



PRO VERITATE

MARK COLLIER

Apologia pro vita nostra (2)

BEYERS NAUDÉ

Waaroor het dit eintlik vir Calvyn gegaan?

E. A. DU PLESSIS

Churches in compromise

BRUCKNER DE VILLIERS

The positive answer

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Editorial

Terrifying Reflection

Concerned Christians and church groups have warned betimes against the danger inherent in absolutising the National Party's policy of apartheid by entrenching it in a religious and pseudo-Christian manner as the exclusive will of God for South Africa.

There was a time (already past?) when this monopolising of God and his revelation, of Christ and his word of salvation, of the Holy Spirit and his purpose rendered invaluable service to the National Party in its propagandistic fervour. The religious protagonists of its policy created concepts such as a "God of the Afrikaner", a "Church of the Afrikaner", and "the Afrikaner's Christian view and way of life" and so forth which were highly useful and welcome to the Party on its way towards political omnipotence. Thus it became relatively easy to banish anyone who sounded a warning from the exclusive laager of the people's religion and "National Afrikanerdom" as being an instrument of "powers foreign to the people", of "liberalism" and of "godless Communism".

This fanatic opposition to anything which struck an ever so slightly discordant note was typical of the intolerance which is characteristic of all pseudo-religious political ideologies. Precisely this attitude had as a result that even individuals who were on the whole undisturbed by the broad outlines of a policy of racial separation openly declared, in the strongest language, that Christians were called upon to reject, on the basis of the revealed truths of Christianity, the whole idea of apartheid as an anti-Christian invention. By so doing, they wanted to open men's eyes to the fact that South Africa was steering a fatal course if a theological sub-structure was being provided for the political policy of the party in power whereby its dedication to sectional self-interest was being proclaimed as the only true obedience to God and was being absolutised as the greatest virtue.

Apartheid need never have become such a reprehensible evil. For certainly it will always survive in some form or other. But it should never have been elevated to the status of "principle". We should never have seen it otherwise than as a manifestation of man's profound and essential inability to arrange his earthly life completely and in all respects in accordance to God's purpose. We shall always have to confess our guilt before God on this score. The task of creating political order ("Calvinistically" speaking!) falls in the sphere of sanctification. And just as the sanctification of the individual essentially remains something imperfect, and the residual sin always remains more plentiful than the little sanctity which even the most saintly manage to achieve in their lives, so goes it also in the political order. In any case, whatever the differences between the individual life and the political order, it would be inconceivably odious to proclaim

this residual sin to be the purpose of God with human life. In the socio-political sphere, "apartheid" between man and man, between rich and poor, distinguished and undistinguished, race and race will always survive. But it will also always run counter to the purpose which God has with human life, i.e. that all should be a single body and He all in all. It will always remind us that we are able to realise so little of the purpose of God in our own strength.

When apartheid, as criterion and purpose of the political order in South Africa, was preached as the programme which should be executed in obedience to God's will, such a piece of "residual sin" became elevated, in idolatrous apostasy from Him, as the perfect will of God. This is what Christian witness came to revolt against. For to call evil good has as its inevitable corollary that good will be called evil. The disastrous results of such a perversion of the truth are unavoidable.

As against it, the bearers of Christian witness have always pleaded for a return to the legitimately Christian foundation for the ordering of our society. It is characteristic of the true Christianisation of politics that politics is relieved of its religious undertones and overtones, that it becomes de-demonised, that it becomes what it in fact is in the eyes of God: the task of ordering the temporal, material world in obedience to God's commandments and promises.

It can be clearly discerned only from the viewpoint of Christian knowledge and faith that the world in which we live is nothing else and no more than a material world; that man is only man, that the soil of the fatherland, blood, race, etc. are not divine. To come closer home: that "the white man" or "the Afrikaner" are not entities in which fragments of divinity exist; that South Africa is not the divinely sanctified home of "the Afrikaner", that the National Party with its racial ideology is not the bearer of divine revelation in South Africa.

Concretely stated: seen from the standpoint of Christian faith, South Africa may not be evaluated otherwise than as a small part of the one created, material world which is no more holy than whatever part of the world, whether it be Russia, China or England. And seen from the side of Christian faith the "true Afrikaner" is no more **man** according to God's purpose than whatever other bastard form of "man". And the white skin of the white man in South Africa is not more precious to God than the brown skins of which there are already millions here, giving witness of the miscegenation which took place in the past, or of which there may be millions more in future to give witness to the miscegenation which may still take place.

It is, therefore, nothing but a fatal demonising of Christian faith to attempt to sanction in its name the motives underlying the politics of apartheid. It should never have happened. And when it did hap-

pen nonetheless, the consequences were incalculable, except that it should have been clear to us that we were adopting a course which could lead from stupidity to stupidity, from delusion to delusion, from folly to madness. Apartheid, when believed and proclaimed as the will of God for South Africa, had to lead to the fatuities which we already witnessed, and if we do not come to our senses in good time (if this could still happen at all!) we are still going to witness the most stupefying lunacies.

Certain "verligte" relaxations as regards the consistent application of apartheid as we have come to know it, must be seen (and is in fact thus seen by many) as a possibility which is not inherent in the ideology itself. Surprisingly or shockingly enough, they simply happen, it being a case either of a deliberate watering down of "principles" — something which frequently characterises political opportunism — or of the inevitability with which even the most rigid politics of "principle" is sometimes forced to display (paradoxically) pragmatic features under the pressure of practical demands. Whatever the explanation, adherents of the ideology who see no real evil in this, but who even come to its defence as being necessary and inevitable in the interests of the Party, are panic-stricken by the rebelliousness in their own ranks with which any thought of such concessions is being contested; also by the insistence — with a passionate appeal to God and his Word — on an inflexible carrying out of the idea of apartheid and a consistent absolu-

tising of Afrikaner nationalism. "Verligte" concessions which are regarded as necessary in the interests of the Party (e.g. for the sake of English speaking support!) are being condemned as a prostitution of principles and a denial of "Calvinism" by those who pride themselves on consistently standing "with the Lord and his Word."

The "verligte party leadership" may well fear this latter group as a potentially mortal enemy. The "Calvinists", those who stand "with the Lord and his Word", the people of "principle", have trimmed their sails to the wind. The omens are most auspicious for them. They can gain political supremacy in the name of the "god of the Afrikaner", the god of apartheid — precisely because "the Afrikaner" likes nothing better than hearing (and will be carried along by nothing so much as!) that his exclusive faith in apartheid and the consistent deification of his own interests are an expression of the fact that he is "by nature" so "deeply religious".

The most recent description of itself as "Calvinism" indeed represents the factual appearance on the South African political scene of a terrifying monstrosity. An own product, a bloodchild of the National Party. And if this party now gawks at this monstrosity with fear and perplexity, it should only recall its own history to establish for itself that it is its own reflection confronting it, its essential features merely more prominently accentuated by the light falling upon it than when it last it looked into the mirror.

Inleidingsartikel

Skrikwekkende spieëlbeeld

Daar is van die kant van besorgde Christene onkerkgroepe in ons land vroegtydig gewaarsku teen die gevaar wat daarin skuil om die Nasionale Party se apartheidsbeleid in 'n religieuse, pseudo-Christelike verskansing as die uitsluitlike wil van God vir Suid-Afrika te verabsoluteer.

Daar was 'n tyd (maar is dit al verby?) toe hierdie monopolisering van God en sy openbaring, van Christus en sy heilswerk, van die Heilige Gees en sy bedoeling aan die Nasionale Party in sy woeste propagandavaart dienste van 'n onskatbare waarde bewys het. Die religieuse protagoniste van die beleid het begrippe soos 'n „god van die Afrikaner“, 'n „kerk van die Afrikaner“ 'n „Christelike lewensbeskouing en lewenswyse van die Afrikaner“ en dergelike meer geskep, wat vir die Party op sy weg na politieke almagtigheid ten hoogste bruikbaar en welkom was. Daarmee is dit maklik genoeg gemaak om wie ook al wat 'n waarskuwende vinger omhoog gehou het, as 'n instrument van „volksvreemde magte“, van die „liberalisme“ en die „godlose kommunisme“ uit die eksklusiewe laer van die volksreligie van die „Nasionale Afrikanerdom“ uit te ban.

Hierdie fanatieke afweer van alles wat maar enigszins uit die toon geval het, het die tipiese trekke verrai van die intoleransie wat aan alle pseudo-religieuse politieke ideologieë eie is. Dit, veral, is

wat daartoe gelei het dat daar selfs van die kant van persone wat met die breë opset van 'n beleid van rasse-skeiding min of meer vrede sou kon hê, in die sterkste taal in die openbaar verklaar is dat Christene geroepe is om op grond van die Christelike geloofswaarhede, die hele idee van apartheid as 'n Christusvyandige bedenkfel te verwerp. Daarmee wou hulle die oë daarvoor probeer open dat Suid-Afrika hom op 'n rampspoedige koers bevind as die politieke beleid van die party aan bewind van 'n teologiese onderbou voorsien word waardeur sy toewyding aan 'n seksionalistiese eiebelang as die enigste ware gehoorsaamheid aan God geproklameer word en tot die hoogste goed verabsoluteer word.

Apartheid in Suid-Afrika hoef nooit tot so 'n verdoemlike euwel te geword het nie. Dit sal immers altyd in een of ander vorm bly bestaan, maar dit moes nooit tot „beginsel“ verhef gewees het nie. Ons moes dit nooit anders gesien het nie as 'n manifestasie van die mens se diepe en wesenlike onvermoë om die aardse lewe volkome en in alle opsigte na Gods bedoeling in te rig. Ons sal daarvoor altyd ons skuld voor God moet bely. Die politieke ordeningstaak lê („Calvinisties“ gesproke!) op die terrein van die heiligmaking. En soos die heiligmaking van die enkele mens wesenlik in die onvolkomenheid bly steek, en die oorblywende

sonde steeds oorvloediger bly as die klein bietjie heiligheid wat selfs die allerheiligstes in hulle lewe verwesenlik, so is dit ook in die politieke orde. In elke geval, hoe verskillend die persoonlike lewe en die politieke orde ook van mekaar mag wees, sou dit ondenkbaar gruwelik wees om dié oorblywende sonde tot doel van God met die menselewe te verklaar. In die maatskaplik-politieke sfeer sal „apartheid“ tussen mens en mens, tussen ryk en arm, aansienlik en onaansienlik, ras en ras altyd bly bestaan. Maar dit sal altyd ook in stryd bly met die bestemming wat God met die menselewe het, nl. dat almal een vlees sal wees en Hy alles in almal. Dit sal ons altyd daaraan herinner dat ons so min van die bedoeling van God uit onself kan verwesenlik.

So 'n stuk „oorblywende sonde“ is as die volmaakte wil van God in 'n afgodiese afvalligheid van Hom tot norm en doel van die politieke inrigting van Suid-Afrika verhef toe apartheid as dié program verkondig is wat in gehoorsaamheid aan Gods wil uitgevoer moes word. Dit is hierteen dat die Christelike getuïenis in verset gekom het. Want om die kwaad goed te noem, het as onvermydelike keersy dat die goed kwaad genoem sal word. Die rampspoedige gevolge van so 'n perversie van die waarheid is onafwendbaar.

Daarteenoor is daar vanuit die Christelike getuïenis steeds gepleit vir 'n terugkeer tot die legitiem Christelike grondslag vir die inrigting van ons samelewing. Van die egte kerstening van die politiek is dit kenmerkend dat die politiek van sy religieuse geladenheid bevry word, dat dit geontdemoniseer word, dat dit word tot wat dit voor Gods aangesig is, nl. 'n ordeningstaak van die tydelike, stoflike wêreld, in gehoorsaamheid aan Gods geboïe en beloftes.

Alleen vanuit die Christelike geloofskennis is dit duidelik in te sien dat die wêreld waarin ons leef, niks anders en niks meer is nie as 'n stoflike wêreld; dat die mens slêgs mens is; dat die vaderlandsbodem, die bloed, die ras, ens. nie goddelik is nie. Nader toegespits: dat „die blanke“ of „die Afrikaner“ geen entiteite is waarin daar stukkies goddelikheid woon nie; dat Suid-Afrika nie die deur God geheiligde tuiste van „die Afrikaner“ is nie; dat die Nasionale Party met sy rasse-ideologie nie die draer van die Godsopenbaring in Suid-Afrika is nie.

