

# PRO

# VERITATE

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## KRISIS IN KORINTHE

(PAULUS OOR DIE EENHEID VAN DIE KERK)

PROF. ALBERT GEYSER

„maar God het die liggaam saamgestel . . . sodat daar geen verdeeldheid in die liggaam mag wees nie . . .” So skryf Paulus in 53 n.C. aan die Kerk te Korinthe (1 Kor. 12:24 en 25). Die „liggaam”, d.i. die „liggaam van Christus” is in hierdie en in ander briewe Paulus se geliefde beeld vir die Kerk. Daar mag dus nie verdeeldheid in die Kerk wees nie. Daarmee stel die Apostel een van die wesenskenmerke van die Kerk: haar eenheid. En hy stel dit absoluut en sonder voorbehoud. Die eenheid is nie ’n eenheid ter wille van eenheid nie, dit is ook nie ’n ideaal, so-iets soos Eendrag maak Mag nie, dis eenvoudig en voorbehoudloos eis, want „God het die liggaam saamgestel”.

### VERDEELDHEID

Meermale in sy briewe, maar besonder dikwels teenoor die Korinthiërs beklemtoon die Apostel hierdie eenheid van die Kerk want dit was veral in die veelsoortige en veelrassige gemeente van hierdie middellandseesee hawestad dat die eenheid en daarmee die wese van die Kerk onder bedreiging gekom het. Uit 1 Kor. 3 merk mens dat persoonlike voorkeure die eenheid bedreig het. Daar was Petrusmense, Paulusmense, Apollosmense, net soos daar vandag Lutherane, Calviniste en Wesleyane is. In die geval waarsku die Apostel die voorbode van die verdeeldheid. „As iemand die tempel van God skend, sal God hom skend” (1 Kor. 3:17) en benadruk hy teenoor die partygangers, „maar julle behoort aan Christus, en Christus aan God” (vs. 23).

Die Kerk te Korinthe, rou uit die heidendom, het volgens hfst. 6 ook om ander redes gedreig om weg te brokkel van die één Kerk. Hulle het hier en daar die geslagtelike ongebondenheid van hul heidense dae probeer voortsit. Paulus herinner hulle daaraan dat wie Christus aangeneem het, met Hom één liggaam en gees vorm.

Dit klink eintlik te onbenullig om dit te noem, maar selfs eetgebruike het die eenheid van die Kerk in Korinthe bedreig, en mens verwonder jou waarom Paulus die hele hoofstuk 10 aan so ’n minder belangrike saking wy. By nadere ondersoek blyk dit egter wél be-

langrik, inhoudelik belangrik maar veral prinsipiële belangrik. Dit gaan oor die eet van vleis. Paulus was geen vegetariër nie, maar die probleem was dat mens in Korinthe beswaarlik elders vleis kon koop as by die afgodstempels. (Vervolg op bladsy 2)

## THE DECREE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ON ECUMENISM

By

G. M. A. JANSEN, O.P., S.T.L.

Whenever a person desires to enter into a dialogue with another in order to bring about closer co-existence between them, there are three questions which he has to ask himself very carefully:

- (1) Is it necessary and desirable for such a union to be established?
- (2) If there is a positive antagonism between us, is it my fault?  
Is there anything wrong with me that prevents and obstructs the union?
- (3) What can I offer the other that he is in need of, and what am I lacking that he can give me in return?

It was to give an answer to these three questions that the

fathers of the Vatican Council sat together and discussed in a special session the problem of re-union with all Christian churches, and published their findings in a decree.

### 1. THE NECESSITY AND DESIRABILITY OF RE-UNION

The Council confirmed this proposition in no uncertain terms. This is how they introduced their decree: "The restoration of unity (Continued on page 4)

## Krisis in Korinthe

(Vervolg van bladsy 1)

Hulle het die vleismonopolie gehad want hulle het die vleisoffers gemaak. As jy dus lus was vir 'n stukkie vleis, moes jy dit van die afgodsaltaar af koop. Sommige Korinthiese Christene het beswaar gehad om dit te eet. Die meer gehardes het hierdie fyngevoeliges spottend die „swakkes“, oftewel die „sagtes“ genoem. En daar het partyskap tussen „gehardes“ en „sagtes“ gedreig. Uit so 'n klein aanleiding as vleis-eet of nie-eet-nie het 'n wesenskenmerk van die Kerk in die gedrang gekom: haar eenheid. En as die eenheid van die Kerk, een van haar wesenskenmerke op die spel staan, was niks vir Paulus te onbenullig of te groot nie. Hy het sonder versuim wal gegooi, en insidientel 'n verdere kenmerk van die Christelike Kerk gestel: die aard van haar diensbaarheid. In die Kerk verag die sterkes nie die swakkes nie, hulle help hulle op. As my vleis-eter my swakkere broer kan laat struikel, moet ek liever afsien van vleis. Om die swakkere en mindere en minderwaardige op te help, lê in die lyn van Christus self wat Hom verneder het ter wille van ons minderwaardiges, wat gekom het om te red, nie die stewiges en gevestigdes nie, maar dié wat verlore gaan. Hierdie diensbaarheid aan die swakke is ook nie beperk net tot die Kerk nie. „Wees geen oorsaak van struikeling vir Jode of Grieke of vir die Kerk van God nie“, sê die Apostel in 1 Kor. 11:32. Hierdie onderlinge diensbaarheid sal weer in hfst. 12 ter sprake kom.

Uit 1 Kor. 11:17-34 merk ons 'n verdere bedreiging vir die eenheid in die gemeente. Dis 'n bedreiging van die eenheid as gemeenskap, partyskappe by die sentraalste openbaring van die eenheid van die Kerk, die gemeenskap van die Nagmaal. Om 'n duidelike beeld van die probleem te vorm, moet mens weet dat in die vroeë Kerk die Nagmaal saam met die liefdesmaal, of **Agape** gebruik is. Justinus die Martelaar beskryf hoedat die Christene vroeg op die Sondagmôre saamgekom het en hierdie maaltyd saam genuttig het.

In Korinthe het die aansienlikes

en die vernames blykbaar neergesien daarop om met die minderwaardiges saam te eet, hulle het hul eie kosmandjies gebring en hul eie klub gevorm, eenkant geëet. „Het julle dan geen huise om in te eet en te drink nie? Of verag julle die gemeente van God, en maak julle dié beskaamd wat nie het nie?“ vra die Apostel in 1 Kor. 11:22.

Mens sou dink dat hiermee nou darem al die moontlike oorsake van verdeeldheid, bedreiging van die eenheid, in die Kerk te Korinthe uitgeput was. Dis nie die geval nie. Ook die verskillende geestesgawes, of **charismata** het 'n aanleiding tot verdeeldheid geword. Onder die verskillende soorte begaafdhede wat die ou Kerk in die tyd van die Apostel geken het, was daar die glossolalie, die spreek in 'n onbekende en onverstaanbare soort taal. Hierdie verskynsel kom tot vandag toe in sommige godsdienstige gemeenskappe voor. Paulus het self ook hierdie spraakverrukking ervaar en was daarvoor dankbaar (1 Kor. 14:18). In die vroeë Kerk was dit taamlik in aansien en omdat dit 'n taal was wat deur geen mens verstaan is nie, het sommige dit die „taal van die engele“ genoem (1 Kor. 13:1).

Teen die verskynsel op sigself het Paulus geen beswaar gehad nie. As dit egter 'n bedreiging vir die eenheid van die Kerk word, verander die saak. En so 'n bedreiging het dit op 'n bepaalde tydstip wél geword. Die wat in „tale“ gespreek het, het hul gedistansieër van die res wat na hulle oortuiging nie goed genoeg Christen was om in hulle begaafdheid te deel of dit te waardeer nie. Begaaftheid en bevoorregting, sê die Apostel dan, is nie tot selfverheffing en verdeeldheid nie, maar tot onderlinge diens en tot eenheid. Vanaf 1 Kor. 12 tot 14 handel hy hieroor. In hierdie hoofstukke leer mens die hele diepte en wydheid van sy opvatting van die eenheid van die Kerk ken. Hier gebruik hy die beeld van die Kerk as liggaam van die Here in nog voller mate as in 1 Kor. 6:15-17, 10:14-22, 11:23-29 en Ef. 4:3-7.

Daar is 'n verskeidenheid van gawes, netsoos daar 'n verskeidenheid van ledemate van die liggaam is. Daar is oë, ore, neus, hande, voete, 'n hoof, en ook le-

demate wat mens nie aldag in goeie geselskap noem nie. Nie een kan sonder die ander klaarkom nie. Dit neem alle soorte van lidmate om 'n Kerk te maak. Nie almal is eenders of gelykelyk beedeel nie. Nie almal is ewe „geestelik“ nie. Party is selfs nederig en nie so sierlik nie, maar hulle almal vorm die één liggaam, en as hulle geamputeer sou word, sal die liggaam nie volwaardig funksioneer nie.

### DIE KERK MOET EEN WEES

Paulus se onderrig oor die eenheid van die Kerk in hierdie hoofstukke is so fundamenteel dat mens dit liever van voor af en byna woord vir woord moet bespreek. Hy begin om die wat hul op grond van hul meerwaardigheid afsonder, te wys op hul staat van verwildering en verwydering toe hul nog heidene was, 1 Kor. 12:2. Verdeeldheid is 'n kenmerk van heidendom. Die vers is 'n stille waarskuwing dat verdeeldheid in die Kerk 'n terugval tot die heidendom beteken.

Dan vertel hy hulle in die volgende vers dat die onsigbare krag wat hulle uit die heidense verwarring en verdeeldheid tot die één Kerk van Christus omvorm het, die Heilige Gees was. Om die volle implikasie van die stelling vir sy lesers te begryp, moes mens ruimte gehad het vir 'n lang studie oor die Bybelse leer van die Heilige Gees. Vir die oomblik moet dit voldoen om te sê dat die Heilige Gees van die begin tot die einde van die Skrif die lewegewende krag van God is, en dit word openbaar in die lewegewe in die skepping en die herskepping en in die lewewekkende profetiese woord. In hierdie vers sê Paulus gevolglik, en so verstaan die Korinthiërs hom, dat waar die eenheid in die Kerk ontbreek, daar ontbreek die lewegewende krag van God, die Heilige Gees. Verdeeldheid in die Kerk is 'n ontsettende oordeel oor die Kerk. Die verdeelde Kerk is letterlik sonder die Gees van die Here. En daar disintegreer die Kerk, want as dit die Gees sou gehad het, sou die verskeidenheid van gawes mekaar tot 'n onderlinge eenheid aangevul het (1 Kor. 14:4 en 11).

Die eenheid is nie 'n doel in sigself nie, en die genadegawes ook nie. Beide kategorieë is be-



stem tot **diens** in en aan die één Here. Daarom noem Paulus in vs. 5 die begaafdheid „bediening“ en praat hy in dieselfde asem van „dieselfde Here“, as voorwerp van daardie bediening. Daarom gaan hy in vs. 6 voort om die bediening nader te kwalifiseer as „werkinge“ oftewel, diensleweringe. Dis God sê hy, wat hierdie werkinge in die begaafdes werk, „wat alles in almal werk“. Wie dit ontken of strem, ontken en strem nie net die eenheid van die Kerk nie, hy ontken en strem God self.

Die gevolgtrekking van Paulus se stelling is klink-klaar: In sy eindproduk is die verdeeldheid van die Kerk 'n loëning van God self.

In vers 4 tot 6 laat Paulus in drie opeenvolgende herhalinge die eis van eenheid in weerwil van verskeidenheid, meer, eenheid juis omrede van verskeidenheid, diep insink: „dit is dieselfde Gees“, „dit is dieselfde Here“, „dit is dieselfde God“. Die enigheid van God, Christus en Gees, is die grondslag en die rede vir die eenheid van die Kerk. Één Gees, één Here, één God en daarom één Kerk.

Paulus noem in die daaropvolgende verse 8 tot 10 die verskillende begaafdheid wat in die Kerk werksaam is, op: genesing, kragte, d.i. die vermoë om demone te besweer, profesie, d.i. prediking, en dan die glossolie waaroor klaarblyklik die moeilikheid gekom het. Die apostel spreek hom nie uit oor die relatiewe waarde van die begaafdheid nie. Hy benadruk alleen dat die glossolie nie oorskat moet word nie, want dit is alleen vir die sodanig begaafde van betekenis en vir niemand anders nie. Die vernaamste is dat dit een en dieselfde Gees is wat al hierdie dinge werk en dat hulle daarom tot eenheid en nie tot verdeeldheid nie, moet opereer.

Vanaf vs. 12 introduceer Paulus 'n verdere rede tot die eenheid: die doop. Veel meer as teenswoordige Christene, het die Kerk van die eerste eeu 'n onmiddellike verband tussen die doop en die Heilige Gees beleef. Dis een Gees en doop waarmee algar gedoop is. Daar is dus nie 'n meer- of minderwaardige in die gemeentete nie, en daar mag daarom ook geen verdeeldheid heers nie. Hy

neem nou in aanmerking nie alleen die onderskeie begaafdheid nie, maar ook die verskeidenheid van herkoms en stand in hierdie veelrassige gemeente. „Want ons is almal ook deur een Gees gedoop tot een liggaam, of ons Jode of Grieke is, slawe of vrymanne“ (vs. 13).

