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Third (and final) draft of the address to be given by the Convenor of Church and Nation to the 1963 General Assembly:

Moderator, Fathers and Brethren,

Of the many problems faced by the Church in today's world, one of the most urgent and terrible is the problem of how to resist the soul-consuming giant of nationalism, particularly as we see it in Africa. Your Committee cannot believe that all nationalism is bad. On the contrary, we freely confess that love of one's own, love of one's own country and people, a desire to see one's land and people free to follow its vision and destiny unrestrained by the hampering hand of a foreign ruler - that all this is, as far as it goes, probably well-pleasing in the sight of God. But we are revolted at the idolatry of a nationalism which has broken all bounds, which makes a mockery of toleration, compassion, justice, mercy and love, which claims what only God can claim - the ultimate and utter loyalty of man. We are appalled at the demonic forces of cruelty, injustice and oppression summoned by this idol from the dark abyss of mansoul. We are horrified, not only at what nationalism does to the bodies of men, but to the hearts and souls of men: the hatred it brings in its train, the bitterness, the twisting of the truth, the cramping restrictions on liberty.

Our hearts agonise with compassion for the victims of nationalism. But we are dismayed also at the way it rots the souls of those who seem to benefit from it. So often the arrogant top-dog yields to the temptation to arrogance, pride, bigotry, scorn, fear and contempt. His soul becomes so distorted that he calls evil good, curses that which God has blessed and can no longer hear the judging and forgiving word of God.

Our own loved land is not free from this idol-worship. One of its most distressing features is the way it has affected Christians in this land, including ourselves, for it has bitten deep into our bone and marrow. In the public pronouncements of Presbyteries and of this Assembly, we pay lip-service to high ideals and noble principles, we put God above our national group, Christian brotherhood above nationality, but our congregational life and the daily deeds of our members reveal just how hollow our words are. Meekly - so meekly - we submit to the growing compulsion to separate ourselves from others; we shrink from worshipping with fellow-Christians if they speak a different language or are of a different skin-colour; we join in the general suspicion and exclusion of those who are not quite like us; we are reluctant to sacrifice life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the service of the down-trodden and the poor.



Your Committee is forced to ask itself why this should be. Some of the reasons we guess at are these: in the first place, we acknowledge that the restrictive laws on our statute books are so complex and appear so all-embracing that many Christians are honestly bewildered as to what they should do, what they may legally do. Harsh and restrictive laws piling one on top of another have so stupefied us that we are no longer sure what really belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God. Most of us are so confused that the wisest course seems to be to sit still, do nothing, say nothing and even think nothing. With this predicament, we are in full sympathy. The agony of it has not passed by your Committee.

Secondly, many Christians, including many Ministers, are confused by the utter collapse of a system of ethics which deals only with the behaviour of the individual and has nothing relevant or concrete to say to man in society. We accept that the Christian doesn't drink too much or smoke too much or play too many games on Sunday or gamble too much or philander at all. This we understand - we were all reared on it, trained in it. But when we face the complications, complexities and compromises of group behaviour, of business and professional life, of politics, of international relations, we are in a complete and utter fog. This is foreign territory, and the Gospel may as well be written in a foreign language. The old landmarks have disappeared, the old signposts point nowhere. We do not know where we are. So instead of saying something that will brand us as ignorant or naïve, we say and do nothing. Thus we insulate ourselves from the difficult and disciplined thought demanded of every Christian. Thus we seal ourselves off from the lessons of Scripture and of church history, lessons which can lead us into the paths of that righteousness which exalteth a nation. We must remember that Jeremiah and Isaiah did not hesitate to charge a whole nation with crimes against God. We must notice that only a few months ago, the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany held every German responsible for the crimes of the Nazi regime. "Ignorance", said the Synod, in effect, "is no excuse. We all connived at the corrosion of justice and freedom which made such crimes possible. No voice was raised in protest. No finger was lifted in opposition." One wonders what this Assembly will be saying thirty years from now.

So far the reasons we guess at for the lack of effective witness against the idolatry of nationalism are understandable, and even deserve a certain amount of sympathy. But there are others which give your Committee cause for concern. There is, for example, the sheer, appalling, rock-like apathy which shackles so many of us. We do not know of the restrictions, frustrations and fears that corrode the souls of men in South Africa. Nor do we care.



