

SIGNPOSTS

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A DIGEST OF RESEARCHED INFORMATION FOR CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

JOINING THE SACC IS WRONG!

The recent decision of the leadership of the International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC) to join the South African Council of Churches (SACC) is wrong! The reason? The two groups have a totally different concept of the Christian message.

The IFCC believes in a personal God Who has revealed Himself through His unique Son, Jesus Christ, and whose revelation is preserved for us in the Bible. It believes in the Fall of man, personal sin and the need of the New Birth which comes through faith in the death of Christ. It believes in the resurrection and ascension of Christ and His second coming with power.

It believes that current world events are moving towards a climax which will see the Rapture of the saints, the rise of the Anti-Christ, a God-hating world ruler who will be supported by the False Prophet and the apostate church. These will be overthrown

when Jesus returns in power to set up His 1 000 year reign on earth. The IFCC also believes in a prayer-answering God who performs miracles, in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and that the gifts of the Spirit are available to Christians today.

Although it may pay lip service to traditional creeds and statements of faith, in practice the SACC believes something very different. It sees the Bible, not as the revealed will of God, but as an imperfect record of the awakening of man's religious consciousness. The few kernels of truth it contains lie buried under heavy layers of ancient tradition which must be peeled away to expose the truth. According to the SACC, the Bible was written in a society dominated by men and stifled by rigid sexual taboos. Because our society is a totally different one, the teaching of the Bible must be made relevant by breaking these restrictions. Thus the religious wing of the feminist movement demands the ordination of women priests while gay liberation groups insist on the ordination of practicing homosexuals and the Church's blessing on single-sex marriages!

The SACC regards all other religions and their sacred writings as being as valid as the Christian faith and the Bible. They are all records of the awakening of man's religious conscience. They only differ from the Bible because they come from a different culture or geographical area.

It is easy to understand that starting from this foundation, the SACC sees the Biblical accounts of the creation, the Fall, the Birth, miracles, resurrection and ascension of Jesus to be myths, fables and fantasies. Far from being created in the image of God, the SACC accepts that man evolved from the animal kingdom. It does not believe in the literal return of our Lord and is sceptical about life after death. It strives to create a socialist utopia on earth.

But the gulf between what the IFCC and the SACC believe widens still further. Because the SACC believes all religions are equally valid, we are forced to ask, "How can we be sure that God has actually spoken? And through whom?" If God has spoken with equal authority through Jesus, Mohammed and Buddha, why do their messages contradict each other? If we cannot be sure through whom God has spoken, how can we be sure that God actually exists? If we cannot be sure God exists, we are left with man as the only active agent in the universe! Certainly, the SACC tends to see man as the only active agent in the universe. The IFCC, on the other hand, sees God as the great Creator Who changes circumstances and human hearts in



The ministry of SIGNPOSTS is to stand on "the walls of Jerusalem" and blow the trumpet at the first sign of danger. In this way, we warn God's people of threats they would otherwise not be aware of. This is particularly true of this issue. The South African Council of Churches has embarked on a drive to persuade more churches to join it. Its influence with the African National Congress appears to be a factor that is attracting new members.

response to the prayers of His people.

Because it is consistent with its belief that all religions are equally valid, the SACC is heavily committed to the Inter-Faith Movement, the New Age Movement, the New World Order and the One World Government. Some recent examples of its involvement with these groups are given below.

THE INTER-FAITH NETWORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

The main promoters of the inter-faith concept in South Africa are the SACC, the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) and the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT). These organisations are inter-linked. Thus, the SACBC is an observer member church of the SACC while the ICT is an associate member organisation. The SACC, SACBC and ICT are three of the four Christian organisations that are associate organisations of the WCRP, along with one Bahai, four Hindu, three Jewish and four Muslim groups.

The ties between the groups is further strengthened by an exchange of personnel. This is illustrated by the members of the editorial board of *Challenge*, the magazine of the ICT. Its editor is Father Albert Nolan, a Roman Catholic priest, who is regarded by many as the leading liberation theologian in South Africa and the driving force behind the ICT. Editorial board members include Rev Frank Chikane (general secretary of the SACC and former general secretary of the ICT); Dr Khosa Mgojo (president of the SACC); Father Smangalis Mkhathshwa (general secretary of the ICT and former general secretary of the SACBC) and Dr Beyers Naude (former general secretary of the SACC).