Konkreet gestel: Vanuit die Christelike geloof gesien, mag Suid-Afrika nie anders gewaardeer word nie as 'n stukkie van die één geskape, stoflike wêreld wat niks heiliger is as watter ander deel van die wêreld ook al nie, of dit sou Rusland, Sjina of Engeland is. En vanuit die Christelike geloof gesien, is die „ware Afrikaner“ niks meer mense na Gods bedoeling as watter ander bastervorm van „mens“ ook al nie. En die blanke vel van die blanke in Suid-Afrika is vir God nie kosbaarder as die bruin velle wat in hulle miljoene tans hier is as die getuies van bloedvermenging wat in die verlede plaasgevind het, of wat in groter miljoene in die toekoms hier mag wees as die getuies van bloedvermenging wat nog mag plaasvind nie.

Dit is dus niks anders nie as 'n fatale verdemonisering van die Christelike geloof om die gedagtes

en motiewe agter die apartheidspolitiek Christelik te wil sanksioneer. Dit moes nooit gebeur het nie. En toe dit tog gebeur het, was die gevolge nie te bereken nie, behalwe vir sover dit duidelik moes voes dat ons ons op 'n weg begeef het wat lei van dwaasheid tot dwaasheid, van verblindings tot verblindings, van gekheid tot kranksinnigheid. Apartheid, geglo en verkondig as die wil van God vir Suid-Afrika, moes lei tot die dwaashede waarvan ons reeds die aanskouers was, en as daar nie betyds besin word nie (as dit in die geheel nog kan gebeur!) gaan dit ons nog die aanskouers maak van die verbysterendste kranksinnighede.

Sekere „verligte“ verslappinge t.o.v. die konsekwente toepassing van apartheid soos ons dit leer ken het, moet gesien word (en word inderdaad ook deur baie gesien) as 'n moontlikheid wat nie in die ideologie self voor hande is nie, maar op 'n verrassende of skokkende wyse eenvoudig gebeur, sy dit dan as 'n doelbewuste afbuiging van „beginsels“ wat so dikwels van die politieke opportuniste kenmerkend is, of as die noodwendigheid waarmee selfs die starste „beginnel“-politiek soms gedwing word om onder die druk van die eise van die praktyk (paradoksale) pragmatiese trekke te vertoon. Maar waaruit dit ook al verklaar mag word, aanhangers van die ideologie wat hierin geen weselike kwaad sien nie maar dit selfs as noodsaaklik en onvermydelik vir die party-belang verdedig, staan bevange met 'n paniese skrik voor die oproerigheid in eie geledere waarmee elke gedagte aan dergelyke toegewinge fanaties beveg word, en voor die aandrang, met 'n hartstogtelike beroep op God en sy Woord, op 'n onbuigsame deurvoering van die apartheidsgedagte en 'n konsekwente verabsoluttering van die Afrikaner-nasionalisme. „Verligte“ toegewings wat vir die party-belang noodsaaklik geag word (ter wille van die steun van Engelssprekendes, bv.), word deur dié wat hulle daarop beroem dat hulle konsekwent „by die Here en sy Woord“ staan, as 'n verkragting van beginsels en 'n verloëning van die „Calvinisme“ verdoem.

Hierdie laasgenoemde groep kan tereg deur die verligte „partyleiding“ as 'n potensiële doodsvyand gevrees word. Die „Calviniste“, dié wat „by die Here en sy Woord“ staan, die „beginnel“-mense, het hulle seile na die wind gespan. Die tekens is vir hulle besonder gunstig. Hulle kan die politieke mag verower in die naam van die „god van die Afrikaner“, die god van apartheid — juis omdat „die Afrikaner“ niks so graag sal wil weet (en deur niks so meegevoer sal word!) as dat sy eksklusiewe apartheidsgeloof en die konsekwente vergoddeliking van sy eie belange 'n uitdrukking is van die feit dat hy „van nature“ so „diep godsdienstig“ is nie.

Daar het op die Suid-Afrikaanse politieke toneel inderdaad 'n skrikwekkende monsteragtigheid verskyn onder die jongste selfbenaming van „Calvinisme“. 'n Eie voortbrengsel, 'n bloedkind van die Nasionale Party. En as die Party hierdie gedrogtelikheid nou met skrik en verbystering aanstaar, moet hy hom sy eie geskiedenis maar voor die gees roep en hom daarvan vergewis dat dit sy eie spieëlbeeld is waarvan die wesenstrekke, deur die lig wat daarop val, nou maar net prominenter uitstaan as toe hy laas in die spieël gekyk het.

APOLOGIA PRO VITA NOSTRA

(II)

MARK COLLIER

As an introduction to this article I would like to recapitulate what was suggested in my previous article. First many people have passed through a *metanoia*. This implies that change has already taken place and that the problem for these people is to put this change into effect. What has happened on a social plane in this century and is beginning to gather momentum in our day, is similar to what happened to history in Christ. In him creation was recreated. Some people accept this change. They must be passive to the change in the sense of accepting its having been accomplished and active to it in the sense of responding to the invitation to make it evident everywhere for people to see. Hence we don't have to initiate it, but rather actualise that which has already taken place. This is the grace-life: living in grateful acceptance of re-creation in a love relationship with God and man. Sin is opting out of this situation, refusing to take part in achieved salvation; resisting the change that has taken place.

Secondly, I focussed in on the new sense of time. I suggested that historicity is of the essence of man. Man can be defined as a *natura fluens* (nature in movement) just as the medievals defined time as the *nunc fluens* (the moving present). With co-creativity placed in man's hands, he is responsible for taking the initiative in building the earth, to devoting himself fully to the here and now and in the quarry of the present to discover the future. For man is engaged on a search and the Christian is a seeker borne along by the conviction that his search has a future, because it has a meaning. This conviction is born in a belief in the resurrection of Christ. Hence the Christian can hope. He can hope because Christ is the truth of D. H. Lawrence's "Ballad of the man who came through".

The Church

It is time now that we turned to the Christian Institute. The Christian Institute is not a Church, nor does it wish to be one. It is rather a servant of the Church, calling it to its rôle in the crisis of our times. For we live in troubled times, ours is a revolutionary age, be this technologically, theologically, sociologically or just, in say, fashions. In this time of growth the Church cannot opt out of its serious responsibilities. The Church should be at the head of all the significant thrusts of our time — opening man, humanising society and giving the movement confidence, hope and direction. The Church should have the courage to be itself, to risk, in short, to die. Nikos Kazantzakis says in his autobiography that there are three prayers for three kinds of

people. First, the one who prays, "I am a bow in your hands, Lord. Draw me lest I rot." Secondly, "Do not overdraw me, Lord. I shall break". And finally, "Overdraw me, Lord and who cares if I break".

It is the final prayer that should be the prayer of the Church.

The Institute believes that whatever it is doing ought to be being done by the Church. Its existence points to areas in the Church's life where the Church is not witnessing adequately. These rôles have not been usurped, rather they have been assumed in order to be relinquished as soon as the Church seriously commits itself to them.

Five such areas of the Church's life and activity come to mind viz. risk, prophecy, search, application and criticism. In examining these we will be examining much of the Institute's life.

Risk

Jesus said: "Anyone who finds his life will lose it, anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it". This is a risk the Christian must take, this is the paradox at the centre of our lives. It is the risk that Abraham took when he responded to God's call. God said: "Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land that I will show you". Abraham left all — his land, his tradition, his reputation, his identity, his way of life. And he journeyed in faith, lured by God. Jesus was later to ask the same of his disciples — the preparedness to leave all those things which bind us — riches, family, attachment to self.

The Church too must be prepared

to leave all those things which bind it and must free itself so as to journey unencumbered. Without all its vested interests, its traditions and its reputation, free to be the presence of Christ in the world. It must be like Abraham ready to leave the land it knows, the position it has traditionally taken up in society, its treasured places of respectability at the head of tables. Once more a servant, the Church will be free to prophesy.

Prophecy

There is a story of a man who was charged with preaching the name of the Great One. He spent apparently fruitless years at his task and returned to the desert-home of the Great One. There he confessed his failure and asked to be allowed to preach to the Great One about Himself. "Go back to the land of the living", came the reply, "for I have sunk my hearing in the deafness of men."

To prophecy means to speak so that men can hear. And to speak clearly so that all men can hear, even the simplest.

This is the task of the prophet with its attendant danger of alienation. It is the task of the herald breaking truth, interpreting the signs of the times in the light of revelation, interpreting the present in the light of its dynamism for the future. This prophecy is not a prophecy of word alone, but of word clothed in action. The person of the prophet and his way of life are as much prophetic as what he says.

All this was true of Israel's prophets. No matter how dependant they stood in the mainstream of Israelite religion and spoke in relation to the cult of Israel, they remained first and foremost charismatic figures and their words were always 'NEW'.

Jesus retained many characteristics of the prophets: he made known the signs of the times; his attitude to accepted values was critical e.g. severity on those who held the keys of authority and used them to prevent people entering into knowledge (Luke 11.52); he was angered by religious hypocrisy and corrupt tradition (Matt. 15.7); he saw himself reject-

ed by the same Jerusalem that killed the prophets. (Matt. 23.37).

True of Israel, true of Jesus, it must be likewise true of the Church. For times come in the life of nations when all is complacent and self-satisfied and fundamental issues are being by-passed, when the prophetic word must be spoken and acted. For the Church must be what it does and do what it is.

Search

Christianity is more of a search than an answer. It is a journey. As Christ's life was a pilgrimage from a womb to a tomb, so our life is a pilgrimage from this selfsame hole in the ground at Easter to wholeness. It is a search with others for the final meaning of life. The Christian additive is the built-in conviction that it has meaning and only needs to be discovered. Jurgen Moltmann, the German theologian wrote recently in his essay 'The Revolution of Freedom: the Christian and Marxist struggle' that "some men base their community on answers alone. Such communities are always biased, factious and confessional. But they cannot be universal. However there is also a community of men based on asking. This is the community of the seeking and hungry, neither biased nor confessional. It is a community pervading all parties and churches, uniting men in their common experience of deficiency and not-knowing". Such a community of questioning and seeking can today unite Christians. Such a community, instead of being complacent, will be challenging.

The Church in its search for the fulness of truth and life should be articulating questions rather than repeating its answers to questions nobody is asking anymore. For only when the right questions have been asked, can the right answers be sought.

Application

But the Church has not all the answers to all man's problems and questions. It never had. It never will. What it does have is the message of a man whom we recognise as God. In the Church's search it should be striving to apply this message to the concrete situations of life.

A film is currently showing in Johannesburg called "The heart is a lonely hunter". It is a film about loneliness and communication, about insensitivity and selfishness, about reconciliation and race. It is a film for our day. Yet as the film was ending

one man near me got up to leave, obstructing the vision of a man behind him. There was a sharp exchange of words. There was an incident that negated the message of the film. It had been seen but not heard. It had been enjoyed but the point had been missed. No connection had been seen between its message and the actual situation. The medium was not the message. The film had failed in not involving these two men in a living experience while speaking about life.

The Gospel speaks about life: man's life and God's life, but it will fail to impinge and will thus have no meaning in a functional age unless it is seen in action, putting flesh to love in such a way that people can come in contact with it in their daily experience.

For we live in an honest age which will tear down all pretence at play-acting, will call a spade by its name, will have no truck with implicit talking, watches as the credibility gap widens and knows that today the credibility of the Christian message is being tested on the anvil of poverty and race.

Institutionalised Criticism

The Church is not beside or above or beyond the social reality, but within it as an institution of socio-political criticism.

The Church lives in a hope directed to the future. Because the Church exists for the sake of the Kingdom of God, because the Church exists for others, because the Church realises its own temporality, because the Church recognises the absoluteness of God alone, it is able to criticise socio-political life where this shows absolutist and exclusive tendencies. The task of the Church is one of social criticism, not the formulation of a systematic social doctrine.