In die hellenistiese wêreld van die tyd, en veral in die gebiede rondom die Middellandse See, was daar 'n ongekeerde volkermenging. Die nasie- en standsverskille kon maklik aanleiding vir verdeling in die Kerk word. Nie net in Korinthe nie, maar ook in Galate (Gal. 3:28) en in Colossae (Kol. 3:11) moes die Apostel hierdie gevaar vroegtydig besweer. Dis nie 'n mens se herkoms of jou stand of jou begaafdheid wat jou gemeenskap bepaal nie, maar Christus, die Gees, God. Dis nie bloedbande wat jou identiteit gee nie, maar die bloed van Christus. Dis nie tradisionele geneenthede en die volksliggaam wat jou finale binding is nie, maar die liggaam van Christus en die liefde.

In die dertiende en ook die veertiende hoofstukke spreek Paulus uitvoerig oor die liefde as die vernaamste gawe wat die Christen moet hê, en hy bedoel daarmee 'n onvoorwaardelike liefde teenoor elke medegelowige, soos Christus ook onvoorwaardelik elke lid van sy liggaam, van sy Kerk liefhet. Dis moeilik om in hierdie klassieke hoofstuk enige gedeelte bo die ander uit te kies, maar miskien is die vyfde vers wel die onmiddellike antwoord op die dreigende verdeeldheid: die liefde soek nie sy eie belang nie. Hierdie stelling sny tot aan die wortel van verdelinge in die Kerk op grond van gewaande meerwaardighede of ook reële meerwaardighede. Meerwaardigheid, eg of gewaand, is nie rede tot verwydering nie, maar juis tot groter samesnoering, want ongeag stand, ras en funksie in die Christelike gemeenskap, verplig die meerdere stand, meerdere vermoë en meerdere begaafdheid tot meerdere en nederiger diens, toewyding aan die belang van die mindere.

En hieraan wy die Apostel die hele volgende hoofstuk: die „stigting“ van die Kerk. Alles wat lidmate afsonderlik doen, moet die opbou, verstewiging van die Kerk dien, dit is, tot eenheid dien.

## TOTAALBEELD VAN PAULUS SE PREDIKING

Die totaalbeeld uit die drie hoofstukke aan die Korinthiërs, soos die totaalbeeld van sy prediking elders, laat twee aspekte van die eenheid na vore kom. Eenheid is nie 'n doel in sigself nie. Dis onontbeerlik en lewensvoorwaarde van die Kerk omdat eenheid getuienis is, en omdat dit 'n woordelose Christus-verkondiging is. Dit getuig van God en dit getuig van die eenheid en onverdeeldheid van Christus. Dit predik en illustreer met die sigbare daad die sigbare, ervaarbare genade van God soos Hy dit in Christus openbaar het.

En met hierdie twee betekenis van die eenheid, staan Paulus in lyn met die Hoëpriesterlike gebed, waarin Christus self die eenheid van sy Kerk as Godsgetuienis en 'n daadprediking leer. „Dat almal een mag wees net soos U in My en Ek in U; dat hulle ook in Ons een mag wees, **sodat die wêreld kan glo dat U My gestuur het**“ „... dat hulle volkome een kan wees, **en dat die wêreld kan weet dat U My gestuur het, en hulle liefgehad het net soos U My liefgehad het**“.

### SUMMARY

The author discusses different factors which gave rise to disunity in the early Christian Church in Corinth: personal preferences (1 Cor. 3); the continuation by some of the sexual licentiousness found among the heathen (1 Cor. 6); the buying of meat by some at the tempels of idols (1 Cor. 10); the formation of groups at the celebration of Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11); the variety of spiritual gifts and the overrating of speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12-14). In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul aims at arresting this disintegration within the Church by proclaiming the gospel to them. According to the author, the apostle advances the following reasons as to why the Church should be one: Disunity is a mark of the heathen; a divided Church is without the Spirit of the Lord; the disunity of the Church is basically a denial of God; baptism as incorporation into the body of Christ excludes any thought of disunity; love that does not seek its own interest can only find true embodiment in the unity of the Church in humble service.

In his message in this letter Paul particularly emphasises two aspects of this unity of the Church: unity is not the goal in itself and, unity is a precondition to the Church's life because by it she bears witness to the unity and undividedness of Christ. Here Paul's teaching conforms to that of Christ himself in his high priestly prayer namely that the unity of his Church is a witness to God and a sermon by example.

## The Decree of the Second Vatican Council on Ecumenism

(Continued from page 1)

among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian Communion present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways as if Christ were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalises the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."

The Council then professes its acknowledgement, that the remorse over their divisions and the longing for unity, which sprang up among the divided Christians is a movement which is fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and is therefore the plan of grace of God Himself. The Council sees it therefore as its task to set before all Catholics the ways and means by which they too can respond to this grace and to this divine call.

It is thus that we come naturally to the second question which the Catholic Church and therefore every Catholic has to ask himself:

### 2. IF THERE IS A POSITIVE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, IS IT PERHAPS MY FAULT? IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME, THAT PREVENTS AND OBSTRUCTS THE UNION?

We discover two different aspects of the Church of Christ. The first is the Church as an outward visible institution; as the bearer of the message of Christ in preaching the Gospel; as the bearer of the means of sanctification, the sacraments; and as the bearer of the authority of Christ in her hierarchical construction. But in another aspect, we can also see the Church of Christ in the local communities, where the word of God is preached, where the faithful are united

with Christ in faith, hope and charity, where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated together, where the Christian virtues are practised and the Holy Spirit works by His charisms. We can see that these two aspects of the Church form only one reality; the church of Christ is only perfect when not only the structure, as it was instituted by Christ, is fully maintained, but also when all the means of salvation given to the Church are in full operation.

However, the Church is not perfect yet. It is on the road to perfection, for, — to quote the constitution of the Church of the Vatican Council II — "The Church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, and in which we acquire sanctity through the grace of God, will attain its full perfection only in the glory of Heaven, when there will come the time of the restoration of all things."

Today we have become very conscious of this imperfection of the Church. The Church of Christ is split up, divided in all sorts of churches, which all call themselves "the" Church of Christ, and therefore remain divided. We see that all these Christians of different denominations have received genuine religious experiences in their own church, and therefore remain convinced that their community must be preserved in their present existence; they are happy in their church and do not want it changed. Moreover there is always an attraction in forming small communities, where the personal element of friendship and unity can be much better maintained than in larger communities. Living together and creating an environment in which they find their daily sustenance, they are averse to all change.

This is true of the members of the Protestant Churches, but it was particularly true of the members of the Catholic Church; in that long stretch of centuries, which began with the Council of Trent, and ended with the death of Pope Pius XII. Convinced, as they were, that the Catholic Church was the only true Church, they did not like any idea of a change in their society, which was so utterly to their liking and conviction. They were rather proud of their isolation; for any reunion with the Protestants, they de-

manded a complete conversion to the Catholic Church.

The Protestants were treated on one line with the heathens. A Catholic priest would rather rebaptise a Protestant conditionally than acknowledge their baptism. One of the characteristics of the Catholics was that they were rather scrupulous about fraternizing with the Protestants and joining with them in prayer; they thought that they were committing a sin against faith if they would acknowledge that a Protestant had an equal right to call himself a Christian. In teaching Catholic doctrine, the pastors of the Church concentrated rather on the differences with the other churches, and while we always pointed out that the very term "Protestant" indicated the rather negative side of their religion, by making it a protest against the Catholic Church, the Catholics themselves fell into the same error by protesting too much.

We cannot say that the prejudice and sinfulness of private individuals were the cause of this deliberate isolation. The laws of the Church were enforcing it officially and made it a system. It was forbidden for the Catholic to take part in any Protestant service; entering a Protestant church, he was not allowed to say any prayers there or give any sign of devotion. He was not allowed to read or possess a Protestant Bible, nor any book that discussed or defended the Protestant religion. Censorship on books was very strict and an official list of banned books was regularly published. This was also valid for any Catholic theologian who queried the validity of any Catholic practice or current explanation of doctrine in favour of the Protestant or agnostic explanation. The doctrine was established, new investigation was looked upon with suspicion, and no new development was possible without falling into heresy.

A mixed marriage was not allowed, and if dispensation was granted, it could never be given, unless the non-Catholic party made the promise that the children of the marriage would be baptised and educated in the Catholic Church. Catholics were encouraged to form their own organisations, labour as well as

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## Editorial:

## UT OMNES UNUM SINT

All over the world people cry and sigh for Christian unity. Numerous inter-church councils and an increasing number of inter-church enterprises are clear indications that the Spirit of God is at work in the hearts of men and in the assemblies of churches. There is as yet no clarity on the final aims: must the longing for unity lead to the organizational fusion of all denominations into one organizational church? Or must it lead only to a closer union between individual Christians of various church traditions?

If our aim is the former, how will we face the existing differences of doctrine, liturgy, language, culture and race which have been such potent factors in the establishment of separate denominations? If our aim is the latter, does it conform to God's will and to Christ's prayer for his Church? Is a true spiritual unity possible without it also being a visible unity? And what about the unity demanded by Holy Communion? Should it start with unity at the Lord's Table or should it lead to this unity?

These and many other questions provisionally remain unanswered. But is this a valid reason for Christians and churches to remain separated until such time as we have found all the answers? Has the way of the Holy Spirit not often been that of using the willingness of individual Christians to act in obedience to the Scriptures?

Because we believe the latter to be the case, we are deeply grateful for every attempt to express and experience our confession of Christian unity, e.g. the Week of Prayer which will be observed in many churches in South Africa from the 22nd to the 29th of May. For the same reason we are encouraged by many other ventures in South Africa where expression is given to our longing for unity, for e.g. the exchange of pulpits, united services of worship, various forms of practical inter-church service, etc.

In our contemporary situation there is an additional reason — which has in fact become a basic challenge — why the people of God should face this issue, namely the growing spiritual and geographic separation between believers brought about by the apartheid policy. The resultant alienation leads to greater ignorance, prejudice and dissension. No political measures or economic forces are able to restore these disturbed human relations. It is the calling of churches and of Christians to do all in their power to witness in attitude, word and deed that the unity in Christ transcends all walls of partition created by ignorance or distrust, hatred or fear.

It is our prayer that the Spirit of God will in increasing measure lead all Christians in South Africa to greater obedience in this matter.

## Inleidingsartikel

## UT OMNES UNUM SINT

Oral in die wêreld hunker en smag mense na Christelike eenheid. Talle interkerklike rade en 'n toenemende getal interkerklike ondernemings is 'n duidelike aanwysing dat die Gees van God werk in die harte van mense en in die vergaderings van kerke. Daar is nog geen duidelikheid oor wat uiteindelik beoog word nie: moet die verlangete na eenheid lei tot 'n organisatoriese saamsmelting van alle denominasies in een kerkinstituut? Of moet dit slegs lei tot 'n hegte verbintenis tussen individuele Christene van verskillende kerklike tradisies?

As eersgenoemde ons doel is, wat gaan ons maak met die bestaande verskille in leer, liturgie, taal, kultuur en ras wat magtige faktore was in die totstandkoming van aparte denominasies? As laasgenoemde ons doel is, is dit in ooreenstemming met Gods wil en met Christus se gebed vir sy Kerk? Is 'n ware geestelike eenheid denkbaar sonder dat dit ook 'n sigbare eenheid is? En wat van die eenheid wat die Nagmaal vereis? Moet die eenheid waarna ons soek by die Nagmaal begin of moet dit daarheen lei?

Hierdie en baie ander vrae bly voorlopig nog onbeantwoord. Maar moet Christene en kerke om hierdie rede verdeeld bly en wag totdat al die antwoorde eers gevind is? Was die weg van die Heilige Gees nie al dikwels dat Hy die gewilligheid van individuele Christene om te handel in gehoorsamenheid aan die Skrif, in Sy diens neem nie?

Omdat ons glo dat laasgenoemde die geval is, is ons innig dankbaar vir elke poging wat uitdrukking wil gee aan ons belydenis van Christelike eenheid en ons beleving daarvan, bv. die Week van Gebed wat in baie kerke in Suid-Afrika waargeneem sal word vanaf 22-29 Mei. Om dieselfde rede is baie ander ondernemings in Suid-Afrika wat uitdrukking gee aan ons verlangete na eenheid, bv. die uitruil van kansels, gesamentlike eredienste, verskeie vorms van praktiese interkerklike diens, ens., vir ons bemoedigend.

In ons teenswoordige situasie in Suid-Afrika is daar nog 'n bykomstige rede — wat terselfdertyd 'n basiese uitdaging geword het — waarom die volk van God hierdie saak moet uitmaak, nl. die toenemende geestelike en geografiese skeiding tussen gelowiges as gevolg van die apartheidsbeleid. Die vervreemding wat uit hierdie situasie voortvloei, lei tot groter onkunde, vooroordeel en tweedrag. Geen politieke maatreëls of ekonomiese druk sal by magte wees om hierdie vertroebelde menslike verhoudinge te herstel nie. Dit is die dure roeping van kerke en Christene om alles in hulle vermoë te doen om in gesindheid en met woord en daad te getuig van die eenheid in Christus wat alle skeids-mure, veroorsaak deur onkunde of agterdog, haat of vrees, te oorbrug.

