

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF LAGOS



“South Africa Visited”

by

THE RT. REV S. I. KALE O. C. N., M. A., D. D.
BISHOP OF LAGOS

Extracts
from:

REPORT ON THE VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA
OF THE BISHOP OF LAGOS
THE RT. REV. S. I. KALE, M.B.E., M.A.
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INTRODUCTION.

Like many people in Nigeria I have for a long time been curious to know what goes on in South Africa.

In December 1973 an invitation came from Rev. George Daneel of the Dutch Reformed Church and a leader in Moral Re-Armament whom I met in Caux, Switzerland, in 1971. I decided to consult the Diocesan Board and individual persons in a position to advise me. I was surprised that all agreed that I should go. This report is prepared to afford 'a bird's eye view' of what I saw and how the conference went.

LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Before and after the conference a group of us were able to visit various parts of the country. We saw three distinct areas in South Africa - cities where Europeans live and work but where Africans come to work but may not live; the "African townships" which are huge areas of row after row of uniform houses, usually with four rooms; the "Homelands", areas of the country exclusively reserved for Africans. In addition I noticed in Durban a whole section of the city which was entirely Indian.

In three of the "Homelands" we were received by the Chief Ministers, Chief Buthelezi, Mr. Phatudi and Prof. Ntsanwisi.

We had one talk with a senior Afrikaans official in the Internal Affairs Department. One got the impression that there are men in the South African Administration who are conscious that the present treatment of the Africans is not right and want to see the restrictions eased. These are signs of change. However, one cannot help being constantly aware of the outward signs of discrimination - "Whites Only" signs meaning Africans cannot enter. These facts make it the more remarkable that during the MRA International Assembly in the heart of Pretoria there was not a sign of discrimination. The spirit was such that South Africans, Swazis and others commented many times, "We never believed it could happen like this in South Africa." I can say for certain that South Africa will never be the same after the Assembly. It has made a permanent mark.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR MORAL RE-ARMAMENT, PRETORIA, APRIL 9-15.

The Assembly comprised well over 1,000 people of all races from 25 nations meeting together on the basis of creating a hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world; a conference where black, brown and white delegates met together, had meals together and slept in the same hotel.

The opening session of the Moral Re-Armament Assembly was held in the auditorium of the University of South Africa, the finest hall in Pretoria. The multi-racial gathering filled the vast amphitheatre. 150 representatives of 25 countries sat on the platform. Those attending included Maoris and whites from New Zealand, black and white Americans, Europeans, Brazilians, Kenyans, Nigerians, Rhodesians and delegations from Swaziland and Lesotho. The Mayor of Pretoria, Councillor C. A. Young, opening the Assembly said, "In this bewildered world, Moral Re-Armament shines like a light in the darkness. It is one of the few guarantees against self-destruction."

The Assembly was widely reported in the South African press and over the radio.

The Assembly gave hope to many that what Rev. Daneel said could yet come true, "We as whites have an enormous responsibility. The material benefits we have given to improve the lot of the black man are not enough. The future depends on whether we can win the trust of men of different races. We will only do so when we acknowledge where we are wrong."

Quotations follow from: The Hon. C. J. Claassen, former Judge of the Supreme Court of South Africa; Chief Minister Cedric Phatudi of Lebowa; Prof. M. E. R. Mathivha of the University of the North, the largest black university in South Africa; Dr. Abraham Nkomo, eldest son of the late Dr. William Nkomo; Mr. Ben Wegesa, Kenya headmaster and playwright; Mr. Subbiah Kistasami, Indian teacher, formerly of Durban, South Africa, now teaching in London, England; Mr. Antonio Falcao, a Brazilian port-worker who had been a Communist for eighteen years.

CLIMATE OF HONESTY AND TRUST.

During the conference meetings and over meals in the Burgers Park Hotel as well as on visits outside there were many free and frank exchanges. The climate of honesty and trust was built. The object was not just to 'improve race relations' nor attempt to prepare a blue-print of the future political framework for a just society. It was to help all men, black and white, to change so fundamentally that South Africa would speak to the world with a new voice. The major political, economic and social changes needed would come as a by-product. There is no doubt that what happened and continues to happen will be closely followed by the leaders of the country. They may heed, or they may not; but a significant impetus has been given to the revolution of a change of heart which is beginning in South Africa."

CONCLUSION

It is noteworthy that whatever has been in South Africa before, I left with the impression that the majority of people of all races living there want to see a new day dawning. People want to see a change where all will want to work together without resorting to violence to find a solution.