

THE ALFRED AND WINIFRED  
HOERNLÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE  
1964

APARTHEID: A CRISIS  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

by Denis E. Hurley, O.M.I.



SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS

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Denis E. Hurley, O.M.I.  
Archbishop of Durban

Delivered under the auspices of the  
South African Institute of Race Relations

## THE ALFRED AND WINIFRED HOERNLÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE

**A** LECTURE entitled the Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernlé, President of the South African Institute of Race Relations from 1934 to 1943 and of his wife, the late Winifred Hoernlé, President of the Institute from 1948 to 1950, and again from 1953 to 1954), is delivered once a year\* under the auspices of the Institute. An invitation to deliver the Lecture is extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa and elsewhere.

It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture provides a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers are entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lecturers will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."

Previous lecturers have been the Rt. Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr (*Christian Principles and Race Problems*), Dr. E. G. Malherbe (*Race Attitudes and Education*), Prof. W. M. Macmillan (*Africa Beyond the Union*), Dr. the Hon. E. H. Brookes (*We Come of Age*), Prof. I. D. MacCrone (*Group Conflicts and Race Prejudices*), Mrs. A. W. Hoernlé (*Penal Reform and Race Relations*), Dr. H. J. van Eck (*Some Aspects of the Industrial Revolution*), Prof. S. Herbert Frankel (*Some Reflections on Civilization in Africa*), Prof. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (*Outlook for Africa*), Dr. Emory Ross (*Colour and Christian Community*), Vice-Chancellor T. B. Davie (*Education and Race Relations in South Africa*), Prof. Gordon W. Allport (*Prejudice in Modern Perspective*), Prof. B. B. Keet (*The Ethics of Apartheid*), Dr. David Thomson (*The Government of Divided Communities*), Dr. Simon Biesheuvel (*Race, Culture and Personality*), Dr. C. W. de Kiewiet (*Can Africa Come of Age?*), and Prof. D. V. Cowen (*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—Today*).

\* No Lecture was delivered during 1962 and 1963.

IT is perhaps indicative of where the real trouble lies in our South African racial situation that for the fourth time in twenty years the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture deals with the ethics of the problem. It is with no little trepidation that I take up the theme from such great predecessors as Jan H. Hofmeyr, Dr. Emory Ross and Professor B. B. Keet. The sense of inadequacy that accompanies my effort finds some compensation in the privilege of being admitted to the illustrious company who, in delivering the lecture, have honoured the name of Hoernlé and have been honoured by it.

### *Christian Ethic and the South African Situation*

In the 1960 religious census 94 per cent of the White population of South Africa registered itself as adhering to one or other denomination of the Christian Religion. Basic to the Christian Religion is faith in the fatherhood of God, the Redemption accomplished by the Incarnate Son of God and the resultant sanctifying presence and action of the Holy Spirit. Basic, too, is the acceptance of the law of love as the fundamental law of the Christian Religion. This law was taken textually from the Religion of Israel, to which, in the same 1960 census, about 4 per cent of the White population of South Africa professed itself as belonging. St. Mark's account of Christ's unqualified adoption and promulgation of the Old Testament law of love reads as follows: "And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him: 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered: 'The first is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this. 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.' And the scribe said to him: 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he, and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices'. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him: 'You are not far from the kingdom of God'".<sup>1</sup> In St Luke's account the report is expanded by reference to a further question put to Christ: "And who is my neighbour?"

(<sup>1</sup>) *Mark* 12: 28-34.

The answer to this constitutes the greatest short story ever told: the story of the Good Samaritan.<sup>2</sup>

That this lesson was no mere secondary or incidental aspect of the way of life taught by Christ is obvious from the standards by which a Christian behaviour is to be assessed. In St. Matthew's Gospel we read Christ's description of the judgment passed on good and evil men. The sentence in favour of the good is: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him: 'Lord when did we see thee hunger and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick, or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them: 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'. The sentence passed on the evil is: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil, and his angels, for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer: 'Lord when did we see thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did not to me".<sup>3</sup> Charity is the supreme test of Christian behaviour.

Finally, at the most solemn hour of His life, the hour of farewell at the Last Supper, John tells us that Christ reiterated the law of love. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another".<sup>4</sup> And again: "This I command you to love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. This I command you, to love one another".<sup>5</sup>

We are left in no doubt. Love is the greatest commandment. Love is the supreme test of the Christian spirit. By love will the Christian be recognised, a love he must extend to all men. "For if you love those who

(2) Luke 10: 29.

(3) Matthew 25: 34-35.

(4) John 13: 34-35.

