

(NOT TO BE RELEASED BEFORE 11 A.M. ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27TH, 1962.)

D I O C E S E O F J O H A N N E S B U R G

THE CHARGE delivered by the Rt. Rev. Leslie E. Stradling, Lord Bishop of Johannesburg at the Thirty-eighth Synod on Saturday, October 27th, 1962.

My brethren, this Synod is more than an assembly of men gathered together to plan the affairs of our Church during the coming year. We have been called here by God, as members of his family in this place. We have been called here, not to make plans but to find out what are God's plans for us. We have already waited upon him in prayer this morning. We have expressed our fellowship in the Holy Communion. Now in our deliberations we must try to set aside our personal ideas and feelings and to accept his will for us as it shall be expressed in the decisions of this meeting.

I confess to a certain amount of fear - I hope that it is holy fear - in view of my responsibility in having to preside over this Synod for the first time and I ask in advance your forbearance for my shortcomings. I cannot review, as is usual on these occasions, the work of the diocese since the last Synod, as that took place three years ago. I have been your Bishop for only one year, so that I can speak of that year only.

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH.

But first it is important that we should all realise in what capacity I am speaking. There are three ways in which a Bishop may speak of the events of the world and of the Church. First he may speak as a private individual and here he has the same rights of speech as any other private individual. Secondly he may speak as your Bishop on some formal occasion like the present. Here he must try to speak responsibly and objectively, but it is not always clear whether or not he is expressing the mind of Synod as a whole. Our tradition forbids you to applaud anything in this charge of which you approve or to protest at anything of which you disapprove. Thirdly a Bishop may speak as president of the Synod, to ratify the decisions to which Synod has come. It is when he speaks in this third capacity, and only then, that he can demand the full loyalty of all his people in seeing that those decisions are wholeheartedly carried out.

CHRISTIANITY/.....

BISHOP OF JOHANNESBURG'S CHARGE TO SYNOD 27/10/1962.

Page 2. Before the last paragraph, beginning, 'It is not a question.....
.....' insert as follows:-

As some of you were perturbed by some reports that appeared yesterday, I should like at this point to try to make my personal position plain. I am wholly opposed to the policy of apartheid, which I believe to be contrary to the gospel of Christ. I know, however, that the laws of the land enforce it, and we have a duty to obey the laws of the land in which we live. In that sense we must all accept apartheid, but not in the sense of giving it one iota of moral support. I am quite clear about that.

The only question for me is what should be my public attitude towards it. Broadly speaking there are three possible answers. First, there are some religious leaders who regard their duties as solely and specifically religious, and who consequently never make any public utterance either on politics or on any other matter which concerns the world at large. I am not of that number. Secondly there are those who are called to take a political lead in the life of their country and to guide their people on all matters of political concern. Bishop Reeves was one such leader and, when I said that I was different from him in this respect, I was stating something which must be patently obvious to anyone who knows me. I was not criticising Bishop Reeves, whom I admire and respect very much, but merely saying that it seems right to me personally to pursue a third course. This third course is difficult to define. All middle of the road courses are difficult to define, as Anglicans know to their cost. I believe, then, that a Bishop has the right to speak on political and other issues when he is so moved. It is impossible to answer in advance the hypothetical question as to what are the matters on which he should speak. That must be his responsibility from moment to moment. What I am trying to make clear is that I do not see myself confronted by an either - or; either complete silence or wholesale political leadership. There is a middle way, and that is the way that I am trying to follow.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS.

Looking back, then, over the past year, the general conditions under which the Church has to work have become worse rather than better. The Sabotage Act has placed further restrictions on the liberty of the subject and is another step towards giving to the State that ultimate power over the individual subject which should belong to God alone. Before its passing, I called for a day of prayer, which was well observed. The Church is right to lodge protests against all such acts of injustice but the time has gone by when we could hope that our protests would be heeded. The political swing to the right which has been observable during the past year indicates that an increasing number of people are content that all these things should be so.

When I first came to Johannesburg I was widely asked whether I should be concerned with politics, or interfere in politics, according to the viewpoint of the questioner, and much unsolicited advice was given me on this subject. Every Christian who believes that Christ is the Lord of all life must necessarily believe that he is the lord of politics and that politics - like business and education and every other sphere of human life - must come under the judgment of religion. Unfortunately in this age politics is usurping the role of religion and is setting itself up as the controlling interest of life. It desires to bring business, education and religion itself under its control. This is what has happened in Russia and in China. This is what is happening in Ghana where outside the Parliament house at Accra there is a statue of President Nkrumah with the inscription: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all these things shall be added unto you."

It is not a question, therefore, of whether you and I like the policies of the present government. I dislike apartheid very much and I know that many of you do also, but we are not sufficiently important for our likes and dislikes to matter much. There are two things that are very important for us in this connection. First we must be absolutely loyal to God and our conscience and we must be prepared to suffer where necessary for our convictions. Secondly, in all our frustrations and disappointments at the way things are going, we must at all costs avoid that bitterness which can only harm both our work and ourselves; and we must above all things strive to maintain an active spirit of love towards those

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from whom we have to differ.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR.

Turning now specifically to the affairs of this diocese, I wish first to express my great indebtedness to the Dean, the Archdeacons, the Secretary and the Lay Officers. I think that there must be few dioceses in the Anglican Communion who have so good a team at headquarters. My gratitude also to all the clergy and laity who have welcomed me with such generous affection is greater than I can express.