As the German theologian J. M. Metz says "the Church must constantly use this liberating power of criticism with regard to all political systems and stress that history as a whole is subject to God's eschatological proviso. It must apply the truth that history as a whole can never be contained in a political idea in the narrow sense of the word, and therefore can never be limited to any particular political conduct. There is nothing within this world that can be designated as the subject of all history and whenever a party, group, nation or class sees itself as such a subject and consequently tries to do-

minate the whole process of history with its particular political interpretation, it must necessarily become totalitarian.

Furthermore, the Church must today more than ever mobilize the potentiality of that Christian love which lies at the heart of its tradition. This love must not be confined to the interpersonal I-Thou contact. Nor should it be understood as a kind of philanthropy. It must be interpreted in its social dimension and made operative. This means that it must be understood as the unconditional commitment to justice, freedom and peace **for others**".

For these reasons one of the most pressing programmes before the Church is one of de-ideologising. For ideology is a human construction, a creation of man to which he submits himself. His own construction becomes his master and man is again in bondage. Ideology is an idea absolutised and thus carries within itself the possibility of idolatry. Yet Christ saved man from bondage and offers freedom, for the God-man is freedom in flesh. The task of Christianity is this — to be like Christ: free, open and responsible.

The task of the Church as a non-ideological body is, by means of socio-political criticism, to help de-ideologise South Africa and so help liberate it to its true potentialities. In this process it should not allow its criticism to be dissipated by debating the value of soporifics like our country's present 'outward policy' which are nothing else than pragmatic accommodations within the ideological framework. For it is the ideology itself which is in question.

The Church is in the world, of the world for the world. It can inculcate a vision, an openness, a search, a concern for people and not causes, a service that one would like to see operating in our social, economical and political structures. But the Church as such has no political formulae. It cannot give its allegiance to a political party nor can it position itself on the party political spectrum to the left of one or to the right of another. But the Church can urge its members to be active politically and to incarnate Christian insights and values as they co-operate with others for the good of all.

Critique of Itself

The Church may never allow itself to be seduced by ideologies. To prevent it absolutising itself it must not only criticise **ad extra** but **ad intra**

as well. That is, it must engage itself in self-criticism. If the Institute has haltingly and with many errors exercised itself in the above areas, it cannot escape a scrutiny of its own life.

It can have institutionalised its witness and not constantly adjusted it to the changing needs of the times. It may not have kept abreast of the times, and though its witness-style at its inception in 1963 may have been relevant, it may not be relevant or appropriate in 1969.

It may as a result of this be presently falling between many stools e.g. between the radicals and reactionaries in the Church and the thought gap between those who clamour for radical social change and those who would see the *status quo* gradually modified.

In its anxiety to be an instrument of socio-political criticism, in its desire to offer the prophetic word, it may cloud its concern for the weightier things of the Gospel — love, mercy, forgiveness. In its attempt to be open and responsive to the thrust of the spirit, it may, in the process, have become alienated and become witness to that which it wished to repair, viz. breakdown in communication. Wherever it has consciously contributed towards a rupture in relations, it is repentive and humbly asks forgiveness of those it has harmed. It was founded to be ecumenical, i.e. to be reconciliatory, to build bridges. It does not wish to create chasms. In its attempts to call the Church to its important position today, it may start believing that it alone is enshrining these concerns, that it alone

has the Gospel of its Lord close to its heart. This would be fatal as the life-style of a group such as the Institute must be different from those working more closely within existing Church structures. Their concern is as real, doubtless more real, but manifests itself naturally differently.

Finally, perhaps instead of being charged with having done too much, it may be guilty of not doing enough. It may in the final analysis be too intellectual, i.e. too theoretical. Theory, like the prophetic word, must be 'earthed' and balanced in action. What may be being asked of it today, in addition to its present preoccupations, is to initiate or sponsor some ecumenical, inter-racial living which may be the strongest and most non-violent expression of its constant prayer: UT OMNES UNUM SINT.

WAAROM HET DIT EINTLIK VIR CALVYN GEGAAN?

C. F. B. NAUDÉ

Calvyn is deesdae in die nuus. Bekende openbare figure het hulle die afgelope tyd oor die Calvinisme uitgelaat: Dr. Albert Hertzog, die Eerste Minister, dr. A. P. Treurnicht, dr. Carel de Wet en dr. André Hugo.

'n Vergelyking tussen hierdie persone se siening van Calvinisme openbaar sulke duidelik verskillende gesigspunte dat dit geen wonder is nie dat die gemiddelde burger (die Calvinis sowel as die nie-Calvinistiese Christen) in verwarring verkeer oor wat Calvinisme werklik is en wat Calvyn in werklikheid verkondig het.

Aan die een kant maak dr. Hertzog daarop aanspraak dat Afrikaner-Calvinisme onversoenbaar is met die liberalisme (met name soos dit uitgedruk en toegepas word deur die grootste gedeelte van ons Engelssprekende gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika).

Aan die ander kant het dr. André Hugo, wat 'n uitstaande kenner van Calvyn en die Calvinisme is, tydens 'n toespraak aan die Universiteit van Kaapstad verklaar dat die ware Calvinisme grootliks ooreenstem met wat as liberalisme in ons land bekend is.

Wie is reg?

Die antwoord kan slegs gegee word op grond van 'n noukeurige en objektiewe bestudering van Calvyn se uitsprake, geskrifte en handeling — en dit lewer afdoende bewys dat dr. Hertzog hom tevergeefs op Calvyn beroep ter stawing van die neo-Calvinistiese opvatting wat gehuldig word deur mense soos dr. Treurnicht, ds. J. H. Jooste en mnr. Barry Botha.

Verskeidenheid

Die hoofsuil waarop hulle hul argument teen die liberalisme bou, is die verskeidenheid van volke wat deur God tydens die skepping en by Babel daargestel sou gewees het en wat, soos hulle volhou, 'n Bybelse beginsel sou wees wat deur Calvyn voorgedra is.

In sy verdediging van dr. Hertzog se onlangse toespraak in die Volksraad, stel dr. Treurnicht die liberale lewensopvatting van die Engelssprekende volksdeel teenoor die Afrikaner Calvinisme, soos volg: „In soverre die Engelssprekende tot hiertoe oorwegend die toepassing van die beginsel van differensiasie teengestaan het, het hy in ooreenstemming met die aard van die liberalisme opgetree.

„Hierteenoor het die Afrikaner 'n lewensfilosofie in die praktyk toegepas waarvolgens hy vir homself as volks- en kultuurgemeenskap 'n eie bestaan en roeping opeis en dieselfde reg aan die Engelssprekende, die

Kleurling en die verskillende Bantoevolkere gun. En dit is ten diepste 'n uitvloeisel van sy Calvinistiese lewensbeskouing, wat eintlik niks anders is nie as die toepassing van 'n Bybelse beginsel, naamlik dié van verskeidenheid, wat in die Calvinisme besonder beklemtoning vind”.

Feit is egter dat ons nêrens in die geskrifte van Calvyn of, wat dit betref, enige van die gereformeerde belydenisskrifte wat deur hom geïnspireer is en waarvan drie (die Heidelbergse Kategismus, die Nederlandse geloofsbelydenis en die Dordtse Leerreëls) die aanvaarde belydenisgrondslag van die drie Afrikaans-Hollandse kerke geword het, enige grond vir hierdie beskouing vind nie.

Apartheid

Die neo-Calviniste in Suid-Afrika en elders wil graag bewys dat Calvyn die noodsaaklikheid geleer het van die handhawing van nasionale of rasse-identiteit en die regverdiging van die skeidslyne tussen verskillende volke en rasse, en hulle beroep hulle veral op Artikel 2 van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis om hierdie siening te staaf.

Dog nêrens in die *Institusie* van Calvyn nie, (m.n. in Boek I, Hoofstuk 3, 5, 10 en 15, waar 'n mens sou kon verwag om steun vir hierdie

soort apartheid te vind), nóg in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis kan die gronde vir hierdie gevolgtrekking met reg gevind word.

Die teendeel is egter waar: Calvyn maak 'n duidelike onderskeid tussen die ware God en die afgode en verkondig die wesenlike gelykheid van alle mense in hulle verdorwenheid as gevolg van die sonde, terwyl daar 'n duidelike beklemtoning by hom is dat daar slegs een skeiding bestaan, nl. dié tussen die ware gelowige en die ongelowige.

Soos wat die mens na die Beeld van God geskape is, so is alle mense een in die sonde — ongeag aan watter volk of ras of kultuur hulle behoort (Boek II).

Verder, waar dit met soveel trots deur die ondersteuners van dr. Hertzog en dr. Treurnicht verklaar word dat die Afrikaner „onbeskaamd Afrikaner” moet wees, wil ek hulle graag aanraai om Calvyn se uitleg van die Eerste Gebod te lees. En 'n ontnugterende skok wag vir daardie Afrikaners wat so vlotweg op God kan beslag lê vir hulleself, hulle afgode en hulle politiek as hulle 'n ernstige studie gaan maak van Calvyn se uitleg van die Derde Gebod.

Daar is ook min troos vir hulle wat miskien nog gehoop het om by Calvyn enige steun vir apartheid te vind as hulle 'n insae kry in sy uitleg van die Sesde Gebod. En wie graag 'n verhelderende insig sou wil kry in wat Calvyn van ons Ontugwet sou gedink het, lees maar sy uitleg van die Sewende Gebod.

Ekumenies

Ek wonder wat die neo-Calviniste (wat so bang is vir die „liberalisme” van die Engelssprekende kerke) sou sê as hulle moes ontdek watter diepe ekumeniese besorgdheid daar spreek uit sy houding en dade, nie alleen teenoor die Duitse en Switserse Lutherane nie, maar ook teenoor die Engelse Anglikane van sy tyd.

Toe die Aartsbiskop van Kantelberg op 29 Maart 1552 aan Calvyn geskryf het om hom uit te nooi na 'n „godly synod” om die moontlikheid van groter eenheid tussen die kerke van die Reformasie te bespreek, het Calvyn geantwoord: „As slegs dit bereik kon word dat op 'n bepaalde plek geleerde, ernstige manne uit die belangrikste kerke saamkom om die afsonderlike geloofsartikels ywerig te bespreek en aan die nageslag die sekere leer van die Skrif oor gemeenskaplike sake na te laat. Maar dit behoort tot een van die vernaamste misstande van ons tyd dat die afsonder-

like kerke so uiteengeskeur is, dat nouliks die gemeenskap van mense onder ons van krag is, laat staan dan maar die heilige gemeenskap van die lede van Christus, wat almal weliswaar met die mond bely, maar van wie slegs weinig dit inderdaad opreg in die praktyk bring. Ek persoonlik sou dit nie 'n te groot moeite ag om, as hulle my nodig het, tien seë, as dit dan so moet wees, oor te steek nie”.

Baie ander dergelike voorbeelde kan aangehaal word as bewys van Calvyn se ekumeniese visie en besorgdheid. Die Calvinisme is inderdaad wesenlik 'n ekumeniese beweging — en as Calvyn moes herleef en vandag in Suid-Afrika moes kom woon, is ek oortuig daarvan dat hy 'n troue en aktiewe ondersteuner sou wees van die Christelike Instituut van Suider-Afrika.

Daarom moet ek aan dr. Hertzog en aan ander wat Calvyn wil kommandeer om morele steun aan hulle sieninge te gee, sê: Julle het geen hoop nie!

As daar oor hierdie gevolgtrekking miskien enige twyfel oorgebly het in die gemoedere van lede van die kerke van gereformeerde belydenis, wil ek hulle graag herinner aan die onlangse vergadering van die Gereformeerde Ekumeniese Sinode te Lunteren, waar hierdie liggaam wat die konserwatiefste Calvinistiese benadering verteenwoordig, 'n eenparige besluit geneem het wat in direkte teenstelling staan met die basiese „Calvinistiese” opvattinge van die verkrampes.

Verwerp die verkrampes hierdie besluite? En indien wel, op watter gronde?

Neo-Calvinisme

As dit die geval is, dan kom die vraag vanself op: Hoe en waar en wanneer het hierdie gevaarlike vervorming van die Calvinisme ontstaan — en waarom het teoloë van die kerke van gereformeerde belydenis in Suid-Afrika nie 'n sterk stem van protes verhef teen hierdie nuwe kettery nie?