(5) John 15: 12-14, 17.

love you, what reward have you? . . . And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? . . . You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect".<sup>6</sup> Ninety-four per cent of White South Africa claims to be Christian. One should expect, therefore, to find the Christian spirit powerfully reflected in the society that White people have created in South Africa and of which they maintain the leadership in politics, economics and culture. One does not, of course, expect to find a code of religious ethics formulated in the law of the land. The law is not for that. Civil legislation is not meant to codify the basic moral attitudes of a people. It accepts them as its presuppositions. We do not expect to find the law of love expressly stated in the civil code of a Christian nation, but we do expect to find laws that so regulate relations between citizens that the observance of the law of love is not impeded, but promoted. We do expect to find a Christian society giving itself laws that reflect concern for all members of society, for their just treatment, for the exercise of their freedom, for the encouragement of their lawful enterprises, and the promotion of their happiness, wellbeing and prosperity.

What do we find when we examine South African legislation? We find that the cardinal principle of this legislation is an overriding concern for the wellbeing of one part of the population; the White part, which constitutes one-fifth of the total population. There is hardly an area of legislation, with the honourable exception, perhaps, of that which is concerned with the administration of justice in the courts, which does not reflect this one-sided concern for the White fifth of the population. There is no need for me to go into detail. There is enormous bias in favour of the Whites in participation in government, ownership and occupation of property, education, professional training, the right to work and the enjoyment of social amenities. The bias amounts to the total suppression of Non-White rights in many areas and their severe limitation in others. For instance, the situation of the Africans, who constitute 69 per cent of the population, is that they have no voice in the government and practically no legal right to residence or employment in 87 per cent of the country. When outstanding legislation in this regard is finalised the presence of Africans outside their own areas (13 per cent of the country's extent) will be completely dependent on the possession of labour permits.

Coloured and Asian citizens are not much better off. They have no effective say in the government. Under the Group Areas Act, their right of ownership and occupation is severely restricted, while Job Reservation takes care of their right to earn a living. Education, it is true, is not

(<sup>6</sup>) *Matthew 5: 46-48.*

denied to non-Europeans but again the bias is heavily in favour of the Europeans. As Dr. W. G. McConkey has recently pointed out, the South African State spends on the education of an African child one-fourteenth of what it spends on the education of a European child, and this represents a deterioration, for in 1954 the fraction was one-eighth. Among other telling points made by Dr. McConkey are the following:

- (i) The total Bantu Education vote is about half of the Police vote.
- (ii) Of this total vote, the part coming from the general revenue of South Africa is less than one-third of the Police vote.
- (iii) The general revenue vote for the schooling of the African, 69 per cent of our people, is barely two-sevenths of one per cent of the national income of South Africa. This is a record for low expenditure for a developed country in dire need of skilled manpower.<sup>7</sup>

There is no need to labour the point. The bias is unmistakable. South African legislation unashamedly accepts the principle of discrimination. The law looks first to the wellbeing of the Whites and having assured them of a privileged and protected position, and having relegated all Non-Whites to a subordinate role, does what it can for the latter within the limits imposed by the requirements of White supremacy. One looks in vain here for the influence of the Christian law of love in South African legislation.

### *Religion and Politics*

There are those who indignantly reply that to look for a reflection of the Christian code of ethics in the laws of the land is to mix religion with politics. Religion they say is a private matter between a man and his God. Politics is concerned with the social and economic organization of a nation and has nothing to do with religion. Now obviously the question of religion and politics is not an easy one. The founder of the Christian Faith recognised the distinction between the two when He said: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". But He did not state exactly what the things of God are and what the things of Caesar. Probably He left this to each age to work out for itself, for, though the principle of a distinction is essential, its applications are determined by the changing situations produced by social evolution. The First Amendment of the American Constitution would have been incomprehensible nonsense to the bishops and barons at Runnymede, and the popes of the nineteenth century would turn in their graves

(<sup>7</sup>) Article in *The Natal Daily News*, 25 November 1963.

if they read the declaration on religious liberty that has been drawn up for the Second Vatican Council. Fundamental religious truths need not change, but their implications are better understood and areas of confused and erroneous application are cleared up, as reason illuminated by faith wrestles with the new situations thrown up by human society in ceaseless evolution.

There are circumstances in which it is right to maintain that religion must be kept out of politics and vice versa. I would say, for instance, along with perhaps seventy-five or eighty per cent of the bishops at the Second Vatican Council that the state, as understood in the twentieth century has no religious competence, that is, that a man's duties to the state, be it as private citizen or participant in the government, do not carry with them the right and obligation to promote or protect any form of religion. This conviction is directly opposed to the principle of an established religion so long upheld as the official Roman Catholic view and still to some extent accepted in Italy and Spain. A clearer understanding of the distinction between the political society and the religious society has enabled the majority of us to reach this conclusion. But it was not an easy conclusion for Roman Catholics to reach, because the Church for us is as much a social fact as the political society and, in view of its more exalted nature, an even more important social fact. The problem was to sort out the scope and functions of two societies serving very often the same human community. Absolute finality on the question has not yet been reached and, because of the evolutionary nature of the human community, may never be reached. But substantial progress has been made over the past and the respective rights and duties of Church and State are much more clearly demarcated than before.