A terrible indictment like that needs justifying. In previous years your Committee has tried, in its own stumbling fashion, to indicate some of the positive things Christians may do, considering all the circumstances. We have, also, done our best to study legislation and make clear its implications for the Christian. To the best of our knowledge, these statements and recommendations, piously noted by this Assembly, have had less effect than the rattling of tin cans tied to a cat's tail. In fact, we are worried that they may have had a negative effect, that they may have soothed the conscience of the Church member, who can point to them and say "There you are - that is what my church thinks" and then go back to his reading of the Sunday paper. \*

Another and even graver reason is this: we cannot help believing that our reluctance to witness is due to plain fear. In this country we are riddled with fear: we are afraid of the authorities, of the Security Branch; the Afrikaner is afraid of the Englishman, and the Englishman is afraid of the Afrikaner; the white man is afraid of the black man, and the black man is afraid of the white man. Look at the evil things that result from our fear: fear accelerates our galloping tendency to isolate ourselves from friend and foe, so that we build walls of granite to separate one group from another; fear corrodes both our reason and our morals so that we condone injustice by making it legal and invent the impossible and dangerous Bantustan policy; fear breeds ignorance which in turn leads to this vicious circle: the more we fear something, the less we want to know about it - the less we know about it, the more we fear it. And, finally, this fear shrivels love in our souls.

We are afraid. So we sit still. We do nothing. We say nothing. We even think nothing. Then - so we fondly imagine - nothing can happen to us, and the forces of history will pass us by, along with the police. Now your Committee is only too well aware of the futility of making statements protesting against this law or that. We realise that this has been compared to the thunderous firing of pop-guns, and we also realise that for many Africans today is the day when protests against unjust laws do not matter one way or the other, since today is the day for just a little more patience, today is one day nearer to the inevitable doom of the white man in Africa. We realise all that. But we are still convinced that the reason why many of us refuse to act or speak is quite simply fear of the consequences. A cabinet minister, for example, hints broadly that the only reason for the opposition of certain churchmen to apartheid is that they are the tools of Communism and our lips are sealed.

How, then, are we to dispel confusion and defeat fear? The answer is easy to give, not so easy to follow.



Our first weapon in the fight against fear is knowledge. We must not run away from the object of our fear. We must go to him and get to know him better. Then, too, we must root up our prejudices and expose them to the clear light of fact and reason, sifting wheat from chaff, truth from exaggeration. Consultation between white and black, between white and white, an honest facing of the other man and coming to know the real man behind the facade - these are essentials.

Our second weapon is a willingness to clear away the causes of fear which we ourselves have made: for example, the hurtful and unnecessary laws which grind the hearts and hopes of men to dust, which breed hate and fear in the souls of men, these must go.

Thirdly, we have to see clearly the true opposite of fear. We seem to think that the opposite of fear is courage. Not so. The true opposite of fear is faith, unlimited faith in God, loving trust in our fellow-man.

Easy words? Yes. But look what happens when you put faith and love into action. For the love of which we speak is the love which forgives, which looks beyond the punishment of the evildoer to his rehabilitation and reconciliation. The world outside the Church may have caught glimpses of this, but if Christians carry this kind of thing too far, then the world girds itself for battle. Secondly, the love of which we speak is the love which helps us to enter with imagination and sympathy into the lives of others, to sit where they sit, to feel the bitterness and burdens which they feel, to bear on our own hearts the sorrows and sighings which afflict them. This is the love which leaves the world completely baffled, for its favourite motto is "Look after number one". And where the world cannot understand something, it turns hostile. Thirdly, this love is a sacrificial love, ready to sacrifice him who loves for him who is loved, ready to let go all prosperity and privilege if the loved one may be served thereby. The world outside the Church finds this love strange and suspect. Finally, the love of which we speak knows <sup>no</sup> barriers. It is not limited by the lines of family, tribe or nation. All men, no matter what their language or skin colour, are drawn into its embrace. And the world does not understand that kind of love. It does not tolerate it. It resists it. It girds itself for battle against it.

This is the remedy for our desperate plight. We would not have the Assembly think that we, Christians, members of the Church, can summon up this faith, this love by an act of will. It is a gift of God which will be given to us when we realise how bankrupt we are, how poverty-stricken we are, how desperately we lack love and how desperately we need it. It is a gift of God given to us in Jesus Christ. It is worth



remembering that he, our Saviour, is the only true incarnation of this kind of love that ever lived. Because the world could neither understand nor tolerate that kind of love, we crucified him. But beyond his crucifixion - and ours - lay victory.

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