

# Editorial

## 3. SALLIE LUNDIE

Sallie Lundie died at the beginning of June in her eightieth year. A member of a small group of people of all races from Pietermaritzburg, who, in the early 1950s, formed a Liberal Association, she became a founding member of the Liberal Party of South Africa when that small group converted itself into a branch of the new Party in 1953.

Although already in her fifties and in a full-time job, she was active in the Party's activities from then on.

She retired from her full-time job at a time when the Liberal Party was under great pressure from the Government, with members being banned and detained regularly. Without the slightest hesitation she offered to help keep its national office running, and continued to do so until government action forced the Party to close down.

She then helped start REALITY, and continued on its Editorial Board until illness forced her to resign earlier this year. During this time it was she as much as anyone who

ensured that this journal appeared regularly and on time. Sallie was a person who was genuinely interested in other people, and her broadmindedness endeared her to young and old. She was always cheerful and fun to work with, despite often having to contend with ill health.

One of the bright spots in Sallie's last months was to see change come to Zimbabwe. While she was still well enough she used to visit that country regularly to see her sister and brother-in-law, who were staunch opponents of the Rhodesian Front throughout the time of UDI. The prospect of there emerging there a country in which equal rights and opportunities would be accorded everyone without regard to race was something which must have given her great satisfaction.

The best tribute that REALITY can pay to the memory of Sallie Lundie is to continue to work for the creation of such a society here. □

## REVIEW OF "A DIFFERENT GOSPEL" by Rev. Douglas Bax

Reviewed by Alan Paton

One of the striking features of institutional Christianity in South Africa is that it has less unity in purpose and belief than in any other country in the world. In fact the various manifestations of Christianity in our country have only one belief in common, and that is that Christ is the Redeemer of mankind and is the Lord of the Church.

Yet this common belief has no unifying power. The several interpretations of the Gospel are sometimes totally incompatible. The Dutch Reformed view (held by all three of the D. R. Churches) is that man's racial identity is a priceless gift from God, and that God desires above all else that it should be maintained: therefore racial separation is a policy that would be approved by God.

The view of what are usually called the English-speaking churches, but would include for this purpose the non-English Lutheran churches, is that man's individual humanity is the great gift from God, that he is made in the image of God, and that his greatest possession is his sonship. Therefore the recognition of his dignity as a man, and his freedom to use his talents and capabilities without undue interference from the State, is a policy that would be approved by God.

It is doubtful whether there is any theological principle that unites the thousands of separatist churches, now called the "new" churches. But they undoubtedly represent

a wish to be free of the established churches, to be free of white domination, and to worship in ways more suited to their native temperament.

The real political revolution is not coming from the "new" churches. It is coming from the black Christians in the older established churches, who maintain that the white understanding of the Gospel is defective, that white Christians are too much conformed to the secular world, that they shrink from Christ's identification with the hungry, the poor, and the oppressed. In the June issue of SEEK, Bishop Tutu, in his column *The Way I See It*, suggests that whites and blacks in the older churches may have to part company, until they come together in a true reconciliation. It is a fact of the greatest importance that the "sister" or "daughter" churches of the NGK, the biggest of the DRC's which were set up in obedience to God's supposed wish for racial separation, should now have come to reject it.

Of all the issues discussed above, the Rev. Douglas Bax of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, deals with one of the most difficult in his small book *A Different Gospel*, written as a memorandum for a national conference of Churches held in Pretoria under the auspices of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, to which both the Presbyterian and the Dutch Reformed Churches belong. On each significant resolution the white Hervormde Kerk delegates

# DARK THOUGHTS

by Vortex

and most of the white NGK delegates voted on one side, and the other delegates, led by the "sister" or "daughter" churches of the NGK, voted on the other. How can such a thing happen? Are the dividing issues racial, or are they theological? It is interesting that the majority of white delegates thought they were theological, and that the others thought they were racial.