Die antwoord op die eerste vraag kan in een of twee sinne gegee word. Abraham Kuyper, 'n bekende Nederlandse teoloog en politikus, het Calvyn se teologiese beskouing as sy uitgangspunt geneem en dit met so 'n briljante logika verwerk, geamendeer en vervorm, dat dit wat daaruit voortgekom het 'n neo-Calvinisme was wat op basiese punte grootliks van die ware Calvinisme verskil het.

Dit is hierdie Calvinisme wat deur baie teoloë en predikante van die drie

Afrikaans-Hollandse kerke in Suid-Afrika aanvaar, verwelkom en verkondig is as die ware Calvinisme en waaraan manne soos dr. Treurnicht, ds. Jooste en kerkmanne wat soos hulle dink, tot vandag toe opvattinge ontleen wat nóg in die Skrif nóg by Calvyn enige steun vind — godsdienstige opvattinge wat hulle nou baie behendig propageer en uitbuit vir hulle eie politieke doeleindes.

Dit is ook hierdie neo-Calvinisme van Abraham Kuyper wat met 'n kultuur-teorie vorendag gekom het wat die hele onderwysidee in Suid-Afrika sterk beïnvloed het en wat in die begrip „Christelik-nasionale onderwys” uitgekristalliseer het — met al die eventuele gevare wat daar onvermydelik verbode was aan so 'n afbuiging en vervorming van die ware Christelike geloof.

Die tragiese ontwikkelinge in die Duitse volk vanweë die propagering van die idee van **das Deutsche Christentum** in die tyd van Nazi-Duitsland is ongetwyfeld 'n parallele verskynsel, en alhoewel dit in sommige opsigte verskil het, moet dit gesien word as 'n waarskuwende teken vir ons land van die ernstige gevaar van politieke misleiding agter die masker van die ware godsdienst. Slegte teologie loop altyd uit op 'n ideologie.

Nog 'n rede vir die gretige aanvaarding van hierdie neo-Calvinistiese beskouings in Suid-Afrika, is die patetiese hunkering van baie Afrikaners om steun en regverdiging in die Skrif te vind vir ons tradisionele houding t.o.v. ras en ons politiek van die verlede.

In hierdie opsig is daar 'n merkwaardige ooreenstemming tussen die Fundamentaliste van die suidelike state van die V.S.A. en die neo-Calviniste van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, aangesien albei geprobeer het of nog steeds probeer om hulle rassebeskouings met 'n beroep op die Skrif (veral die Ou Testament) te regverdig.

En in die geval van die Afrikaner was die versoeking selfs groter (vanweë talle skynbare ooreenkomste in uiterlike omstandighede) om die Afrikanervolk met die volk Israel te identifiseer as die uitverkore volk van God — 'n baie menslike, maar ook 'n baie gevaarlike fout.

Kerk en Politiek

As daar 'n antwoord gegee moet word op die vraag waarom daar geen onmiddellike protes teen, en verwerping van hierdie valse Bybelse beskouinge onder die dekmantel van Calvinisme, gekom het van die kant van

Calvinistiese teoloë van die Afrikaans-Hollandse kerke in Suid-Afrika nie — wat tog van beter weet of behoort te weet — dan moet daar gewys word op die noue historiese verbondenheid tussen die N.G. Kerk en die Afrikanervolk (en sy politieke leiers, wat met jaloersheid gewaak het oor die belange van die Afrikaners).

Hierdie bondgenootskap is so innig verbind en verweef met al die ander lewensterreine van die Afrikaner dat elke direkte kritiek van 'n Afrikaner op hierdie uiters sensitiewe punt onmiddellik beskou sou word as verraad van alles wat vir die Afrikaner dierbaar is, met 'n gevolglike ostrasisme en uitbanning uit die Afrikanergemeenskap — 'n baie reële uitwerking in die buitenste duisternis, waarvoor baie lede van die Afrikaanse kerkgemeenskap moeilik, of glad nie, kans sien.

Daar is waarskynlik geen ander land ter wêreld waar daar nog so 'n innige bondgenootskap bestaan tussen kerk en politieke nasionalisme as in die lewe van die Afrikanervolk nie. Om slegs twee onlangse voorbeelde te noem:

● Die onmiddellike reaksie van die Eerste Minister op die „Boodskap aan die volk van Suid-Afrika” — 'n dokument wat Bybels so suiwer en profeties so geldig is as wat enige Calvinistiese belydenis maar kan hoop om te wees.

● Die ongehoorde politieke toespraak van dr. Carel de Wet voor 900 afgevaardigdes van die N.G. Kerk tydens die konferensie oor Kerk en Nywerheid — en die spontane applous wat hy van kerkmanne ontvang het wat veronderstel is om alle uitsprake, insluitend 'n toespraak soos hierdie, aan die hand van die Skrif alleen te beoordeel.

Dis geen wonder dat mnr. Vorster en

dr. De Wet sowel as dr. Hertzog en dr. Treurnicht almal op 'n handige manier probeer gebruik maak van die historiese en sentimentele verering van die nagedagtenis van Calvyn, en sy unieke bydrae tot die gereformeerde teologie, as 'n politieke wapen om hulle posisies te versterk en om hulle eie belange te bevorder onder die geleedere van die kerke van Calvinistiese oorsprong nie.

Dit is heilsaam om herinner te word aan Calvyn se oortuigings aangaande die verhouding van kerk en staat. Hy het geglo dat die burger hom in gehoorsaamheid aan die staat moes onderwerp as die gesag wat deur God ingestel is, maar hy het benadruk dat die staat ook sy posisie as dienaar van God moet erken, dat hy sy afhanklikheid van God moet erken, en dat, as die owerhede iets sou beveel wat teen Gods wil is, dit verwerp moet word asof dit van nul en gener waarde is.

Dit is dus duidelik dat Calvyn nie 'n eksklusiewe ideologie wat gebaseer is op die oorheersing deur een groep, kultuur of ras van 'n ander, verkondig of gesteun het nie. Intendeel, sy hele gees was ekumenies ingestel, en die beweging van die Calvinisme wat deur hom geïnisiëer is, is ekumenies en streef daarna om alle kerke en konfessies in te sluit op die basis van die waarheid van Gods Woord.

Misleidend

Op die grondslag van sy wekroep, **Soli Deo Gloria**, het Calvyn nooit bedoel om 'n Calvinistiese lewensbeskouing te ontwikkel nie, en nog minder 'n teologiese of kulturele denksisteem wat op sy leerstellinge gebaseer is.

As hy moes herleef en vandag in Suid-Afrika moes kom, sou hy die eerste gewees het om te protesteer

en te stry teen baie van die beskouinge wat as Afrikaner-Calvinisme verkondig word en poseer.

As 'n getroue Calvinis wil ek baie ernstig pleit by teoloë van die drie Afrikaans-Hollandse kerke om hierdie valse beskouinge van 'n neo-neo-Calvinisme te verwerp. Dit mislei ons volk en vorm nie slegs 'n ernstige bedreiging vir 'n verantwoordelike uitoefening van politieke gesag op 'n demokratiese grondslag nie, maar doen ook ernstige skade aan die ware begrip van die Christendom en die Calvinisme.

Ek lewer hierdie pleidooi ter wille van my mede-Afrikaners wat hierdie teologiese leiding dringend nodig het. Maar ek doen dit ook ter wille van ons Engelssprekende blankes van wie baie tereg genceig voel om al wat Calvinistiese opvatting is, te verwerp omdat daar geen verduideliking na vore kom wat duidelik onderskei tussen wat waar is en wat vals is nie.

Maar ek doen dit nog meer ter wille van ons nie-blanke bevolking onder wie daar, veral onder die intellektuele en die stedelike jeug, in toenemende mate 'n houding van sinisme teenoor en verwerping van die Christelike geloof se sodanig gekweek word deur so 'n verdraaiing van die ware godsdiens.

As Suid-Afrika maar wou ag gee op die ware boodskap van Calvyn, hoe totaal verskillend sou ons hele kerklike en politieke lewe wees — totaal verskillend van die opvattinge en doelstellings van mense soos Albert Hertzog en Andries Treurnicht en Barry Botha.

(Oorgeneem uit die *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 April 1969, en in Afrikaans vertaal, met die vriendelike toestemming van die Redakteur van die *Rand Daily Mail*).

CHURCHES IN COMPROMISE

E. A. DU PLESSIS

Many articles have been written and many books have appeared about the situation of the German Church during the Hitler years of 1933 to 1945. It may seem strange to some people that one should stir up this problem again. But Nazism was too serious to be forgotten. Besides most Germans are as anxious as we are that it should never happen again, but it could happen again and it can happen in any other country in the world. Furthermore something happened to the German Church during that period which should be recalled to enrich the entire church in the whole world.

The essence of Nazism

As far as Nazism (or National Socialism) was concerned it has received such a total rejection by the

world community that the very mention of the word invokes strong reactions. Nazism envisaged a 'final solution' of the Jewish problem by

liquidating millions of them. Disturbing things were happening such as the teaching of new songs at school which had a doubtful theological content; new ceremonies were introduced at the graveside of heroes; new hatreds were encouraged; people disappeared and Jews were treated unjustly. From a Christian point of view what was even more serious was Hitler's initial attempt not to persecute the churches, but to pervert their

teaching. He wanted the churches to become instrumental in furthering his policies and in proclaiming his doctrines. It was an attempt to seduce the central citadel of the Christian faith.

The state of the German Churches

The German churches were influenced by the popular feeling which prevailed in Germany in 1929. It was then only ten years after the First World War. This war had broken the pride of the whole nation. The political and economic chaos that followed left the German people with little hope. Germans wanted to be proud of their country. They wanted to preserve its cultural heritage and the churches wanted to recall the people to their moral heritage. It was in this national spirit of a new 'will to live' that National Socialism found a ready response. The NAZI programme of a 'national regeneration' seemed to go hand in hand with that of a 'moral and religious regeneration' preached by the churches.

C. S. Conway in a remarkable study called "THE NAZI PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCHES" shows clearly what happened in a confrontation between two irreconcilable ideologies, each claiming the whole of man. Reconciliation is perhaps the most important word in the Bible, but Nazism and the Christian faith were quite clearly irreconcilable. Yet Christians failed to see this in time. Pastor Martin Niemöller could still congratulate Hitler on the German withdrawal from the League of Nations. Later he was to become a leading figure in the Confessing Church.

There was also the threat of Communism or Bolshevism as it was then called. Young Germans looked upon Nazism as the answer to this threat. When Frank Buchmann founded Moral Re-armament in 1938 he too welcomed this new German spirit. He was not the only one who had misjudged the stirrings in Germany.

The Church was particularly vulnerable to this new appeal. The New German Constitution had declared: "There is no State Church." The separation of the Church and State was one of the first acts of the New Republic. The Church was separated from the people. The Church belonged neither to the head of state nor to the people. In these circumstances the overwhelming majority of Christians compromised. All the issues were confused and they were confused. Be-

sides, how could any pastor be sure of his congregation's support? Christians marched under the swastika and on Sundays they went to church.

The Christian Resistance

The honour of Christian resistance lies with an organization of Protestant churches, known as the Confessing Church. The Confessing Church had eventually included some 2,000 parishes spread over Germany. It presented a continuous and organized resistance throughout the Hitler years from 1933 to 1945. Their resistance was essentially theological rather than political. (One should not ignore the bold resistance of some members of the Roman Catholic Church. These include names like Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich and Graf von Galen, Bishop of Münster and the Jesuit priest, Alfred Delp who was executed in February 1945. However one's concern is primarily with the Protestants).

At the Synod which was held at Barmen in 1934 a charter of resistance was drawn up which became known as the 'Declaration of Barmen'. This document was written in the spirit of the classical church tradition. Karl Barth was the theological mind behind it. These Christians were moderate, but as the atrocities of Nazism became worse, they were forced to adopt a more radical position. Their primary concern was to preserve the purity and the integrity of the Christian faith. Just how far Hitler was prepared to go in an attempt to pervert the central citadel of the Christian faith can be gleaned from a piece of prose that was taught in schools in early 1934: "As Jesus set men free from sin and hell, so Hitler rescued the German people from destruction. Both Jesus and Hitler were persecuted, but, while Jesus was crucified, Hitler was exalted to Chancellor."