The WCRP holds an annual Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture. Archbishop Tutu is a former general secretary of the SACC and former president of the WCRP.

COSMIC SPIRITUALITY - A NEW AGE CONCEPT

The first article in the August 1992 issue of *Challenge* is entitled

WHAT IS THE IFCC?

The International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC) came into being in 1985 as an association of the Charismatic churches relating to the Rhema Bible Church, the Hatfield Christian Church and also to the evangelist Nicky van der Westhuizen. In the early days, Pastor Reinhardt Bonnke of Christ for All Nations was closely associated with it.

The IFCC has since drawn in many Charismatic and Pentecostal pastors and those who head Christian ministries. It now claims to represent 800 churches and 83 related ministries with 900 pastors and 400 000 adherents. The current leaders are Pastors Ed Roebert, Ray McCauley, Tim Salmon and David Thebehali.

The IFCC is listed as a co-ordinating agency in the South African Christian Handbook 1993. However the South African Council of Churches groups it with church denominations as an "observer church". Other co-ordinating agencies, eg Belydendekring, are listed by the SACC as "associate member organisations".

An elder who proposed that his church withdraw from the IFCC because of its SACC membership was ruled out of order on the grounds that churches could not join the IFCC, only pastors!

Cosmic Spirituality and is by the editor, Father Nolan. He reports on a workshop in Sri Lanka on cosmic spirituality, which is said to be emerging in many parts of today's world. Cosmic spirituality is described as "an integrated and holistic" spirituality which emphasises "the physical, the material and the bodily", instead of other-worldly spirituality. "In cosmic spirituality," continues Father Nolan, "the social justice activist, the feminist, the ecologist and the religious searcher can find one another. Their concerns are not merely connected. They are, when properly understood, one and the same."

The article closes with the following words: "All the participants at this workshop have developed a deep respect and appreciation for the rites, myths and cosmic symbols of our traditional religions ... The participants at the workshop tried to develop more sensitivity towards such practices by visiting temples and shrines in Sri Lanka where simple and sincere people engage in what we call 'popular religion'. Our own prayers and liturgies made extensive use of simple cosmic symbols like fire, water, flowers, rice cakes and burning the coconuts. A cosmic spirituality would make us more aware of the transforming power of symbols."

Informed Christians will instantly recognise many New Age concepts in the above quotations as well as attempts to merge different religions. BY JOINING THE SACC, THE IFCC IS IDENTIFYING WITH THESE CONCEPTS!

The second and third articles in the August issue of *Challenge* deal sympathetically with the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, a major New Age event, which is said to have "put the salvation of the earth on the world's agenda".

Incidentally, *Challenge* regularly carries an advertisement for *Mayibuye - Journal of the African National Congress*. It has very few adverts and certainly none from any other political group.

PROMOTING THE INTER-FAITH MOVEMENT

The September 1992 issue of *Challenge* published the text of the *Draft Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Religious People*, the major inter-faith document in South Africa. This document put all religions on the same footing and placed heavy restrictions on evangelism, especially on reaching children with the Gospel. (See *SIGNPOSTS* Vol 11, no 4, 1992)

This draft declaration was the result of the National Inter-Faith Conference on Religion-State Relations, held in December 1990. The conference grew out of two suggestions, one from the WCRP and the other from Prof Albie Sachs, a member of the ANC's national executive committee, who was the only speaker at the conference with a non-religious background. Other speakers were Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and a monk from the Ramakrishna Centre. Rev Chikane was a major speaker. He did not once refer to the Bible and called for a "constitutionally secular state" with "a clear separation between religion and state".

Other speakers drew no distinction between "our sacred writing (the Torah, the Gita, the Qur'an or the Bible)" and between "the church, the mosque, the synagogue, the temple, etc". They referred to God as "our Father and Mother" and lamented that there were no representatives of African indigenous religions (that is, those who worship ancestral spirits) at the conference. They talked of "the community of faith" or "people of faith", meaning people of all religions. They called on Christians to

collaborate with other religions in a partnership "to contribute to their own understanding of oneness". They argued that it was not the state's responsibility to decide on issues of personal morality, like the questions of euthanasia, abortion and the right of homosexuals to marry.

INTER-FAITH PRAYERS

A second conference was held towards the end of November 1992 to finalise this document. Those who led in prayer included a Muslim, a Hindu and a Bahai. Another to open in prayer was Maarten Turkstra, a White South African who calls himself a shaman, that is, a priest who is in contact with ancestral spirits as well as the spirits of living things and inanimate objects. He was at the conference to represent the sangomas or witchdoctors. He maintains that Jesus' claim to be the only way to God to be a tremendous stumbling block to the inter-faith movement.

