

5Wyoombe Avenue,
Groombridge,
Salisbury,
Rhodesia.
March 25, 1965.

Dear Alan Paton,

My friend Arthur Blaxall was kind enough to give me your address, and having recently read 'Hofmeyer' I thought I might just query one rather enigmatic statement near the top of page 319.

The sentence I am referring to runs like this:- 'Many Christians, for whom the cross of Christ and the Resurrection had once been the central realities of life, felt guilty because they had retreated into the ~~field~~ field of ethics.', and I find it all rather obscure.

I call to mind some Plymouth Brethren, whom I know rather well, who never tire of emotionally immersing themselves in their concept of salvation through the blood of Jesus. When it comes to ethical perceptiveness, however, they seem to fall down rather badly, and they see nothing immoral in holding beliefs which are patently irrational. They are not, moreover, unusually immune to racial prejudice and there is little doubt that some feeling of guilt concerning their deviation from the ethic of wholeness would do them a world of good.

It is undoubtedly useful to distinguish between morality (i.e. the actual doing of good works; the actual leaving undone of those things which ought not to be done) and ethics (the study of right and wrong) but it is just as immoral to turn one's face away from a frank appraisal of ethical questions as it is to fail to act upon our existing ethical knowledge.

My own feelings of guilt arise whenever I am made aware of my casuistry and wilful blindness in the face of so much that cries out for the spirit of love. But I don't think that I frequently waste more time than I should on ethical reflection and I doubt whether the average Christian (or average man) is in the habit of using such reflection in order to retreat from much needed action. Many people, if they suddenly decided to act, would probably not know what to do -- precisely because they have never reflected on the problems which surround them. They have not retreated into ethics but from both ethics and the kind of action which makes us personally vulnerable -- spending their days in sheer irrelevancies.

Does one not see in Hofmeyer's own life the complex interaction between these two demands which our existence makes upon us -- sometimes too much reflection without appropriate action and sometimes very definite action with insufficient reflection.

Hofmeyer's own personal religion changed quite markedly during the course of his life (inwardly more so than outwardly) -- a point which you bring out very clearly, and one wonders whether more conscious reflection on this issue might not have been helpful in breaking down barriers between himself and others, with whom he might well have worked more closely to the benefit of all. How it hurts and helps us all when we genuinely and openly acknowledge a change for the better so that the bonds between us and others become both stronger and kinder.

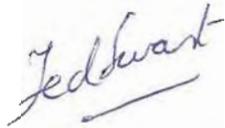
2.

I do not myself feel any guilt about the fact that the cross and the resurrection of Jesus no longer play a central role in ~~my~~ my life since I ~~have~~ now know that they never really where at the centre of my life at all. But I do feel the Spirit of love, which these Christian symbols represent, standing as judge over me even as I sit here at the typewriter.

I think you have done a wonderful job in setting Hofmeyer before the public so very clearly and I cannot but cry as I think of the situation he tried so hard to prevent. One can only hope that your efforts will help to pass on that spirit of detached interest, which seems to have been so characteristic of Hofmeyer, the spirit which allows us to see ourselves in perspective and sets us free to act as we should.

Thank you for having given me three or four days of very real pleasure which has left me with much food for thought.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "E.R. Swart". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

E.R. Swart.