The area where confusion is still possible is that of the Christian conscience as applied to politics. The confusion cannot be dismissed by saying that the Church should keep out of politics, or that churchmen should not mix religion with politics. The heart of the problem is that conscience is very much involved in both religion and politics. A man's conscience is a reflection of his ultimate convictions, of his faith, whatever that faith may be, whether exclusively humanistic or religious as well. Ethics or morality is the way a person sees behaviour in the light of his ultimate convictions. Conscience is the habit of mind which applies the moral outlook to concrete situations. In our groping towards a decision, in the decision itself and in the aftermath of decision we are inescapably aware that conscience is the constant companion of our mental effort.

Even in politics. Especially in politics. Politics I take to mean the science and art of government, the thought behind and the skill employed



in the practical arrangements whereby men endeavour to maintain order in civil society. Politics cannot be divorced from morality, for politics involves human thought and decision, and reflective thought and decision are, by everything that is most intimate and essential to man's rational and free nature, tested against a moral code derived from ultimate conviction.

In this sense no man can keep his faith out of politics, and if he is a believer he cannot keep his religion out of politics. His religion goes with him into public office in the form of a moral outlook and a conscience trained to apply that outlook to specific situations. By this I do not in the least wish to maintain that a man should use his public office to promote directly the cause of the religion he holds. His political mandate does not include such a right or obligation. What I am trying to convey is that he cannot escape applying the sense of duty he has acquired from his religion to the task he has to perform in public office. In modern theological language we call this the consecration of the world—the process by which a man endeavours to impart a spiritual enrichment and elevation to the material world in which he works by reflecting, in all his contacts with that world and the human society living in it, his religious ideal and moral outlook. Pope John called this humanising and Christianising the world.

These words indicate that conscience is not merely a negative and supervisory agency standing on the side-lines of human behaviour to utter warnings and administer rebukes, but rather a positive dynamic force weaving itself into the fabric of conduct and communicating its own transcendent quality to every achievement that it inspires. Ultimately to the believer each such achievement is a rational and free collaboration with God in his never-ending creation of the universe. In *Le Milieu Divin*, Teilhard de Chardin discusses the problem of reconciling commitment to the world with the Christian duty of rising above the world to God. "There was reason to fear", he writes, "that the introduction of the Christian perspective might seriously upset the ordering of human action; that the seeking after, and waiting for, the Kingdom of Heaven might deflect human activity from its natural tasks, or at least entirely eclipse any interest in them. Now we see why this cannot and must not be so. The knitting together of God and the world has just taken place under our eyes in the domain of action (as described by Teilhard in a preceding passage). No, God does not deflect our gaze prematurely from the work He Himself has given us, since He presents Himself to us as attainable through that very work. Nor does He blot out, in His intense light, the detail of our earthly aims, since the closeness of our union with Him is in fact determined by the exact fulfilment

of the least of our tasks. We ought to accustom ourselves to this basic truth till we are steeped in it, until it becomes as familiar to us as the perception of shape or the reading of words. God, in all that is most living and incarnate in Him, is not far away from us, altogether apart from the world we see, touch, hear, smell and taste about us. Rather He awaits us every instant in our action, in the work of the moment. There is a sense in which He is at the tip of my pen, my spade, my brush, my needle—of my heart and of my thought. By pressing the stroke, the line, or the stitch, on which I am engaged, to its ultimate natural finish, I shall lay hold of that last end towards which my innermost will tends. Like those formidable physical forces which man contrives to discipline so as to make them perform operations of prodigious delicacy, so the tremendous power of the divine attraction is focused on our frail desires and microscopic intents without breaking their point. It sur-animates; hence it neither disturbs anything nor stifles anything. It sur-animates; hence it introduces a higher principle of unity into our spiritual life, the specific effect of which is—depending upon the point of view one adopts—either to make man's endeavour holy, or to give the Christian life the full flavour of humanity".<sup>8</sup>

And in another passage: "Why should there not be men vowed to the task of exemplifying by their lives, the general sanctification of human endeavour?—men whose common religious ideal would be to give a full and conscious explanation of the divine possibilities or demands which any worldly occupation implies—men, in a word, who would devote themselves, in the fields of thought, art, industry, commerce and politics, etc. to carrying out in the sublime spirit these demands—the basic tasks which form the very bonework of society?"<sup>9</sup>

Political life is without doubt one of the basic tasks which form the very bonework of society, one of the most difficult callings in which to make man's endeavours holy or give the Christian life the full flavour of humanity. This is because political life involves the use of power and nothing is more tempting or more dangerous to man than power. It has been said that all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. For this reason a specially tough and sensitive moral fibre is required in politicians and a high sense of duty to society, a sense of justice, of concern, a real love for the people at whose service a man places himself when he enters public life. Far then from leaving his religion behind him when he enters upon his duties, the politician who is a believer needs it more than

(<sup>8</sup>) *Le Milieu Divin*: Teilhard de Chardin (Collins), p. 36-37.