When his opportunity to pray came, Turkstra called on the participants to hum like a bee as the Australian aborigines do and to turn their eyes "inward towards the heart" while he called on "the Great Spirit, the first movement" in the original emptiness "to witness our action of prayer". He called on "the milky way, our stellar family within the galaxy ... the sun and the moon, the heavenly bodies ... the powers of the four direction - the east and the west, the north and the south ... the elements of sky and earth, of fire and water, to be present with us here as we pray together."

Then, almost mirroring the apostasy recorded in Rom 1:23, he invoked "the spirit of all the two-legged peoples", "the spirit of all four-legged creatures," "the winged creatures", and "all creeping things - all lowly beetles and worms and snakes - I invite you to be with us in our prayers."

He invoked the kingdom of the plants, "the rock people, the

THANK YOU!

SIGNPOSTS most sincerely thanks all who supported the ministry so faithfully during 1992. To those who contributed anonymously and could not therefore receive a personal letter, please accept our appreciation and heartfelt thanks. **SIGNPOSTS** could not continue without those who regularly send donations over and above the usual subscription rate. May God bless you all and make 1993 a year of blessing and encouragement.

living earth, and the dust, and the space between the dust ... the tiniest atom and the emptiness at the heart of the atom. I call on you to be present here with us in our prayers."

Incredibly, the IFCC representatives at the conference sat through that prayer without registering any protest! Given the IFCC's awareness of demon activity and demon-possession, the IFCC representatives should have been horrified when evil spirits were invited to come into the meeting!

One of the purposes of the conference was to draw people together for inter-faith prayer. By its presence at the conference, the IFCC agreed that it is acceptable to pray to the Living God and at the same time to pray to those who are not gods and to invoke demons!

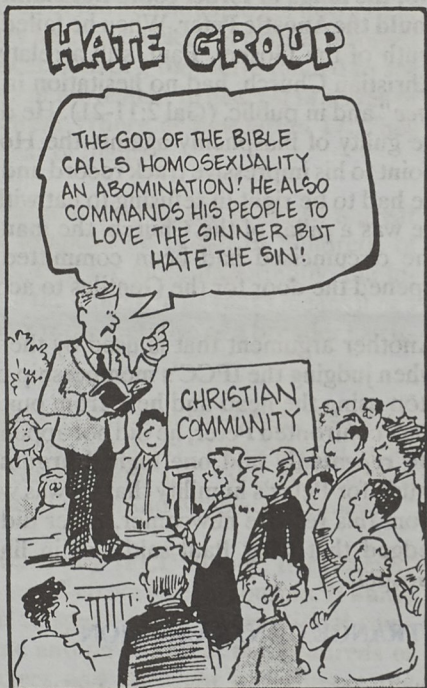
GOD IS NOT A CHRISTIAN!

"God is clearly not a Christian," Archbishop Tutu said in Cape Town on July 8, 1992, making an impassioned plea for the inter-faith position. "That God does not belong only to Christians must be

abundantly obvious except to those who ignore the truth. ... My God and, I hope your God, is not sitting around apprehensive that a profound religious truth ... is going to be made by a non-Christian. ... Do we really have to be so ridiculous to assert that what Mahatma Gandhi did was good, but it would have been better had he been a Christian? What evidence do we have that Christians are better? Isn't the evidence often overwhelmingly in the opposite direction? ... Religion is not necessarily a good thing. ... It is far better for all concerned that we should have a secular state."

"I wonder how Christians would feel if they were a minority religious group in a predominantly, say, Muslim country, when ... the current status quo would be reversed?" asked Archbishop Tutu in an address delivered on his behalf at the third Archbishop Stephen Naidoo memorial lecture. (What the Archbishop failed to point out is that Muslims already have far greater religious freedom in South Africa than Christians would dream of in a country where three-quarters of the population was Muslim! Why must South African Christians have to watch a Muslim or Jewish service when only 1.1 and 0.2 percent of the population are Muslim and Jews respectively?)

These are the people, organisations and ideas with which the IFCC has identified itself by joining the SA Council of Churches! It should have nothing to do with them for they are all hostile to the basic beliefs that the IFCC churches and their members hold dear. If the IFCC continues in the SACC, it will be led into one compromise after another. **IT MUST GET OUT OF THE SACC NOW!**



HOW DO THE IFCC LEADERS JUSTIFY THEIR DECISION?