Dit is ons bede dat alle Christene in Suid-Afrika in toenemende mate deur die Gees van God tot groter gehoorsamenheid in hierdie opsig gelei mag word.

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religious associations. They were not allowed to join non-Catholic ones, some of them were forbidden on pain of excommunication. Pope Pius XII in his encyclical: *Mystici Corpus Christi*, identified the Church of Christ completely with the Catholic Church, and thus came to the conclusion that "only those could be accounted real members of the Church who had been generated in the waters of baptism and professed the true faith, and had not cut themselves from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefrom by the legitimate authority . . . "And therefore whoever refuses to hear the Church must, as the Lord commanded, be considered as the heathen and publican. It follows that those who are divided from one another in faith or government cannot be living in one Body so described, and by its one divine Spirit." (The Mystical Body of Christ No. 21.)

### THE VATICAN COUNCIL CHANGED ALL THAT

The fathers of the Council, united in their desire to bring about union among the Christian Churches, began to revise the concept of the Church of Christ and came to the conclusion that the non-Catholic Christian communities had a real right to call themselves "Churches". Their argument may be condensed in the following way:

If we consider the Church of Christ in its institutional aspect, then we must say that there is only one true Church, namely the Catholic Church.

There is no doubt that Christ **instituted** a Church. During His lifetime He selected a band of Apostles with St. Peter at their head, — "and on this rock I shall build my Church" — to take on the establishment and the government of the Church, and gave them at the same time the power to appoint their successors. It is in this way that the authority of Christ was in His Church and

carried on from generation to generation up to the present day. He sent them out to preach His word to all the nations and baptise them in His name, and "I shall be with you until the consummation of the world." He gave them a special power therefore to promulgate and preserve His doctrine. Finally He instituted the 7 sacraments, with the Holy Eucharist as their centre, so that by the visible actions and words of the Church, He could give Himself and His graces to all His members.

If we consider then the Church of Christ as an institution, with these three elements of construction: the power to preserve and preach the doctrine; the gifts of grace in the sacraments; and the governmental or hierarchial structure; and we ask ourselves: Where can we find this Church which Christ instituted, we can point to the Catholic Church and say: Here is a Church, in which we find all these institutional elements. Not only has the Catholic Church the Apostolic succession in the bishops as the true successors of the Apostles with the Pope as the true successor of St. Peter at their head, but the Catholic Church also has endeavoured to keep the Gospel of Christ in all its purity and completeness, and makes use of all the means of grace which Christ has bestowed upon His Church. The other churches have retained some of these institutional elements of the Church of Christ, some more some less, — the orthodox churches practically all (18 — 18), among the Western Churches the Anglican Church takes a very special place, — (13) among the modern Protestant churches there are some who have hardly retained any of the institutional characters, apart from the Bible, baptism and communal prayer. However, the Council points out to us, that we must not look at the Church of Christ exclusively as an institution. There is another aspect to the Church, namely the local community in which Christ lives and which gives abundant signs of the working of the Holy Spirit. And looking at it from this aspect, we must acknowledge that the Protestant churches can be truly called "Churches", even though they form an incomplete

realisation of the Church of Christ. For, as the Fathers point out in the decree on Ecumenism: "Some of the significant elements and endowments, which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself can exist outside the boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written Word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit." (3) "Even though the ecclesial communities which are separated from us lack the fulness of unity with us which should flow from baptism, and though we believe they have not retained the proper reality of the eucharistic mystery in its fulness, especially because of the absence of the Sacrament of Orders, nevertheless when they commemorate His death and resurrection in the Lord's supper they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and look forward to His coming in glory." (22)

Moreover, we find that also the Protestant communities by a sincere living with Christ and the practice of Christian virtues, create often an environment in which it becomes increasingly easier for others and also for us to live a Christian life. In this way too they give Christ to others. "The daily Christian lives of these brethren are nourished by their faith in Christ. They are strengthened by their faith in baptism and by hearing the word of God. This shows itself in their private prayer, their meditation on the Bible, in their Christian family life, and in the worship of a community gathered together to praise God . . . Their faith in Christ bears fruit in praise and thanksgiving for the good things received from the hands of God . . . Among them too, is a strong sense of justice and a true charity towards others. This active faith has been responsible for many organisations for the relief of spiritual and material distress, the furthering of the education of youth, the improvement of the social conditions of life, and the promotion of peace throughout the world.

"While it is true that many Christians understand the normal teaching of the Gospel differently from Catholics, and do not accept the same solutions to the more difficult problems of modern society, nevertheless they share



our desire to stand by the words of Christ as the source of Christian virtue, and to obey the command of the apostle: "and whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Col. 3:7). Even in dogmatic truth, sensitive as we are about the gift of the infallibility in the Church, we are told by the Council that we can learn from our separated brethren, since the tradition in their church may have come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than ours, and has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are often to be considered as mutually complementary rather than conflicting. (17) When comparing doctrines with one another, we should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith. Thus the way will be open whereby this kind of "fraternal rivalry" will incite all to have a clearer awareness and a deeper realisation of the unfathomable riches of Christ." (11)

It is clear from these statements of the Council that we cannot judge the value of the ecclesial reality of a Christian community merely by the institutional standards. It is quite possible that there exists a Catholic parish which has all the institutional elements, — orthodox doctrine, the seven sacraments and apostolic hierarchy, — and yet live its religious life in a killing routine, without any depth of faith, hope and charity, while next to that parish there may be a small Protestant community, which only has the Bible, the preaching and communal prayer as institutional elements and yet show a fervour of spirit and a deep longing for communion with God so that the charisms of the Holy Spirit begin to show.

### WE ARE GUILTY

We receive therefore from the Vatican Council an image of the Church of Christ as one which is divided, torn asunder, and the blame of this division falls as much on the Catholic Church as on the other churches — if not

more. In the decree on ecumenism, **the Fathers ask pardon of God as well as of the separated brethren**, for the wrong we did. (7) The blame falls on the Catholic Church, not merely on account of what happened in the past at the time of the Reformation, but also on account of the policy of isolation which she practised throughout the centuries up to the present time, by which we made it impossible for the other churches to come to any honest dialogue. Moreover the blame of the schism does not fall on the Protestants of today: "The children who are born into these communities and grow up believing in Christ, cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation and the Catholic Church looks upon them as brothers with respect and affection." (3)

We must come to the conclusion that we Catholics are forming the Church of Christ together with our separated brethren, but that we are all guilty in causing this division, and therefore we must make a united effort to make the Church of Christ the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church which Jesus Christ intended it to be. And this must be done by a sincere dialogue. We from our side can do much to restore the institutional character of the Church and bring to it all the means of sanctification which Christ has given us, and His authority by restoring the Apostolic succession and the purity of doctrine that has already been won by the Church. But on the other hand it is our task to listen, in humility and charity; to be open to what Christ has given the other communities in which He truly lives. We must try and enter into that environment which they built up by their living with Christ, and profit by the gifts of prophecy, healing, faith, a great surrender to the Will of God etc., which are living in their churches. This can only be to our own enrichment, because it is the same Jesus who lives in their and our churches.

The Catholic Church is therefore really in need of reformation. When the Council was called by Pope John, there were so many Catholics who said: "Why call a Council? The Church is not in need of any reformation. The Catholic life is flourishing as

never before, her religious, educational and social activities are expanding all over the world; the conversions are ever on the increase, the religious life of priests, monks, religious congregations are of a high standard." Even today there are so many Catholics who will not allow to see anything wrong in the Church, who are full of admiration for all that is Catholic and blind to anything that yet may be honest criticism. The Fathers of the Council had a word for this attitude: triumphalism.

But now the Council calls for a reformation of which the Church is **continually** in need. There must especially be a **change of heart**. "For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. For although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truths and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervour that they should, so that the radiance of the Church's image is less in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of the Kingdom is delayed. All Catholics must therefore aim at Christian perfection and, each according to his station, play his part that the Church may daily be more purified and **renewed**. For the Church must bear in her own body the humility and the dying of Christ, against the day when Christ will present her to Himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle." (4)

We see from the last sentence that we cannot receive a good concept of the Church without the theory of evolution; the Church is not yet fully the Church of Christ, but growing towards it, in the way in which man is not fully man but growing towards full manhood.

All the arguments so extensively built up in the science which is called "Apologetics", and which forms the biggest part of the Catholic catechism, no longer prove to be tenable. The Catholic Church must have the ideal to become the Church of Christ which in her fulness must have the four marks of unity, catholicity, sanctity and apostolicity, but the Catholic Church is not yet

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this one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, because 1) she is the concurring cause of disunity; 2) she has all the means of sanctification, but not exclusively so, because these means of sanctification can be partially found in other churches with which she lives in disunion; 3) she has the Apostolic succession, but some other Churches have it as well; 4) neither can she claim catholicity if by her deliberate policy of isolation she is preventing being universal.

Nevertheless, in the ecumenical movement these four marks of the Church of Christ will become more and more visible in the joy of fellow Christians finding each other, and the more pronounced against the background of an atheistic and agnostic paganism.

### 3. WHAT CAN I OFFER THE OTHER AND WHAT CAN HE GIVE ME IN RETURN?

The Council saw it as a main objective to launch an ecumenical movement, in order to "induce the faithful that under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fulness of unity which Jesus Christ desires."

The following are the initiatives and activities which the Council recommends to be undertaken:

1) Every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult;

2) then "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and communities. At these meetings, which are organised in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions;

3) In addition, the way is prepared for co-operation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity, which are demanded by every Christian conscience;

4) and, where this is allowed, there is prayer in common.

5) Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigour the task of **renewal and reform.**

As regards 1) and 2) it is essential for a true dialogue that we meet our fellow Christian with love and humility. A false and unfair representation of their conviction is always against charity and serves no purpose. Convinced as we are that we only have the true faith, we are inclined to see the "conversion" of the Protestant as a one-sided affair, a monologue, we have to teach them, while we can learn nothing from them . . . We are so convinced that we can refute the Protestant with logical and rational arguments, we have the infallible truth and therefore they have not. However, with all this rationalisation of our faith, we often do not allow mystery to remain, we draw all sorts of conclusions with the aid of philosophy, and give these conclusions the same value and the same faith as the mystery itself.

Man lives his history, he is ever confronted with new situations and must apply the tenets of his faith to these new situations. But how often he can go wrong, either because he has not fully grasped the whole of the situation or because his theological conclusion has been overtaken. That is why the Council makes the statement that in Catholic doctrine **there exists a hierarchy of truths**, so that they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith (11); and in another place that the Church needs continual reformation **also in the way in which Church teaching has been formulated**, to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself. (6)

It is because we can so often go wrong in our theological conclusions, either as individuals or as a group (e.g. a group of theologians) that we need the infallible Magisterium of the Church, but this does not mean that our

process of thinking and investigating has got to be arrested continually by a "deus ex machina" in the form of an infallible pronouncement of dogma by the Pope; but it means that this process is guided in the right direction. That infallible magisterium is Christ Himself who is with His Church until the consummation of the world; the being-with-Christ with His members individually in His grace and internal illumination of faith; — and His being-with in His Church, by His authority in the external society. A Christian, being with Christ, meets his situation as he sees it and tries to express his love for Christ in it, and so do all the others. In dialogue with each other, this experience of their situation begins to be explicated and formulated by the group and a theological conclusion is formed; however, new situations may require a more precise or revised formulation. It is the magisterium of the Church — the bishops together with the Pope; or the Pope by himself — who may find it necessary to give guidance to the formulation. Yet the Pope will not formulate any doctrine, unless it is an expression of faith which lives in the Universal Church, and it is through the dialogue that this universal faith comes into being.

In this present time we begin to feel that we are badly in need of dialogue with our separated brethren. We need to be confronted by their faith in order to weed out our own private heresies, the exaggerations of theological conclusions, the rationalisations which arise from a too much probing into the mystery. The dialogue with our separated brethren forces us to fall back on the deposit of faith, the original sources: the Bible, the primitive tradition of those who were the contemporaries of Christ, the universal dogmas which have been won by the Church by living with Christ for so many centuries.

That is why we need humility; any approach that takes the form of a condescension is useless; we have got to be innerly convinced that we need the dialogue with our separated brethren and their charity, for **our own** reformation.

A characteristic example of this need is the crisis which we



experience in our moral theology on marriage. Instead of asking an immediate decision of the Pope — the "deus ex machina" again — could we not come to a better understanding of our faith by entering into dialogue with our separated brethren, and ask them how they in **their** experience of faith, find the moral problems solved? Would this dialogue not give us an understanding in a new dimension of what we ourselves believe?