Some of those at the conference—the peacemakers I suppose—thought that the two sides agreed in their basic theology, and differed only in the practical application. Mr Bax rejects entirely this face-saving supposition. He writes "we really disagreed so much on the practical issues because we disagreed so deeply in theology". But he does not stop there. He says that the two sides were "inspired by two quite different spirits". I interpret him to be saying in fact that the roots of the separation policies are not primarily intellectual, but are deeply emotional.

I shall give only one example of this. The NGK 1975 Report on Human Relations . . . in the Light of Scripture, quotes the statement of the World Reformed Ecumenical Synod on mixed marriages. It says

Holy scripture does not give a judgement about racially mixed marriages; contracting a marriage is primarily a personal and family concern. Church and State should refrain from prohibiting racially mixed marriages, because they have no right to limit the free choice of the marriage partner.

The NGK Report rejected this as a "one-sided . . . oversimplification" which omitted important social, religious, and politico-juridical considerations. If the government is convinced that public order is threatened by mixed marriages, then it has a right to forbid them.

The fact is that the Nationalist Afrikaner objection to mixed marriages is deeply emotional. To him they are abhorrent and they threaten his racial identity. The emotional reasons have strong racial and historical elements. However he is also a religious man and therefore he sets his theologians the task of finding justification in Scripture for his abhorrence

and his fear. But his fellow-Christians of the "daughter" churches do not share his abhorrence and his fear; therefore they interpret Scripture differently.

It is very human to try to convert one's emotional reasons into intellectual ones, and if one is a Christian, into theological ones. But it is one of the great claims of Christians that Christ has liberated them from the bondage of their abhorrences and their fears and their prejudices. Professor Ben Marais once posed the question: "Will my Christian beliefs be determined by my nationalism, or will my nationalism be fashioned (or we may add, negated) by my Christian beliefs?"

Mr Bax's small book is so meaty and closely argued that it should be reviewed at length, which REALITY cannot do. Mr Bax regards the doctrines of racial separation as mortally dangerous for the peace and unity of South Africa. He regards them as repugnant to the Gospel. Especially does he regard the doctrine of the separation of Christians as repugnant to the teaching of Christ, who prayed that all his followers should be one. It was at one time argued by Dutch Reformed theologians that this did not mean a "visible unity", but they are reeling a little under the onslaught of the "daughter" churches.

Mr Bax's deep concern is not only for the Church but also for South Africa. He closes his little book with a grave question.

South Africa stands on the edge of a political disaster "too ghastly to contemplate". It is a false theology and a false ideology, as well as the greed and the fears of both Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking Whites, that have dragged her people there. The urgent question is: is it too late for us to repent and turn back from the abyss?

One does not know the answer to that question. But Douglas Bax has certainly played his part in urging white South Africa to repent and turn. □

1. One looks around, desperately, in self-defence (not that it helps), for images of the National Party, the great incubus, the vast unprovidence, which lies so heavily, so crushingly, on us all.
2. Was Vorster sincere when he asked for six months? Was P. W. Botha sincere when he made certain large promises? We don't know; and it hardly matters. Little men, they were both promptly dragged back to the static centre, the status quo, by the might Inertia which rules all Nationalist Prime Ministers.
3. What will roll back the great stone which blocks the entrance to the tomb, which prevents the resurrection of humanity in South Africa? Maybe only rockets. But it will be a long process. And an ugly one.
4. Most wars can be described properly only when they are over. The South African civil war (which has of course been going on for some time) can be analysed right now.
5. The Zimbabwe election showed that South Africa has real power in the sub-continent: by its enthusiastic

support of Muzorewa it helped to destroy him as a candidate.

6. Similarly in Namibia. All the actions that the South African Government has taken in relation to SWAPO—denunciation, refusal to talk, prophecies that it will lose the election—ensure an even clearer electoral victory for their enemy, whom they thus neatly present to the world as, indeed, the authentic representative of the people of Namibia.
7. In their conquest of Southern Africa the whites demonstrated the power of the gun. The guerillas have now learned this lesson.
8. We are waiting, largely, on Providence; but it is not enough to wait. One must pray too—pray that new possibilities emerge in this hopeless situation, miraculous bubbles of light and air in this sea of tar. □