In view of the storm of criticism that has burst over its head, how has the IFCC leadership justified its decision to join the SACC? BY APPEALING TO TRUST AND BY THREATENING DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR THOSE WHO DARE CRITICISE THEIR ACTION.

“Let our track record be the basis for trusting us”, they say. But blind faith in leadership is not the Scriptural pattern, because while we are still in the flesh we are both fallible and subject to temptation. In fact, it was the refusal to put blind faith in church authorities that sparked off the Protestant Reformation.

Martin Luther faced a pope who claimed to be Christ's representative on earth and was therefore infallible. The institutionalised church maintained that it was identical with the true body of Christ. So outside of that church there could be no salvation. Yet in the face of this awe-inspiring show of spiritual authority, Luther boldly stated: **“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by evident reason - for I confide neither in the pope nor in a council alone, since it is certain that they have often erred and contradicted themselves - I am held fast by the Scriptures adduced by me and my conscience is taken captive by God's Word, and I neither can nor will revoke anything, seeing that it is not safe or right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen.”**

This must surely be our position. We must so soak ourselves in the Word of God that our conscience is taken captive by it. Then we must hold that position against all odds until we are shown from the Bible that our position is wrong. Or unless clear, logical arguments can be presented against the position we have taken.

BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

When appeals to “trust us”, have failed to quench the criticism, threats of dire consequences are issued against those who disagree with the decision to join the SACC. The IFCC leaders claim that they were guided by the Holy Spirit in their decision. Anyone who dares question that decision is attributing what God has done to the devil. This, they declare, is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin! Appeals are made to the story of Korah who rebelled against Moses and as a result the earth opened and swallowed him and his followers (Num 16). Those who disagree with the decision to join the SACC are warned that illnesses will come upon them, or their businesses will fail or they will meet with a car accident. Then, of course, there are the inevitable exhortations to “touch not the Lord's anointed”.

Despite the Biblical commandment not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (I Jn 4:1), the threats from the IFCC leadership have had their effect and many voices have been silenced.

Yet there are many examples in the Bible where those in authority were challenged because they were out of line with the revealed will of God. The kings of Israel were instructed to write out their own copy of the law and meditate on it daily to ensure that they “turned not aside from the commandment” (Deut 17:18-20). When King Saul turned away from the written commandment and took on the responsibilities of the priest, Samuel

I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, who shall never hold their peace day or night.

Isaiah 62:6

rebuked him in the strongest terms (I Sam 13:13-14). In the same way, Nathan confronted David when he fell into sin (II Sam 12:7-12; cf I Kings 15:5).

No, the kings of Israel could not claim to be infallible. Neither could the Apostle Peter. When he failed to walk according to the truth of the Gospel, Paul, still a relatively minor figure in the Christian Church, had no hesitation in confronting him “to his face” and in public. (Gal 2:11-21). He did not fear that he might be guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Nor did Peter point to his impressive track record and claim that, on that basis, he had to be right in refusing to eat with the Gentiles! After all, he was a pillar of the Church, the man to whom the Gospel of the circumcised had been committed and the one who had opened the door for the Gentiles to accept Christ.

Another argument that is used by the IFCC leadership is that when judging the IFCC's membership of the SACC, one should stop using the head and hear from our spirit instead. But when Paul confronted Peter, he did not appeal to his heart or his spirit. He repeatedly laid one logical argument on another. It says much for Peter's humility that he was willing to accept a rebuke from this relative newcomer. Peter did so because he acknowledged that what Paul said was in line with the truth of the Gospel.

STRANGE CONTRADICTION

There is a strange contradiction in the attempts of the IFCC leadership to justify their decision. It is well known that the leaders of the SACC do not accept the basic Christian doctrines, such as the Inspiration of the Scriptures, the Virgin Birth, the Deity of Christ, His Resurrection or the need for the New Birth through grace and faith. Yet they are not accused of being guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the IFCC must join them in order to change them.

However when mature spiritual leaders who are born again, Spirit-filled and believe all the above, and who hold senior pastoral positions in IFCC churches, when these men disagree with the decision to join the SACC, they are warned that they are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin!

