

THE DYNAMICS OF RECONCILIATION

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Over the twenty years, 1947-1967, one and a half million black people from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and other Asian countries, from Africa and the Caribbean had come to make their home in Britain amongst 54 million white people. They came to work on the buses, in the hospitals and on the underground trains. They brought their families with them. As in America there was growing conflict between all these communities. I gave up my career as an international sportsman to obey the thought "to anticipate and cure the causes of colour war in Britain for the sake of the world".

My friends and I of different races, trained in the ideas of moral and spiritual re-armament, campaigned in thirty-three cities where coloured immigrants lived in large numbers. We used films and books but mostly our own stories of personal change on national issues like corruption, bitterness and arrogance.

In some of these thirty-three areas people began to change in their attitudes, e.g. a businessman in Sheffield began employing coloured girls on merit in his shops for sale of ladies' garments. An Indian family born in South Africa opened their home and during a period of six years 1967-1973 over one thousand families of different cultures from their neighbourhood met each other and mingled at dinner parties and began to find common ground of understanding, faith and action.

Meanwhile some of us also had long discussions with the leadership of the Black Power movement in London. These were men and women trained at some of the universities of Britain and USA who were indignant, because they felt that, in spite of their academic excellence, they and others of their people were considered second-class citizens.

In these discussions we met their arguments for violence and confrontation, as a way to bring about change in society, with the evidence that through personal change in our own lives we had been used to bring about a change in the structure of society in which we lived. After some months one of them had a most penetrating thought. He asked himself this question: "When we get power, as we will, will we treat some people the way some of us are treated now? When we get economic parity, will we be less selfish and more honest than the people who now have everything?" He told us, "Whatever is right politically in the future, a change of heart is necessary now. You are dealing with the causes of the problem while others are discussing the symptoms. We will bring more and more of our members to meet with you".

So hundreds of the rank and file of this movement came to the Westminster Theatre to see one of our plays based on the answer to the class struggle, called "Annie".

One of these men who changed fundamentally and worked with us told me that when Martin Luther King was assassinated in Tennessee on 4th April, 1968, the Black Power movement in London were ready to rise up in a racial demonstration that might have led to violence. They had been in touch by transatlantic telephone with the situation in America and knew such an event would be possible. They were ready with Molotov cocktails, home-made bombs, dynamite, matches, but at the last moment those who had touches with us in MRA called off the demonstration. They came to the conclusion that violence would not win them a permanent solution, so they were prepared to try to find another way.

Some men and women who yesterday were bent on violence and confrontation as a means of changing society, are now working for reconciliation and harmony on a militant, non-violent basis.

Reconciliation is an often misused word. For its full effect on human history and endeavour, I believe that reconciliation must mean two things:

1. The dynamics of making friends between God and man and between man and man.
2. Forgiveness on the part of those who have endured suffering, and repentance on the part of those who might have caused that suffering, must meet. The synthesis created will be adequate to lead to total change, racial, social, political, national and international, all based on personal change.

A fresh impetus to the advance of this strategy of a multi-racial society was given in 1973. In that year an English family changed and wrote a play out of their experience of living in Africa, and also in South East London where many different communities live. In the past four years 1973-1977 a team of Asians, Africans, West Indians and British have taken this ideological drama in play-reading form to many of the sensitive cities of Britain where many different cultures and colours meet. The play is set in three acts. The first portrays life in a West Indian family living in an industrial city in Britain. The second, life in an English family in the same city, and the third, what Britain could be like when all families of different communities in Britain experience a change of heart, and decide to live for a colourful and classless society in their country. This play has had a notable effect on police/community relations in the areas visited, and has offered the black British a way to find a part and a purpose in their new country, and challenges both the host and immigrant communities to accept the change of character that is necessary in order to face the new situation of a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-cultural society.

By the way, during the recent international conference at the Westminster Theatre in London "Britain 2000" was performed as a play-reading for about four hundred delegates from forty-seven countries. We are in the process of making a cassette of this play. We expect it to be ready by the end of September and it will cost £2.40 a copy. Any orders can be made with me. I think this will be a worthwhile weapon in the hands of our force around the world to understand this crucial question of a multi-racial society, and what changes are needed to make it work.

A close study of this action in Britain which has been a continuing one and which will continue, will reveal five important points:

1. Strategy is spiritual and is given by God to the person or persons who are ready to receive it. In this case the thought came to me to "anticipate and cure the causes of colour war". It came to me alone and others rallied to the cause. Had I disobeyed, which was possible, things might have been very different in Britain today on this particular issue.
2. Out of that strategy came a national action. But even here it started with one person who offered to be responsible for the first meeting in the city of Coventry in the Midlands, an industrial city. From that meeting others present invited my team and myself to give similar occasions in their cities. From one action came a chain reaction that became national.
3. One of the persons taking part who happened to be in a job as a teacher, who was limited to the amount of travelling he might do, was inspired to take local action in his neighborhood where he, his wife and five children held multi-racial dinners for more than one thousand people in six years. Other families in other cities were inspired to do likewise.
4. A crucial action was with specific people undertaken to redirect the aims and purpose of a political group, the Black Power movement.
5. Out of all this came at least one wholly committed black family and one wholly committed white family. There were also a number of fellow travellers.

Personal change for me meant the end of corruption and a surrender of my bitterness. I used to cheat the West Indian Board of Cricket Control on my expenses. I paid the money back and apologised, and I asked God to take away my bitterness against Him and against people for the way in which my people have been treated in the past, and in some places are still being treated today. I have learnt and am learning to forgive.

On this basis of total change starting with personal change, I believe we of all races could inherit a new order of society which will be colourful, classless, character-built and Christ-centred.

Family life will be restructured according to Christ's standards of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love.

Marriage will be consecrated both on love and unselfishness.

Education will train our students for service and not for status.

He who has academic gifts will use them for the sake of all, to unravel the knotty problems of the age.

He who has gifts of arts and crafts will use them to uplift the quality of life of the people by excellence of service and dignity of labour.

Industry will be a partnership between government who have the power, capital who have the money, and labour who give their toil and their sweat to meet the needs of the human family, nationwide and worldwide, and not to fill the pockets of the few and multiply the misery of the many.

In this society there will be no waste and no want.