

Our debt—our mission

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THERE are those among us who claim that apartheid is our traditional way of life. They say that God created races of different colours and that those races should not mingle and intermarry. Then those who think about it in this way must also remember that if God created races of different colours he also gave them different areas of the earth to live in.

To the white man he gave Europe, to the brown man and the yellow man he gave Asia, to the red man he gave North America and to the black man he gave Africa. Then what is the white man doing in Africa? What right has he to be there?

I believe that we have a mandate from God. I believe that we are permitted to be in Africa in accordance with a divine purpose and that we have a mission. That mission is to bring civilisation and culture to the African peoples and to impart to them the teachings of the Christian Faith. On no other ground can we justify our presence here. We are not here merely to possess the land and to repeat the pattern of European existence.

It was the Roman who said that out of Africa there is always something new. We are here to show the new things out of Africa. It just happens that in future every nation will to some extent be faced with the problem of multi-racial living.

We are face-to-face here with that problem in its most complicated form and it is our duty to solve that problem for the benefit of all mankind. We have no right to point a finger at any other nation; to try to justify our own actions by drawing attention to the shortcomings of others.

The world looks to us for a lead in the solution of the problems of multi-racial living; that is why the eyes of the world are upon us. And the world has a right to criticise us if we fail to do our Christian duty and by our actions arouse the resentment of the African peoples.

We are a Christian people. That has been our proud boast ever since we came here. But we must prove that great truth by our actions. To the African peoples we can demonstrate the wonder of the Christian way of life only by our daily conduct.

If we are to fulfil our mission it is not possible for us to live to ourselves alone but if we have the right attitude toward the African peoples there will always be a place for us in Africa. If on the other hand we think only to dominate their lives for our own selfish ends and to keep

them in subjection by force then our lives too will become part of that pattern of violence which has emerged among the European nations in the years of this century and which is even now emerging in Africa.

Time is not on our side any longer. We have come to the cross-roads. We must choose now and because of the conditions that are shaping on this continent that choice for each and every one of us can be stated today in stark simplicity: By which road will you go — the Way of the Machine Gun or the Way of The Cross?

If there is one thing certain it is that we, the North-Europeans in Southern Africa, have not paid our debt to the Past, nor have we fulfilled our mission because we have failed to share with the African the benefits of our civilisation just as we have failed, by living example, to demonstrate to him the wonder of the Christian way of life.

That this should have happened is mainly due to the fact that during the last two hundred years we have gradually become involved in and in the end have become part of the Machine Civilisation which came into being in the North-Western European countries.

Our Age is the Age of the Machine. Our civilisation is a machine civilisation and the machine created by the European peoples have become indispensable to us and aid us in everything we do.

Without a doubt they have made possible for us a very high standard of living and have transformed our lives but they have also caused us to place too great a value on material things and when we come to contemplate what is happening in the world of today it is evident that they have also served to intensify human greed and selfishness.

From the beginning the machines were put to misuse. Not only were they made to produce articles of value to us but they were also made to produce an endless stream of weapons. Those weapons made possible two great wars and even today the machines are still producing the weapons that are keeping the world in a state of turmoil.

On the other hand the machines are producing too many objects. We have too much to choose from and our selfish lives are cluttered up with too many possessions. Material values have become for most of us the only values and we seek only ease and comfort and still softer ways of living.

At the same time our lives are becoming ever more complicated and we no longer seem able to cope with the conditions we ourselves have created. On every hand we see chaotic conditions and the decay of moral values. Self-denial and simple living, sacrifice and service, have little meaning for most of us and those of us who still have ideals are constantly made aware of the lack of the simple virtues of honesty, decency and consideration for others.

The striving onward and upward, the blood, the toil, the sweat and the tears of centuries, the glory and the wonder of life, the dream and the vision — what meaning have these things for us today? Those things that tended to inspire and uplift, to enrich and ennoble other generations we have scorned and derided and we have lost them.

There is nothing left — nothing but our possessions to which we cling and of which we grant to the African only a bare minimum. That is all we now have to give him!

The lesson that History teaches us is that because of human imperfections every great civilisation carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Our way of life, too, is failing and will have to be replaced by something nobler, more just and more true. And this for us has become a matter of urgent necessity.

Too long we have refused to face the realities of our existence. Now Time is not on our side any longer. History will not wait upon us and in this respect even Africa has a message for us, a message that is being urgently impressed upon our minds by recent events, and that message is, that we must share what we have or lose everything.

Many possessions lead to brute selfishness but sharing comes easily to those whose needs are few and who have a simple way of living. Our way of life is *not* the way of life for the African.

He must never lose his simplicity and his readiness to share with his fellowmen.

Somewhere between our many possessions and his simple way of living there must be found a new way of life for both the African and the European. That is the Challenge of Life with which we are now faced.

There was a time when the Europeans would proudly say: "In God we trust!" But we have lost our spiritual values and have put our trust in armaments. Year by year we think only to arm ourselves the more completely against our enemies with ever more powerful weapons and in doing so we are wasting resources that could transform the lives of those among us who live in poverty and want. Yet we are not entirely to blame. The Contamination of Weapons has spread to every part of the earth and we suffer from a World Malady.

It seems to me that our paramount need today is to find a new way of life for ourselves that will meet several essential requirements and to my mind these are that it must give a meaning and purpose to our lives that the African will understand and that will bring to us the goodwill of all the African peoples; it must give to us a secure place in Africa for centuries to come; it must gain for us the approval and cooperation of the leading North-Western European peoples; and in the practical and economic field of endeavour it must again make South Africa a place that will attract capital from overseas.

We must have a change of heart, which lies in our thinking. Our thoughts have hemmed us in and are making us prisoners in our own land. We must have wider horizons and the first essential is that we should end our isolation and begin to think of the needs of Africa as a whole. The time has come to set aside all thoughts of domination, of arrogance and violence and to revise our attitude toward all the African peoples.

BORDER REGION reports with deep and shocked regret the untimely death of TUZETTE DUNCAN-BROWN — on December 31, 1976.

She was a foundation member of the Sash, served many years on the Border Committee, once as Vice-Chairman, but she shunned the limelight, preferring always to being part of the dependable solid core working in the background. She loathed having to demonstrate but never refused to do so.

Her quiet, gentle dignity, her scrupulous honesty, her strong sense of duty, her beautiful charm and her unwavering convictions made her one of the most outstanding women we have ever known. It was our privilege to know and love her. It is difficult to foresee how the Region will operate without her.

We offer sincere sympathy to her husband and family and renew our resolution to continue the works she served so devotedly.

Deena Streek