Certainly there appears to be no Biblical basis for joining an organisation that has moved into error, to bring them back to God. Rather the Scriptures seem to indicate the opposite course of action. Paul's epistles to Timothy, as well as II Peter and Jude, all deal extensively with those who are departed from the faith. There is most certainly the instruction to be gentle to all men and to instruct in meekness those who oppose the Christian message (II Tim 2:22-26). But if they fail to respond, the tone of these epistles seems to be summed up in the words “from such turn away” (II Tim 3:5).

This is confirmed by Paul's exhortation not to have fellowship with unbelievers but to separate ourselves from them (II Cor 6:14-18). Certainly Elijah did not join the prophets of Baal in order to convert them! He placed a stark choice before the people. Either they went one way or the other (I Kings 18:21).

IFCC'S MEMBERSHIP A GREAT VICTORY FOR THE SACC

A small item in the last issue of *SIGNPOSTS* has caused wide reaction. It was the announcement that the International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC) had joined the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

There were three reasons for the reaction. Firstly the IFCC is the first big church to join the SACC for some time. Secondly, it is the first of the Pentecostal/Charismatic groups to join the SACC. This is very significant, because these churches have generally focused on the need of the individual to get into a right relationship with God. They have shied clear of getting involved in anything remotely political. Thirdly, they have tended to see the SACC and the ecumenical movement in general in terms of the Anti-Christ and the Great Whore of Revelation 17. They have therefore kept well clear of them.

Thus the SACC sees the membership of the IFCC as a great victory. It can now claim to speak on behalf of hundreds of thousands more Christians. But, far more importantly, the inclusion of another branch of the church in its ranks means it can justifiably boast that it is now representative of a broader Christian spectrum.

The IFCC leadership justifies its decision to join the SACC by arguing that it is only an observer member. "This does not mean we agree with what they teach," they say. "We did not sign anything nor subscribe to anything or did we give any money."

But the SACC does not want any IFCC money. It is already getting some R24 million annually from foreign sources. It wants only two things - the right to speak to the international community in the IFCC's name and on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of IFCC members and the right to influence the

IFCC representatives at its conferences and committees. By accepting the IFCC's application for membership, the SACC has acquired both rights. On the other hand, as an observer member, the IFCC does not have the vote. Its ability to influence SACC decisions is therefore minimal.

It is my belief that the SACC's campaign to draw in new members has only just begun. Contact has already been made with the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, but I believe that special efforts are being directed at the Pentecostal/Charismatic section of the Church. The next body that is likely to be targeted is the newly-formed Pentecostal-Charismatic Fellowship of Southern Africa which is said to represent eight major churches with 3 million members. Its chairman, Pastor Ray McCauley of the Rhema Bible Church, is believed to be the man largely responsible for taking the IFCC into the SACC. Since the 1990 National Conference of Churches at Rustenburg, he is known to have built up a very close friendship with leading figures in the SACC, especially its general secretary, Rev Frank Chikane and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a former general secretary.

Because of the controversy surrounding the IFCC's membership of the SACC and the fact that many Christians are seeking factual information on this matter, this issue of *SIGNPOSTS* is devoted to this heated controversy. We also urge our readers to pray earnestly and to do what they can to have the decision to join the SACC reversed.

Edward Cain

DOES THE IFCC ENDORSE SACC ACTIONS?

At the SACC's national conference held in Durban from July 6-10, the conference at which the IFCC was accepted as an observer member church, the SACC's general secretary, Rev Frank Chikane, laid the blame for the present crisis in South Africa, for the breakdown of negotiations and for the violence, at the door of what he called, the illegitimate, White, minority government and its institutions, like the military and the police. His report was described as the highlight of the conference.

Does the SACC's analysis of the political scene in South Africa reflect the views of the IFCC and its membership? If not, has the IFCC, as an observer member church of the SACC, distanced itself publicly from this analysis?

At the same conference, a resolution was passed accepting in principle the call for the establishment of an integrated peace-keeping force in South Africa consisting of equal and substantial numbers from the SA Defence Force, the SA Police, the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Pan-Africanist Congress's Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA); the Azanian People's Organisation's Azanian National Liberation Army (AZANLA) and the police and defence forces of the Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana.

Is this resolution acceptable to the IFCC and its membership? If not, what action has the IFCC, as an SACC observer member church, taken publicly to distance itself from the resolution?

