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VIEWS OF BLACK CHRISTIANS ON SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESENT,  
AND FUTURE.

It is not very often to my knowledge that we have gatherings of this nature - that is gatherings which embrace a variety of denominations in our black society. So I am very happy to have the honour to address such a meeting particularly at this moment of crisis in the period of our South African history.

For a Black Christian, a glance at the present is depressing, it is bleak, it gives a picture of a lifeless situation and above all it gives a question of What am I living for? is it really worth it? However, looking around our borders and recent happenings, a glimpse into the future appears rosy, it gives one the urge to live on and it gives one the wish to see the future of our beloved country South Africa. It is the Christian hope for the future. Here, I remember the words of Jürgen Moltmann in his "Theology of Hope". He states: "Is it not always in the present alone that man is truly existent, real, contemporary with himself, acquiescent and certain? Memory binds him to the past that no longer is. Hope casts him upon the future that is not yet.--- He hopes to live, but he does not live. He expects to be happy one day, and this expectation causes him to pass over the happiness of the present."

Brothers and sisters the topic to be discussed is: "Views of Black Christians On South Africa's present and future" We will agree that these are different views about what we are and what we will be. In an attempt to cover them, I have decided to categorise them so that we also get a glimpse of the most recent views.

The first category of views are the views of the individuals who apply protective psychology. The best way of describing them is by saying they say things merely for the sake of saying them but they hardly ever mean what they say. To illustrate this category, we think of those people who sing songs of praise to the present policy of Apartheid.- a thing not of their making- and making the government believe that blacks are satisfied with it, however, when they meet their fellow blacks, they denounce the government and its policy of apartheid which denies them (the blacks) the right to determine their future. In short these people know which side their bread is buttered. Ladies and gentlemen, remember- the bread has six sides! Their views are more on the selfish side. For the present they want to gain for themselves and as for the future apparently they care little.

Another illustration is the case of "My baas", "Makhosi" or "Morena" "Miesee" and so forth. It is an open secret that most people will plead with the White man and go to the extent of saying "my baas, my baas!" It amuses even that individual afterwards to recall that he was about to land in trouble but an ordinary word like "Baas" saved him. I sometimes wonder whether these Whites do not see the whole thing as flattery. All the same, they really appreciate being addressed in that manner, whilst the black man knows that he really does not say that from the depth of his heart. He says it merely as a protective means to get what he wants immediately. On a point of clarification, I do not propagate that a black man must not plead his way out of a predicament nor that the white man should not show mercy when in a position of both strength and authority but merely that the communication should be human and that the sympathy must be shown because it is deserved and not because I said "Baas".

The second category of views I want to deal with, are the views of the ignorant people. Here again, I shall put in some clarification. By saying that those people are ignorant, I merely mean that they are very much aware of the set-up in our country but they do not know their right and the white man exploits just that aspect of their characters. Let us take the example of the private hostels. We know by now that conditions in some private hostels are appalling in a lot of cases. We have these people living there and they have resigned to ~~what shall we do attitudes~~. It does not occur to them that they have the right to question their living conditions. To them what is of primary importance is the fact that they get their weekly or monthly income by way of wages. However, for the future, they believe that this present very dark cloud has a silver lining and they see this silver lining as growing to a clear sky one day. Another example is the case of permits in the so called urban areas. We are aware that arrests for such offences are prevalent and here, we need not mention that Alexandra takes the confectionary in this respect. Again here, these people - the ignorant group - are not aware that their basic right is to be in an area for at least seventy two hours before being arrested. The natural attitude they adopt is rather to avoid visiting or paying admission of guilt fines when arrested. However, even in this case, there is still a hope that something positive will turn up in the future.

A group to which we can spare a few sentences is the group of what I have to call "Top of the system". These are the views of the

people who in essence are a frustration to the black course. They can be referred to as the proverbial rotten orange in the pocket. They are the people who buy their own oppression, people who are prepared to defend their own oppression, people who are not prepared nor sit down and question the evil in the present set up. They are the people who take their future which has been carefully thought out for them by the white man and meekly struggle very hard to put it into practice. They are paid fantastic sums to pry into the activities of their fellow blacks and give back the information to the security police. They become active state witnesses in our countless so called terror trials. They are these people in the police force who arrest their fellow blacks with no sufficient evidence or reasons. They are the civil servants who are rude to the public for no apparent reasons. They are the Christians in Church who appear to have a very clear line of demarcation between Christianity and politics. Brothers and sisters, kindly note that when black Christians talk politics they are quickly reminded to seek the Kingdom of heaven...but on the other hand, to Whites, Christianity and politics go hand in glove - needless to mention that most parliamentarians are avowed christians. To this group of people, there is no future for as long as the white man thinks for them, they are satisfied and they are a danger to society.

The last and main group of Christians that I am dealing with are the so called "radicals". To me they are called radicals when in essence they are not. They are the Christians who do not want to see a deterioration in the economic progress of this country. They also wish to have improvement in their human and race relations. Quite often they are misinterpreted as saying: "Away with the white man" but personally I think the latter is a gross misrepresentation of facts. It is a grievous error, and I only hope that it does no grievous harm, for these people are the Christians who advocate the sharing of both power and economy of our beloved country.

