
Subject: Disturbing Newspaper clippings

Dear Saints

Below please find two recent newspaper reports - one as disturbing as the other.

The first one (Afrikaans) describes how the New World Order is hitting yet another peg into the ground, whilst the second (English) describes sincretism (the mixing of the gospel with traditional beliefs) in the Body of Christ in SA.

If reported correctly, this should give intercessors more than enough reason to fall on our faces before God and cry for mercy. We fully recognise the fact that the cultural issue in the church is a complex and thorny one, but moving in THIS direction (embracing ancestral rituals and dialogue with sangomas into the bosom of the church) seems to be looking for the right answers in the wrong place.

In Christ

Eben Swart

DIE BURGER Donderdag 10 Julie 2003 p. 9.

[Below a close-up picture of an ant walking across micro chips, is this description:]

Mier-klein: 'n Mier stap tussen 'n klompie rekenarskyfies deur. Lemmetjies en hartmedisyne, elk met 'n skyfie kleiner as 'n mier se kop en 'n dun antenne, sal binnekort op apteek- en winkelrakke verskyn. Binne 20 jaar sal handelaars en vervaardigers dié piepklein senders gebruik wat inligting oor waar hulle is en 'n magdom ander inligting terugstuur. Die skyfies sal staafkodes op produkte vervang. Foto: AUTO-ID CENTER, AP

Mail & Guardian, July 4 to 10 2003 pg. 5.

CHURCH TO DEBATE AFRICAN CUSTOMS

Christian leaders gather to re-evaluate value system.
Yolandi Groenewald

South Africa's church leaders will grapple next week with ways to bring african customs and culture into worship when they meet in Pretoria for the second South African Christian Leadership Assembly (Sacla).

The first Sacla, held in 1979, united Christian leaders in developing a strategy against apartheid.

This year's conference will deal with seven threats to South Africans: HIV/AIDS, violence, crime, racism, poverty and unemployment, sexism and the family in crisis.

The Mail & Guardian understands that a key debating point will be the Africanisation of the church. Charismatic churches are said to be strongly against the concept, while mainstream denominations are more willing to explore and embrace Africanisation.

"The church needs to re-evaluate its value system and identify how African values can be incorporated into Christianity" said Bishop Mvume Dandala, presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. "Eurocentric interpretations of Christianity have alienated so many of our country's people. We should not be ashamed of bringing our culture into our faith.

We have sought to make Africa embrace a culture which we have arbitrarily designated as the only culture that has the capacity to welcome the Lord Jesus. The church has to acknowledge this mistake and repent of it. The church must legitimise the quest for space to look afresh at the gospel of Jesus Christ with African eyes, and through serious African questions."

African values encourage society to develop a structure, he says.

"If people are separated from their value systems, they behave in unsocial ways. I want the church to investigate these structures and to see how this social structure can fit into the church," he said.

Dandala said ancestors have a place in Christianity. "Western norms distorted the honouring of ancestors into ancestor worship," he said. "They decided that ancestor worship was a heathen practice that had to be eradicated. But ancestors are a very important part of African culture. No generation lives for itself. People have rituals to keep the ancestors' memory alive." He said this should not be condemned by the church.

"When we close the doors on the conference we want to give the country, and specifically Christians in South Africa, a powerful momentum to eradicate all these powerful threats that are dragging the country down," Dandala said.

Even sangomas heed not be excluded from the church. "Though a sangoma's role is not in the church, they play a vital role in society. Though we do not agree with everything they do, we need to engage them in the appropriate dialogue."

"There are things that the church think is wrong, but before anyone judges our culture - including sangomas - we need the appropriate dialogue to decide why it is wrong. The problem with mission methodology in the past was they decided everything African is wrong. It was either the Western way or the highway," he said.