But it is not only on the dogmatic front that we can learn from our brethren. We can learn too when we pray with them, when we live with them in the religious environment, which they have created within their community. The very difference in spirituality can for both of us be an enrichment, when we meet honestly in communion of prayer. In our (Catholic) pragmatic, rational form of praying the mystical, the prophetic, is so often lacking. We are shy in divulging our mystical experiences to our neighbour and the result is that we do not make our neighbour profit by these experiences, so that they do not become the property of the community as a whole; — we do not **lead** in prayer. Hence our public devotions have so often taken the form of stereotyped prayer which then must have special power by the indulgences which have been attached to them by the Church. Our spirituality has so often taken the form of "meriting more grace", by special devotions, by frequently going to confession and Communion, by extra "acts" of faith, hope and charity, by deliberate mortifications, — adding "grace" upon "grace", counting them numerically, regimenting them to special times and special exercises, but so often not allowing the heart to speak, not allowing the spontaneous outburst of a prophetic inspiration or mystical experience. All this which we are lacking we may find in the prayer of our separated brethren. In their bearing witness to Christ, as they call it, they are often so spontaneous, and it is done by any layman who feels the inspiration of the moment. It may bring us back to the devotional gatherings of St. Paul.

Therefore the Council encourages the communication in wor-

ship, praying together, so that living in each other's spiritual environment, we may profit from each other in learning to worship God. But here again we must clearly see that no communication in worship is of any use, unless both parties are entering in goodwill and in a feeling of need of receiving something from the other which we are lacking ourselves.

It would be of no value for example if a Protestant would go to Holy Communion or go to confession in the Catholic Church without believing in these Sacraments. It would only be a sham communication, and the same can be said of a Catholic taking part in the Sacraments of the Protestants without believing in them.

The Council makes therefore the following statement: "There are two main principles governing the practice of such common worship: the bearing witness to the unity of the Church, and second the sharing in the means of grace. Witness to the unity of the Church very generally forbids common worship to Christians, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice. The course to be adopted, with due regard to all circumstances of time, place and persons, is to be decided by local episcopal authority, unless otherwise provided for by the Bishop's Conference according to its statutes or by the Holy See." (8)

As long as we are deeply conscious that our separated brethren have something to give us, something of which we are in need, then we may also be conscious that we can give them something in return. We would like to give them the Holy Eucharist in its fulness of the Body and the Blood of our Lord, and with it the priesthood and the Apostolic succession. We would like to tell them of the reality of having one's sins forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance, of the consolation which we give the dying in the Sacrament of the sick, of the trust we have that the Sacrament of Confirmation gives a deeper dimension in our personal relationship with God; of the sustenance which the married people receive in their married life from their faith in the sacramental grace. We would like to give our

separated brethren our love for the Mother of Jesus, the beauty of living in communion with the Saints of Heaven and purgatory, with whom we form together the one Mystical Body of Christ.

We would like to make them understand our obedience and trust in the authority of our shepherds, which to us is the authority of Christ Himself, and which gives us security and certainty.

We would like to tell them of the joy of life we experience, a joy so far removed from any Old Testament fear or depression, because we have risen with Christ in His resurrection and are now enjoying the freedom of the children of God.

We would like to tell them of our belief that anything that God has created is good, and can be freely used as His gifts. We would like to explain how some of us are called to a special life of total dedication to God, in the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty and the monastic community life.

But we could tell each other so much in honest dialogue as long as we are all devoured by a great desire for reunion. With our separated brethren bringing in the mystical and prophetic element, and we, bringing in the institutional element, we could restore the Church of Christ to its former beauty, and make it truly the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

But when will the final reunion take place? Not by the heads and delegates sitting together in conference to negotiate the rules of reunion, although these conferences will be very necessary in the preliminary stage. No, it will come about when we are no longer separated at the Holy Table, and we share the Body and Blood of our Lord, the Sacrament of union among all the Christians. Let us hope that the sorrow of not being able to do that yet, will be like fuel to the intensity of our desire and increase our charity and humility.

Footnote: The numbers of the quotations are all from "Ecumenism", Decree of the Vatican Council, obtainable in both languages at the Department of Ecumenical Affairs, of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (S.A.C.B.C.), P.O. Box 941, Pretoria. (Price: 15c).

# THEOLOGY IN THE CRUCIBLE

THE REV. JAMES MOULDER

Defenders of what is usually called 'our traditional way of life' maintain that the so-called 'South African problem' is 'unique'. They are right. In spite of being inhabited for more than three hundred years there are no South Africans south of the Limpopo — only Africans, Afrikaners, Asians, Coloureds and Englishmen.

If that seems odd or wrong, consider the following: if I had been born in England, Holland or Zambia, all the other people born and bred in the same country as I was would consider me an Englishman, Dutchman or Zambian, as the case may be. Even if they disapprove of my particular amount of brains, beauty or balance in the bank and discriminate against me socially on the basis of such differences, they would nevertheless acknowledge me as a fellow countryman and apply the same laws to me as apply to them. But having been born and bred south of the Limpopo the most insignificant and least important thing about me is that I am a South African. It so happens that my parents, grand-parents and great-grand-parents are or were Afrikaners — but I am usually considered an Englishman. That is already odd. Stranger still — and more frightening — is the knowledge that if I had originally been a twinkle in an African, Asian or Coloured eye my whole life would have been very different — and extremely desperate. Unlike Afrikaners and Englishmen who only experience the social and economic disapproval and discrimination of their fellows, Africans, Asians and Coloured are discriminated against by law and disapproved of by Afrikaners and Englishmen not because of their brains, beauty and bank-balances — or their lack of these — but because of their pigmentation, their genetic genesis.

But it is not merely a genetic conspiracy that occurred deep down in our parents' loins that prevents those of us born and bred south of the Limpopo from being South Africans, that condemns us to being 'fair' and 'dark', 'blessed' and 'cursed'. Via the curse of pigmentation we are doubly damned. Not only does our flesh proclaim us as 'white' and 'black'; the culture we have acquired via this genetic absurdity alienates us from each other. The labels on our cultural prisons — African, Afrikaner, Asian, Coloured, English — also proclaim our dilemma. Three continents, three cultures, three **Weltanschauungen** have invaded our part of the world, have so far prevented us from becoming a nation, a **volk**. Ours is a nowhere land inhabited by groups of nowhere — or anywhere — men. An untidy agglomeration, a cosmopolitan scrapyard, a cultural dumping place.

## NO EXIT!

What is to become of us south of the Limpopo, we who belong to three continents but no nation? Most Afrikaners and a growing number of Africans and Englishmen want to tidy the scrap-heap, want to sort us out into neat bundles, label us with an ethnic tag and dump each bundle in a special area of the yard. Not a bad idea. After all, 'man is a rational animal' — Aris-

totle said — and must classify and arrange his world by categories to safeguard his sanity. And 'tidiness is next to godliness' — the Wesleys said — and sought to be both sane and sanitary.

But who is sane and sanitary enough to do the sorting — and the dumping? The 'fair'? The Afrikaners? All South Africans by mutual consent, the conference table and the ballot-box — as befits rational animals? The last suggestion is impossible: there are no South Africans south of the Limpopo — only groups of people striving to dominate those who are not of their group, petulant children who everlastingly bicker and proclaim they cannot play with you. And even if the 'dark' ones consented or were constrained to be divided by the 'fair', what would become of Afrikaners and Englishmen? How would they find each other and cease to be estranged?

It seems then that we cannot be sorted out, bundled up and dumped in tidy areas on a map. So some believe the crucible must become a carnage heap. We must fight. Dog eat dog. Each group for itself and the Devil take the hindmost. Thus it may very well be, for Adam is our father, not Aristotle. We want to be gods, not rational animals. And as in the Garden the Devil will not merely take the hindmost, he will take the lot.

Is there no other way? Must the crucible become a carnage heap? Not necessarily. There is another way. But then we must accept the crucible, must recognise that we are clay in the Potter's hands. We must seek to co-operate in what we are destined to become — one nation, a **volk**, South Africans who no longer bear the curse of imprisonment in the culture of Africans, Afrikaners, Asians, Coloured and Englishmen.

Our destiny . . . ? Inevitable . . . ? Impossible!

But remember — we are already in the crucible. There is no way out. The mixing has already begun. The Potter is at work and our legislation is powerless. Every day in every way we are being more mixed up — where we work, where we worship, where we tremble in fear because of the 'others'. Even in the privacy of the ballot-box — there where we decide on our own — we are not alone. Some of us vote not to decide our destiny, but the destiny of 'them'; the 'dark' one's; our companions in the crucible; who are mixed up with us; who are being mixed and moulded with us into one nation south of the Limpopo.

## EXPOSURE

I have already pointed out that we are not merely divided by our pigmentation but also by our culture. Even those of us who claim to be 'fair' are divided into Afrikaners and Englishmen. And not merely divided — we are also estranged and alienated from each other because we do not understand each others' presuppositions, values and ideas. This alienation will remain until these presuppositions, these cultural axioms, are brought into the open and discussed. Note: discussed, not shouted at each other as slogans.

I want to try to start such a discussion by examining what appears to be the most crucial theological problems raised by the current cultural and ideological deadlock south of the Limpopo. And I want to begin but not end my examina-



tion of these theological problems and the theological tasks they present to the Church with Prof. F. A. van Jaarsveld's *'The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History'*. (Cape Town: Simonium, 1964), especially his Afrikaans Cultural Council lecture of 25 October, 1961, 'The ideas of the Afrikaner on his calling and mission' (pp 1-32).

But first a few remarks about his book. It consists of lectures and studies originally published in Afrikaans in various magazines, books and brochures and in a collection entitled *'Lewende Verlede'* (Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, 1961). The preface expresses the hope that these essays 'may lead to a clearer comprehension of the Afrikaner people and explain why they have pursued a course that has made them the cynosure of world-wide attention... The book does just that and, in particular, indicates how the Afrikaners' historical experience and their interpretation of it has formulated their philosophy of life, their outlook and thoughts and thus become a determinant of their political and human relationships. But I am not going to review the book. Each essay is not only a mine of information and critical evaluation but is highly readable and clearly argued and so I leave you the privilege of discovering for yourself Prof. van Jaarsveld's stimulating contribution to the kind of cultural and ideological self-examination which is desperately needed south of the Limpopo.

Assuming then the correctness of his account of what he calls the Afrikaner's 'awareness of his history and his realization of himself in national terms' (p 33), I want to confine myself to four problems this 'awareness' and 'realization' poses for Christian theology in general and the ecumenical movement in particular. The problems it raises for politics south of the Limpopo are well presented throughout the book and especially in 'History and Politics'. (pp 105-115).

### IDEOLOGY OR THEOLOGY?

The first problem is a general one and overlaps the other three. How is the Church going to distinguish between its own theological utterances and the ideological utterances of Afrikaner political leaders?

The problem arises because both theologians and Afrikaner leaders

assert that God has acted in history; that certain historical occurrences are in some way or other evidence of God's actions. Amongst theologians Abraham's exodus from Ur of the Chaldees; the Exodus under Moses; the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem; the Return from Babylon; the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus; Pentecost and the early mission of the Church are some of the central historical events which are proclaimed as events which cannot be fully understood apart from God's dealings with us men and his purpose for all men everywhere. Amongst Afrikaner leaders the Great Trek, the Battle of Blood River and the Anglo-Boer Wars are also interpreted and proclaimed as events which cannot fully be understood apart from God's dealings with all men south of the Limpopo. And there are other **formal** similarities: on the one hand, theologians maintain that via the Biblical events God has called a certain group of people — the Church — to fulfil a worldwide mission or special task; that this mission calls for sacrifice and suffering; that participation in this mission is only possible via a faithful commitment. On the other hand, Afrikaner leaders proclaim that via the historical events mentioned God has called a certain group of people — the Afrikaners — to fulfil a mission or special task south of the Limpopo; that this mission demands a faithful commitment.

In spite of these **formal** similarities there are, however, striking differences:

(i) Although the events proclaimed by theologians as loci of God's action are every bit as specific to a particular time, place and people as those proclaimed by Afrikaner leaders, God's actions in the theological instances are **not** merely on behalf of a particular ethnic group — the Jews — but on behalf of us all; the Afrikaner instances are on behalf of a particular ethnic group — the Afrikaners. Another way of putting it: theologians emphasize that God's actions are motivated by a concern for and an interest in the salvation, the total welfare, of every single human being, whereas Afrikaner leaders give the impression that God's actions are motivated by a concern for and interest in the salvation and welfare of Afrikaners.

(ii) Similarly, both the member-

ship and mission of the group of people called by God and entrusted with a special task are different. Theologians proclaim a world-wide Church from which **no** member of the human race is excluded except by the self-exclusion of his or her unbelief. Afrikaner leaders proclaim a parochial ethnic group from which either **every** member of the human race is excluded except Afrikaners, or every 'dark' member — **the majority** — of the human race.

(iii) The sacrifice and suffering which theologians claim this special task demands is on behalf of all those members of the human race who are not (yet) members of the Church. The sacrifice demanded by Afrikaner leaders is either on behalf of Afrikaners only or on behalf of the 'fair'.

