

# CIVIL



# RIGHTS



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Cape Town

News Letter

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## Making History

Monday, December 11, 1961 was a notable date. For us in Cape Town it was made so by our Human Rights Day meeting, which was in many ways the most significant gathering our City had ever seen. Not only was it noteworthy for the stirring and challenging address on "Christian Principles and Human Rights" delivered by our Patron, Archbishop Joost de Blank, but for the fact that both on the platform and in the audience, men and women of all races and creeds came together to affirm their support of the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights. We are grateful to all who helped to make the meeting - sponsored by ourselves and the United Nations Association of Southern Africa - the success it was.

By a happy, unforeseen coincidence the meeting synchronised with one of far wider interest - the dinner given in Oslo by the Nobel Committee at which ex-Chief Lutuli spoke on "Africa and Peace". At the beginning of a new year we make no apology for giving our readers some of the points from these two addresses by leaders of South African thought, which will give us a background against which to view the events of 1962.

## Christian Principles and Human Rights

His Grace the Archbishop said: "It needs to be categorically stated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is due largely to the inspiration of men nurtured in the Christian tradition (certainly in the tradition of the great religions that ally morality to worship), and that in an imperfect world Christians have the obligation to press for its acceptance as at least a pale reflection of divine justice and that dignity with which the Creator has endowed humanity ... even the acceptance of these fundamental human rights is less than is demanded of a Christian. In terms of his Faith, justice is held to be inferior to charity (in its proper sense) ... The Gospel has not only to do with man's relationship to God; it has to do also with man's relationship to his fellow man, and as between groups of people this relationship normally finds expression in political machinery. The Church that

is doing its job, the Church that is true to the Gospel, is bound to be accused by those with guilty consciences of interfering in politics... I have yet to be told where the Declaration of Human Rights is unchristian ... Among the Articles of the Declaration there are many which we as Christians have to accept as being fundamental principles that we receive from God - human dignity, a man's right to obey his conscience within the law, and the sanctity of family life - certain basic freedoms. Articles such as these demand our assent and should be supported by all Christian people ..."

The Archbishop then went on to compare various articles of the Declaration with the findings of the conference called by the World Council of Churches at Cottesloe, Johannesburg just a year previously, pointing out that their content was almost identical. These included the equal right of all South Africans, regardless of race, to make their contribution towards the enrichment of the life of the country and to share in "the ensuing responsibilities, rewards and privileges"; the denial of race exclusion in the Church; freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, of choice of work and adequate standards of living, ownership of property and participation in government, access to the courts, and so forth, which His Grace pointed out were an expression of basic Christian principles, but were also accepted by many non-Christians.

"I believe personally", said the Archbishop, "that on a basis of self-interest alone this country would be wise to sign the Declaration of Human Rights and attempt with all the earnestness and sincerity at its command to put its Articles into practice; but I would hold too that there is a basis higher than that of self-interest - that it is part of our duty to God to love our neighbour as ourselves, and love, when it comes to a relationship between groups of people, almost always begins with a respect for justice ... Love can begin only when the demands of justice have been satisfied ... It can be argued that Communism would never have arisen if the Church had remained true to the principles of social justice and had fought for their application ... It is not enough for the Church to enunciate Christian principles - it must seek to put them into action. Modern secularism is the harvest of the Church's failure in the past ... Either the nation must formally reject God and accept the relativism of life and thus ignore the sanctions of the divine law, or alternatively it must seek not

only to honour God with its lips but to be obedient to His Will in every aspect and facet of its civic and social living. This choice has to be made, and it has to be made soon ..."

The other angle

Space precludes our doing justice to either of the two distinguished speakers, and we can only quote very briefly some of the points which Mr Lutuli made in Oslo. The "Friend" commented that it would no doubt shock White South Africans that the "carefully considered and deliberate view of an acknowledged moderate leader of African thought in South Africa to-day should give so little recognition to the contribution that the White man with his Western way of life has made to the development of Africa and the African people": but "how even more disquieting must be the view of African leaders who are not moderate in their views."

Mr Lutuli said, inter alia:

"To remain neutral in a situation where the laws of the land virtually criticised God for having created men of colour was the sort of thing I could not, as a Christian, tolerate."

"Ours is a continent in revolution against oppression. And peace and revolution make uneasy bedfellows ... Thus, in the turmoil of revolution, the basis for peace and brotherhood in Africa is being restored by the resurrection of national sovereignty and independence, of equality and the dignity of man... All Africa has this single aim, our goal is a United Africa in which the standards of life and liberty are constantly expanding ... There is a paradox in the fact that Africa qualifies for such an award in its age of turmoil and revolution. How great is the paradox and how much greater the honour that an award in support of peace and the brotherhood of man should come to one who is a citizen of a country where the brotherhood of man is an illegal doctrine, outlawed, banned, censured, proscribed and prohibited, where to work, talk of, campaign for the realisation in fact and deed of the brotherhood of man is hazardous, punished with banishment or confinement without trial or imprisonment, where effective democratic channels to peaceful settlement of the race problem have existed these 300 years, and where White-minority power rests on the most heavily armed and equipped military machine in Africa."

Mr Lutuli referred with gratitude to the Cottesloe statement, and added: "There is nothing new in South Africa's apartheid ideas, but South Africa is unique in this: the ideas not only survive in our modern age, but are stubbornly defended,

extended and bolstered by legislation" when they are being "steadily scrapped" by the rest of the world.

"I, as a Christian," said Mr Lutuli, "have always felt that there is one thing above all about apartheid or separate development that is unforgivable. It seems utterly indifferent to the suffering of individual persons, who lose their land, their homes, their jobs, in the pursuit of what is surely the most terrible dream in the world..."

"We, in our situation, have chosen the path of non-violence of our own volition..."

"The true patriots of South Africa, for whom I speak, will be satisfied with nothing less than the fullest democratic rights. In government we will not be satisfied with anything less than direct individual adult suffrage and the right to stand for and be elected to all organs of government. In economic matters we will be satisfied with nothing less than equality of opportunity in every sphere ... In culture we will be satisfied with nothing less than the opening of all doors of learning in non-segregatory institutions on the sole criterion of ability. In the social sphere we will be satisfied with nothing less than the abolition of all racial bars... On these principles we are uncompromising."

Mr Lutuli sees Africa as "man's last hope for a mediator between the East and West", and concludes: "Africa's qualification for this noble task is incontestable. For her own fight has never been and is not now a fight for conquest of land, for accumulation of wealth or domination of peoples, but for the recognition and preservation of the rights of man and the establishment of a true free world."

Comment - even sympathetic comment - in South Africa has taken the line that Mr Lutuli's demand, in particular, for "one man, one vote" is unreasonable. Mr Lutuli has said since his return that Africans would probably be prepared to accept a qualified franchise as a step towards that. But let us look at his demands again and ask ourselves - would we be satisfied with less? Moreover, given three million Whites who will not accept adult suffrage, and eleven million Africans who will not accept anything less - what is the ultimate result likely to be?

#### Last but not least

We hope our members will give early attention to the sub. reminders enclosed. These have not been sent to those members who have already paid for 1962 or longer - to whom many thanks.

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