The Confessing Church never managed to get the support of more than a mere 10% of the clergy. Their position was complicated by the fact that they did not always know who their opponents really were. A leading pastor who was a member of the Confessing Church and who is now witnessing equally faithfully in East Germany under a Communist government said: "Then we did not always know who was our opponent. The Nazi official was so often a regular churchgoer with a genuine interest in theology. Today, the man we oppose says clearly that he is an atheist.

It is a clean fight now with the issues clear."

This at once explains the extreme difficulties under which German Christians laboured and why so many of them compromised.

In the final analysis the acts of supreme self-sacrifice by people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alfred Delp saved the face of German Christians.

The significance of the Christian Resistance

The resistance of the Confessing Church was founded on the Bible. Most Lutheran pastors used a Church lectionary which required them to preach from a prescribed text each Sunday. Many groups of ministers organized themselves on a local basis and they worked together. They decided to set aside one day of each week for united Bible study of the prescribed text. One of them was chosen to study the commentaries and to present a report to the pastoral meeting. A morning of academic discussion of the text followed. The afternoon was taken up by a discussion of the common pastoral problems and of the situation in the confused world. The evening was used to bring the two worlds together, namely the world of the Bible and the world situation.

This Bible study method spread to the parish level and a growing number of laymen and pastors adopted it for their own Bible study. A new confidence in the Bible was born. It was a form of Bible study which combined a close academic study of the Bible with the world situation. Thus the Bible became relevant again. Theology became alive and it matched the political situation.

These Christians have shown clearly by their self-sacrifice, dedication and resistance that all Germans were not Nazis. It is to them that Christians owe an immense gratitude. They did not do it for the German Church alone, but the whole Universal Church has become immensely enriched by their witness. They witnessed in the true tradition of the early Christians and some of them died for their witness. Those who died were true martyrs. Nietzsche once wrote: "Graves are the pre-condition for resurrection". Applied to these German Christians no quotation can be more relevant.

Having considered briefly some aspects of the German Christian resistance to Nazism, one can try to consider the position of South African

Christians and their resistance to Apartheid. No sane person would suggest that Apartheid and Nazism are similar. Of course there are important differences, but Christians should view with deep concern the attempts to make Apartheid the religion of South Africa.

The essence of Apartheid

The big question is: Are Apartheid and the Christian faith irreconcilable with each ideology claiming the whole of man? Apartheid or separate development involves racial purity and segregation, and white paramountcy. In theory, it means that the races should be given separate and equal opportunities, but in practice supporters and opponents agree that this is impossible. The laws introduced by the National Party since 1948 have affected the political rights of non-whites, and their rights of movement, choice of residence, property, worship, choice of occupation, and marriage. The fact that the Bantustans (an aspect of the so-called positive Apartheid) would amount to only 13% of the total geographical area of South Africa hardly presents a brighter picture. Mr. Alan Paton said: "The essence of separate development is not that it provides separate freedoms—that is the dream. In essence it is something done by people who have power to people who have none—that is the reality." This is a more accurate definition of separate development than that being bandied about by the protagonists of Apartheid.

The state of the South African Churches

Since the beginning of the 19th century, the South African churches have been marked by a dichotomy between the Afrikaans-language churches and the English-language churches. The three Afrikaner churches have always been closely involved in the cultural, political, social and religious life of the Afrikaner people. It is therefore not surprising that with the exception of a few notable individuals, they always closely identified themselves with Apartheid as it became known since 1948. These churches provided the moral basis for Afrikaner thinking.

The English-language churches have always provided an unambiguous opposition to the doctrines of race purity in Afrikaner circles. However, it would be mistaken to give the impression that English Christians are

saints and Afrikaner Christians devils. Such a rigid distinction can hardly be made in spiritual matters. Of course, English Christians have always officially condemned Apartheid. This they have always done on ethical and theological grounds. In spite of this they have always obediently observed the Apartheid laws. A growing number of non-whites began a long time ago already to doubt their sincerity. This is considerably complicated by the fact that English South Africans, just as the Afrikaners, are also in a privileged position simply because of their fair pigmentation. If Mr. Harold Macmillan could win the general election in Britain in 1959 with the slogan 'You have never had it so good' then it is also true that English South Africans have never had it so good as at present. Their lack of authority stems from the fact that they, like the Afrikaners, form the affluent society in South Africa. A church can never be strong when the rich preach the Gospel of Christ to the poor. Besides, a congregation does not always share their minister's opposition to Apartheid. Thus when the Methodist Church appointed the Rev. Seth Mokitimi President of their conference in 1963, there were widespread protests and even resignations followed from church membership. The shock caused then has still not completely settled down. How many ministers do really have the courage and the integrity to make a stand on the race question?

As far as the Afrikaner Christians opposed to Apartheid are concerned, the words of the member of the German Confessing Church now witnessing in East Germany leap to mind. They do not always know who their opponents are. The Apartheid officials are so often regular churchgoers with a genuine interest in theology. It is not a clear fight.

The resistance of Afrikaner Churches

The Afrikaner churches have always provided powerful support to the National Party by finding Scriptural justification for Apartheid and by preaching the myth of an Afrikaner volk chosen by God. In his book "THE DARK EYE IN AFRICA", Laurens van der Post revealed how the Afrikaners were dominated by this myth: "In the Book they found their inspiration and their comfort. They came out of Europe like the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt to search for their promised land . . . The particular

myth of my countrymen presupposed just such a journey as the Great Trek through a great unknown wilderness to a land of promise."

It was extremely difficult for Afrikaner Christians to make a clear distinction between the Christian faith and the Afrikaner politician's policy of racial purity. The two concepts seemed to go hand in hand. The Afrikaner theologian was very often the Afrikaner politician as well.

There are, however, signs of a ferment within the three Afrikaner churches. In 1955 professor B. B. Keet's book: "SOUTH AFRICA — WHITHER?" appeared. This book rejected the myth of a Scriptural justification for Apartheid in unambiguous terms. In 1960 a group of eleven prominent Afrikaner theologians voiced their deep concern at the course of events and their articles appeared as: "Delayed Action". They considered it rather late to voice a protest and hence the title of their book. In 1962 two Afrikaner theologians, Prof. A. van Selms and Prof. A. S. Geysers challenged the doctrine of the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk (N.H.K.) of restricting church membership to whites only with the result that they were both defrocked. The Rev. C. F. Beyers Naudé who was the moderator of the Southern Transvaal Synod of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (N.G.K.) was defrocked for accepting the position of Director of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa: the Institute seeks to unite Christians of all races and denominations and to make Christianity more of a 'living force' than it is at present in South Africa. In October 1965 four Afrikaner theologians who were members of the Christian Institute sent a letter to the 1,500 ministers of the N.G.K. warning that a strong political current was flowing in South Africa "in the direction of making the political ideology of Apartheid the highest authority over the consciences of the people, elevating it above the Word of God as the yardstick of the Christian faith."

These men offer a resistance to Apartheid founded on the Bible. Time is in their favour; the Word of God is of eternal value whereas a political system is of a transitory nature — see Luke 3:1-2.

The effect of Afrikaner resistance

The resistance of these Afrikaner theologians has adequately rejected the myth of a Scriptural justification

for Apartheid. They have driven pro-Apartheid theologians on the defensive. No rational Afrikaner theologian would still dare to defend Apartheid on Biblical grounds in an open, public debate in which his views can be challenged. Apartheid has been shown to be indefensible.

Nobody can still accuse all Afrikaners of being pro-Apartheid. All Afrikaners are not racialists. This distinction is necessary to make. The Christian calling is not to oppose Afrikaners simply because they are Afrikaners, but to oppose Apartheid as a system. It is of course to the eternal discredit of that dwindling breed of Afrikaners that they equate Afrikanerdom with Apartheid and look upon Apartheid as their way of life. This is dangerous and short-sighted. Christians should never permit themselves to be so blinded by any worldly systems.

These Afrikaner theologians who oppose Apartheid will find their names shine like the glitter of a precious stone in the future history of South Africa. They will get the honour of having rescued Afrikaner theology from perversion and of having defended the Christian faith. Apartheid will then only be a ghost memory.

The resistance of English Churches

The English churches have always been fortunately free from any attempts to soil theology by providing a Biblical justification for Apartheid. The very word Apartheid is alien to them. This is at once their strength and also their weakness. Many of them are still against the excesses of Afrikaners and against the National Party rather than being against racialism, the central evil. Racialism in

any guise is irreconcilable with the Christian faith.

The English-language churches are, however, not inhibited by the isolationism in which the Afrikaners find themselves. All major English-Protestant churches are organized in the South African Council of Churches. This body produced the now famous "Message to the People of South Africa" in which separate development was clearly rejected on theological grounds. This Message together with the Cottesloe Consultation Report in 1960 could still serve as a "Declaration of Barmen" on South African soil.

These churches also belong to the World Council of Churches whose rejection of Apartheid has never been in doubt. Furthermore, they maintain valuable links with churches in Britain. They also receive valuable moral support from Christians in Britain as was revealed by the publication "THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA. A STUDY BY BRITISH CHRISTIANS" (Published for the British Council of Churches by SCM Press, London, 1965).

In view of this it is rather sad that the Christian churches in Holland have not yet come together and produced a report on the South African question which could serve as guidance to churches in Holland. This is even more important for the Reformed (Gereformeerde) Christians in Holland because they still maintain a link with two Afrikaner churches in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (R.E.S.). This is the only international body with which these Afrikaner churches still maintain contact. The effect that this would have on Afrikaner Christians could be considerable.

The Challenge to South African Churches

The challenge to the churches in South Africa lies primarily in their ability to preserve the purity of the Christian faith. To put it in the words of a Methodist minister, the Rev. Leslie A. Hewson: "Our history has made us one multi-racial church and given us pastoral care of the greatest missionary church in South Africa. Fidelity to that ideal is laid upon us by our understanding of the New Testament, and by the events in which we believe God speaks to our time. We understand Him to be saying that not in 'Apartheid', but in 'eendrag' (unity) lies the true destiny of our land". (From: AN INTRODUCTION TO SOUTH AFRICAN METHODISTS). If this is true for the Methodist Church, then surely it must also be true for all Christian churches, namely that the voice of God says that the destiny of South Africa does not lie in Apartheid, but in unity; a unity in which all the physical differences between brown, black and white would disappear in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is only when this happens in a practical sense that one will be able to say that theology has matched the political situation in South Africa. To this aim all Christians should work, pray and dedicate themselves.

* * *

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THE POSITIVE ANSWER

Dr. W. B. DE VILLIERS

This was the final lecture of a series of three on "Positive Christian Action in a Time of Crisis" held by Dr. de Villiers at the Ranch House College, Salisbury, Rhodesia in October 1968.

Wrestling with all the implications of our main subject, we have dealt thusfar with the preliminary questions: What is the crisis? and Who is the Christian? Now comes the crunch and we have to face the most difficult question of all: Does the Christian have an answer to the real problem of all time, which essentially underlies also the crisis of our time, the problem of sin?

The answer is, has always been and must always be an unqualified "Yes!" But one of the sad features of our

time is the diffidence, the lack of positiveness with which even Christians are mumbling this "Yes" ever

so faintly. The very people who should loudly be shouting "Yes!" are all too prone to whisper, "Well, yes — perhaps". Is it not true that we as Christians have become rather apologetic about Christianity as a positive answer; that we have become so numbed by the spirit rife in the world today that even we have our doubts about this "Yes"? We say it softly; we say it with a shrug of the shoulders: "Yes, maybe". Is this not what

has gone wrong with us? Is this not where we Christians have failed Christianity — and the world to which we Christians have been given as “the salt of the earth”?

“Maybe”

No wonder the world feels that our affirmation must be taken with a pinch of salt — as we ourselves frequently take our Christianity with a pinch of salt. We have our unspoken inner reservations. “Alright”, we say to ourselves, “it was still good enough for our fathers; it was fine for our grandfathers. But times have changed, Things are different now; things are more difficult nowadays. The problems of our time are not quite as straightforward as those our elders had to deal with. To be sure, Christianity still has some sort of answer to our present-day problems, but only one of many answers”. This is what we whisper to ourselves — knowing full well that, if we were only true to the faith we profess, we should be saying out loud: “Christianity has the only answer!”

