
Intervention by Rev. James Bevel

The road toward a constitutional republic in South Africa

In 1988 and 1989, Rev. James Bevel, the vice presidential running-mate of Lyndon LaRouche in 1992, visited South Africa. As the director of Mass Action for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and a close associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Reverend Bevel approached the South African apartheid problem from the same philosophical standpoint that King and others had used to develop the theory of nonviolence for the civil rights movement in the United States. During that movement, after the 1963 bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Bevel proposed, developed, and executed the Alabama Right to Vote Movement, which culminated in the Selma campaign and the famous march on Montgomery in 1965. These actions directly led to the passage of the 1965 federal Civil Rights Voting Act.

Below are excerpts from two of Reverend Bevel's statements on South African apartheid.

'I cannot engage in armed struggle'

From a speech delivered in Durban, South Africa on April 17, 1989:

This paper is a response to an agonizing request from a black pastor in Soweto. How do I as a Christian assume responsibility for the freedom of my people and at the same time maintain my eternal commitment to Christ? As a Christian pastor I am compelled to answer. And my answer is dedicated to the health, interests, rights, and needs of all the people of South Africa.

Let us begin with the issue of freedom. Freedom is the right and responsibility of exercising the definition and the purpose for which one was created. How is this freedom attained? You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

Let us context our discussion so as to clarify our authority, because a freedom-fighter must have absolute authority and must assume a superior position so that freedom is guaranteed.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. So God created man in his own image. Male and female he created them and blessed them and named them man when they were created.

And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the whole earth. Every man has this responsibility. Every man has the

right to assume this responsibility. This responsibility is given to man by God. And the right to assume the responsibility is also given by God. Thus our rights are not privileges granted by the state. Our rights are gifts from God. . . .

With the knowledge of God and the right to govern the self and the knowledge of how to govern the self, man is in fact the image and likeness of God. This is the self-evident truth—that all men are created equal, and are endowed by the Creator with inalienable rights, that among these rights are life, liberty, and knowledge.

As one who has an eternal commitment to Christ, I cannot engage in armed struggle, because I would be violating a God-given right of another. . . .

So we know that freedom is attained by the knowledge of the truth, and not by any other means. . . .

How to end apartheid

How do we end apartheid? Not by murder, not by sanctions, but by confessing our errors. In the first place, those who erected apartheid obviously didn't know the truth, and those who obeyed the rules and regulations of apartheid obviously didn't know the truth either. For freedom is a two-way street. We should never allow ourselves to be lifted up in pride, and put our privileges, advantages, wants, and desires above the health, interests, rights, and needs of others. On the other hand, we should neither demean ourselves and allow others to put their privileges, advantages, wants, and desires above our health, interests, rights, and needs.

Apartheid was an agreement between two parties who didn't know the truth or who knew it and didn't live it. However, it cannot be eradicated by punishment, pressure, or murder. The attempt to eradicate it by punishment, pressure, and murder is to secretly deny our party to the crime. To pretend that the other party is 100% responsible for the problem is to create a worse problem than apartheid. It is this lie told by the blacks that caused them to ask the enemies of South Africa to bring sanctions, to disinvest, and to give arms for murder.

And no solution can come because we will have gone from one lie (obeying the rules and regulations of apartheid), to another lie (harming, injuring, and murdering our brothers). For the same God who gave us the right to assume the responsibility for the definition and purpose of man (which apartheid denies), is the same God who told us to love our

neighbors and not to injure or murder our neighbors (which armed struggle, sanctions, and disinvestments also deny).

If we are honest and look carefully, we can see that apartheid came about not because of the white man's evilness, but because we did not assume God's definition and purpose of man. And because we didn't, we got into something less than God's definition and purpose with the white man. So I challenge every black man of South Africa not to ever get involved with any person or anything that is less than God's definition and purpose of man.

So if we say to our white brothers of South Africa, we will not engage in apartheid, which is less than God's definition and purpose of man, but then become engaged with the Russian white man in the murdering of our white African brothers, and engaged with the American white man in sanctions and disinvestment against our white South African brothers, are we not still engaging ourselves with white men in something that is less than God's definition and purpose of man, so that in time murder, sanctions, and disinvestment will cause us injury because they too are less than God's definition and purpose of man?