At its meeting from August 21-28, 1992, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches adopted a resolution on South Africa which, among other things, said it believed "that political

developments in South Africa cannot, as yet, be considered 'irreversible' and, accordingly, urges once again all member churches to continue to campaign for economic and financial sanctions until such time as an interim government is in place which reflects the full participation of all the people of South Africa".

The resolution was based on a report which Rev Chikane presented to the WCC's Central Committee on behalf of the SACC's national conference and all its member churches. Speaking on economic sanctions, he said at a press conference at the WCC's headquarters in Geneva on August 22: "Any investment in South Africa at the moment will strengthen the apartheid regime." He urged the international community not to grant fresh loans to the South African government "until there is an interim government".

The WCC resolution and Rev Chikane's statement were taken on behalf of and in the name of all the member churches of the SACC and the Christians who are members of those churches. In other words, they are talking in the name of the IFCC and the members of the churches linked to it. Do the IFCC and its members support continued economic sanctions against South

Africa? If not, what representations have the IFCC leadership made to the WCC and the SACC dissociating themselves from these actions? Have they registered their objections publicly? If

the IFCC leadership has remained silent, the international community must assume that they endorse the WCC's resolution and Rev Chikane's statement!

AFM REJECTS POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Not all the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches are following the lead of the IFCC. "The Church could never allow itself to become an engine for political ideology," Dr Isak Burger, president of the Apostolic Faith Mission, South Africa's oldest Pentecostal church, said on December 26, 1992. He was reacting to the State President's Christmas message in which he requested churches to call for a day of prayer and contrition.

Although he appreciated President De Klerk's call for a day of contrition, Dr Burger cautioned churches to steer clear of allowing political under- or overtones to come into such days. "To allow politics into such calls would be taking politics to Scripture, instead of applying the lessons of the Bible to the problem. This could not be tolerated as it would ultimately lead the Church into the trap of situational ethics. Church and state have important roles to play in the developing South African scenario, but one dare never transgress on the other's terrain, however well-meaning."

Noting that the church would never be dependent on the goodwill of political leaders for its existence, Dr Burger said: "When a man like Mr Mandela, who has never been prepared to publicly state where he personally stood with regard to religion, gives an undertaking, the Church had great difficulty assessing the value of his undertaking. When Mr Mandela called on churches to promote the democratic process without explaining what he meant, it smacked of liberation theology."

Firmly rejecting Mr Mandela's call to join hands with other religious groups like Muslims, he added: "Christians have no problem with Muslims doing their own thing, but spiritually Christians could and should have no truck with them. They have absolutely nothing in common."

- While in principle many Bible-believing Christians supported Mr De Klerk's call for a day of prayer and contrition, they noted with alarm that he spoke of churches and believers rather than of churches and Christians. They are aware that the Inter-faith movement uses the term "believers" to mean adherents of all religions. "Churches" is sometimes used in place of "religions". In the view of Bible-believing Christians, the main sin that South Africa needs to repent of is invoking the blessing of false gods on national occasions like the signing of the National Peace Accord and at Codesa. If the day of prayer called by the State President turns out to be an inter-faith one, Bible-believing Christians will certainly refuse to take part.

CURRYING FAVOUR WITH THE ANC?

IFCC leaders have advanced a number of reasons for joining the SACC. These can be summed up by saying that the IFCC must be relevant in the current situation. It joined in order to take on the traditional church and stop its acting as though it were the only church. In so doing, the IFCC can be on the cutting edge and it can be light and salt to the SACC. If it fails to join the SACC, the IFCC would be totally by-passed, and relegated to the position of being an irrelevant, funny little outfit.

None of these arguments are very convincing. They certainly do not justify the taking of such a momentous decision nor the hot water into which the IFCC leadership has landed itself as a result of the storm of criticism that has broken over its head.

One is therefore forced to the conclusion that the real reason for joining has not been, or cannot be, expressed. Could it be, as some have suggested, that the real reason is to curry favour with the African National Congress?

This line of argument runs like this. The ANC will inevitably and soon be in power as the new government of South Africa. In the past, the Charismatic churches have not been involved politically. Unlike the SACC, they have not campaigned against apartheid. For this reason they are seen by the ANC to have been supportive of the status quo. Unless they change this perception quickly, before the ANC comes to power, they will find restrictions placed on their ability to preach the Gospel in the new South Africa. The best way of ensuring that the IFCC churches continue to have the freedom to preach the Gospel is for them to join the SACC now and benefit from its proven anti-apartheid record. In other words, the noble end, freedom to preach the Gospel, justifies the questionable means of dragging the IFCC membership, kicking and screaming, into the SACC, seen by many of them as part of the apostate church.