The trouble with us is that we have become “perhaps” Christians, “maybe” Christians. Is this really saying too much? Let us only give an honest answer to the question whether we really still believe in the ultimate efficacy of Christianity. The Gospel of Christ, this “old wives’ tale”, does it still have any meaning whatsoever for us in our twentieth century? Are there no nagging doubts in our minds?

After all, Christianity has been around for some two thousand years, and look at the mess we are in! Christianity has had its great preachers and expounders and prophets; it has had lengthy tomes written about it; its message has been carried to the ends of the earth by its dedicated missionaries — and look at the mess we are in! How can we still say that Christianity has the answer, the only answer? Has it really — in our own minds, in our own hearts? If we do not sincerely believe it, we are talking into the wind; also into the winds that are so swiftly changing over our African continent.

Only Answer

I, too, am tempted to doubt at times. And yet I know, deep down, that Christianity, this more-than-worldly phenomenon that has survived for two thousand years, **has** the ultimate answer; that it has not survived in vain.

To be sure, far more sensational things have happened in the history of man since Christ died on the cross. The oceans have been spanned, the vast riches of earth discovered. The Americans have just recently circled the moon. Such events have been far more dramatic, far more capable of making the imagination boggle. But somehow they all become relegated to their proper perspective as time passes.

The one event, however, which the passing of history has not succeeded in reducing to something relatively unimportant and irrelevant is the event of Christ’s coming to earth, His death and His resurrection. Throughout the centuries, ever anew, man has stood amazed all over again when the real significance of this event dawned upon him. History has never managed to absorb and digest this event. After two thousand years, Christianity still stands knocking at the door of man’s spirit, is still relevant, is still of vital importance. Deep down in our hearts, all of us realise that this is true: Christianity still has the answer, the only answer.

Certainly, the answer has not always come across very clearly. It has often been vague; often been so feeble as to be drowned by the clamour of the world; often not been heard at all. But, whenever this has happened, it has not been the fault of the Christian Gospel itself, but the fault of the practitioners of Christianity, of the so-called Christians, of the trusted standard-bearers of Christ’s Kingdom: those who were supposed to stand with their heads high and to proclaim in the the Name of the Lord: “We have the answer, the only answer!”

Of course, the answers of the world that come and go are superficially more impressive and appear to be far more tangible, far more real. Science has provided us with the most fantastic achievements. At Cape Kennedy we are now regularly confronted by a huge man-made edifice, more than thirty stories high, which shoots up from earth and communes with the moon and the stars. But thousands of years ago, man also built himself an impressive edifice that pointed towards the heavens, the tower of Babel. And as it arose, so it was destroyed and became relativised in its importance. So do all the works of men ultimately come and go. But the simple message of a lowly carpenter’s

son still survives among all these comings and goings. And it is only a fool who will persist in saying: “There is no God”.

Perspective

Of all the answers ever given to man, the answer of Christianity has proved to be the most lasting, outlasting all the solutions for the problems of the world that man himself has devised. Let us only cast our eyes over the vast vista of history and reflect upon all that men have achieved; how these achievements have come and gone. And let us then start thinking in terms of the eternal: of the millions of lives that have been changed by the Gospel; of those Christian men and women who have truly lived by their faith, who have often died for their faith. Let us remember how much in human history has been engraved in the records of eternity by the community of believers, the true Church of Christ. Yes, let us reflect upon human history and get things into proper perspective. Let us realise that Christianity is by no means as impotent as we are sometimes tempted to think; that so often that which has been lastingly achieved has been achieved in the Name of Christ alone — not in the name of any other god.

This, then, is the only real message I can leave with you Christians in Rhodesia: that, ultimately, **Christian** action is the only action that measures up to the demands also of our time, as it has always measured up to the demands of all time.

But then we must also immediately proceed to ask ourselves honestly: this Christian action, has it ever been really earnestly, dedicatedly tried, put to the test in our time, with reference to our specific problems? Indeed, we have tried a lot of things. We have experimented with everything known to us. We have taxed our ingenuity in numerous attempts at finding solutions for the problems that beset us and our world — all with relatively little success. Human science in our time has advanced by incredible leaps and bounds. It has chalked up the most stupendous achievements. Today it is reaching to the very stars. And yet it has never been able to effect the slightest improvement in human morality or to alleviate in any way man’s inhumanity to man. If we take a really long look at all the noble attempts that have been made, dedicatedly made, desperately made to make a better man of man and a better world of his world, our hearts

are filled with despair. If only one per cent of all that energy could have been devoted to real Christian action — has it ever occurred to us what would have happened then? How seriously have we ever dedicated ourselves to the implementation of the oldest, the most proven, the most trustworthy of solutions: Christian action?

Action

This, of course, leads to the unavoidable question: What is Christian action? Have we ever given this question some serious thought? In our given situation — in your situation here in Rhodesia — in our individual, individually responsible situation, in our family situation, in our national situation, in our situation as citizens of the world — what is Christian action?

It is obviously impossible for me to give a truly adequate reply, to go into the fulness of the Gospel and its detailed spelling-out of the answer. But permit me, please, to dwell, however briefly, on what I regard as a few of the most salient characteristics of real Christian action.

In the first place — and this, together with what follows, ties in with what has gone before — Christian action is decidedly **humble action**: not arrogant action, not the action of one who knows better than everybody else, not “whatever you can do, I can do better” action, not the action of one who is completely sure of himself.

The Christian is never really sure of himself. Even as Christian, he is still a sinner, fully aware, precisely because he is a Christian, of the uncertainty and insecurity that sin bears in its train. His whole existence is an existence on his knees, an existence in prayer, an existence in continuous dialogue with God, from whom, ever and anon, he receives guidance as to the way in which he may regain and retain his surety in Christ. When the Christian makes a statement, it is not “So say I”, but “Thus saith the Lord”.

What truly perplexes one these days is the way in which so many Christians are making the most positive statements — frequently, in fact, in the name of Christianity itself — with an arrogance and hauteur which should be completely foreign to the Christian. For the Christian is, must needs be, a humble man, a servant of God and the neighbour. And Christian action

must under all circumstances be characterised by the humility of Christ Himself.

Although always humble, Christian action also has to be **persistent and unremitting action**, however. This is the one thing that characterises the Church of Christ throughout its history: its nagging quality, its persistent chipping away at the walls of prejudice, injustice and unbelief. If we cannot achieve anything more concrete, let us at least be persistent; let us never let up, let us nag. Christianity is a nagging religion, and its message is a nagging message. True Christian action can never be merely sporadic action: it must be persistent, unremitting, never ceasing.

Gala Christianity

Thus it is no good at all to be active as a Christian only on Sundays. Christian action only on high days and holidays is no good at all. Calling upon God to be the God of our people only at our special people’s festivals is no good at all. One cannot be a Christian, and a people cannot be a Christian people, only on gala occasions. Christianity does not breathe easily in a circus atmosphere. Rather is it something which has relevance when one gets up in the morning and when one goes to bed at night — and at all the humdrum moments in between. It applies to every second of our daily life, especially when no one sees us, when there is no audience to applaud the nobility of our actions.

Then, of course, Christian action is essentially, **kneeling, consultative action**. The Christian’s activity does not consist of dramatic gestures and the performance of athletic feats. His supreme athletic feat is getting down on to his knees and praying, consulting with God. Our inspiration is all too short-lived and we recognise the need in ourselves for divine guidance from moment to moment. That is why the Christian’s most sensible and purposeful action is to get right down on his knees — which is actually part of his humility — and to pray: “Help me, Father; alone I am powerless!”

The basic cause of man’s powerlessness and fear of action is his loneliness and isolation, of course. That is why it is so important to realise that Christian action — if my understanding of the Bible is at all to be trusted — must also be **concerted action**. At first glance the Christians of this world are indeed a sorry lot,

for in them you basically have a collection of abject sinners; of weak men, of poor men, of tiny men, of despised men. And yet this tattered demoralised assembly of seeming misfits are capable of achieving miracles, if only they were to act in unison. That is where their real strength lies: in their unity, in the fact that all of them together—even the weakest among them—constitute the communion of believers, the one body of Christ. That is why our striving towards the ideal of ecumenical concord between Christians should be a ceaseless endeavour.

Quarrelsomeness

The facts, as opposed to the ideal, are unfortunately most depressing. Has it ever struck you, for instance, how shockingly argumentative and quarrelsome we Christians have become? I do not know about you people here in Rhodesia, but we in South Africa certainly have very little to be proud of. **There we have the usual confusing variety of churches and sects, a confusion worse confounded by divisions along linguistic and ethnic lines. Our Afrikaans churches, which are adamantly divided among themselves, refuse to have any truck with our English churches — largely for political and racialistic, not religious reasons. Our white Christians regard a black Christian sharing their religious services as a decided oddity. And our black Christians are increasingly breaking away from the traditional “white man’s churches” on account of their serving “a white man’s God”. Everyone wants something for himself from Christianity; few ever pause to think what they can contribute to Christianity. Of concerted action there is almost no evidence any more.**

May I, at the risk of being accused of cliché-mongering, remind you of the old adage: “United we stand, divided we fall”. In our inner divisions as Christians we are in fact serving Satan most efficiently. For this is his most useful weapon against Christianity: creating divisions among Christians. As long as we Christians persist in speaking with so many different voices, vociferously arguing about the relative merits of our own interpretations of Christianity, so long shall we remain impotent and powerless. History has taught us again and again that only a few men standing together in Christ and boldly stating, “This we believe!”, can achieve near miracles and can rock the powers of this world to their very foundations.

But unless we achieve this togetherness, this fellowship, this brotherhood, this unison, this unanimity, all our fondly conceived Christian action flows away to sand and disappears.

I would finally like to mention just one thing more as a, perhaps not so obvious, characteristic of Christian action. In the final tally, it is also **trusting and confident action, venturesome action, fearless action**. Because the Christian trusts in God completely, he is committed to action in the service of God and his action is completely **self-committing, committed action**. His action can never be shrewd, clever, diplomatic, pragmatic action. He cannot eat his cake and have it. He must be prepared to cross his own particular Rubicon without looking back doubtfully. He must be prepared to venture, to take whatever risk, to lay everything — if needs be, even his own life — at stake, simply because, through Christ, he possesses the ultimate security without which there can never really be such a thing as positive action.

Committedness

Sadly enough, there is very little of this spirit of committedness and venturesomeness noticeable among our present-day Christians. So often, when something obviously has to be done in the Name of Christ, urgently done, one finds, upon approaching those who are obviously in the position to do it, that they start vacillating. "Oh well yes, but certainly", they will say, "but hold on a moment. Let's first consider the whole matter very carefully. After all, one must count the cost. One must think of our Synod's reaction to this type of thing, y'know old chap. Let's first consult our Elders on this issue: their next meeting is only three months hence."

Is not this our typical Christian reaction these days? A prompt reaction, to be sure, but without any corresponding action: Let us first make certain of retaining our traditional securities. As long as we don't give any offense to those in power (and their influential supporters, of course) and don't endanger the inflow of funds into the coffers of our Church, let us go ahead by all means!

What then, one may well ask, of God on whom we are supposed to rely and in whom we profess to trust? And what about Christ who has already gained the victory that we are merely cashing in upon? **Why are we Christians, if I may**

use a vulgar expression, such "scaredypants"; so fearful, so careful, so sickeningly discreet in our actions?

Imitatio Christi

To conclude, let me briefly refer to the life of Jesus Christ, our Master and Mentor, who must remain for us the supreme example for our own lives. He lived in a situation in many ways very similar to ours today. He, too, was faced with political tensions among his own people which must have made popular sloganeering a grave temptation. The Jews were living under the heel of imperial Rome and frequently had to stomach insults to their national pride. If ever there was a situation custom-made for shouting, "Uhuru!", and for preaching mass rebellion, this was it. But Jesus was not to be tempted. His sole comment — so deflating to nationalist aspirations — was the ostensibly submissive directive: "Give Caesar his due."