(<sup>9</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 39-40.

ever to guide his decision and sustain his resolution in the intricate and troubled situations in which he must act.

There is another reason too why politics must be eminently moral—because of the far-reaching consequences of political decisions. Such great multitudes are affected by political decisions and to so far-reaching a degree that these decisions require much more careful weighing in the ethical balance than decisions that affect only the person concerned, or his family and friends, his neighbourhood or a restricted cultural or social circle. On political decisions hangs the fate of millions—poverty or prosperity, starvation or plenty, order or agitation, sound domestic life or broken homes, the preservation or disintegration of the institutions that are the framework of social morals, love or hate, peace or war.

When a man advocates keeping religion out of politics he cannot mean that the religiously inspired conscience must have nothing to do with politics. He would be advocating the inhuman. Nor can he mean that no one, and particularly no religious leader, has the right to comment on the morality of political decisions. This would be tantamount to claiming that the politician is either above criticism or beyond redemption. Conscience and morality are inextricably involved in politics. They are inextricably involved in the politics of apartheid. And if, as is sometimes claimed, the purpose of apartheid is to preserve Christian civilisation, Christians have a right to say whether or not they want their Christianity preserved that way.

### *Christianity and Separate Development*

There are many politicians, I am sure, who are prepared to admit this. They are ready to meet religious critics on their own ground and to argue the case with honesty and sincerity that apartheid properly understood is acceptable to the Christian conscience. This kind of apartheid is separate development. Separate development may not reflect the Christian spirit in its perfection, but perfection, they point out, is not of this world. The politician must do what is possible under the prevailing circumstances. In South Africa the circumstances are such that justice for the Non-White races cannot be achieved in a common society with the Whites, because the latter fear that in a common society they will be submerged and lose what is most precious to them, their identity as a White race. Like other human groups they are not prepared to indulge in national or racial suicide. This attitude of the Whites makes it unrealistic to talk of integration, so the only other solution is a Christian form of apartheid—separate development, separate areas for each race where each can develop along its own lines in just and peaceful separation from the others.

They claim that this kind of apartheid is ethical and Christian, soberly and reasonably advanced by men who are serious about their Christianity. It, therefore, calls for a sober and reasonable assessment.

In our assessment we start from what is common ground between us, namely, that separate development involves extensive government interference in the residential and economic interests of millions of people. The big question is: does this interference constitute an infringement of rights? If it does, injustice is committed and separate development is incompatible with Christian ethics. The answer could be: the ultimate aim is good, namely, peace and harmony among the peoples of South Africa. If it is necessary to commit injustice to achieve this, it is worth the price. Which, of course, is an acceptance of the maxim that the end justifies the means, a maxim subversive of all morality, a maxim implicitly invoked by every tyrant when he indulges in cruelty and oppression to impose upon his subjects the order he conceives to be good for them. Hitler's extermination of the Jews can be condoned on this principle. I do not think that anyone in South Africa would consciously invoke such a frightful perversion of morality to prove that separate development is compatible with the Christian ethic.

It remains to consider, therefore, whether or not injustice is inherently involved in the policy of separate development as it is being currently pursued. The onus of proof rests on the promoters of the policy, for citizens are entitled to the peaceful possession of their residential and economic rights unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the common good of the country demands some rearrangement of the manner in which these rights are exercised. The common good of the country, let it be remembered, is the good not only of the White citizens but of all the others as well—the other 80 per cent. In justification of separate development it is maintained that this is precisely the case, that the common good of all South Africans, White and Non-White, demands separation and that only through separation can the rights of all be adequately protected.

This is the contention. But the proof of it is another matter. To justify the moral acceptability of separate development it would appear that there are four conditions which must be demonstrated as possible of fulfilment: firstly, the policy must be feasible; secondly, it must meet with the free consent of all parties involved; thirdly, there must be a proportionate share of sacrifice and fourthly, the rights of all parties must be adequately protected during the transition period.

In regard to the first condition, the practical possibility of separate development, it is not enough to have faith in it, to be convinced in a mystical sort of way that it must work because it is right. Faith and

mysticism do not count when peoples' basic rights to habitation and livelihood are concerned. We must be sure. We cannot take chances. We must have the sort of assurance that any prudent and reasonable man would demand in taking a serious decision. We must have a clear picture of how South Africa is to be partitioned between the three million Whites, the eleven million Africans, the million-and-a-half Coloured people and the half-million Asians, so that each group and all the individuals constituting it may be provided with political, social, cultural and economic conditions under which to pursue a decent livelihood. It is not enough to say that separate development is a trend towards a distant and not too clearly defined goal, a trend that can be set in motion now by a crushing mass of legislation which with luck will produce results that no one, at this stage, dares to forecast in concrete detail. Is there anything more irrational and perilous than pursuing means to an end that have not yet been clearly defined?