They are pressing for change and in doing so they highlight the evil in the system of the government. They expose the policy of Apartheid (separate development) and consider it to be a particularly inhuman and degrading form of racism and racial discrimination, and the South African social and labour policies are doomed abhorrent as typified by the imposition of increasingly harsh laws which prohibit free employment. Elementary human and trade unions are being denied to the blacks and the latter are kept outside of normal management labour relations. This group thus has as its main aim the

eliminations of all forms of racial discrimination.

They also realise that every nation or race can consist of different tribes. The American nation has a variety of language groups in it and so is the Canadian nation. The South African nation, not nations, should be precisely along the same lines. They observed the apartheid exploitation of the quotation "divide and rule". Their motto is that we are all one, - no Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa and so on i.e. Black solidarity. The aim is to have a society which works on Christian principles. In Christianity race is irrelevant and so is class. It is not a question of who we are? but whose are we? Where differences of class or race, or secondary doctrines or trivial patterns of behaviour divide us, I am convinced that the Holy Spirit will be limited in using us - to be true witness of the kingdom of God in South Africa. Christ has transcended those differences by giving to us a higher and ultimate sense of loyalty, a new centre of gravitation, status that makes other distinctions trivial and meaningless. A Black man is still black the white still white. But now all are Christians and so if any man be in Christ Old categories are past away - behold all things are become new, are moving into the future. To achieve the solidarity and the open society we yearn for, we must start at some point. A point where we can start is to advocate that our African Churches must have self-reliance. This entails two concepts namely self and reliance.

Self: This entails that the African Church with Christ as a base should now carry out her duties and responsibilities, identifying herself with her African backgrounds.

Reliance: This entails that the African Church has to develop enough resources and potentials to stand on her own.

It is high time the Church in South Africa should know herself and identify herself and her relationship with Jesus Christ the liberator. Our people need to be released from the prison of apathy, ignorance and fear. What each one at this meeting should ask himself is; "What part is my church playing in raising the level of consciousness to the liberation struggle?" Full political self determination for the peoples of South Africa will come only through the joint efforts of different churches to combat racism. We affirm our solidarity with those views of the so called radicals and call upon all Christians inside and outside our country, to end all political economic military and any other support of structures of oppression.

fulfillment of man's quest for full freedom and justice for all men  
kind.

Ladies and gentlemen, we should also take heed of the words of  
Chief Gqasha Buthelezi when he said:

Let the church in South Africa support the move of the majority  
in their movement towards constructive unity. The Church has  
in the past only paid lip service to this ideal. Some churches  
have not even done that much. It is perhaps true for Black Chri-  
stians to recognise that they have to take the lead at National  
level. There may be protests from some White Churchmen, when  
they hear what I have said today about the Church. My answer to  
these protests is that the Church is rapidly losing credibility  
among Blacks in South Africa. If churches are convinced that they  
have acted properly, then they have only convinced themselves. The  
Church has not been effective in their support for the Black libera-  
tion struggle. I do admit that there have been outstanding indivi-  
dual Churchmen who have witnessed. I say again that it is time for  
Black Christians to take the lead in this matter.

The Church must take active steps towards reconciliation in this  
country before it is too late. There will be no true reconciliation  
until the Blacks are liberated. In this matter the Churches must  
act with conviction and what is more they must act in public.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a fact that the church has not done  
enough to support constructive unity, it is also a fact that the  
church has been quiet on matters of national interest, it is an  
indisputable fact that the Church is losing credibility with the  
black man, it goes without saying that Churches convince themselves,  
that they are doing the correct thing and lastly, the fact that  
the church must take the lead in steps towards reconciliation and  
that blacks must be liberated cannot be evaded.

As a conclusion, may I mention that critical announcements of Chri-  
stians of Government policies, when they are absolutely necessary,  
should be viewed as attacks from concerned Christians who have  
the future of their country at heart, and we dare not keep quiet.  
Christian ministers do not preach the Gospel for themselves, for  
their own glorification nor are we the message. We preach Christ  
Jesus who died and rose again, and as for our relationship to Him,  
He is our Lord. As for our relationship with our fellow men, we  
are their servants not for their sake or our own sake, but for  
Christ's sake.

(6).

We end up by the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "Woe unto him who builds his own house by unrighteousness and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbour serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages." We must challenge powers of white racism in our country. We must also challenge those who exploit the illiterate labourers in their homes, in the mines or in other places of work, be they be white or black. But can we do this when many of our churches are asleep, unconcious of the needs of man around them, but busy arguing about leadership or caught up in irrelevant structures or issues while Christ is sweating even blood in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We must move with Christ from Gethsemane the place of sleep to Golgotha the place of denial and death to meet him in the Jerusalem of our cities and towns and in the midst of millions of different tongues of this country in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Delivered by Dr. Sam Butzi, General Secretary of a Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk of Africa (NGK A) on March 27th 1976 in Jabavu, Soweto at a conference organised by the Lutheran and NGKA congregations of Soweto in cooperation with the Christian Academy in S.A.