Nationalist politics was not Christ's prime concern. He directed His energies elsewhere. His action took place on a different level, assumed another dimension. His action consisted, in the first place, of **fearlessly giving witness** to the Kingdom of God at all times; and, whilst doing so, of calling a spade a spade in His teaching and in His preaching. His approach was by no means conciliatory, despite the fact that the very content of His message was the reconciliation between God and man and man and man. One cannot imagine Him compromising on principle and talking of sin as "not quite playing cricket." When confronted by what was evil, He said: "This is evil. This is of the Devil". And when He met Satan face to face, He cast him out. And when being tempted in the desert, He knew exactly who was tempting Him and firmly resisted the supreme temptation.

Fearless testimony, fearless witness — this was a prime characteristic of the life of Christ, And then not merely verbal witness, but **living witness, witness through His very life, through His daily deeds and actions**. He did not merely tell others what to do. He lived by His own precepts and **showed** them what to do. He did not demand sacrifices of others that He was not prepared to make Himself. When He spoke about the ultimate necessity of laying down one's life for one's fellow, He was prepared to prove it — and did so, on the Cross.

A further aspect that strikes me

about the life of Christ was His **complete lack of impatience**. Outwardly there was no hurry about Christ's life. There was no apparent impatience to get things done immediately. And I think the reason for this was that He expended so much of His active energy on His knees; that His primary action consisted of continually staying in touch with the Father. On His knees, He was perpetually asking the crucial question: "What is Thy will? How can I do Thy will?" And on His knees, time and again, He received the assurance: "This is my will; this is the way I want you to go." And because he had this assurance, He could calmly and patiently walk along that way of pilgrimage that was finally to end on Golgotha — with all the humility in the world, with all the peace of mind, with all the certainty; knowing that whatever happened to Him, He was doing God's will and that His every word and every action were inspired by constant communion with the Source of all human strength. Is not this the real certainty that we modern-day Christians so gravely lack: the certainty we desperately need, so that we, too, may become more patient — but also more effective — in the knowledge of God's will being done through us?

Faith

By way of summing up, then, what is the answer? What is the positive answer of Christianity? The Bible has a special word for it. It is simply **Faith**: Christianity's only answer to the problems of our sinful world.

And immediately, I am sure, many listeners, on hearing this word, will start mumbling to themselves: "Oh my goodness: the hackneyed old message! What does it mean, this hollow phrase: this invisible, intangible thing that the preachers sermonise about so soulfully? How can I touch it? How can I lay my hands upon it? Where can I still see it clearly demonstrated?"

There is plenty of justification for this complaint. For true faith has become a rare commodity among Christians. And there is good reason for confusion. For faith (like "love" and "hope") has become perhaps the most misunderstood and maligned word in our religious vocabulary.

And yet I venture to say to you quite confidently: Have faith! For this is the one thing our modern world desperately needs and cannot afford to dispense with as it is doing at the moment. However little I know about Rhodesia and its pro-

blems, this is the one statement I dare confidently make: Rhodesia needs faith! For this is today the universal need: faith in Jesus Christ our Lord; faith in the power of the Holy Spirit; faith in God Almighty who is still the ruler of this world — also of this part of the world — and whose Kingdom is coming in this world.

Reality and Hope

Let me remind you of the definition of faith provided for us in the Epistle to the Hebrews; "Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of the realities we do not see." Around us there are plenty of seeming realities: the material things we can touch and feel and possess and enjoy. But all these things come and go and ultimately have only a transient reality. That we are already substantially part of that for which we hope, the Kingdom of God; that this

very world of ours belongs to God and that God is steadily fulfilling His purpose with the world — this is the true reality. And this is the reality which faith enables us to see: that every one of us, however unimportant we may appear in the eyes of the world, is God's creature and important in His eyes, as precious to Him as His own child; that everyone of us has a special, divinely ordained task to fulfil upon this earth and that the world needs everyone of us personally and the contribution, however tiny, that we are able to make to it in its preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

This is the reality of our life which faith unveils before us. And this is the ultimate answer of Christianity. It is an old, old story, of course, this story of faith. But in the end it is the only story. However unrewarding faith may seem, ultimately it is the only action that brings real reward,

because it sums up in one word everything we have touched upon as constituting positive Christian action.

Make no mistake: this is not an easy, comfortable message that I bring you. Faith depends upon hope based on the unseen, and the road of faith all too frequently leads to a cross.

But I want to leave you this message also: Do not be afraid of hoping in faith! For beyond the Cross there lies the Resurrection, and we, unlike Christ, are at least spared the devastating doubt of Gethsemane, since we assuredly know that Christ Himself **did** die for us on Golgotha and that He **did** gain the victory over Death and the Lord of Darkness. The battle we are fighting is only a paltry skirmish compared to the decisive battle already won. We are already on the winning side. **Christ** has overcome!

Die Kerk Buite Suid-Afrika

PROF. B. B. KEET

DIE VRAAGSTUK VAN DIE REWOLUSIE NOGEENS

Die Hervormde Sinode het hom in Februarie besiggehou met die behandeling van 'n rapport van die hervormde raad „voor de zaken van overheid en samenleving” oor die onderwerp **Revolusie en Gerechtigheid**. Aanleiding tot hierdie studie was die voorbereiding van die Wêreldraad van Kerke in Uppsala (Julie 1968), plek van vergadering, Lunteren, waar die Gereformeerde Sinode vroeër saamgekom het. In die somervergadering (1968) het die Hervormde Sinode al 'n kort nota oor die revolusie bespreek, waarby besluit is dat daar 'n uitvoeriger studie gemaak sou word, wat nou in behandeling gekom het.

In die begin van hierdie meer uitvoerige studie word gesê, dat dit geen toegewing aan 'n moderne modever-skynsel is wanneer kerke hulle besiggehou met die begrip rewolusie nie. Veeleer is dit ten gevolge van die snelle veranderinge in die samelewing, wat ook die kerke ten diepste raak, dat hierdie kerke hulle afvra: waar staan ons, waarheen is ons op weg, wat mag ons van die mens verwag en watter funksie vervul ons verkondiging in 'n rewolusionêre tydperk? So spreek die nota, waarin daar verder op gewys word dat die stryd om gerechtigheid in ons eeu tot wêreldwye afmeting gegroei het.

„Dit gaan nie alleen om sosiale, maar ook om ekonomiese en politieke hervorming, om radikale vernuwing op wêreldvlak. Nie slegs bevolkings-groepe nie maar hele volke en kontinente het tans in krisisstaat geraak waarvoor alleen deur 'n gesamentlike,

internasionale inspanning 'n begin van 'n oplossing gevind kan word” — so skryf die hervormde raad in sy nota.

Die opset van die nuwe studie is in die eerste plek gerig op 'n presieser definisie van die begrip rewolusie en van die rewolusionêre situasie in hierdie tyd. Daarop volg 'n hoofstuk oor gerechtigheid, dan 'n hoofstuk waarin ondersoek word hoe op hierdie oomblik gevra word na 'n teologiese besinning. Maar in die meeste kerke lê die kanselbybel oop by die Profete, een van die mees rewolusionêre dele van die Bybel. 'n Professor het egter gesê dat dit nie daarop aankom of die waarheid van rewolusie presies gedefinieer moet word nie, maar veel meer hoe en op watter manier dit by die kerklede gebring word. Dit gaan volgens hom, om drie aspekte:

1. die eksplousiewe situasie in Latyns-Amerika;
2. die rewolusionêre beweginge na

die voorbeeld van die studente in Parys;

3. die tegnokratiese rewolusie. Hy sou ook graag wil sien dat die problematiek van geweld en geweldloosheid, asook die vraagstukke van oorlog en vrede na vore kom.

Die Sinode het besluit om die stuk te aanvaar, aangepas aan die diskussies in die sinode, om 'n beter teologiese fundering daaraan te gee.

Van Gereformeerde Kant is deur 'n aantal lede van die wetenskaplike staf van die Vrije Universiteit, onder wie die rektor magnificus, prof. de Gaay Fortman, kommentaar in 'n ope brief gelewer oor die gereformeerde kanselboodskap in verband met Praag. Teleurstelling word uitgespreek hieroor deur 125 persone, 'n aansienlike getal, as in aanmerking geneem word dat dit vakansietyd was. Hulle konstateer met leedwese dat van hierdie kanselboodskap die suggestie uitgaan dat taak en roeping van Christene in die huidige politieke situasie beperk is tot gebed vir verdruktes en verdrukkers. Verder betreur hulle dit dat hierdie kanselboodskap nie oproep tot besinning oor bestaande militêre en politieke verhoudinge nie.

Briewe aan Trouw, waaraan hier-

die berig ontleen is, spreek o.a. soos volg: „Is dit die een of ander angsvir skeuring dat ons gereformeerde „voormanne” so angsvallig vermy om konkreet te word. Moet dan altyd die kool, die geit, ds. Vorster, die Nato en allerlei gevestigede gespaar word? Begryp ons dan nie dat ons gebed vir Tsjeggo-Slowakge volgens die Evangelie waardeloos is nie, solank ons nie bely dat ook ons westerse hande so vuil is nie? Tot my groot droefheid en ergenis kon ons lees dat daar van verskeie kerke ’n getuigenis uitgegaan het insake die besetting van Tsjeggo-Slowakye, maar dat die gereformeerde kerke dit nie onderteken het nie. Ek verklaar hiermee dat ek, as ampsdraer van die Geref. Kerk van Amsterdam-Centrum, my skaar agter die hoofredaksie van **Trouw**.

Gebed vir die vierde Algemene Vergadering van die Wêreldraad van Kerke

Die volgende gebed is uitgespreek voor die vergadering, voorafgegaan

deur Skriflesing uit. Jes. 1:11-17. So dikwels word beweer dat die Wêreldraad onder kommunistiese invloed staan; diegene wat dit beweer, sal met moeite die kommunisme met hierdie gebed kan vereenselwig. Ek gee dit so getrou as moontlik weer:—

Hoor, Here ons nederige voorbidding in die Naam van Jesus Christus. Gedenk, o Here, ons algemene kerk en vul dit met u Gees, ondersteun almal wat u volk oral bedien, wat die Evangelie verkondig, wat jong mense en kinders onderrig, wat die siekes besoek, wat die dwalendes vermaan en wat die raadgeewinge van u Woord verkondig.

Ons vra vir ’n dieper beseef van die verhouding tussen Jesus Christus en sy Kerk en vir ’n groter gewilligheid om u wil vir u Kerk te verstaan.

Ons smeeek U om vergewing, omdat ons nie geleef of liefgehad het op so ’n wyse dat U nie ’n vreemdeling in ons wêreld is nie. Ons vra u vergewing omdat ons U ’n vreemdeling gemaak het, selfs in u liggaam, die

Kerk; omdat ons nie u taal gepraat het nie, omdat ons nie voel wat U voel nie, omdat ons in geestelike armoede leef met die las van ons tradisies en gewoontes en ons persoonlike vooroordele.

Gee, o Here, dat u Kerk wat een fondament en een hoof het, ook een liggaam mag word wat een geloof bely en sy Here volg in heiligheid en liefde, soos u Seun, ons Verlosser Jesus Christus, gedoen het.

O Here, ons bid vir almal wat vervreemd en uit ons gemeenskap uitgestoot is, vir almal wat in ellende en onderontwikkeling verkeer, vir almal wat stry om geregtigheid. Vir die krankes en dié wat alle hoop op genesing verloor het, vir dié wat honger het, vir dié wat ly aan rasse-diskriminasie, vir dié wat weens hul ideale vervolgd word, vir gevangenes, insonderheid politieke gevangenes.

Heerlikheid en eer aan die Vader wat ons geskape het, aan die Seun wat ons verlos, aan die Heilige Gees wat ons heilig! Amen.

MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA FROM LATIN AMERICA

JOHANN MAREE

It was my privilege to attend a student congress in Manchester at the beginning of April this year. The congress was organised by the British Student Christian Movement in close collaboration with other student organisations. The theme of the congress was “Response to Crisis” the crisis being the situation the world finds itself in at present. One-third of the world has wealth and power; the other two-thirds live in poverty and misery. The division between the “haves” and “have-nots” is growing. The cold war between the capitalist and the communist worlds continues to threaten the very survival of mankind. Racial tensions are increasing. 1400 students from all over Britain and many overseas countries, particularly from the Third World, congregated in Manchester for 5 days to investigate the crisis and attempt to respond to it.