We end apartheid by confessing our error and then assuming responsibility. We begin to pray, study, and work, and God and all people of good will will join us. . . .

The disenfranchisement of black people in America was not totally the fault of the white man. We felt that we should take at least 50% of the responsibility. So instead of calling for punishment, we assumed responsibility and God joined us, and thousands of our fellow citizens joined us, from all races and all walks of life. And the President of the United States joined us, and put his life and political career on the line for God's definition and purpose of man. And Congress passed the law and the rest is history.

Is the white man in Russia interested in the freedom of black South Africans? Or is he interested in the strategic minerals that he wants in order to attain military dominance over the world?

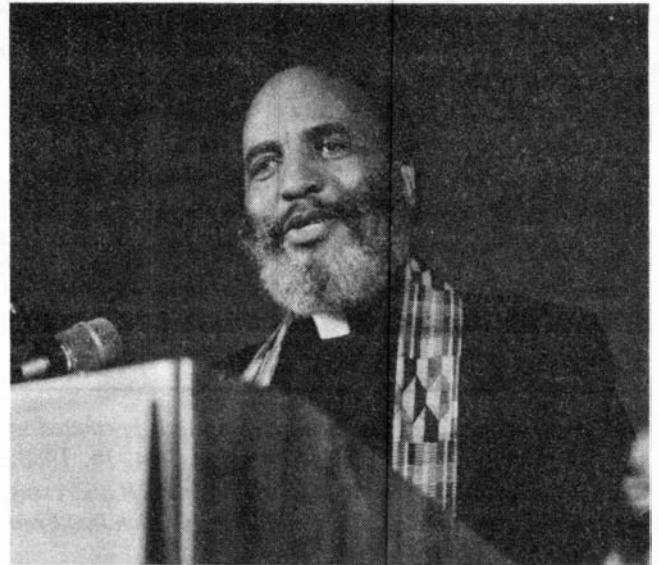
Is the white man in America interested in the freedom of black South Africans? Or is he interested in appeasing ignorant black American voters so he can stay in office? Or his ignorant American black consumers so he can make money?

When someone helps you to do something that is less than God's definition and purpose of man, you can be assured that they have ill motives, and if you accept their help, in time you will become a slave of their ill motive.

Pray, study, and work

So I say, in order to end apartheid, let's come together and pray, study, and work. And the power to change will come from within. And when we get our freedom this way, we will not be obligated to the Russians or the Americans. We will be obligated to God. We know that God has impeccable integrity and total commitment to our definitions and purpose, and to our freedom. . . .

Government is the act of joining God in making man in



The Rev. James Bevel, speaking at a Schiller Institute conference in September 1992. "Government is the act of joining God in making man in the image and likeness of God." Bevel visited South Africa in 1988 and 1989.

the image and likeness of God. . . .

All just, constitutional democratic republics are established in the definition and purpose of man. Constitutional democratic republics do not give preference, privileges, advantages, or deference to anyone, but are designed to allow each citizen to develop his fullest potential, and to protect the health, interests, rights, and needs of all.

This is why no government can match a constitutional democratic republic if the people are diligent about their own freedom. This form of government protects and promotes everyone's educational rights. This guarantees the greatest amount of creativity, inventiveness, production, free trade, and free enterprise, which maximizes the health, strength, courage, and confidence in all the people, and it is this fact that makes for peace and justice. . . .

If we only move the social deformity of apartheid and do not uproot violence and tyranny from our characters, and put education principles and procedures in place to guarantee everyone's economic rights, and put constitutional democratic councils at the disposal of every citizen, then violence and tyranny will reappear, maybe not as apartheid, but as something as bad or worse.

In America we moved the deformities of segregation and disenfranchisement, but we didn't uproot the violence and tyranny from the characters of the people, and we didn't put the education principles and procedures in place, and we didn't put the self-governing precinct councils in place. Now new and worse social deformities are appearing in the form of drug abuse, and drug wars, homosexuality as a right, and AIDS; no prayer and education in schools, lotteries as substitutes for economic development, and sanctions as punishment against our allies and neighbors.

