

Giving Account of your Hope. 1979

1 Peter 3:15

Be always ready with your defence whenever you are called to account for the hope that is in you, but make that defence with modesty and respect.

A person who has no faith in the future is a person who ~~has~~ consequently has lost hope.

During the past 2 years in my pastoral counselling I've often and increasingly been struck by the marked contrast in the attitudes and outlook ^{on the future} of whites in general and of blacks on the other hand - especially as related to their understanding and expression of hope for the future. Amongst whites I discovered a wide and varying spectrum ^{of feelings} ranging from confident optimism (based mainly on their emphasis on white ecc., material or political strength) ^{to} others ~~partly~~ involved in economic activities to cash in on the economic boom and at the same time obtain as much enjoyment as possible out of life, wealth and comfort - and ending with many trying to disguise a deep hidden anxiety and loss of hope as reflected in such questions as: what about our children's future? How safe is this country going to be in 10 years time?

On the side of the black community, I've found an equally wide range of feelings - but of a different nature. Amongst many of the older generation there was a ^{attitude of} spirit of fatalism leading to apathy and despair and acceptance of their plight as token of God's will. But ~~there were also~~ ^{amongst} many adults I ~~also~~ found a spirit of grumbling frustration and anger based on a new awareness of their condition whilst among the younger generation I discovered a new vigour struggle of calm conviction and of hope that liberation is nearer than ever before. - *despite detentions, bombings, imprisonment the future is theirs!*

In reflecting on these widely differing attitudes of hope and expectation it struck me that on both sides thousands of Christians were ~~not~~ involved, people confessing the same Christ as Lord, ^{as one} belonging to the same church, subscribing to the same faith - then why this almost unbridgeable gap in understanding of the hope?

- ① Because of totally different interpretation of the ~~same~~ ^{concept} Christian hope
- ② Because of lack of agreement of what justice ^{is} the Biblical sense implies
- ③ Because of practically total lack of common life, experience, concerns etc.
The grounds for common hope were absent!

nature and the

what is the foundation upon which all authentic Christian hope rests?

- ① Belief in a God who is truly loving as well as just
- God: Christ dying on the cross - that is the essential diff. between ordinary human hope & Christian hope: the cross of Xt
- ② Belief in victory of goodness and justice over forces of evil and injustice

- But of that victory is the forgiveness which God offers and which we have to accept - and offer to others - of for all evil and injustice done by man to man
- Knowledge that struggle for justice, suffering and sacrifice have not been in vain - *and will not be in vain*

- ③ Belief in the total renewal of all human life - individual as well as communal and of restoring it as from the moment of creation (1 Cor. 1: 14-20)

How to give account of that hope
in us?

① Verbal confession and personal testimony
of the nature and strength of that
hope in each of us as Christians - to
clearly declare what I believe and why
- Requires honesty to admit where
that hope has been found to be wavering,
to be inadequate, not to have provided
all the answers to many vexing questions
of life and death

② Concrete proof through specific actions
and attitudes of how that hope operates
in our daily lives - as we struggle with
situations of all kinds in which
we have to contend

③ A period of silence and withdrawal as
one way of giving account of that hope
in us - where ~~the~~ ^{our} testimony has been
deliberately trusted, despised, rejected,
scorned then God sometimes call upon
his followers to become silent E.g.
Jeremiah, Christ.

History has proved that many times
the testimony of silence has been more
fruitful than all the sermons or
speeches of a life-time!

④ Humility in testimony as a proof
that the presence of such a hope is
not because of our personal virtue
of goodness or strength