In reply, it could be pointed out that at least the policy of Bantu homelands has been clearly defined, that they are on their way towards organization and independence. Possibly—but one of the big questions on the lips of interested observers is: what kind of independence will a hard-headed and realistic South African government grant to Bantustans in a world in which African states are unanimously and congenitally antagonistic to South Africa? To sum up, the feasibility of separate development depends largely on what it really means, and nobody so far has been willing to spell that out in clear detail.

The second condition is that the policy must meet with the free consent of the parties involved. An objection to this condition rises immediately: the condition like the two others following it is based on a false supposition, namely, that there are parties involved. This, it can be contended, is false. There are no parties in the strict sense of the term, for it is a case of a government legitimately providing for its citizens according to what in the long run is in the interest of all.

This could be accepted as an honest presentation of the case if the citizens in question were all equal before the law and all received equal treatment from the Government. But we know this is not the case. We know that the Government identifies itself only with the interests of the Whites, and in practice treats Africans, Asians and Coloured groups as subject races, to whom it permits only that exercise of human rights which is compatible with safeguarding the racial identity and supremacy of the Whites. Because the Government treats Africans, Coloureds and Asians as separate groups with separate interests and separate futures, it must accept the consequence that these groups have a right to be considered as

separate parties in any arrangement made for the future partition of South Africa.

In which case elementary justice demands that the consent of all parties be sought and obtained to a policy which can have such far-reaching repercussions on the residential and economic rights of people. So far there appears to be no evidence that any of the parties to the future partition of South Africa, not even the Europeans, have given their consent. When the Africans of the Transkei had a chance of voting on it, they appear to have rejected it.

As far as a proportionate share of sacrifice is concerned there would appear to be only one just way of ensuring this and that would be by submitting the whole matter to the judgment of a neutral arbitrator. One of the basic rules for the administration of justice is that no one should be judge in his own cause. But we all know that the South African Government would never dream of submitting the matter of separate development to arbitration.

Finally, there is the question of protecting rights during the period of transition. There is no need for me to enlarge on this. We all know what is happening under the Group Areas Act, the Job Reservation Act, and the massive legislation that has deprived the African population of practically all civil rights in 87 per cent of South Africa. As Professor Keet puts it: "It is becoming increasingly evident that the implementation of the apartheid policy is marked by an ever greater curtailment of the limited privileges they (the non-Europeans) still enjoy. That is true in the fields of economics, education, freehold tenure and a host of other rights to which they had access, though in a limited degree, in the past. The extreme frustration to which all this leads in the present situation can be imagined—the difficulty, nay impossibility, of unravelling the tangled skeins of the so-called borderline cases, the uprooting and breaking-up of family life, the dispossession of property, and the destruction of goodwill, public and private, that has been built up through generations of unhampered practice, for no other reason than that the policy demands it—these and other disservices must be laid at the door of enforced apartheid.

"That is the natural result when the State arrogates to itself the regimentation of society and fails to honour the liberty of its subjects; the unhappy consequences have been all too apparent in the tragic examples of totalitarian states for us to have any doubts on this score. Reduced to its simplest ethical terms it boils down to the perilous doctrine that the end justifies the means, at best a purely utilitarian creed which is beset with insuperable difficulties. When morality becomes a matter of calculation

we may be sure that it is near to extinction, for then its normative value disappears and it becomes a mere rule of expediency".<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion is that not one of the four conditions required for the just implementation of separate development is being fulfilled or shows any likelihood of being fulfilled. We have no evidence that the policy will succeed. There will be no consultation with the parties most deeply affected with a view to obtaining their consent. No independent arbitrator will be called in to see that there is a proportionate share of sacrifice. And finally, there is no guarantee of a protection of rights during the time of transition. In the light of all this it must be concluded that separate development as contemplated in South Africa cannot be pursued without injustice and is, therefore, not in accord with the Christian ethic.

This does not mean to say, of course, that everything done in pursuit of this policy is wrong, for instance, in the Transkei or in any other African area. Anything undertaken in these areas to rehabilitate the land and to give African citizens a responsible share in the promotion of their own welfare is all to the good. But that could be done equally well under some other policy. It is not exclusive to separate development.

### *The Dilemma*

There is another answer to the accusation that apartheid, whether of the blatant and realistic White domination kind or the more subtle and unrealistic separate development variety, is unjust and unchristian. It is to the effect that no human community can be expected to practise justice to its own destruction. Yet this, say the protagonists of apartheid, is precisely what the world expects of us. White South Africa must choose between surviving by injustice or perishing with justice. It can see only one solution: to perish is out of the question, survival is the only choice, and if injustice is its unavoidable accompaniment, so be it. We will survive with injustice.