(iv) Theological accounts of faith and loyalty to Jesus do not allow for a prior faith or greater loyalty to any other person, ethnic group, social institution, government or nation. The Afrikaner leaders' account of faithful and loyal participation in an commitment to Afrikanerdom is ambiguous and sometimes suggests that such a loyalty is either superior to loyalty to Jesus or impossible of conflicting with loyalty to him. This ambiguity probably arises because of the tendency to identify either the Church and Afrikanerdom or the membership of the three Dutch Reformed denominations and Afrikanerdom (p 28).

I will return to some of these points later. First I want to pursue the general problem of the validity of the claims made by theologians and Afrikaner leaders. Roughly the problem is this: neither theologians nor Afrikaner leaders can advance empirical, secular evidence that God has participated in those events which each of them proclaims as loci of his actions. In other words: if you or I or anyone else had made a documentary film of, say, the original Exodus from Egypt, Return from Babylon and Battle of Blood River, God would not have appeared on the screen, whereas Moses, people like Nehemiah and Sarel Cilliers, would have.

Now I do **not** want to maintain — although an increasing number of people would — that this lack of empirical evidence proves that any claim that God had acted or is now active in history is nonsense, merely

(Continued on page 12)

## Theology in the Crucible

(Continued from page 11)

playing with empty words and phrases. But what I do want to maintain is that, since theologians and Afrikaner leaders regularly make these claims, and since they disagree considerably as to what God is doing, some criteria or other must be formulated by which those who are neither theologians, nor Afrikaners, nor either may decide which claims are valid. For example: when the late Dr. D. F. Malan maintained that Afrikaner history is the highest work of art of the Architect of the centuries (p 21) he flatly contradicted what theologians maintain about the Church. Both Dr. Malan and the theologians cannot be correct. But who is? How are we to decide?

Furthermore: the utterances of Afrikaner leaders often suggest that God is their ultimate line of defence in the conflict situation in which they find themselves. Thus Dr. H. F. Verwoerd urged his fellow Afrikaners to 'enter the future with full courage and faith, with our eyes raised above to Him who planted us here for a purpose' (p 25). This kind of statement should make theologians extremely uncomfortable — to say the least:

**Firstly**, because it suggests, or makes it easy to suggest, that if Afrikaners are not successful in fulfilling what they seem to regard as their 'purpose' — according to **Die Transvaler**, 'the continued existence of the whites in this country' (p 24)

— then God will have failed them; and

**secondly**, because theologians know that God was instrumental — in the sense that he did not prevent it — in the destruction of Samaria and the assimilation of its citizens with non-Jews; instrumental in the **destruction and captivity** of the Jerusalem Jews as well as in their return; and finally initiated a non-racial community — the Church — via Jesus and the early missionary work of the apostles, especially Peter and Paul.

Thus there is a real danger that the distinctive emphases of Christianity may be distorted via their assimilation with the ideological utterances of Afrikaner leaders with which they are in conflict and which contradict them. And this distortion and perversion of the theology of the Church is spreading. Pointing out the similarity between the Afrikaner Bond slogan of 1881 — 'Africa for the Afrikaners' — and similar slogans of African political movements, Prof. van Jaarsveld poses this question: 'May not investigation show that the non-white too says: God planted us here with a purpose and gave us a calling — perhaps that of becoming masters of the white man?' (p 27).

This is happening. I remember an African student at the University College of Fort Hare arguing that Africans had nothing to fear if they used violent means to win political power because God is on their side. And anyone who is familiar with the theology of the African Independent Churches — via, for example, B. Sundkler's **Bantu Prophets**

**in South Africa** — will know that African no less than Afrikaner leaders are proclaiming that God has a special interest in a particular ethnic group south of the Limpopo and a special task for them which includes their separation from and domination of other groups in the area.

This then is the first problem and task presented to theology by African and Afrikaner ideological utterances — what differentiates the theology of the Church from the ideology of a particular ethnic group? How can we substantiate the Church's claim that God is active in and the Lord of all history while refuting the claim that a particular ethnic group are his favourites?

Whatever the criteria for such a distinction, one thing is clear: they cannot be empirical or historical criteria. I want to suggest that they are **moral**. That is: when someone or other claims that God has acted in the history of his people or in his own life then such claims must be evaluated 'by the fruits they bear' (Matthew 7:15-20). Or, in the words of Reinhold Niebuhr: 'The creative consequences of such encounters, the humility and charity of true repentance, the absence of pride and pretension, must be the proofs that there has been an encounter with the only true God'. ('Intellectual Autobiography' in **Reinhold Niebuhr**, pp 20-21).

Leaving this general problem for a while I want to examine three specific concepts of Afrikaner ideology which are in conflict with the Church's theology.

(To be Continued)

# DIE KERK BUITE SUID-AFRIKA

## OPVOLGER VAN DR. VISSER 'T HOOFT

As algemene sekretaris van die Wêreldraad van Kerke, is dr. Eugene Carson Blake, „stated clerk” (uitvoerende amptenaar) van die United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., met 'n oorweldigende meerderheid deur die Sentrale Komitee van 100 lede in Genève gekies. Hy begin sy dienstryd op 1 Desember en sal tot Julie 1968 werksaam wees. Dr. Franklin Fry van New York, voorsitter van die Komitee wat sy verkiesing aangekondig het, het hom beskryf as 'n bekwame kerkman, 'n man van forse energie en persoonlikheid en 'n bedrewe administrateur.

By sy aanvaarding van die pos, het dr. Blake gesê hy beskou sy verkiesing as 'n roeping van God, terwyl die Wêreldraad die vernaamste instrument van die ekumeniese beweging is tot nou toe. Hy het

hom verbind om dit tot 'n nog vrugbaarder instrument van dié beweging te help maak. Die sukses van die Wêreldraad in die komende jare sou hy nie meet by die standarde van organisasie soos grootte, doel-

## PROF. B. B. KEET

treffendheid of stabiliteit nie, maar by die mate waarin, onder sy beskerming die waarlike geesdriftige en teologiese bekwame groot leiers van al ons kerke aangemoedig en in staat gestel sal word om met mekaar kennis te maak en die kerke te help om sigbaar die Kerk van Jesus Christus te word, waar hulle getrou en effektief van Hom in en vir die wêreld getuig.

Dr. Blake wat beskryf word as iemand wie se groot postuur 'n mens



soms laat dink aan 'n rugby-voetbal speler, blink veral uit in organisatoriese talent. Hy was sending-onderwyser in Indië, 19 jaar lank prediker en pastoor, een maal president van die National Council of Churches, en het veral bekendheid verwerf deur sy voorstel om die Presbiteriaanse, Metodiste en Episkopale in een kerk te verenig, 'n voorstel wat tans deur die kerke bespreek word. Ook is hy bekend as oortuigde ondersteuner van die beweging vir Negerregte, waarvoor hy in 1963 arrest ondergaan het in verband met 'n poging om 'n pret-park in Mayland te integreer. Hy het ook deel gehad aan die vryheidsmars na Alabama onder leiding van Martin Luther King. In meer as een opsig dus 'n kontroversiële figuur, maar seker nie so gevaarlik dat in sommige kringe nou gepraat word van 'n nuwe eis tot waaksaamheid „vir komende verdrukking van die gemeente van Jesus deur 'n magtige eenheidskerk” (Die Kerkbode).

**Aan „Inter Nos”, Nuusbrief van die Inligtingsburo van die N.G. Kerk in Suid-Afrika (Februarie 1966), ontleen ons die volgende:**

**„Rome — Vyand of Vriend?**

In *Life and Work* (Record of the Church of Scotland) van November l.l. bespreek dr. Stewart Mechie die boek van Rudolf J. Ehrlich: **Rome, Opponent or Partner?** Hy meen dat die skrywer 'n weloorwoë, duidelike

en betroubare antwoord gee op die vraag wat hy in sy titel stel. Wat moet ons dink van die nuwe vriendskaplike, selfs hartlike verhouding tussen Rooms-Katolieke en Protestantse? Daar is dié wat so diep onder die indruk van Rome se nuwe houding is dat hulle van eventuele vereniging droom. Daar is ander wat so oortuig voel dat Rome nooit kan verander nie, dat hulle die nuwe ontwikkeling met argwaan en afkeer betrag. Die meeste mense van ons Protestantse kerke is egter in die war. Hulle begryp dat iets aan die gang is, maar wat presies weet hulle nie.

Dr. Mechie is van oordeel dat Ehrlich betroubare voorligting gee omdat hy, soos sy naam aandui, eerlik is en weet om tot die kern van vraagstukke deur te dring.

Allereers toon hy aan dat die ou polemiese benadering, met die veronderstelling dat die teenstander **per se** dwaal en in geen opsig te vertrou is nie, plek gemaak het vir 'n bereidheid om geduldig te luister, te vergelyk en te bespreek. In hierdie verband bespreek hy waardierend maar tog krities Roomse teoloë soos Louis Boyer en Hans Küng, wat 'n verbasende insae het in die Pauliniese regverdigingsleer en in hul beskouings digby Karl Barth staan.

Ook die diepe Skrifkennis en suiwere Skrifbeskouings van sommige Roomse teoloë is verrassend. Hul bewering dat die Heilige Skrif

die enigste bron van die openbaring is en dat die lewende oorlewering van die kerk slegs die verklaarder van die Skrif is, klink vir Protestantse ore heeltemal aanneemlik, totdat die herinnering deurbreek dat dogmas soos die onbevleete ontvangenis en die liggaamlike hemelvaart van die Moeder Maagd ook aan die verklarende funksie van tradisie toegeskryf word. Dr. Ehrlich toon aan dat selfs vir die bewonderenswaardige Roomse Skrifkeners, ondanks hul mooi en versigtige formulerings, nie die Skrif en die tradisie nie, maar in werklikheid die kerk die bron van openbaring is. Hy staan dan ook krities teenoor die „ekumeniese rekenkunde” wat optimisties aankondig dat die punte van ooreenkoms tussen Rome en die Reformasie talryker is as die punte van verskil. Dit is nie ter sake nie beweer hy, terwyl die punte van verskil, die betekenis van regverdigmaking, van genade, geloof en gesag so diepgaande is. Slotsom waartoe hy kom, is dat, terwyl die openheid en bereidheid van Roomse kant vir samesprekings met die Protestantse kerke 'n positiewe wins is, die sake wat ons nog steeds skei, lewensbelangrik is.

Mits ons dit volkome eerlik en ernstig, maar dan ook in nederige op sien tot ons Here en Heiland erken, kan ons met vrug en met die hoop op positiewe resultate ons samesprekings voortsit.”

## LETTERS

### An American Protest Against Article on Human Rights

The Rev. LEONARD VERDUIN\*

The November 15 issue of PRO VERITATE, which has just now caught up with me six thousand miles from my home in the United States, contains an item to which I feel more attention should be given. Hence I send this, in the hope that the Editor will be able to give it space. The item to which I refer occurs in Dr. W. Bruckner de Villiers' "Menseregte" en Christenverantwoordelikheid".

Although there is a great deal in Dr. Bruckner de Villiers' article with which one can and must agree heartily his treatment of the concept of "Menseregte" (the quotation marks are his) leaves much to be desired, as the matter looks from where I sit.

The very fact that *Menseregte* is set off with quotation marks leads one to suppose that the writer of the article in question does not like the expression, wants to keep clear of it even as he uses it. As one reads on he discovers that

this supposition was correct. Dr. Bruckner de Villiers has no use for the term. He puts it in the category of "slagspreuke" which "vertroebel en beduiwel". It is an example of "holle krete wat . . . neerkom op vervalsinge, verwateringe . . . van die waarheid . . ." It is an example of "holruggeryde towerformules". With direct reference to it he considers it pertinent to refer to Adolf Hitler and his demonic contention that "die grootste leuen, as dit dikwels en oortuigend genoeg herhaal word, sal die massa tot aanname oorreed".

The term *Menseregte*, so says our author, is "een van die tot vervelens toe herhaalde slagspreuke . . . wat waarskynlik die grootste en verderflikste invloed uitgeoefen het op die denke asook die werklike historiese gebeure van ons tyd." It is, says he, "die Franse . . . Revolusie wat eintlik en oorspronklik hierdie vreemde vuur aan die brand gestek het" and he declares that "n hele

skaar verdwaalde geeste het by hierdie vuur kom lig opsteek".

Our author goes on to assert that America (which he names by name) is one of these "verdwaalde geeste", witness its Bill of Rights "waarkragtens . . . die vryheid van godsdien, van spraak, van die pers en die reg tot vreedsame samekoms en 'n beroep om die herstel van onreg gewaarborg is".

#### A DIVINE BESTOWAL

It goes without saying that no American, least of all an American who knows and values America's religious heritage, can stay in his chair when a thing for which he thanks God daily is reduced in this way to "n allesoondederende slagspreuk" which bedevils men's thinking and acting. He feels the need of protesting when our author derives the concept of *Menseregte* from the unbelief of the French Revolution, when the basic law of the land derives it from a religious insight, calls these rights matters "endowed by their Creator". As a Christian he must protest when it is said in words of one syllable that the concept of *Menseregte* lacks Biblical warrant.

It goes without saying that the position is wholly correct, the position, worked out with considerable skill and



clarity by my honoured opponent and garnished by him with a quotation from Herman Bavinck, to the effect that "rechten hebben schepselen tegenover God niet." Even in the state of rectitude man had nothing to demand of God, what will it be when he is "in sin"? At this point there is no room for argument, so it seems to me.

