

CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF EAST AFRICA
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FROM THE BISHOP OF MASASI,
P.O. MASASI
MTWARA REGION
TANZANIA



June 26, 1967.

My dear Alan,

It was a great delight to have your letter of June 15th. Thank you so much for writing at such length. I am very glad that Dorrie is at home again and that in spite of the constant anxiety of her condition you feel that things are better than they have been for many months. Needless to say I will keep you both very specially in my prayers.

I am delighted you think well of Craig Williamson's poems and I am sure he will be delighted too. I have heard from Edward Paget who is most willing to put Craig up if he gets his visa and I do hope this will happen so that he can meet you. I must say Edward really is the kindest of men.

About your two questions: the first one is fairly easily answered. You may remember I was staying with you for a brief holiday in, I think, the September before I left South Africa. Anyhow I was finishing off 'Naught For Your Comfort' and you had lent me a small card-table on which to write. It was as I was sitting at that table that I received Fr. Raynes' letter recalling me to England, and my recollection is as clear as anything could possibly be. Nevertheless I think I did not tell you at the time, though my recollection is that I told you before I left your home. However I would not swear even to that. All I can swear to is that the letter came whilst I was actually writing a chapter in the book and I can remember holding it in my hand as I sat at that card-table.

I will certainly try and give you a proper answer to all the questions about Geoffrey Clayton for I am more than anxious that this biography should be as good as only you can make it; but I don't remember the particular incident you mention as having occurred in Synod. I mean I don't remember the detail and I would not care to put a date to that particular occasion. I suspect it took place when we were discussing "The Church and Nation Report" which Geoffrey himself had drafted and which Michael Scott dared to criticize at various points, thus calling down the wrath of Geoffrey in no uncertain terms. But more than this I simply cannot remember. Now that I have got started perhaps I will write a bit more, but I would like time to consider your questions in greater depth.

1. I believe Geoffrey was inhibited about emotion because he was fundamentally a very affectionate person. I understand that he was regarded as something of an ugly duckling in the family, and perhaps this led to his reserve, but certainly I had evidence on many an occasion of his affectionate nature, and then of his suddenly, so to speak, turning



it off into a joke or some other equally unconvincing aside. My own relationship with him was uncomplicated and easy during my Sophiatown period, though, as you know, he could be quite appallingly rude and abrupt if he was in the mood, but I always took the line that he appreciated straight-forwardness and even disagreement, and I tried to act accordingly. I believe he suffered from yes-men who were afraid of him. I always remember that at my Induction as priest in charge of Sophiatown he said to me afterwards, in the words of Paul to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth", and certainly over those years I think he regarded me as pretty young and inexperienced and was always extremely ready to listen and to help over parish problems and the like. He never paid any compliments of course, nor did he ever thank anybody as far as I know, but you could tell from his general attitude whether he was pleased or not. I stayed with him when he moved to Capetwon and he certainly kept one up very late, though I expect I showed my weariness more than some people do for I simply am no use at all after midnight; but I always enjoyed staying with him for he was so full of stories and gossip, which somehow didn't really matter, and of course he thoroughly enjoyed the beauties of Bishopscourt. As things got more tense politically he and I got across one another and particularly after an article I wrote for the Observer, which I entitled "The Church Sleeps On", and which Geoffrey very strongly objected to; and as I got more involved with the struggle he felt, I am sure, that I was embarrassing church leadership. In fact towards the end he wrote to Fr. Raynes saying he no longer wished to be Visitor to the Community whilst I was Provincial. I managed to see him about this and got him to withdraw his threat, but nevertheless I am sure he did not really feel that he was on the same wavelength with me over my particular attitude to apartheid.

2. I remember that enormous mastiff which he had in Johannesburg and which he enjoyed because of its enormous size, but I don't remember his being particularly fond of any other dogs, at least I don't recollect his having one at Capetown, though perhaps he did.

3. Geoffrey's laughter, when it really got going, took possession of his whole frame, and I have seen him lying on a sofa and laughing with great belly-chuckles; but I don't remember ever feeling that he laughed at what was not funny, and I would not have said that it covered embarrassment. I think he did have his own sense of humour, which was often connected with particular personal whims, either in himself or others. I must confess I nearly always found that I could laugh with him.

4. I recollect him walking in procession, at Synod, particularly, with his cope askew and his mitre not very straight, and yet he always

had a kind of dignity which did not depend on externals at all. I imagine the same sort of thing was true of Churchill who was obviously a fairly untidy man, and yet his presence was enough to make you forget the untidiness. The far away look which you mention was I think a genuine attempt on his part at recollecting the presence of God in a liturgical setting. I always remember hearing that during Confirmations when he had a large number of candidates and therefore tended to get mechanical, he chose special subjects for meditation and tried to keep his mind on them, and I think the same sort of thing was true in liturgical processions etc.

5. I would say that Geoffrey Clayton's greatness rested on a very considerable intellect (I am sure there were very few in South Africa that he could really talk to at his own level and therefore he was intellectually lonely) combined with a forthrightness both in thought and word which allowed men to see that he knew exactly where he was going and had certain fundamental convictions which were not going to be affected either by human opinion or by circumstances. In this way too, he had a kind of Churchillian greatness, and it was this, I think, which also made people both love and fear him. He was a whole person and although subject to moods he could never be small-minded. Even if one disagreed with him one was bound to respect the massive power of his intelligence and moral certainty, and I don't think that the kind of petulance and moroseness which were certainly very much part of him, were anything but surface moods, rather like a sudden gust of wind disturbing the sea but not in any way altering the tide.

6. It is true that he had an element of cruelty in his character, and I don't think anyone of us escaped it. I remember very well when I was extremely young in Synod, moving a resolution (which Redvers had approved) concerning leave for women missionaries who had been stuck in South Africa all through the war and who badly needed to get home. Geoffrey disapproved of this, and as I got up to speak to it, he told me with great vigour that he was going to oppose it from the chair, which he proceeded to do. He did so in the most offensive possible way. I waited for him after Synod and told him exactly what I thought of him, with the result that the next morning he invited me to coffee and did everything he was capable of doing short of apologising! I don't think he ever did apologise to anyone for anything.

Well, there are some random reflections which I hope will be useful, but I will try and send some more as and when I can, and please don't hesitate to write for anything if you think I can be of use. I am certainly one of those who loved Geoffrey and have grown in respect for his judgment through the years. Incidentally Lady Howick^x and her husband (The Grange, Howick, Alwick, Northumberland) would, I am sure, be very happy to give you further anecdotes of Geoffrey for they knew

him very well in Capetown and were both very devoted to him and, as I think you know, Arthur Calder Marshall, the writer, made quite a lot of preliminary notes for a biography which in fact he never got round to. However no doubt you have all these sources of information on your list.

Please give my love to Dorrie, and thank you once again both for your letter and for the opinion on Craig Williamson's poems which I am sending off to him to-day.

With my love,

Yours ever,

T Trevor

* Then Lady Mary Baring

Alan Paton Esq.,
23 Lynton Road,
Kloof,
Natal,
South Africa.