Overseas critics with any sort of social sensibility find it difficult to believe that White South Africans can live in that state of mind. "How do you square it with your conscience?" they ask. And they are serious about this question, for a conscience about human dignity is one of the marks of our time. It is particularly acute on the continent of Europe. It can be ridiculed of course. It can be called hypocritical and selective—quick to condemn South Africa, slow to censure Ghana. Perhaps it is unbalanced in this regard, but perhaps also it has reason to be. Perhaps this European conscience about human dignity expects more of South

(10) *The Ethics of Apartheid*: Professor B. B. Keet (S.A. Institute of Race Relations).

Africa than of Ghana—rightly or wrongly identifying White South Africa with the Western tradition and all it has gone through in terms of political, cultural and religious evolution, rightly or wrongly expecting South Africa to show more for its longer experience of stable government and economic security.

Unbalanced or not in its reaction to different situations the conscience about human dignity is a social fact of our time. One can imagine, therefore, the hopeless and frustrating task of South Africa's official apologists. They haven't a hope of making the slightest impact where impact counts: in the intellectual and socially conscious areas of the West. Trying to sell apartheid to these areas is like trying to sell bows and arrows to the American Army. Business circles may still be persuaded that investment in South Africa is a safe risk for what in business is the foreseeable future. That is all to the good. The more business we have in South Africa the greater the prosperity for all and the sooner everyone will be brought to admit that economic integration has gone too far for reversal and that Job Reservation is not only a moral crime but also an economic sacrilege. Instead of boycotting South Africa, opponents of apartheid in other countries should overwhelm us with business. History indicates that men are usually more amenable to economic incentives than physical pressure and moral exhortation. Make integration in South Africa a really paying proposition and watch the barriers crumble. Just imagine our commercial executives charging all over the continent to interview African governments and negotiate with African businessmen. Imagine them acquiring the habit of communication with such men. It would not be long before they would be putting it into practice in South Africa. It would not be long before they would be insisting on returning the hospitality of their African contacts. The possibilities are almost infinite once communication is established. In religion ecumenism is the order of the day. There is also something to be said for economic ecumenism.

Unhappily for White South Africa, the rest of the world entertains few ecumenical feelings towards us whether economic or political or cultural. And the root of our growing isolation lies precisely in the conflict between our official policy of discrimination and the social conscience of the modern world on human dignity. We are decades out of date. We are suffering from a moral lag, the sort of lag that is experienced whenever there are great changes in human society. Because morality is essentially a question of habit (in which, of course, there is nothing disparaging because all great human capacity, like art and science, involves habit), there is always a problem in adjusting a moral outlook, to a social, political, economic or technological change. It takes time to stir up social inertia and get people



to include new situations in their moral perspective. There was a time, not so long ago, when apart from a few far-seeing and discerning critics, no one was aware that there was much wrong with the South African situation. This was because there was little difference between it and the colonial situation in most parts of Africa and Asia. Particular differences there were, of course, and degrees of comparison in regard to imperial arrogance and racial discrimination. But the basic attitude everywhere was the same—recognition of the right of the White man to rule and the duty of the Non-White to be ruled and to accept humbly and gratefully whatever elements of Western civilisation he could acquire as by-products of colonial occupation. The social conscience of the West saw nothing wrong in this situation. But the situation carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. Along with elements of its culture and technology the West carried the doctrine of human dignity and liberty all over the world. A succession of historical events aroused colonial people to a realisation of what these things meant and once they had made up their minds to enjoy them, there was nothing the West could do to stop them. Whether or not the West could have asserted itself physically is a moot point, but morally its own convictions deprived it of any serious will to maintain colonial rule by tyranny. The shock of the reaction against European colonial rule helped Europe to grasp the lesson of the events, the lesson that human dignity and liberty are as applicable to African and Asian people as they are to Europeans. Now Europe is as sensitive about these values in Asia and Africa as in its own backyard.

But this does not apply to the Europeans of South Africa. There were too many psychological obstacles, too many vested interests involved. So we suffer the moral lag. Although we are great believers in human dignity and liberty in theory and for ourselves, we do not see why these attributes should be shared with non-Europeans. We fear that their extension would mean the end of the White race in South Africa and this we see as the supreme calamity. And yet we proclaim ourselves Christian—94 per cent Christian. This is the crisis of the Christian conscience in South Africa.

### *The Only Christian Solution*

How are we going to resolve it? By doing what Christian communities have so often done in the past when confronted with comparable crises—refuse to extend Christian moral principles to the critical area and allow other influences to take command? Hypocrisy, short-sightedness and moral cowardice have always been Christianity's greatest enemies. Can we really reproach the Communists, misguided though we judge them to be, when they enter the field of social reform left wide open for them by

Christians, with a crusading zeal and sense of conquest that make Christians look like flabby and ineffectual windbags if not downright supporters of an evil system? Let us make no mistake about it—only crusaders succeed in the field of social reform. It takes drive and dynamism to alter a social pattern. If Christianity wants to have any say in the alteration of South Africa's social pattern its representatives will have to become crusaders, crusaders fully possessed of that which is characteristic of crusaders—a flame of conviction, a fire of zeal. It will take all that to enable any Christian who takes the Christian ethic seriously in South Africa to make an impact on White Christian society surrounding him, for that White Christian society has grown up in the firm conviction that the law of love does not apply to non-Europeans, except in special and unusual circumstances.