But what if God in His goodness grants certain things to man? What if, as the basic law of the United States has it, men "have been endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights"? What then? Then, as of then, man has inalienable rights vis-a-vis his fellow man, then there have come into being *Menseregte*, inalienable rights, rights of which no man or group of men can divest a fellow man without incurring the fierce displeasure of Him who endowed man with these rights.

We shall be specific, painfully so. In Genesis we read of God giving to man "dominion over fish . . . , fowl . . . , cattle, all the earth . . ." If now a share in this dominion is denied a man, any man, then that man's *Menseregte* are being denied him. And he who does the denying comes under the displeasure of Him who did the endowing.

### EVERY MAN

I read, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth . . ." This divine ordinance insures to man, to every man, the right to have a home, a family, a nest where he and his mate may lay their offspring, to nurture and to cherish. Whoever disrupts this most blessed of all earthly scenes is going roughshod over a man's inalienable rights; he must not be surprised if the wrath of God comes upon him in the day of reckoning.

I hear Jehovah God saying to the human race: "Behold I give you every herb . . . , every tree . . . ; to you it shall be for food." If now a man, any man, is denied his portion of this divine bestowal, his "food that is convenient for him" as the writer of Proverbs put it, then his *Menseregte* are being violated; and the perpetrator of the wicked deed will have to face an outraged God, the God who decreed otherwise for man, the God who is known for the way He takes the side of the dispossessed, the exploited, the bruised.

I hear the Creator say, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" — a matter which, according to Holy Writ, was not decreed so much for the benefit of oxen as for the welfare of man and the health of human societies. If now a man, any man, is denied the just benefit of his toil, whether that toil be in a mine or in a field, then that man's *Menseregte* are being denied him; and he who does the denying will one day have to face up to Him who has said that He is sensitive to the cry of those whose wages have been withheld, so much so that in a situation where there is no justice in these matters the very songs of the sanctuary become cacophonous in His ears, the "noise of thy songs".

I read that on the fiftieth year, so Jehovah decreed, every man who had been forced, in the mad and often painfully one-sided scramble for survival, to sell himself as a bond servant, had the right to shake off his shackles and be a free man again. The Emancipation Act

which in my country put an end to slavery was not a stroke of benevolence — for which we may now compliment ourselves for our virtue — but a recognition, a very much belated one at that, of basic human rights too long flouted, the right for a man, any man, to *live* rather than to *be lived*.

In the Year of Jubilee every man had the right to return to his ancestral home, to reclaim it and to take up his domicile there. Manifestly God has given to man, to any and every man, the right to a plot, however small and humble, from which he cannot and may not be divested at will. Naboth had a perfect right, perfect because God-given, to say to the power-intoxicated Ahab that his premises were not for sale; when Ahab nevertheless declared the parcel Royal Area he was trampling on *Menseregte* — and the trampling cost him plenty, at the hand of God.

The apronful of barley heads with which Ruth came to the humble abode where she and Naomi lived was hers not by virtue of a benevolent mood on the part of one Boaz; it was hers by right, by a right divinely given. She could also have gleaned in the field of a churl such as Nabal was, and that as a matter of right.

I read that civil government is a gift, bestowed by God "because of the depravity of humankind" (as the Belgic Confession of the Reformed Churches puts it) in order that it may afford to the good man a protection against the bad. This bequeaths to man, to any and every man, the right to such protection, at the hand of his government. This implies the right of assembly for to discuss grievances, i.e., real or imagined grievances concerning failure to provide the protection — precisely as the Bill of Rights has it. It implies the right to petition for "die herstel van onreg" as my worthy opponent renders the text of the Bill of Rights. Any government that denies to a man, to any man under its jurisdiction, or to any group of men, the rights so specified is infringing upon rights that are inalienable because they have been bestowed by God.

Is there any need to go on, any need to enumerate more of the *Menseregte* for which the Word of God makes provision? Space does not allow.

### UNALIENABLE

I am not so naive as not to realize that the specifications of man's *Menseregte* as given in a pastoral society of milleniums ago cannot be carried into modern life just like that; the specifications will have to be adjusted to the much more complex conditions of 20th century human communities. But, the basic truth is unalterable, unalterable because the God whose ordinances are reflected in them does not adjust himself to the whims of man.

It is then correct, eminently correct, to speak of *Menseregte*; and, to clamor for their observance. These *Menseregte* are not contingent upon any vaunted "geestesbeskawing en verantwoordelikeheidsinset" — words and concepts for which we shall leave our opponent responsible; they are contingent upon the revealed will of God.

Whether the Bill of Rights supplies the best formulation of the God-given *Menseregte* is a matter that can be de-

bated; whether "pres. Roosevelt se beroemde manifes" is in all respects happy, ditto; what is not open to debate is whether it is correct to speak of *Menseregte*, of inalienable rights with which man has been "endowed by his Creator".

I conclude with the transcription of a sentence found in the article in question, Mr. Bruckner de Villiers' sentence: "As die Bybelse openbaring vir ons nog enige sinvolle betekenis het, moet die inherente valsheid van hierdie populêrste van alle slagspreuke van ons tyd in al sy holheid voor ons blootgelê word." I would hand this sentence back, modified to read: "As die Bybelse openbaring vir ons nog enige sinvolle betekenis hoegenaamd het, moet die inherente juistheid van hierdie populêrste van alle slagspreuke van ons tyd in al sy Bybelse vastheid en krag voor ons blootgelê word." It could be that the result would be that much of that which is sometimes called "liberalisme" and even "kommunisme" and "Social Gospel" turns out to be nothing but the simple content of the Word of God.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S CONCERN

Dr. Bruckner de Villiers speaks of the presence of a "geesteswroeging waardeur die groot meerderheid Christenburgers in Suid-Afrika hulleself gekwel vind." It is not my province to determine or seek to determine whether and to what extent such a "geesteswroeging" is present in the society of which he speaks; it is not my province to determine or seek to determine whether such a "geesteswroeging" is called for and if so to what extent and intensity. It is my province however to point out that as long as we do not reckon with the fact that "all men have been endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights" the "geesteswroeging", if any, will be neither adequate in scope or intensity, nor properly and adequately Scripture-induced.

\* *The Rev. Verduin is a retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church in the U.S.A., formerly Director of Campus Chapel, University of Michigan. At present on a visit to S.A.*

## Human Rights or Christian Responsibility?

Dr. W. B. de Villiers

The Rev. Verduin criticises, in fact, reprimands me for my disparagement of the concept of "human rights" and my allegation that this concept is nowadays repeatedly abused to serve sectional and secular aims.

Perhaps he is right. I do not claim to be either a prophet or an infallible expounder of Christian belief.

I do, however, suspect that his vision of "human rights" and mine are, in terms of Christian ethics and in terms of the motivation towards Christian action, poles apart.

He, apparently, regards "human rights" as a fixed, divinely ordained datum, as an immutable premise upon which every anthropological syllogism must be based by the theoreticising Christian.

I do not: I regard human *responsibility*, and this primarily, as the only cogent and acceptable premise on which



the life of a *practising* Christian can possibly be based.

Perhaps he will understand better what I am driving at when I pose two very simple questions:

Was Christ's life and ministry upon earth — for us the prime example of true Christian action — based upon an insistence on His "rights" or on His awareness of *responsibility* towards both God and man; and:

Were His successors, the Apostles and the First Century Christians, inspired in their actions and their professions of faith — which historically proved to be the very cornerstone of the phenomenon still known as "Christianity" — by a conviction as regards their own and their less privileged fellow-men's "rights" or by their essential belief in Christ (the Son of God, denuded of all "human rights" on the cross) and their sense of grateful *responsibility* which His life and death, and especially His suffering on their behalf, had placed upon them?

Personally I am quite convinced that Christ, our Master, did not intend us, His followers, to grab the sinful world by the throat with a demand for the observance of our and our fellow-men's "human rights", but that He did beg of us, His followers and children, reborn and recreated in the image of God Himself, to offer ourselves to the world — in the true image of Christ — in a spirit of self-abnegating service and enlightened Christian *responsibility*.

Now that the word ecumenical has become fashionable in many circles, it remains to ask whether it is not often misused. This is certainly the case. In the light of its history it is most regrettable that it is sometimes used in a sentimental and vague way which brings it into the bad company of latitudinarianism and syncretism. Those who speak in these terms should be reminded that the 'ecumenical' faith is not the common denominator of what anyone at anytime has believed, but the faith which was once delivered to the saints and which has remained the foundation of the Church of Christ throughout the ages.

Another misuse is that in which the basic connotation of universality is forgotten. We should not get into the habit of calling every meeting in which there happens to be representatives of more

than one Church an 'ecumenical' meeting. The word refers clearly to the Church of Christ as a whole. There is a sense in which every Christian congregation represents the total Oikoumene. But that truth implies that we can only use the word ecumenical where there is a definite intention to speak and act as members of the Church Universal.

Finally we should never allow the word ecumenical to be used in an introverted manner. It must not be isolated from the missionary and evangelistic context in which it belongs. The Christian Oikoumene has only the right to call itself by that name if it remembers that it exists to be the salt of the earth, that it is to represent 'the coming Oikoumene' in the midst of the Oikoumene which is the whole inhabited earth. — (Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft).

## GEESTESKWELLINGE

# KOINONIA

DR. W. BRUCKNER DE VILLIERS

**Die ekumeniese ideaal van 'n onderlinge eenheid tussen kerke en kerkgenootskappe is hedendaags 'n saak wat alhoemeer gekonsentreerde aandag geniet.**

**Dit bly egter 'n vraag wat presies met hierdie „eenheid” bedoel word: 'n formele „samewerking” tussen die betrokke kerke of kerkgenootskappe; 'n uiterlike vertoon van „eenheid” en vermoedelike eensgesindheid teenoor die sondige wêreld; 'n daadwerklike gedagte-uitruiling tussen veteenwoordigers van verskillende godsdienstinstitute?**

Oor hierdie vraag vind daar deesdae lewendige besprekings plaas op alle vlakke van die godsdienstige en kerklike lewe en daarmee is reeds aansienlike vordering gemaak.

Een ding is daar egter wat my nog steeds hinder in al dié eerlike strewe na 'n oplossing vir die probleem van die heersende verdeeldheid tussen Christene, na die herverwesenliking van „een, heilige, algemene, Christelike kerk”: die gevaar naamlik van 'n vervlakking van dié grootse ideaal juis in die proses van sy verwesenliking; van 'n selftevredestelling met 'n uiterlike skyn sonder werklike en lewenskragtige inhoud; van 'n valse vereenvoudiging van 'n probleem-situasie wat eindeloos meer gekompliseerd is as wat dit op die oog af sou wou voorkom, omdat dié situasie nie

slegs voortvloei uit die mensdom se solidariteit in die sonde nie, maar wesenlik terughertoe kan word tot die verskeidenheidskarakter van die skepping self.

Om maar met 'n eenvoudige benaming te begin: Word die klem in sovele ekumeniese beyweringe nie al te veel, en alhoemeer, gelê op die bloot formele, institusionele en uiterlike „mekaar-vind” en die tref van 'n wedersyds bevredigende vergelyk tussen kerke en kerkgenootskappe as sulks nie? En as daarin geslaag kan word om op bloot amptelik-institusionele vlak 'n sodanige verstandhouding te bewerkstellig, word daar nie alte maklik agteroor gesit en met 'n sug van verligting ontspan, die gewetens gesus, die gekwelde gemoedere gepaai deur die versekering dat, formeel altans, daar

die skyn van eensgesindheid en gemeenskaplikheid voor die oë van die wêreld tentoongestel is nie?

## PERSOONSGEMEENSKAP

Daar word so maklik en selfvergenoegd gepraat van „moederkerke”, „dogterkerke” en „susterkerke”. Hoeveel konkrete **persoons-gemeenskap** bestaan daar in werklikheid tussen die **individuele** Christenlede van dié moeder-, dogter- en susterkerke?

Bestaan daar nie die gevaar dat die gemiddelde kerklidmaat, wat sy ekumeniese verantwoordelikheid en gewete betref, heeltemal bevredig sal voel mits die leidliede van sy besondere kerk tot een of ander vreedsame verstandhouding gekom het met die leidliede van ander kerke nie? En dat hy dit heel getroos daarby laat? En dat daar by hom geen bewustheid bestaan dat die vervulling van die ekumeniese ideaal wesenlik van hom 'n **persoonlike** offer en inset vereis nie: dat daar van hom 'n **persoonlike** oorgawe aan die „Andere”, aan die individuele lidmaat van die „dogter”- of „susterkerk”, geverg word terwille van die werklike gemeenskap in Christus, wat in laaste instansie alleen 'n **persoons-gemeenskap** kan wees?

