

(Acts 2 vs 42-47)

(O.T. : Isaiah 59 vs 21 - 60 vs 5.)

Acts 2 vs 42-47.

Dank vir uitnodiging - roep baie geheiligde hewensinge
op van een bediening in Pta Oas (1949-53) en blyf in
stud. pastorie in Duerburgweg 53

Na. duns v/and is in ekum. studenteisme. Die woord
"ekumenies" het ~~oorspr~~ is een v.d. Bybelwoorde wat gelei
is met ^{rike} riekend en betekenis. Oorgeklop het dit vir baie
blanke S. Apikaans in skrikwoord, ja selfs in skilwoord
geword - n woord wat hulle met ang en wesens verband.

Die woord word ^{net} 6 maal in d. Bybel gebruik - al 6 keer
in die N.T. (5 maal deur d. skrywer Rukkas en 1 maal
deur die skrywer v.d. Hebreeuws.) en dit het 4 ver-
skillende verwante betekenisse: (1) Die Romeinse ryk (Ruk. 2 vs 1)
(2) Die wêreld in d. algemeen duns die ^{gehele wêreld} ~~gehele wêreld~~ met alles wat
daarop betel (Ruk. 4 vs 5, Ruk. 31 vs 24), (3) die mensdom v.d.
wêreld (Hand 17 vs 6 en 31) (4) die kerk (Heb. 2 vs 5) =
~~die kerklike wêreld~~. Die aangelope haefien het die woord
ekumenies = ekumenies die spesifieke teol. betekenis gekry
van die beweging in die kerk wat die eenheid van alle
Christene nastreef. In my men is die ekumeniese beweging
dus die streming om d. eenheid v.d. kerk soos gestig
deur Jesus v. Nas. te herontdek en te herstel en so die
sandige gebroektheid, verasie die kerk ^{om die een} verval het,
te heel en te gemes. In my S.A. het die Bybel nie in
besondere betekenis omdat na my meete daar geen ander
land is is wêreld is waar die kerk v. Christus so verdeel en
versplite is as in S.A. nie. In d.v. is hd. duns v.a.
in sigbare simbool.

2.

But in order to restore the NT. image of the church as the one body of Christ we have to discover anew what the main characteristics are of the church as the community of believers as founded by Christ and established at Pentecost. If we read, study and reflect on the relevant passages in the gospels and esp. in Acts (2:14-47) there are three outstanding characteristics of this newly-born community which I believe to be the most significant:

(1) A community with a new dimension of love: This is the first striking feature of this small new community called the church - their love towards one another. It would be untrue to state that previously amongst the Jews as a religious community there was no love towards one another - but Pentecost gave birth to a love with a new quality and content, a new depth and dimension which far transcended the ordinary concept of goodwill, sentimental attachment or purely human ties of friendship. This love permeated every sphere of life, it exposed ^{and purified} people's deepest motives and intentions and it purified ^{enriched all hearts} all hearts. This love was offered to every human being, regardless of religion or class or race or sex; furthermore this love drove out all fear towards any person

Jews: clearly defined & restricted.

(3)

(2) A community with a new experience of unity: Through the outpouring of the Spirit these men and women discovered a new unity amongst themselves which transcended the existing divisions of Class, of culture, of race and sex. It in no way implied a denial of these differences - in fact it was just the opposite: there was an acceptance of this reality of rich diversity in human society an indication that these differences were not made a principle of separation or division amongst believers. In this way the unity in Christ which was conferred and practised not only as an invisible, individual spiritual unity but as a visible and concrete expression of their faith transcending the differences which otherwise could lead to division, separation, polarisation & conflict.

(3) A community with a new understanding of justice: Through the outpouring of the Spirit these Christians immediately started to break bread from home to home, to share their income and possessions, to extend this care for people's material need to non-Christians and thus to make available in love the resources of the rich for the needs of the poor. When the widows of the Greek-speaking members were neglected the community chose a team of deacons to attend to their needs. They discovered the real meaning of justice in distribution and of freedom of each ind. believer to give or withhold as he/she felt urged by God's spiritance of a deep concern for truth and justice in all their dealings with each other.

all the above 3 features (love, unity, justice) as well as the other ~~characteristics~~ ^{characteristics} of this new life (love respect for human dignity, humility, penitence) reflected a new life in wholeness, a new vision of unity, a new understanding of God's purpose for the whole world — the ecumene It was by no

means a perfect society with utopian dreams & ideals: it was a community of people with all the weakness, failings & shortcomings of all human beings with one difference: the love of Christ had entered and ^{was born} transforming their whole life and their every relationship.

→ What now are the implications of this Christian faith which we profess and this love which we proclaim?
for ourselves and our society?

- 1) Love: (Love in love)
 - It unearths and uplifts depressed forms of prejudice, bias or fears toward people of other groups, class, races or religions — and removes them not by force but by love!
 - It creates a new sensitivity for the needs of all other human beings, a new concern for all who are suffering for whatever reason
 - It strengthens the wyge to reconcile opposing individuals & groups as well as conflicting interests & systems

- 2) Unity: (Love in unity)
 - The challenge toward Christian unity is a crucial one facing the Church as a whole in S.A. today.
 - It ^{confronts} ~~challenges~~ the D.K. Churches who are deeply divided on the decision of the W.A.S.C. declaring apartheid to be a heresy and the Belhar confession of the N.G. Suiderskerk

~~There was no way of valid, developing and thinking life in separate compartments~~

5.

And whether members & ministers of the D.R. churches like this or not each one of them are being challenged by the H Spirit to choose which God they wish to serve

- The ^{multi-racial} ~~churches~~ supporting the same movement ^{& their members} are equally challenged. In the past these churches (such as the Anglican Church) have made many verbal expressions of their formal support for church unity: but are you really one in Christ with your black, coloured, Indian or African brothers & sisters in Christ? Have you gone out of your way to let them tell you how they view your witness of unity?

- And for all our churches (regardless of cultural or language groups belonging to them): If this unity in Christ is threatened or even partially destroyed by a political policy or by laws enforcably separating people against God's will what do we do?

(Living in justice) at Pentecost

3) Justice: Justice begins within the family of Christians but it does not end there for justice is indivisible.

And we as Christians in SA: ~~or it may~~ do we see the pro urgency and priority of thinking through the example of the first Christians in the sharing of gifts, talents, of income, of possessions? Does it not present a tremendous challenge to the wealth and luxury of a minority ^{an affluent} ^(white) ^{over} against stark poverty of millions in our land? (Campe Leuf). And what about the serious discrimination in education between white & black? And the policy of enforced removals & resettlement of millions of people? How do we reconcile this with the justice which promised and was practised

6.
in Christ's Church of the N.T.?

Love, unity, justice : do you now understand why
I'm saying: the true Christian life cannot be split into
separate compartments where one Christian individual
or group says: I'll undertake the loving part -
you others look after unity or justice!

→ The need for Christians of all denominations
becoming part in S.A. of a confessing move-
ment, a confessing community ~~of Christians~~ pro-
claiming the lordship of Christ and the
living out the life of the Kingdom
of God in obedience to Christ.