Everybody of course can give examples of European benevolence to the non-European, of consideration, of charity, even of heroic charity when White men have risked their lives to save Non-Whites from death. That we all know. Just as we know that Non-Whites have done the same for Whites. But what we also know is that the hunger in the heart of the African, the Coloured and the Asian is not for the bread of the White man, nor for the occasional heroic act of recognition—the hunger in his heart is for everyday acceptance of his human dignity.

In the consciousness that accompanies all our thinking and doing there is an awareness of what we are, a realisation of identity, of self-hood. How it comes to us we do not know. How deep it goes we cannot tell. It is a realisation that there is something more than the slime of the earth behind our thoughts, something more than animal instinct in the freedom with which we choose and decide, something more than flesh and blood in the love we experience. It is the knowledge that we are men. We take it for granted. We scarcely ever promote it to the forefront of our thoughts. Until something is said or done that implies a negation of it or a diminution of it. Then it leaps to life, vibrant, throbbing, rebellious, crying to high Heaven against the outrage that has been done. For of all man's treasured rights and attributes there is none more treasured than this: the quality of being human, the quality of being capable of rational thought and free choice and tender emotion: of being worthy of the death of God—and of the life of God. Human dignity—our most intimate and precious possession, woven into every human quality and accomplishment, present in every thought and emotion, impressed on every worthy product of human effort, the last lingering beauty in a body broken by age or illness, the last lonely attribute of the man who stands on the gallows or faces the firing squad. The last and the most lasting—for it goes with his spirit into eternity.

The evil of apartheid is that it refuses recognition of this human dignity and by every cruel refinement of law, custom and convention pours scorn on the humanity of men and women created with an inborn hunger for recognition, for acceptance by their fellow-men. The hunger of such people starved of elemental recognition is a devouring thing indeed. And in them Christ hungers. "I was hungry and you gave me no food". No food—no morsel of that respect which is inseparable from Christian love. Every test of Christian charity devised by Christ demands that we meet the evil of apartheid not merely by not adding to it but by going forward courageously to replace it by what is positive and constructive and redemptive. Every Christian who sees Christ suffering in a neighbour diminished by apartheid has more than a duty of abstention. He has a duty of commitment, and, because of the circumstances in this country, this is his first and principal duty, not in the sense that exorcising apartheid is more important than loving God, but in the sense that in South Africa a White man's love for God is on trial every time he meets a Non-White neighbour.

We who are ministers of the Gospel know that only too well, but have we the courage to preach it? A minister of the Christian Gospel should have no peace of mind as long as he knows that his congregation, while proclaiming itself Christian, accepts apartheid, inside or outside the house of God. What kind of a congregation can it be? What kind of a house of God? Let Christ's own words be the judgment of it. "Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like; he is like a man building a house, who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But he who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great".<sup>11</sup>

You may well ask me for the practical applications to politics, economics and social life of the Christian attitude that I am proclaiming. It is not my purpose or my function to give them. All I can hope to do, with the help of God is to make the Christian vision a little clearer and a little more compelling. There are men and women much wiser than me and much more exercised in politics and economics and social science whose duty it is to work out the practical applications of the vision.

But there is a protest that cannot be stilled, a protest and an anxious query: It is all very well to be told these things by a minister of religion with no family responsibilities, but what of our future and the future of

(11) *Luke 6: 47-49.*

our children? Will the practice of Christian charity take care of that? If we once weaken in our control of the African majority shall we not be overwhelmed and submerged, and, in the day of reckoning, will there be any charity in African hearts for us? I think the answer depends on White South Africa. The day of reckoning is bound to come. White South Africa must decide whether it is to be a reckoning of revenge or of fraternal recognition. Because Christianity is still by far the greatest moral force in South Africa, recognition can come only if a sufficient number of White Christians are prepared to live their faith and to act towards their Non-White neighbours as if Christ meant what He said about the law of love.

Christianity has always been a religion of salvation. It took over this characteristic from the Synagogue. The God of the Old Testament is a God of hope, of salvation, of deliverance. As Israel evolved socially, culturally and religiously the concept of salvation deepened and broadened. Originally it had meant only the escape from Egypt and the providential care that brought Israel through its desert wanderings into the Promised Land. Religion had been very much a tribal affair and a matter of external ritual. Slowly but surely under the influence of the great prophets and in response to its own historical evolution, Israel understood more fully its religious role in the world and its messianic mission, and the salvation begun in and typified by the Exodus took on more and more the character of a liberation of the spirit intended for all mankind, as is so clearly indicated in Isaiah.