(Vervolg op bladsy 16)

## Koinonia

(Vervolg van bladsy 15)

My bedenking, met ander woorde, is een ten opsigte van die **onpersoonlikheid** en **verontpersoonliking** van die hedendaagse ekumeniese strewende en die wyse waarop daar getrag word om die ekumeniese ideaal te verwesenlik. Dit sou totaal futiel wees vir my besondere kerk om op amptelike en institusionele vlak 'n gerusmakende verstandhouding met ander kerke te bereik indien ek, die individuele lidmaat van my kerk, nog geen positiewe verstandhouding op **persoonsvlak** met individuele lidmate van daardie ander kerke bereik het nie — indien ek, soos inderdaad alte dikwels die geval is, nog nie eens binne 'n sodanige **persoonsgemeenskap in Christus** te staan gekom het met die medelidmate van my eie kerk nie!

Selfs en veral op hierdie gebied hou die kerklike institusionalisme 'n baie daadwerklike gevaar in en is dit alte maklik om 'n mens se **persoonlike Christenverantwoordelikheid** teenoor die mede-Christen van watter kerkgenootskap ookal te ontduik deur 'n beroep op die voorbeeldige, en daarom hopelik plaasbekledend verontskuldigende, amptelike optrede van jou eie kerk in haar verhouding tot ander kerke.

Wat ons nooit uit die gesig durf verloor nie is dat die **oikumene**, die geseënde huishouding van die Here, nooit enige bestand of bestaansreg kan hê sonder 'n werklike **koinonia**, 'n geestelike **persoonsgemeenskap** en mededeelsaamheid tussen die individuele lede van dié huishouding nie — die soort van situasie waarvan daar sprake is in Lukas se Handeling van die Apostels wanneer hy vertel dat hulle „**almal eendragtig bymekaar**” was (Hd. 2:1).

### EERBIED VIR VERSCHEIDENHEID

En, let wel: hierdie **eendrag**, hierdie geestesgemeenskap, hierdie eensgesindheid, hierdie besondere eenheid wat bestaan het uit 'n wesentlike bymekaarwees en 'n gereedheid om mekaar se laste te deel, was 'n eendrag te midde en ten spyte van die algehele **verskeidenheid** wat daar ongetwyfeld bestaan het tussen die individuele lede van die oorspronklike pinkstergemeenskap.

En dít juis lei tot die tweede be-

langrike vraagteken wat ek verplig voel om te plaas agter die aktiewe ekumeniese strewende waardeur die noemenswaardige kerklike lewe van ons tyd gekenmerk word:

Loop ons nie gevaar om die godgegewe verskeidenheid en die onloënbare verskille tussen ons as belydende Christene te nivelleer en te verdoesel in al ons ekumeniese ywer nie? Visualiseer ons die ekumeniese ideaal nie in 'n alte simplistiese lig nie? Is ons nie besig om in die versoeking te verval om die daarstelling van 'n uiterlike „eenheid” tot 'n soort afgodstatus te verhef — en onself in die proses skuldig te maak aan 'n alte fasiele, inderdaad 'n nuwe vereenvoudiging van die werklike feite en komplikasies by die saak betrokke nie?

'n Sodanige valse vereenvoudiging van die harde werklikhede waarvoor ons te staan gebring word, lê natuurlik voor die hand indien 'n mens die probleem vanaf 'n bloot institusionele standpunt wil benader. Tussen amptelike organisasies, instansies of institute kan daar baie maklik formeel en „in beginsel” — op totaal onpersoonlike basis — 'n vergelyk getref of 'n verstandhouding aangegaan word.

Maar wat van die besondere individue, die individuele Christene wat by so 'n ooreenkoms betrokke is? Vir die owerhede van my eie besondere kerk is dit teoreties eintlik baie maklik om te besluit dat daar, in beginsel, geen rede tot tweedrag, en alle rede tot samewerking bestaan tussen ons kerk en watter ander kerk of kerkgenootskap ookal. Hoe weinig affekteer dié besluit egter wesentlik die konkrete persoonsverhouding tussen my en die totaal vreemde en van my verskillende individuele lid van daardie ander kerk of kerkgenootskap!

Ek is per slot van sake nog steeds, ten spyte van my kerkverband — maar dikwels juis ook as gevolg daarvan — 'n hoogs unike persoon in eie reg. So ook daardie ander persoon, die individuele lidmaat van daardie ander, vreemde kerk, met sy vreemde geestesagtergrond en tradisie. Al wat ons oënskynlik in't gemeen het is ons gemeenskaplike geloofsbelydenis en ons luidkeels verkondigde mede-Christenskap. Maar eintlik bly hy in my oë nog steeds 'n totale vreemdeling, 'n onverstaanbare, 'n gevaarlike onbekende; en daarom, potensieel, 'n teenstander en 'n vyand.

Hy mag homself nou wel 'n

„Christen” noem, maar, wat my betref, bly hy wesentlik nog steeds 'n vreemdsoortige Lutheraan, 'n Rooms-Katoliek, 'n lid van die verdagte „Engelse” kerk of 'n aangeeflik „gekerstende” Bruinman of Swartman: 'n man met 'n totaal verskillende geestesagtergrond, daaglikse leefwyse en toekomsaspirasie. Hoe kan dit in alle erns van my verwag word om die hand van Christenbroederskap na hom uit te strek ten aansien van al die onoor-kombare mure van tradisie en lewensuitkyk wat ons so realisties van mekaar skei? (Hoe kan dit trouens van my verwag word om die hand na hom uit te strek as ek binne my eie kerkverband nog nie eens die vreugde van werklike Christenbroederskap leer ervaar het nie?).

### GEMEENSAP 'N WONDER

Tussen hom en my kan daar natuurlik die unieke en wonderbaarlike „vind-van-mekaar” tot stand kom waarvan die oortuigde ekumene droom. Maar, indien dit 'n werklike egte geestesontmoeting tussen ons as uniek-geskepe persone moet wees, dan nóg op die basis van 'n blote beginselverstandhouding tussen ons onderskeie kerke, nóg op dié van 'n ontkenning of 'n miskenning van die daadwerklike en onuitwisbare verskil en verskeidenheid wat daar tussen ons as persone bestaan. Dan moet so 'n lewewende persoonsverhouding tussen ons inderdaad as 'n ware Godswonder gesien word: 'n gemeenskaps-wonder wat wesentlik tot stand gebring is deur die verdienste van Christus se liefdesdaad aan die kruis ten behoeve van albei van ons.

Waarop dit myns insiens ten slotte neerkom is dat die hedendaags so sterk beklemtoonde ekumeniese strewende op kerklike gebied allesins te bewonder en aan te moedig is; maar dan slegs op die basis dat dié ideaal hom sal deursuurdeeg van onder af boontoe, van die oortuigde Christen-individu af na die kerklike gemeenskap as geheel, en nie andersom nie; dat die bereiking van die ekumeniese ideaal nie gekenmerk sal word deur die uiterlike vertoon van 'n skyn-solidariteit onder die kerkgemeenskaplike massa nie, maar deur die egte belewenis van 'n persoonsgemeenskap, 'n werklike **koinonia**, in Christus tussen individuele Christene, sy hulle dan ook lidmate van verskillende kerke.

Voorts: dat enige **oikumene**-struktuur, gebou op die valse fondament



van 'n vermoedelik voorafbestaande of „inherente” en daarom latente „eenheid” tussen die verskeidenheid van mensepersone, selfs Christenmense, op sand gebou staan, en daarom uit die staanspoor gedoem is tot ondergang en ineenstorting.

Dit is voorwaar en ongetwyfeld ons roeping om te strewe na 'n „eenheid” onder Christenmense, na die „een, heilige, algemene, Christelike kerk”. Maar dié „eenheid” darf nooit bloot teoreties, simplisties, as't ware meganisties gedink word nie. Veel eerder moet dit gesien word as voortspruitende uit 'n werklike **koinonia**: as 'n geesteseenheid te midde en ten spyte van persoonsverskeidenheid, 'n werklike gemeenskap tussen heeltemal unieke en daarom totaal verskillende persone met totaal verskillende agtergronde en tradisies, slegs op grond van 'n onselfsugtige selfopoffering aan albei kante terwille van 'n wedersyds gehuldigde geloofsoortuiging.

Só gesien kan dié **eenheid** in die kerk wat ons almal begeer, slegs gebaseer word op 'n ware **persoonsgemeenskap** in die geloof tussen wesenlik vreemdsoortiges; en kan 'n sodanige persoonsgemeenskap in laaste instansie slegs sinvol en lewenskragtig wees mits dit 'n werklike **gemeenskap in Christus** is. Want in Christus alleen bestaan daar vir ons as't ware 'n gemene deler, 'n plek van samekoms, 'n gemeenskaplike vriend, 'n samesnoerder tussen ons wat origens bloedweinig in't gemeen het.

In Hom egter, en in die wedersydse gemeenskap met Hom, kan daar uiteindelik sprake wees van 'n werklike **koinonia**, van 'n eendrag en eensgesindheid tussen ons, van 'n deel in mekaar se lief en leed, vreugde en smart — van 'n volwaardige deelgenootskap in die huishouding van die Here, die ekumeniese gemeenskap wat ons so vuriglik begeer.

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# A NEW IDENTITY FOR ALL

THE RT. REV. B. B. BURNETT

We each have a father and a grandfather and ancestors before him whose genes have made us the strange fellows we are. We inherited from them and their friends and relations the culture which gives us significance. In the traditions and prejudices of our people we find an identity and a protection for our otherwise thin skinned, human nature. Like a shell fish we need a protection to our sensitivity and fears. Family, tribe and class, the gang, the school of thought, the customary things, seal us off from the unknown and from being a meaningless nothing. We have significance where we belong. Perhaps this is why Africans describe Westerners who detribalize their compatriots as “eating them up”. The tribe gives us our identity. Thus the Jews were Abraham's seed. They find their identity in this tribal family and in the comfort and security of its folklore and traditions. But the Son of Man says to them: “Before Abraham was, I am”. The Son of Man finds an identification with Everyman. “In as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto Me,” identifies Him with Everyman. “Before Abraham was, I am” shatters every exclusive human solidarity. This catapults us all from the security of a particular culture or nation into what appears to be a merciless universe where every man has a claim on one. This is where we must have the courage to find our identity.

## THE DESTINY OF MAN

Jesus and His Apostles introduce a new wine that bursts the old wine skins of a closed tradition. They were and are a threat to the safety of the culture of Abraham and Moses. The challenge of the universalism of the Son of Man produced an acute insecurity among the Jews and an attempt to destroy Him. The Son of Man threatens every self-sufficient closed culture or society with a new dimension and a new authority. This is an authority which is breathtaking in its depth and width, because it is the authority of a Grace which has no limits.

Who is this Son of Man who is before all the great ancestors and leaders of men? He is described as the alpha and omega because He is both our source and in Him is our perfection. He is what a man is, and what we are destined to become. This is why he could say, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one cometh unto the Father but by me”. He is the way to ourselves and to the Father, for Everyman, whether he be of Abraham's people or Van Riebeeck's people or Moshesh's people. He is the way to our becoming the sons of men we are being created to be. He is the way

to ourselves. This is the same thing as saying he is the way to the Father, for we are only ourselves as, in the Son of Man, we are related to the one we call our Father. In Him we live and move and have our being. In the Son of Man alone God and Man meet perfectly. This is why we find in Him an atonement, a reconciliation and our peace.

The presence of the Son of Man precedes us wherever we meet with men. He is truly Adam and His manhood is in Everyman. He is sometimes only partly perceived and understood but the whole potential of the proper Man is there. This is why we must give a due respect to everyman and to his culture, however “primitive” we may suppose it to be. Among all men there are the vestiges of what John Taylor in the book of that title calls the “Primal Vision”. This has a deep significance for the zealous evangelist. He should expect to find the Son of Man present with the man who still has no Christian name. The Lord of Life will be there even if his image is seen distorted like a face in water moved by the wind. This means that the evangelist does not simply pour out his assortment of spiritual merchandize to im-

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## A new Identity for all

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press or overwhelm with arguments and claims about his truths. He will come rather to be in the presence of Christ with the other man of another culture. He will not find it difficult to be identified with that other man for he is after all also a sinner, though one being made a saint in the New Testament sense of that term. "All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God". The evangelist will come to sit at the feet of the Son of Man with the man who has no Christian name and he will answer his questions and speak of what he seeks to understand. This man who has no Christian name does not yet know of his identity in the Son of Man. He does not yet truly know who he is but only he can find out. For him the Son of Man is not yet the term of reference for the understanding of himself. He is not yet committed to allowing what he is, alas, in fact, to be changed to what he is already in principle in the Son of Man. Such a man will have his own problems, which come from his own background. He will recognise his true nature in Jesus Christ only as the Son of Man is relevant to his needs and speaks to him where he stands within a particular situation. We must be sensitive enough not to bring him a Christ who is the answer to the questions we ask in our own culture or subculture. We should be careful not to simply answer questions that our own particular temperament and experience make us ask. This other man must discover that the Son of Man illuminates his experience and fires his hopes and removes his fears.

When we are humble enough to let the Spirit of God do His work in this way, we frequently find that we are enriched and illuminated by our meeting with the one who is a Son of Man without a Christian name. He will frequently be used to lead us to a better understanding of ourselves and of our Lord. Perhaps for example, the vestiges of the Primal Vision, the Son of Man, in African Society, are for our blessing. Could not Africans' solidarity with the tribal ancestors enrich our understanding and experience of the Communion of the Saints? Will the curious Mod or Rocker perhaps challenge the Christian, who is made flabby by a dreary middle-class

religious tradition, to return to the reckless adventurousness of a God who lets us loose in this exciting and dangerous universe?

