

APARTEID

D. B. KNOX

"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"

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Apartheid is receiving a good deal of airing especially now that the Commonwealth heads of government are meeting in Melbourne. But there is a lot of confused thinking and talking about apartheid amongst the politicians and churchmen. It is important to get our ideas straight. Apartheid means separation; living separately. Now this is what we all want for ourselves. For example, newly married couples don't want to go on living forever in their parents' house, however much they may love them, because it is sure to lead to quarrels and estrangement in the end. Each family wants to live in its own house, to live separately, but in friendship with their neighbours and their relatives. Separate living for families and for nations is essential in this world. This will not be so in heaven where we will all live in the happiest relationship with one another, but in this life there is the fact of sin, self-centredness and quarrelsomeness. So God has separated the nations giving each its own territory. This is plainly taught in the Bible (e.g., Acts 17: 26) but these days politicians and many churchmen ignore the Bible's teaching about humanity's radical sin in rejecting God and being self-centred.

What we should be directing our attention to is not separate living but injustice in applying this principle. The Bible shows the way Abraham and Lot were close relatives but their family groups became very large and the servants of each quarrelled over the water holes for their flocks. So Abraham said to his nephew Lot "We should separate, you choose that part of the land you would like to live in" and Lot chose the fertile level valley and Abraham, the older and richer partner, moved to the arid hill country and so the quarrels ceased. Generosity is the Bible principle, the wealthy Abraham was generous towards the younger Lot.

Our Australian Aborigines want their own separate way of life and their own separate land. Australians should be generous towards them, not giving them the leftovers of barren land or keeping the mining rights for ourselves, but should be generous in providing for the Aboriginal people. So, too, in South Africa the whites should be generous in administering apartheid, giving the blacks fertile land in proportion to their numbers together with gold mines and diamond mines and other natural resources of the earth. If our leaders directed their attention not to attacking apartheid but to attacking the injustice in the way it is administered, there would be a real chance of a breakthrough. Apartheid is natural, we all want separate living for ourselves and it is natural for the Aborigines to want it for themselves; it is the way God administers nations in this sinful world. But if apartheid is to lead to harmony it must be just and generous apartheid, and it is the injustice and the meanness of apartheid in Africa and Australia that our leaders should be directing their attack. For a just and generous apartheid, as in the case of Abraham and Lot, will solve the problem of two national groups quarrelling over the same resources and will lead to harmony between neighbouring peoples. Justice and generosity is the principle for happy relationship. It is on these that our leaders should be insisting.

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