Credibility is given to these arguments by Pastor Ray McCauley's known friendship with ANC leaders and the hostility he shows to Black political leaders in opposition to the ANC, even though, in contrast to senior ANC officials, they openly profess to be Christians. Further credibility is given by a manifesto issued by the IFCC in September which calls on churches to repent of their failure to address the political and social ills of the nation and on the government to repent of the sin of apartheid and for becoming a tyrant. However it fails to call on the ANC to repent of the strife and bitterness sown by its past acts of terror, and the stagnant economy and the lost generation of uneducated youths it helped create.

On the assumption that this line of reasoning is true, the attempts of the IFCC leadership to curry favour with the ANC stand in sharp contrast to their past criticism of the Dutch Reformed Church for its close ties with the present government. That church was criticised for justifying National Party policies and for failing to have had sufficient distance between itself and the government to enable it to challenge the government to uphold Biblical principles.

If anything, the SACC has an even closer relationship with the ANC. Now the IFCC is moving to that position.

This opens the whole matter of church/state relations. It is well

known that the ANC is closely allied to the South African Communist Party and that Marxists have always sought to harness the church for their own ends. They see the church as purely a social institution, but a very influential one and therefore one which must be brought under their control. Marxism cannot allow an independent church because its basic philosophy demands a highly centralised system with tight state control over every aspect of life. In contrast, the Biblical system is decentralised with a lot of responsibility placed on the individual, the family and the church, and only limited powers in the hands of the state.

While the Church must most certainly uphold Biblical standards,

THE SACC STRONGLY SYMPATHISES WITH THE ANC

The 1984 Eloff Commission of Inquiry into the South African Council of Churches rejected the SACC's statement: "The SACC does not identify with the ANC or any other political movement". It said the statement was inconsistent with "some of the utterances of, and active steps taken by, office-bearers, officials and member churches of the SACC." Put simply, the commission said the SACC did support the African National Congress.

Dealing with the SACC's sympathy for terrorist organisations and the perpetrators of violence, the commission warned that "Blacks may gain the impression that men of God think it understandable, even justifiable, if they use violence".

To this day, the SACC denies verbally that it is sympathetic to, or supportive of, the ANC, but its statements are contradicted by its actions. Many of the positions it adopts are similar to those taken by the ANC. On the other hand, it does not, except on minor issues, take a stance which conflicts with the ANC.

The support of the World Council of Churches and the SACC for the ANC can be seen in a conference held in Lusaka in May 1987. It was organised by the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism and attended by a large South African delegation. For the first time at a WCC conference, the ANC, PAC and Swapo leaders attended as official delegates. The resultant statement called on member churches "to recognise, support and relate to the liberation movements" and to campaign "for the recognition of the liberation movements of Namibia and South Africa as legitimate political movements of their countries". It should be

including principles of Godly government, it must beware of identifying with a political party.

It was because the early Christians refused to come under state control that they suffered tremendous persecution at the hand of Nero. In our time, the church in Communist lands has been divided into a compromising church which survived by currying favour with the authorities and a persecuted church which maintained that the church should be free from state interference. By their apparent willingness to curry favour with the ANC, the leadership of the IFCC appears to be already surrendering its independence!

noted that they were not to be recognised as legitimate political movements IN their countries, but OF their countries! In effect they were given the status of the ONLY legitimate representatives OF their countries.

Rev John Lamola, head of the SACC's Department of Justice and Social Ministries and personal assistant to the Rev Frank Chikane, is the former head of the ANC's Department of Religious Affairs, which is an inter-faith body. Writing in the ANC's magazine *Sechaba* (January 1989), he justified the liberation struggle by arguing that this was the primary task of the church. He said: "It is not only a question of social responsibility for the church in South Africa to engage in the struggle for liberation, but it is its central religious duty, an evangelical obligation to see to the overthrow of the apartheid regime."

He went on to strenuously defend the right to use violence. "Abundant theoretical justification of the moral rightness of the attempts of the oppressed of South Africa to seek their freedom through armed struggle has already been done, convincingly and conclusively."

WHY WAS THE SACC MEMBERSHIP KEPT SECRET?

By joining the SACC, the International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC) hopes to be able to influence and change that body. However, all the evidence is on the other side. In other words, the SACC is already greatly influencing the IFCC!

