

APPENDIX F

STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE S A COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN REPLY TO THE BAPTIST UNION

The withdrawal of the Baptist Union of South Africa from the SACC is a matter of deep concern. Not only does it represent a fracturing of Christian unity, but it also contributes to the growing polarisation in our country, particularly because of the overwhelmingly White membership of the Baptist Union.

In an attempt to dialogue with the Baptist Union, we have been aware of deep theological differences. However, it would appear that the Baptist decision was taken not so much on the basis of those differences as for pragmatic reasons, particularly resolutions drawn up by Black people at our last National Conference at Hammanskraal.

The Baptist action has already evoked statements of bitter disappointment from Black members within our ranks. We believe that because of its composition the Baptist Union is out of touch with the situation in South Africa, and what is necessary for the Christian reconciliation it claims to want to work for.

We note with deep anger and hurt for instance, that the Baptist Union appears to claim in its statement on its withdrawal, a monopoly of non-violence. This implies that the SACC is in favour of violence. Such a statement can only be based on facile logic at best, or sheer ignorance at worst.

It pains us that the Baptist Union should have seen fit to issue its statement without first officially informing us of its decision. We regret having to defend ourselves in public in this way with hard words, but we have no choice.

We can only urge on the Baptist Union that it does not isolate itself and mistake a pair of blinkers for adequate Christian witness. Continued contact and dialogue across lines of division especially with those whose opinions are radically different is more necessary than ever in South Africa. Those who reject this course must seriously consider whether it in any way fulfils a Christian calling.