It will be necessary for all of us to pray and work to get every political point of view, and every grievance and abuse, in the negotiations, and we must get everyone who is a party to the South African problem to the negotiations so that everyone can give the piece of the problem that God has given them to help bring about a total solution.

Sanctions and disinvestment are harming South Africa

From a paper, "From Selma to Soweto," presented to the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus on Sept. 16, 1988, after Reverend Bevel's first trip to South Africa. It addresses the issue of sanctions against South Africa which had been instituted by Congress in 1986.

My visit to South Africa revealed to me a serious error that our nation is making in its present course in relation to South Africa.

Much of my ministry has been in the area of nonviolence, as it relates to purifying, protecting, and promulgating constitutional democratic republics. As an American who for 30 years has stood in the vanguard of the American Freedom Movement, I stand firmly against apartheid and all other forms of oppression. Today I see my nation, the United States of America, acting in violation of the people of South Africa.

Our policies of sanctions and disinvestment function as acts of war, not peace.

Why is this so? The South African people are enjoined in a sacred process. Like our founding fathers, and like our freedom movement of the 1960s, the South African people are involved in dealing with the revolutionary question, "How should we, as God's people, collectively and individually govern ourselves?" As I visited every segment of the South African community, this was the underlying question I heard again and again. Despite the multitude of problems, contradictions, and paradoxes, the diversity of cultures, traditions, and opinions, my heart was made glad because I experienced from all sides a sincerity, honesty, seriousness of commitment, and dedication to a just democratic government far beyond that which I experienced in America in the 1960s. Yet, while this internal deliberation is going on, the exaggerated fears of some white inhabitants are manifested as disruptive forces that loom as political and physical threats to both the blacks and whites who search for a constitutional democratic solution. The exaggerated aspirations of some black inhabitants are manifested as political and physical threats against them also.

How do our sanctions and disinvestment violate the people of South Africa? 1) By attempting to coerce a democratic action that by its very nature must be voluntary; 2) by feeding the fears of the white inhabitants and thus threatening the political base of those who are committed to freedom for all;

3) by strengthening the hand of the whites who believe in racism and tyranny; 4) by increasing the suffering among the black masses, and therefore weakening the influence of the black leaders who are committed to a democratic, bi-racial, multi-cultural South Africa; 5) by increasing the power of those who seek to violently overthrow the present government and who seek to exploit racial animosity in blacks in order to set up a communist dictatorship under the guise of black liberation.

As an African-American who helped plan and execute the positive social changes that took place in the 1960s, I speak as one who knows the need of all parties to be free from threat or violation when organized social change is in process.

In the light of day

On this matter, let history speak. In Tracy Sugarman's book, *Stranger at the Gate: A Summer in Mississippi*, the testimony of Charles McLauren is recorded: "Some white guys had hurt a 10-year-old girl, she was the niece of a buddy of mine. They had looped wire around her neck and had dragged her down the street. . . . We were trying to map some strategy about what we were going to do to retaliate, and that's when Reverend Bevel came and stood upon the car to speak to us. He said that we were brave in the dark, we were going to shoot somebody in the dark, or hit somebody on the head in the dark. And he challenged us to do something in the light if we had the guts. He said we could take that energy and go to the bus station and buy tickets in the main waiting room which was on the white side. That was in 1961, when the Freedom Riders were just coming into Mississippi. I went with my buddies downtown and right up to the bus station and I have been in the movement ever since."

While a quite constructive, constitutional dialogue was in process, we asked blacks not to injure whites and each other, but we instructed them to join the constructive process.

If I had remained neutral in that matter and turned my head, and if I had shown no love and concern for the lives of white people, these young people would have never joined the movement for the political enfranchisement of themselves and their people. Not only that, but their negative conduct would have undermined the process that was taking place.

Those who favor sanctions have not fully considered the delicate nature of democratic social change. . . .

Those who ask for sanctions and disinvestment are not assuming the responsibility that is theirs. They are insisting that an outside force punish those they fear and hate. . . .

Some African and American blacks, and their misinformed white supporters, are demanding injurious action from our government aimed at the white people of South Africa. Not understanding the process that leads to democratic social change, the people making these demands are unaware that they are working against their own cause.

