



Outside the Gate: A white man's fight for black justice in South Africa

Rebecca de Saintonge

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A new edition of an inspirational story. Nico Smith was once regarded as a traitor to the Afrikaner people, a thorn in the flesh, now he is lauded as a hero by those struggling to come to terms with their recent history. At the request of a leading intellectual in the Afrikaner community OUTSIDE THE GATE has been republished with a new introduction in the hope that it will inspire and encourage all those engaged with the painful task of re-evaluating their past. Nico Smith shocked many people when, as a white man with an impeccable Afrikaner pedigree, a prestigious university post and a comfortable home, he moved house with his wife Ellen to the deprived South African township of Mamelodi. The move cost him friends, status and very nearly, his life, but it was to trigger a movement of reconciliation that had a profound effect on the dismantling of apartheid and inspired the international community. Born into a staunchly Afrikaner family, Nico Smith had been taught to regard black people as an inferior race. But at the height of his career his doubts began. How could he, as a Christian theologian, reconcile the policies of apartheid with the Gospel's command to 'love your neighbour as yourself'? He could not. This vivid biography charts the struggle of a man who has to re-think all he once held to be true and who ultimately risks everything for what he believes. It throws light on the historical abuse of the Afrikaner people at the hands of the British that contributed to their sense of alienation, the systematic establishment of apartheid and the relationship between church and state that led to the belief that such inhumanity was spiritually justified. Since the dismantling of apartheid the Dutch Reformed Churches, who were committed to its cause, have lost many members, disillusioned by the way their church has misled them. Nico Smith was among the very few Afrikaner churchmen who had the courage to stand out against the system, and his story is an inspiration to his countrymen today who are still struggling to come to terms with their past and the role they were encouraged to play in it. "I would argue that Nico Smith should be ranked among the most courageous of the heroes in Afrikaner history", Douglas S. Bax, Past Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa.

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