The SA Council of Churches' influence can be seen especially in how the decision to join the SACC was taken and how it was announced. However before looking at this in detail, we need some background information.

Jesus said: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great, exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Mat 20:25-26).

The Christian leader is a servant because God does not speak perfectly through one man 100 percent of the time, for, no matter how Spirit-filled he may be, he is still fallible and subject to temptation. God speaks through His body, the Church. All believers can hear from God and they contribute to the enriching of the body. In this way, the bias and weaknesses found in the

individual is minimised. "In a multitude of counsellors there is safety" is how Proverbs (11:14) puts it.

Marxists take the opposite view. They believe that some have evolved for positions of leadership. These enlightened ones have the responsibility to impose their views on their followers. "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others", is how George Orwell summed it up in *Animal Farm*, his biting satire of Marxism. The more-than-equal ones are the leaders because they are superior to the others.

Because the ecumenical movement draws heavily on Marxist thought, it rejects the Biblical concept of the servanthood of the leader in favour of the Marxist idea that the leader must impose his views on his followers. In other words, it strengthens the power of the bureaucracy or hierarchy of the church at the cost

of the members and the ordinary pastors and ministers.

This trend is clearly seen in the SACC although it has been unsuccessful in convincing Christians of the correctness of its views. This led to a widening gulf between the the leadership and the members, a gulf which embarrassed the SACC. It complained that "decisions taken at the National Conference of the SACC have been unacceptable to member churches". On another occasion it said that the impression had been created that "the SACC existed and acted apart from the churches rather than with the churches" and that it was "paddling its own canoe". An SACC spokesman said: "Some now saw the SACC as an entity which, equipped with its own bureaucracy, tended very much to 'do its own thing' with little or no reference to its constituency."

Noting this trend, the Eloff Commission, which investigated the SACC in the early 1980's, concluded that "for many years now a significant distance between the SACC and its member churches has existed, and that the SACC has gradually developed as a largely bureaucratic organisation, kept alive by its overseas donors."

IFCC - A SERVANT OR A LORD?

Now, let us go back to the IFCC and see how it handled the matter of its membership of the SACC. Did the IFCC act as a servant, obeying the will of God as reflected in its constituency



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or acting as a lord, imposing its views on its constituency as though it alone could hear from God?

Although the decision to join the SACC was a major one with serious and widespread ramifications, the IFCC leadership did not inform its 400 000 members that such a move was contemplated. It did not ask the pastors of the 800 churches it represents to pray over the matter. It did not even consult with the 50 or so regional representatives scattered across the country. No, the decision was taken by just four men. They decided they had the mind of the Lord and knew what was best for their constituency! They were determined to impose their decision on their followers, whether they liked it or not!

The decision to apply for observer membership of the SACC was taken in secret early in 1992. The application was formally accepted by the SACC on July 9 at its national conference in Durban.

The IFCC's eighth national conference was held at the Rhema Bible Church, Randburg in September 1992, some 10 weeks after the IFCC joined the SACC. Normally such a conference is an opportunity for the executive to report on its activity over the past year for the endorsement or disapproval of the members who will then give the executive a fresh mandate or elect a new executive. But the earth-shattering fact that the IFCC had joined the SACC was not even mentioned at the conference!

Only after the conference was safely over, was the news that the IFCC had joined the SACC released in the form of an insignificant article in IFCC NEWS. The storm of controversy that broke as a result of that article gives a very clear indication of why the news was suppressed for so long and why it was released surreptitiously. The decision taken by the IFCC leaders lacks grassroots support. It reveals a great distance between them and the churches they should represent, a gap which is mirrored by the gulf between the SACC and its member churches.

The IFCC leadership has been accused of going the way of the Anti-Christ, of lining up with the Great Whore of Revelation 17 and of becoming supporters of terrorism. Many of the members of IFCC-related churches are most upset and some of the pastors are withdrawing from that body.

In the matter of its membership of the SACC, did the IFCC leadership act in a spirit of servanthood with integrity, openness, transparency and truth? Or, by seeking to impose its will on its constituency, can it be accused of "being lords over those entrusted to you" (I Pet 5:3)? Or is it still operating in terms of the widely discredited "shepherding" teaching which demands absolute submission to one's spiritual leaders?

If you will not fight for the right when you can easily win without bloodshed;
if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not too costly,
you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance of survival.

Winston Churchill