It would be wise to study the motives and goals of those who seek sanctions against South Africa. Can you imagine

those of us who brought social change in the '60s in this country calling for sanctions and disinvestment against our own economy and nation?

We didn't call for these things, and one of the brightest spots of our history is that we as Americans struggled to, and did in fact bring about social change without depending on others. . . .

'What is man?'

South Africa is not blessed—as was America in the '60s—with a widespread, loving, creative, and principled church that is unequivocally taking the lead in bringing about social change. Make no mistake: Without the American church, there would have been no American civil rights movement. Although there are many devout Christians in South Africa, the church there is not motivating people, and especially the politically active young people, by continually asking the primary question, "What is man?"

Thus an essential element to ensure a successful democratic revolution is missing: many young organizers who are focused on and committed to Christianity and the nonviolent principles that flow from it. This church-based Christian democratic youth movement is the missing element that is most badly needed in South Africa. In visiting South Africa, I found all the elements in the South African situation that existed in the American civil rights revolution except this one element. From a strong Christian movement in South Africa with energetic organizers, a successful, nonviolent mass movement could grow. . . .

When people pretend that the problem is caused and can be solved solely by whites, they call for and advocate punitive action against whites rather than working to bring courage, confidence, good will, and knowledge to the oppressed, thus aiding in a constructive dialogue.

Those who advocate sanctions should work to build these qualities. When our government brings sanctions and our businesses divest, these actions keep us from being able to contribute to the positive direction of the democratic revolution, while they aid the enemies of the democratic process and strengthen their hand.

Can we afford to betray our founding fathers and the struggling founding fathers of the new Republic of South Africa? Will history record that America refused to be the midwife and refused to help give birth to a new democratic republic? . . .

We understand that when people highly value social freedom and have assumed responsibility for it and then experience demands from others for freedom and shared power but do not experience from these people an equal demand on themselves for discipline and responsibility, they should and will be reluctant and cautious. . . .

Here in America we demanded shared power, but did we not go and organize citizenship education classes, mock elections, the Mississippi Summer Project, and the Selma Right to Vote Movement? Did we not educate people to have

a sense of personal and social responsibility and a knowledge of how to apply it in the realm of government?

You must ask those South Africans who call for sanctions to tell you how many citizenship classes they have set up.

Those who say "punish South African whites," but have not helped to increase the understanding of how the government should operate among the vast majority of blacks, must surely question their own motives.

Our sanctions are the expression of reverse racism. The blacks in America and Africa who call for sanctions assert that the political, social, and economic oppression of blacks is the result of actions taken by white people alone. That assumption is racist.

Many black people do not understand the principle of economic freedom. People who succeed economically do so because they practice 1) religious principles: obedience to God, and love and respect for other people—for their health, interests, rights, and needs; 2) the pursuit of truth, and education in it; 3) industrial research and development and the maintenance of a free market system; and 4) democratic self-government. To the degree that people practice these principles, they will succeed; to the degree that they fail to do so, they will fail.

Many blacks have been led to believe that white people are successful because they are white, or because they exploit blacks. These two racist attitudes in blacks cause envy and fear toward whites and a sense of disrespect and hatred for themselves.

The speeches we hear these days coming from many black leaders refer to economic violence, while at the same time demanding preferential treatment. This kind of approach not only reveals a lack of knowledge about what leads to economic success, it reveals reverse racism.

This form of racism produces resentment that is used by communists to help achieve communist dictatorships. The communists, out of a perverse misunderstanding of man, seek to rule over people with terror, fear, and a military dictatorship. Neither racists nor communists know the principles behind the success of western democracy.

Democracy must be protected, and when our friends abroad are working to establish it, we must not compromise our own democratic principles in an attempt to correct the errors of others.

Let us help our friends. Let us expose the motives of the black racist, the white racist, and the communist. Let us work to help give birth to a constitutional democratic republic. Let us work to liberate blacks, whites, and communists from hate and ignorance. Let us help the South African churches to lead as they should. Let us stop working for sanctions against South Africa. . . .

If we violate, betray, and compromise the constructive, constitutional democratic revolution in South Africa, then surely the American revolution will be violated, betrayed, and compromised.