

## Bridging the gap

A RECENT address to a Moral Rearmament world conference in Switzerland by the Moderator of the Northern District Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Transvaal, Dr F. E. O'B. Geldenhuys, went right to the very heart of the problem of race relations in South Africa.

Urging the need "to raise people of all races who together will seek their common destiny in Africa", Dr Geldenhuys said that, after 300 years of race relations—he was speaking of the Afrikaans section of the nation and particularly the more nationalistic section—his people honestly and sincerely believed that they knew best what was right. It was apparent, however, that many, or most, of the Bantu races did not agree with them, and it had become clear to him that no idea which did not have the support of people of goodwill of all races would have any hope of success.

### All sections

EXCEPT by implication there was no mention by Dr Geldenhuys of the apartheid policy of the Nationalist Government, but he could not have made it clearer that in his view neither apartheid nor any other policy designed to solve the country's race relations problem has any chance of doing so unless it has the support not merely of one section of the community but of all sections.

A visitor from another country, accustomed to all sections of the people having a say in its government, might regard this as a truth so self-evident as not to need stating. In South Africa, however, there is a tragically different state of affairs. Over the centuries the fact that control is vested in the hands of a White minority has led many people to lose sight of the fundamental truth enunciated by Dr Geldenhuys—that in a multi-racial society the co-operation and goodwill of all races is absolutely essential for that racial harmony without which no country can prosper.

One question immediately arises: can this self-evident truth be applied in South Africa without endangering the doctrine of White supremacy which most Whites believe must be maintained for the foreseeable future? It can on one condition: that the non-White peoples can be persuaded that the maintenance of that supremacy for the time being at any rate is as much in their interests as in the interests of the Whites.

### Impossible

THERE are many people who believe that in today's racial climate that is impossible, that Black nationalism, brought prematurely into being by the extremes of White nationalism, would never accept any plan based on the assumption that White supremacy is to continue. If this is so, then the only way of obtaining that racial co-operation that Dr Geldenhuys rightly regards as essential to racial peace is to abrogate from the idea of White supremacy—and that, today, White South Africa would never do.

If these arguments are correct, South Africa has reached the tragic pass where the gap between White and non-White has, under the impetus of nationalism on both sides, become so wide that it cannot be bridged. But what attempts have been made to bridge the gap? Is there no way of narrowing it now so that in the future it may well be bridged? Cannot both White and Black opinion be brought to realise that for their own sakes, for the future of the whole country, it can and must be bridged?

### Suicidal

THE Nationalists do not seem to think so, for their apartheid policy, reaching its logical conclusion in the Bantustan scheme for splitting the country into several Black states and one so-called White state, is tantamount to an admission that White and Black cannot live together. That, however, is a doctrine of despair. Abandoning it as impracticable and suicidal, we must retrace our steps, however painfully, cherish and nourish the racial goodwill that does still exist and seek by consultation and co-operation, with concessions on both sides, a more positive policy that will have the support of all.