One of the guest speakers at the Congress was Archbishop Helder Camara, or Dom Camara as he is referred to in Portuguese, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Olinda and Recife in North-East Brazil. The 60 year old Dom had a gentleness and charm, an inward glow of tranquillity and joy, that spread itself out to every member of the audience and filled each one of us with a desire to possess that divine quality. His message to us gave us all inspiration and hope. He gave us spiritual guidance and hope and although his message was addressed to the youth of Britain it has a universality about it that will make it a message to all oppressed

and concerned people at all times. Particularly it seems applicable to the Christians in South Africa today and this is why I want to share his message with you.

But before I give the content of his address it is necessary for us to understand the situation as it is in Brazil today. Then we can understand why this disciple of Christ is so remarkable in speaking out like this on a worldwide platform. In 1964 the Brazilian army with the overt support of the United States of America ousted President Joao Goulart because of the severe economic problems the country faced, an annual inflation rate of 87%, and because he was too

“leftist” for their liking. He wanted to make Brazil more economically independent of the U.S.A. and was establishing relations with Cuba and China. The new rulers managed to salvage the country’s inflationary trend and brought it down to 24% last year. They have also introduced programmes in the construction industry which, although noteworthy, are only benefitting the wealthy regions and classes in the country.

The army rule has become increasingly oppressive and as time progressed more and more people have become disillusioned with it. The public revolt reached its highlight in June of last year when 100,000 protesters, including middle-class professionals, housewives, journalists, pop-singers and students (one of their leaders being Vladimir Palmeira, son of a Protestant senator), turned out in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Over 20 people were killed during the unrest at the time. Since then public protests have been banned and in December last year President Arthur da Costa e Silva ended parliament by means of

the Fifth Institutional Act. This followed a rebellion in Parliament when the government and opposition parties united in condemning the military junta.

Their rule is now extremely repressive: trade unions are forbidden to strike, and virtually all leading politicians are banned from participation in public life. The press and television are closely supervised. Dozens of Brazilians are in jail on unspecified political charges. Costa e Silva recently broadened the list of offences punishable by jail sentences to include even talking or writing in terms that have a hidden meaning. Military tribunals have superseded courts of law and the Habeas Corpus principle is destroyed. The atmosphere of intimidation is so great that only the Catholic Church dares to speak out in public. And those few individuals such as Dom Camara who do are immediately branded as 'subversive' and 'Communist'. As the rulers have clamped down hard on Marxists and other secular spokesmen the gap to speak out against the tyranny that exists has been filled increasingly by active priests.

These priests have not only spoken out against oppression but also against the exploitation by the rich of the poor in the country. For in Brazil there is a most uneven spread in the wealth of the country: 94% of the acreage is possessed by only 6% of the landowners who pay their peasants extremely poor wages. The minimum wage level which exists in theory is not carried out in practice. Another problem that exists is that of internal colonialism as Dom Camara calls it. By that he means the system of exploitation by a developed region in the country of an underdeveloped region. For example, the Brazilian industry of the South-Central has made large profits from the flow of raw materials supplied by the North-East and the North, both of which are still underdeveloped.

Against this background we can see why Dom Camara also has a message for the people of South Africa even though in Manchester he was addressing young idealistic students. He started his address by saying we should complete the message of the Beatles because our young colleagues the Beatles protested against the monstrous way we live today, with our false values, against the ridiculous mechanisation of everything, including man himself. He lists the seven deadly sins of the contemporary

world, sins which young people have identified and repudiated. They have joined the ranks against racism, colonialism, war, paternalism, pharisaism, estrangement and fear.

Some of these sins speak for themselves, but Dom Camara has a deep insight into the perniciousness of particular sins. The best I can do is to quote him verbatim on those sins.

Racism:

"Racism is not a simple matter of white against black; it is also black systematically shutting itself off from white. The white man once convinced himself that he was superior to the coloured man, that he had a special mission to dominate the world. If there is any merit in this delusion it is up to him to help the poorest races to achieve a human level of life — negroes in Africa, in the U.S.A., in Brazil, in Haiti; Asians in Asia; Mulattos in Latin America.

Colonialism:

"Young people know that in our time there is no longer any place for colonialism. They know that political without economic independence is virtually worthless; they know that to attribute the very low economic level of the Third World to the incapacity, prejudice and dishonesty of coloured peoples is to connive at the grave injustices committed by the developed peoples against the underdeveloped. Compare for example the very low prices which are paid for the primary products of the poor countries to the invariably high prices paid for the industrialised products of the rich.

"Young people do not want to see a world divided between countries which achieve industrialization and those which sink even further into underdevelopment and want. They reject comfort and luxury, for they know that it is provided by the blood, sweat and tears of two-thirds of humanity.

Paternalism:

"Paternalism in society is the attitude which creates all facilities for a servile state — security against accidents at work, education, social assistance, good salaries, everything that you can consider necessary, provided that the beneficiaries are not expected or intended to use either brain or will.

"Paternalism is afraid of the awakening of conscience, when eyes are opened to social realities; paternalism

dislikes the attitude of men who, ungratefully, reject benefits and demand rights.

Fear:

"Young people see the fear of the poor and the fear of the rich. Fear of want, hunger, unemployment, of losing their wretched hovels, fear of arrest, of being beaten and killed. People are afraid to speak, to answer up, to upset anyone. Two-thirds of humanity live in this fear.

"When one thinks of the happy and prosperous third, one ought to think it has no fear. But it has. It is afraid of Communism, of revolution, of structural change. It fears what we Brazilians call "conscientizacao" the awakening of the conscience."

His message ended with these words exhorting, encouraging and inspiring us all: "It is good to take up your stand against the seven deadly sins of today. But you can and must go further. You must create a multi-racial world, in which different races respect one another, associate and mingle as brothers. You must change fundamentally the pattern of international trade, eliminate neo-colonialism and promote the development of all mankind. You must be afraid of only one thing, the fear of being afraid.

"Even though you may not know it, the greatest friend of all young people will be with you. This friend is capable of understanding your excesses, encouraging your generosity and crowning your hopes with success. You will have a friend who will never deceive you, Jesus Christ."

A very central part of Dom Camara's message is the "conscientizacao" of the people, the awakening of the conscience of the people not only to be aware of the needs of their society, but also to have the willpower to do something about it. It is necessary that we first have a spiritual insight and concern for the suffering of others but that in itself is not sufficient; we must back it up with action. We must develop a strategy for action, a definite plan that we believe can achieve what we set out to achieve.

What this strategy must be I am in no position to postulate from my comfortable abode in Oxford. It is also a matter for the individual to awaken his conscience and commit himself to the level he is prepared to go. Fortunately again, Dom Camara gives us guidance through his own personal life. He is in dialogue with young military leaders in an attempt

to win them over to support the real interests of the people. Recently when a Methodist minister was imprisoned this Roman Catholic Archbishop personally went to the prison commissioner to request the release of the

minister. On another occasion when some priests were imprisoned he set up a personal vigil outside the prison building until the priests were released.

We can thank God for such spirit-

ual leaders as Dom Camara and those inside South Africa who act as an example to us. It is also up to us as laymen to act as inspiration to them and to the two-thirds of humanity who are still in bondage.

LETTERS / BRIEWE

LUTHER ONVOLLEDIG AANGEHAAL

Ds. Nico van Loggerenberg, Posbus 346, Benoni.

Die verleentheid van mnr. J. A. Duigan, sien *Pro Veritate* 15:2:69, met my skrywe in die Desember-uitgawe is ooglopend en sy uitdaging verplig my om hom verder te kasty.

Die geskryfte van die gewese Roomse Katolieke, Maria Monk en Chiniguy, is aan my totaal onbekend, maar Die Roomse dogmas en Maria-aanbidding, die onbybelse onfeilbaarheidsleer, die mens-verafgoding, die sogenaamde voortgesette openbaringsleer of onfeilbare tradisie, die hoogheilige pouslike primaat (Roomse Kerk) oor die staat en die ondergeskiktheid van die Bybel aan die Roomse tradisie is aan my goed bekend.

Mnr. Duigan moet sy opponente se woorde suiwer en korrek aanhaal anders gee hy valse getuienis. My woorde in die Desember-uitgawe beteken gans-en-al iets anders as die betekenis wat hy in die Februarie-uitgawe daaraan probeer gee: „Ek verkies om nie te reageer op opmerkings wat persoonlik van aard is nie”. Waarom het hy hierdie woorde onvolledig aangehaal, en daarby nog in 'n verkeerde verband?

Waarom word Luther se woorde so onvolledig en sonder enige verband aangehaal? Moet ek daarvan aflei dat Mnr. Duigan Luther hoegenaamd nie verstaan nie en daarom verkeerd gebruik, of dat hy hom wel begryp en tog verkeerd aanhaal?

(a) Luther het geleer: die mens het geen goeie werke nodig om salig te word nie, want Jesus Christus het die saligheid volkome verdien en die mens ontvang dit as 'n genadegawe deur die geloof. Ef. 2:8, Gal. 3:11 en 13, Rom. 1:17 ens., ens.

Hierteenoor leer Rome: die sondaar ontvang met die doop 'n mate van genade, middelike instorting van genade, wat hom in staat stel om die saligheid en heiligheid deur goeie werke gedeeltelik en geheel te verdien. Luther het die Bybelse leer van genade teenoor die Roomse verdienstelikheid van goeie werke gehandhaaf. Hy was reg, die mens het geen goeie werke vir die saligheid nodig nie.

(b) Die Jakobus-brief verkondig nie die verdienstelikheid van die Roomse goeie werke soos mnr. Duigan probeer te kenne gee nie, maar hy leer die geloofswerke van die ware geloof, die werke van dankbaarheid deur die gelowige. Hy is dankbaar omdat hy salig is en hy vereer God met sy goeie werke. Mat. 5:16. Hierteen het Luther geen beswaar gehad nie, hy het slegs die Roomse dwaalleer van verdienstelike goeie werke verwerp. Luther en Jakobus het saamgestem, daarom was Luther reg en die Roomse kerk bly verkeerd.

Mnr. Duigan se begrip van die Bybelse leer, die leer wat Luther verkondig het, sowel as sy begrip van sy eie kerk se leer, is skokkend. In sy ywer om die Roomse dwaalleer te regverdig laat sy onderskeiding hom elke keer in die steek en dan onderskat hy die insig van sy medemens. Dit is werklik moeilik om 'n gesprek met hom te voer.

(*Effens verkort.—Redakteur*).

ARTICLE OBSCURED BY "AMPUTATION"

The Rev. Douglas Bax, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Somerset Road, Cape Town.

Thank you for publishing my article, "Can We Not Walk Together?"

in your April issue. I would be grateful, however, if you could point out in next month's issue that my article was handed on to you for printing by way of third party who amputated it by completely excising the introduction with which it began. It was this excision that obscured the following:—

1. *The Title.* The introduction expressed my grief that a division based on misunderstanding and suspicion seemed to be growing between the Baptists and other Christians who equally seek to be true to the gospel, and specifically that as a result of the publishing of the *Message to the People of S.A.* the Baptist Union Conference has come near to withdrawing from the S.A. Council of Churches.
2. *The object of the article's criticism.* This was the Baptist reaction to the *Message* expressed in the *Statement of Attitude and Faith* issued by the Executive Committee of the Baptist Union at the end of last year together with the Editorial on "Politics and the Gospel" in the November issue of *The South African Baptist*, which came out before the *Statement* (hence the references in my article to "the SAB Editorial", which were quite incoherent without the introduction).
3. *The four sections of the article.* These were not arbitrary. My introduction had pointed out that the fundamental criticism of the *Statement* against the *Message* was that it had made a "dangerous confusion" of four pairs of ideas. Each of the sections of my article was headed by one of these pairs of ideas and discussed the *Statement's* criticism of the alleged confusion between them.

(*Peccavimus. We sincerely apologise. — Editor*).