From Israel faith in a saving God passed into Christianity and we are all aware of the climactic historical events in which, according to Christian belief, salvation was achieved. Nevertheless, we have but little understanding of its full import and application. When we profess our faith in the "resurrection of the body and life everlasting" what are the dimensions of the mystery we are proclaiming? Surely they embrace all things human, all human interests, all human capacities and aspirations—and the human milieu, the universe, that is so much part of man, so woven into his being, continuous with his body and, therefore, with his soul. Surely all this is involved in the mystery of salvation.

It is so vast a panorama, so profound a mystery that we have been able only to take in fragments of it. We have lived through periods when only the soul of man seemed worthy of salvation and his body, despite our faith in its resurrection, merited hardly a thought. We have paid the price for this neglect, in our indifference to great human and social problems. And often as we have sat snugly in our Christian armchair, saving the souls of a select and complacent minority, the prophetic voices crying in the

wilderness of human loneliness and despair have not been our voices but the voices of agnostic and unbelieving brothers far more conscious than us of man's hunger for salvation and liberation.

The horror of man's limitations is that he can drag the mystery of God's salvation down to his own dimensions and sit in self-satisfied contemplation of what he believes to be his personal enjoyment of it while his brothers all around him are in outer darkness. Or he can identify the mystery of salvation with the aspirations of the group to which he belongs. How often in our history have we Christians been guilty of this. How often have we made of Yahwe, the God of the universe, a tribal god, and invoked his blessing and the aid of his strong arm in our narrow-minded prejudices, our unchristian hates and our fratricidal struggles.

Apartheid is a challenge to every Christian worthy of the name to see the whole South African situation in the light of the law of love, to realise that the salvation in which we believe includes deliverance from everything that is mean and unworthy and restrictive, everything that unlawfully hinders the full flowering of a God-given capacity, its contribution to the human treasury and its enrichment of the universe. Apartheid is a challenge to a crusade of love, of love bursting through the shell of old fears and prejudices to meet the love that has been waiting all these years in the hearts of Africans and Coloureds and Asians, love withered by interminable delay, love almost extinguished by disappointment and despair, but love that still survives and hopes and waits for the day when Europeans will be Christians at last.

The path of love is not an easy path to tread. Love is an ascent and every ascent is a *via dolorosa* for the human heart, an upward striving towards unity that inflicts its share of hurts and bruises—anxieties, disillusionments and renunciations. If electrons and protons had feelings they would probably rebel against the upward striving of matter that binds them together in atoms and molecules and organic substance, in the very substance of the brain and heart of man where they glow in the furnace of human thought and emotion.

The path of Christian love to the goal of racial peace in South Africa will be what the path of Christian love is to any goal—a way of the Cross. It will be that particularly to our Afrikaans-speaking citizens, for the demand made on them is to renounce a vision of life in which they identify the Christian mystery of salvation with their own national destiny—to renounce this vision, and to embrace a broader one in which those whom they have hitherto regarded as the greatest threat to their destiny must be

included as brothers in the same salvation. A way of the Cross indeed, but the way of the Cross does not end on Calvary. It ends in an empty tomb bright with the glory of the Resurrection.

Afrikaners may well protest that invitations to renunciation are a little out of place on the lips of an Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church, an institution coupled in their national consciousness with the memory of ancient tyrannies and persecutions. Like Pope Paul there is here another, though much humbler and much less worthy, representative of the Roman Catholic Church, to ask pardon for our offences of the past, and to assure those whose vision of us is still obscured by the fog of history that we are doing our best to shake off the outworn cultural accretions of a long and turbulent association with the human race and to emphasise again those things that are the essentials of the Christian message. This is our response to the threat that we were being left behind by history. It was a terrifying threat, but, thank God, it was met by a man, old in years but young in courage and vision, the immortal Pope John. His one profound concern was, in the words he borrowed from a great African, Augustine of Hippo, to expand the areas of love. It was a magnificent programme, worthy of the great heart that adopted it.

White South Africa, too, is threatened with being left behind by history. Could it not meet the threat by adopting the programme of Augustine—to expand the areas of love, to push their frontiers ever outwards in an adventure, agonising to old prejudices, but more than amply rewarding through the response to be found in that treasure of warm humanity waiting on the other side of the barrier White South Africans have so feared to cross. Fear is an enslavement, and if we are believing Christians we must recognise that every irrational fear is included in the evil conquered by the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Beyond the barriers that have enslaved us the great adventure lies—the adventure of resurrection and of life, of salvation and of love, of honest and liberating living of the word of God to which we say we have given our belief but which we have been afraid to put into practice. “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes

all things, endures all things. Love never ends . . . When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love".<sup>12</sup>

(<sup>12</sup>) *I Cor* 13: 1-13.