

STATEMENT OF POSITION ON SOUTH AFRICA OF THE NSCF COMMITTEE ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

As one expression of the Church, the Body of Christ, in the world the NSCF is devoted to the reconciliation of men to God and to their fellow men individually and through their communities and institutions. The Committee on Southern Africa is constituted to appraise the situation in South Africa and to speak and act for reconciliation there on behalf of the NSCF.

In keeping with its mandate, the Committee has studied apartheid, the Nationalist government's policy of "separate development" for its peoples. It has reviewed the implementation of apartheid to date and investigated its fruits: for South Africa; for the Church; and for South Africa's neighbors, including the United States. The United States is inescapably involved in South Africa's destinies by close political and commercial ties, rapid communications, and the continual danger of escalating nuclear conflict.

From this study the Committee has come to the following position. The Committee acknowledges the complexity of South Africa's problem. It perceives from the history of the United States the powerful feelings of separateness which operate in multi-racial, multicultural societies to produce alienation, exploitation and de-humanization. But its understanding of the work of God in Jesus Christ and of God's redemptive purposes in history prevents its accepting racial alienation and subjection as the correct solution or final word in any contemporary society. The Committee recognizes also that the South African government has made any solution more difficult by suppressing peaceful opposition to apartheid, thereby showing contempt for the consent of the governed. Repentance is necessary to true reconciliation among men; and repentance seems far off in white South Africa.

Edgar Brooks^e makes this very clear in The City of God and Politics of Crisis. "...The Afrikaners...have set nationalism above God. That being so, to what advice can they listen, except indeed St. Augustine's advice to put God first and care not for earthly city. They have forged their nationalism through blood and tears. They have fought the Africans. They have fought the British, lost the war, and after long travail at last won the peace. To give votes to non-whites, even if at first only on a restricted scale, must ultimately spell the political ruin of that exclusive nationalism which they regard (intelligibly, though wrongly) as their most precious possession. The longer they wait, the more grudging their concessions, the more terrible their ultimate ruin--an outward ruin, almost complete, if they are beaten; an inner ruin, quite complete, if they win."

However difficult the situation in South Africa may be, we believe that apartheid is not and will not become a constructive solution. On the contrary, it is storing up fuel for future human conflagration. The Committee condemns apartheid (as it condemns racial segregation and discrimination in the United States and elsewhere) as a system which denies human rights and establishes predation as the law of the land. It finds apartheid to be disastrous for everyone:

For black South Africans because apartheid denies their full humanity, breaks up their families and blocks their future in the State to which their destiny is bound, and because it fosters black racism.

For white South Africans because apartheid drives them to the inner ruin of which Brooks speaks; because apartheid drives them into a false sense of security; because apartheid extends repression and intimidation into the white community, since the subversion of law and justice for the many, subverts law and justice for the few; and because by cutting them off from non-whites apartheid denies its perpetrators the fullness of life which God intended.

For all the peoples of South Africa in the present because their land has been isolated and alienated from the African continent, and in the future because of the mounting spiral of violence and counter-violence.

For the remainder of Africa because apartheid justifies the fears of black Africans and, by providing a continuing focus for anti-white, ~~sentiment~~ sentiment and propaganda, it both splits the human community and deflects energies from the work of constructing a sound modern Africa.

For the world community because apartheid increases the polarization of the white and non-white races, with potentially deadly consequences and because a law as odious as the No Trial Act of 1963 undermines the rule of civilized law everywhere, as did the Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany.

For the universal Church because apartheid has been justified and established by the Nationalists in the name of Christianity; because apartheid disfigures the gospel and betrays the true life of the Church; because apartheid fosters the belief that the African is not welcome in the Church as an equal son of God and a full man and that the Church and the Christian mission are vehicles for white domination.

The Committee realizes that condemnation of apartheid is easy from across the Atlantic but that reconciliation is hard in South Africa. Therefore it does not merely condemn apartheid but involves itself in strategies it considers promising for constructive change in South Africa. The Committee believes that a unified, non-racial, multi-cultural society in which each adult citizen has one vote and in which there is social mobility and a just distribution of wealth is desirable and to be worked for. It recognizes that such a society cannot be attained easily or overnight, and that intermediate forms of social and political organization may have to be adopted before the above can be realized. The Committee believes that all groups in South Africa must meet together to draw up a new constitution which must fully protect both majority and minority against usurpation and tyranny. It urges an entrenched bill of rights to safeguard the future of all groups.