### CHURCH AND CULTURE

How much indeed of what we regard as unchangeable in the life and worship of the Church is simply the expression of a particular religious culture? Certainly we must take human traditions seriously and especially if they are the vehicles of our Christian experience. Man without a culture and without human loyalties is a kind of nothing, a nobody. Adam is not, alone. A man's culture and loyalties give him meaning and they are his means of communication. He speaks through the accepted myths and symbols and conventions that are his inheritance. He uses a culture to express his humanity. There is no such thing as a cultureless man or a cultureless Christianity. The Church cannot ignore culture. The Son of Man took flesh in a particular milieu. An incarnational faith cannot ignore the cultural garments we wear or the language we understand.

We have to hold together two "words" from St. John: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . ." (John 3.16). and "love not the world neither the things that are in the world . . ." (1 John 2.15).

The Church is that company of men among whom the Son of Man is consciously present as the instrument of Creation. It is therefore quite inescapably identified with the world. But in what way is the Son of Man in His Church to be identified with the world? He must be identified with the world in such a way as to be neither simply over against the world nor simply indistinguishable from the world. The vocation of the Son of Man and of His Body in the world, has been described as "pro-existence". It is a life given for the world. So the Church is the Servant of the World, but never subservient to the world "powers" or cultures or parties.

I heard Oscar Lee, a Christian Minister who is a leader in the U.S.A. Civil Rights Movement, describe with approval how the Movement found that the Church was a readymade instrument for the struggle. I do not believe that the Church should permit this to happen. The Church must never be an instrument in a political power struggle. She cannot be the Pro-

gressive Party at Prayer — or a tool to preserve our Englishness. At the 1906 Synod of the N.G.K. in the Orange Free State, that great man President Steyn, speaking out of the anguish and loss of the times said, "ons het veel verloor, maar ons het ons Kerk behou. Dit is ons laaste skans". It is a great temptation to use the Church as a trench to protect our culture and traditions.

**The Church can never take the traditions and symbols of a particular society, which men use to give themselves security and significance, so seriously that she allows them to reduce the area of the concern of the Son of Man. The Church may not so narrow the area of Her concern that She is seen to contract the universality of the Son of Man. "Before Abraham was, I am". In the Son of Man those human differences which become a source of division and produce the confusions of Babel, are respected and do not cause division, for the Holy Spirit of Pentecost reveals to man in the richness of his diversity a common humanity in the Son of Man. His differences are not basic. What is basic is the nature of Adam, the fact that the Father is equally concerned for all adams, and that every adam may become what he is being created to be in the Son of Man. That men should find a unity in the Son of Man is therefore no luxury. Being in communion with one another is absolutely essential to the authentic life of Man.**

I do not propose to try to assess the significance of the secular technological civilization which is bulldozing its triumphant way through the ancient cultures of the East, of South America and Africa. The effect on the old religions and cultures of these continents will be profound and shattering. This is bound to provoke a powerful reaction to begin with from the orthodoxy of ancient religions. But, I believe, this will be an opportunity to show the relevance of the Son of Man to all life.

The universal Son of Man wants to break out of the institutions and systems within which we try to hold and tame Him. He want to be the Son of Man in the world and for the world. I think it will become possible to demonstrate more effectively the universal relevance of the Son of Man. A sort of withdrawn ecclesiastical culture can be replaced by a gospel with a truly cosmic sweep. "The whole world belongs



to Christ, not merely one sacred, religious sphere within it", remarked Bonhoeffer and the Church exists for the World and not for itself. "Because the world exists only "in Christ" and "for Christ" (Colossians) any view of man "for himself alone" is a mere abstraction. In accordance with the will of God, everything is related to Christ, whether this is realised or not."

### THE NEW AGE

At all events, we should stop shouting about the evils of secularism and in quietness ask what God says to us by it. Strangely enough the Son of Man is not a stranger to the new age. It already witnesses to the unity of Adam and it has a correspondence therefore with the universality of the Son of Man. Moreover, in a secular culture it is mercifully impossible to pretend that there exists one sphere — a spiritual — in which Christ is present and another in which he is a Son of Man. Therefore men without religious needs can be drawn into the life of the Son of Man for it is nothing else but the way and the life of a Man in God's world.

And the world was created by Him in Whom we find our own manhood. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell". (Col. 1.15-20).

Culture is the product of what Tillich would call the ultimate concern of a tribe or a nation. So Christian culture is the expression in a variety of ways of a particular view of the nature of man and of the universe he inhabits. This is why Christianity, both modifies and creates cultures.

Given charity and a refusal to regard cultures as absolutes, there need be no serious conflict between cultures which have been nourished from the same world view. It ought not to be difficult to harmonize cultural expressions of the same ultimate concern. It follows therefore that cultures which have their roots in the truth as it is in Christ, or are being nourished from the same source, should not find it impossible to coalesce in a mutually enriching process.

This does not mean there should be a conscious attempt to cultivate or preserve "a culture". A culture should be a natural growth. When it becomes a deliberately preserved end in itself it becomes an idol and one of the demonic powers that imprison the spirit of man. There

should be no conscious planned attempt, therefore, to create a unified culture in a multi-racial country. If the greatest number of the inhabitants of our society have the same ultimate concern, a richly variegated but integrated culture will emerge over the years. This requires that the Christian's ultimate concern finds a consistent expression in charity and respect for every child of man.

### LANGUAGE

Language is the most obvious bearer of cultural traditions. An Anglican and reformation principle is that men should be free to worship in their own languages. **In a country in which many languages are spoken it follows that congregations will become representative of various languages and of the cultural ethos these convey. From an Anglican point of view this is a perfectly healthy development because various "language congregations" will be in communion with one another, and are free to share in the life of a congregation to which they feel called to belong.** In addition, congregations representing different traditions are united through the person of the bishop of the diocese who is the Chief Shepherd over all. In this way different traditions in churchmanship have been held in one Communion and fellowship and various language and cultural traditions are being held together in the same way. One should not pretend that this is done without tension. While the "powers" still exert influence through nationalisms and class differences there are bound to be tensions. These may well be troublesome and distressing during a period in which the Church is still very largely imprisoned by the world-powers as far as race-relations are concerned. It is from such an imprisonment and such tensions that Christ would set us free.

**What matters to Anglicans is not retaining particular languages and cultures but the need to take these into account in effectively communicating the Gospel. And where there are differences in Churchmanship and cultural traditions, what matters most is that we should, in spite of differences, be truly in communion with one another.** All Christians in one place, whatever their background are to form the One New Nation. (Acts. 10.34; 1 Peter 2.9-10).

It is true of course that at present

Anglicans, and I expect other Church bodies in Southern Africa also, represent a western religious tradition. Our Anglican prayer books are certainly western orientated, but these are not unchanging expressions of our forms of worship. In the Republic the Provincial Synod is the body responsible in the last resort for authorizing the form our Sacramental and other services take. Provision is made for ordered experimentation by the Constitution of the Church of the Province of South Africa and a revision of parts of our Prayer Book is presently being undertaken. It is possible therefore to alter the expression of our faith in worship as this is required by shifts in theological emphasis, by cultural changes and the need to communicate the Gospel to new generations. Anglicans have fairly consistently tried to be guided by the epigram, "In essentials unity, In things not essential, liberty. In all things charity".

Within the Church of the Province of South Africa it is evident that the ethos of a Sotho-speaking congregation is not quite the same as that of a Coloured congregation speaking Afrikaans or of an English-speaking congregation. All use the same prayer book but there is a good deal of variety about the "feel" of the services of various language groups. It is possible that within the limits prescribed by authorized forms of services (and there is far more variety allowed than is frequently supposed by non-Anglicans) there may be increasing variations and differences which are the expression of nationalism. On the other hand the steady emergence of a single secular culture may well encourage greater uniformity.

We should not take cultures too seriously because they are the by-product of values that lie deeper than themselves. Obviously an awareness of cultural traditions is essential for communicating the Gospel, but these must remain relative in their significance. If the reality of the Gospel is present and men are being reconciled to God and one another in Christ, human cultured traditions will evolve unselfconsciously and can be left to find a proper level.

### THE NEW COMMUNITY

The universality of Christ as the Saviour of all mankind is in itself a declaration of the relative nature

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of cultural traditions. The kind of community he creates requires of us a certain cultural detachment and even a readiness for cultural syncretism. The new relationships created by Jesus Christ are not the product so much of believing in the same doctrines and planning common activities, they are the product, in the first place, of a sharing in a common humanity from the hand of God, and, what is more important, they are the result of a humanity being set free through Christ from the principalities and powers to become truly human as the creator intended.

In his book **"A Faith for this One World"**, Lesslie Newbigin points to the deep significance of the new relationships created through Jesus Christ. His remarks will serve as a fitting conclusion to what I have written because our evaluation of the relationship between culture and the Church depends on what God has done for mankind in our Lord Jesus Christ. Speaking of the new fellowship created in Christ, he says, "In that situation I never stand alone. My neighbour stands beside me. Christ died for him as for me. Therefore I meet Christ in him. I am put into a relationship with him which I cannot sever without severing my relation to Christ: If I deny him, I deny Christ. He may sin against me, but Christ died for his sin as for mine. If I do not forgive him, I forfeit the forgiveness that I claim for myself. He and I are related to one another as limbs in the same body, as branches in the same vine. It is a relation which concerns the whole of our being and one which cannot be severed without cutting the very sources of life itself. Such is the nature of the unity which properly characterizes the Church. It is not the unity of a sect or party, it is not the unity which arises from an agreed opinion or an agreed programme, it is the unity of a family in which love for one another has become natural, a spontaneous overflow rather than a calculated duty. It is in fact simply the restored unity of the human race created afresh in Jesus Christ. Within such a unity the natural diversity of race and nation, of temperament and character, of taste

and ability, operates to create a richer harmony, reflecting what St. Paul calls the manifold wisdom of God. (Eph. 3.10). This is the Church as it is set before us in the New Testament, the new human race, the new man in Christ, rooted and

grounded in love, learning to comprehend with all the saints the breadth and length and height and depth, being filled with all the fullness of God, nothing less than humanity redeemed and restored in its true image".

## WE PROGRESS IN TRUST

THE REV. ROBERT ORR

**The Anglican/Presbyterian/(Congregational) Conversations met at the Federal Theological Seminary, Alice, on March 31st and April 1st. One of the minor, but desirable things this meeting did was to decide on a new name for ourselves. That name in the first sentence was, we realised, becoming too long and cumbersome — and we had anticipations of it becoming even longer if, as we hope, other denominations of Christ's Church should decide to enter the Conversations. So we resolved to change the name to the more**

simple, yet comprehensive "Conversations on Church Unity". That name will appear in future as a headline on letterheads, pamphlets and publications, with the names of the participating Churches printed in smaller type immediately below. (Readers should note that we print the "Congregational" in brackets above because the representatives from the three Congregational bodies (C.U.S.A., L.M.S. and C.C.A.) are, technically, still observers, though the hope is growing that their Assemblies this year will be led to make their representation official. Readers should also note that their status as observers does not mean that they simply sit back and watch the Anglicans and Presbyterians discuss. On the contrary, our meetings have been doubly invigorated by the contributions of Congregationalists on every matter discussed).

### HOW SHALL WE WORSHIP?

We believe that in the United Church, the main service of each Sunday, following the teaching of the New Testament, the practice of the early Church, and the writings of the Reformers, should be the Holy Communion. In this service, the redemptive work of Christ is proclaimed in Word and Sacrament. Because of different historical traditions, or even the shortage of clergy, this practice may not be possible in every charge. No criticism is implied of those who for one reason or another find this not possible.

The Holy Communion is:

1. The Service of the Word of God, (reading of Holy Scripture, preaching and prayer) and

2. The Service of the Lord's Supper:
  - a. the taking of bread and wine
  - b. the thanksgiving over the bread and wine, with the narrative of the institution
  - c. the breaking of the bread
  - d. the receiving of the bread and wine.

### DAILY WORSHIP IN THE UNITED CHURCH

Worship morning and evening, largely in the words of Holy Scripture, was a practice of the primitive Church. Its form was derived from synagogue worship. In the United Church such daily services should find a place without being made obligatory. The basis of these services is the ordered use of the Psalter, the reading of Holy Scripture, canticles and prayers, arranged on the pattern of the Christian year.

### FORMS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

We agree that in the first stages of the United Church, the same freedom to determine the forms of public worship should be enjoyed as obtains at present in our several denominations.

We hope that within the United Church new forms of worship will be evolved suited to the new situation. Such forms will seek both to be faithful to the essential tradition of the Church and to permit of such diversity as is compatible with the preservation of unity in matters of faith and order.

The Conversations believed that these agreed summaries of our convictions were important enough to be released at the earliest possible moment. In subsequent issues of this paper, we hope to draw the attention of readers to various significant points in these summary statements.