During the year we have lost by death Daniel Smith, priest, in the prime of his life and also Canon Blundell and Canon Makgalemele. Some European priests have left the diocese and others are about to do so. Some of them go for the best of reasons - that God is calling them to a specific work elsewhere and they know that to refuse this would be disloyalty to him. Others are concerned about the education, particularly the secondary education, of their children. They consider that, if those children are going to spend the rest of their lives in England, they will do better to have an English education. They are suspicious also of the educational indoctrination which is playing an increasing part, especially in the government schools. I sympathise with them very much but I do not find it easy to sympathise with a priest who leaves us merely because he finds the South African outlook on life uncongenial. I do not find that outlook and way of life congenial, and this is why I always find it difficult to answer the question: How do you like Johannesburg? There is so much to like and also so much to dislike. I believe that God has given us a job to do here and we must go on doing it until God shows us, by failing strength or by some other means, that he wants us to go.

We face a serious need for more priests, both European and African. The greatest weakness in the life of our diocese at present is our failure to find a sufficient number of ordinands of the right calibre. It is the proud boast of the Cathedral parish that for many years there has never been a time when they have not had an ordinand in training. Why is it that other parishes are unable to say the same?

At the beginning of the year we were faced by a deplorable financial position, including a deficit of R18,000 on the budget for the year. Thanks to the efforts of a dozen or so parishes, the position is

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now much better than it was. We are not yet out of the wood, but we are moving in the right direction. The setting up of a diocesan Fund-Raising department will undoubtedly be of great help to us, especially if all parishes observe my request not to begin a contract with any professional firm of fund-raisers until they are satisfied that our own department is not in a position to give the help that is needed. In due course the Fund-Raising department will be able to hold seminars and to deal with all the financial problems of the parishes, though naturally we cannot expect them to do everything at once.

But it should be realised that if we are able to balance our budget, or nearly balance it, this year, it is at the cost of ruthless economy on things that really ought to be done. The money we shall vote on Pensions, for instance, on Transport and on support for the missionary dioceses is wholly unrealistic. And we have hardly begun to tackle the vast programme of Church building made necessary by the Group Areas Act. It has even proved impossible to vote sufficient cash for us to send a full deputation to the great Anglican Congress in Toronto next year. (One Rector sent in a proposal that every parish should contribute a specific sum towards this Congress, but I have rejected, though regretfully, that proposal because it might be construed as an underhand way of increasing the parochial assessments.)

It is in the light of our still serious financial position that we must examine the proposal to equalise the basic stipends of European and African priests. I give you my own opinion, which is of course entirely subject to the decision of this Synod, and I know that some of you do not agree with me. It is that we ought to equalise these basic stipends, though not the special allowances which must vary according to the needs of each parish. I say this simply because a priest is a priest, whatever the colour of his skin. But even if we can all agree to that principle now, I believe that we can agree to it only in principle. I believe that we must have more money in hand than we have at present before any substantial increase can be made in Stipends. And here I must frankly say that it has been a matter of great disappointment to me to see that, while most of the European parishes are doing their utmost to increase their assessments, in many of the African parishes - thank God, not by any means in all of them - there is a steady decline in paying the assessment. We have not yet been

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able to discover the fundamental reason for this. I know, of course, that very many African Anglicans are living below the bread-line, but the fact remains that some African parishes are paying their assessment in full, so why not the others? Your Finance Board is doing everything that it can to improve the position, but in the last resort it all depends on the willingness of the laity to give.

THE LIFE OF THE DIOCESE.

Before this Synod discusses our financial situation, we shall be called upon to debate a motion that our primary obligation is to put in order the spiritual life of the diocese. I am not myself yet convinced that a diocesan mission would be the right way to do this, for I believe that the first step must be a call to the laity in each parish to deepen their Christian life and to play an increasingly large part in the life and activity of the Church. There is undoubtedly a movement of the Holy Spirit towards this end in the diocese. Parish Missions, the Lay Apostolate, House Churches, Prayer Groups and other means of evangelism are being tried in many places, and these or similar means must be extended to every parish, for God help us if the progress of the Church has to depend exclusively on the clergy. My brethren of the laity, this is your Church, and we need your active help in spiritual as well as in administrative affairs.

In my enthronement sermon last year I called on the diocese to 'go forward', I believe that we are in fact going forward together under the leadership of Almighty God. We cannot see into the future, but I hope that one of the directions in which we are moving is to become a more united family in this diocese.

Fundamentally we are already united because we all belong, through baptism, to the family of God. The Lord himself has taught us that baptism is a spiritual birth. The Church is not a Club which you can join and from which you can resign at will. In joining a Club, you apply for admission and, if you are accepted, you pay an entrance fee and you resign when you have had enough of it. But we had no say about which human family we should join. That was something that happened to us through physical birth. The same is true of spiritual birth. This is something which God did to us.

Moreover/.....

THE BISHOP'S CHARGE:

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Moreover it is impossible ever to resign from a family. In my own family I have only one brother and I am glad to say that we are devoted to each other. But if I quarrel with him, or despise him or hate him or refuse ever to see him or hear about anything that concerns him, he is always my brother. No power on earth can alter that. So it is in the family of the Church. There is, as St. Paul says, one baptism. There is not a white baptism and a black baptism. There is only one baptism. The various members of the family may be scattered far and wide, we may often fail to understand one another, there may be emotional disturbances which divide us. But we remain brothers in Christ. There already is this fundamental unity and we must take courage from the fact that no power on earth can alter that.

Our task, then, is so to think and speak and act that this unity in Christ may find outward expression in the diocese. I ask you to remember this at all times but especially in those parts of the debate which affect the racial issue. Do not let your emotions carry you away. Do not imagine that unity necessarily means that we agree on every subject. Our aim must be to try to understand one another and where we have to differ we must do so calmly and with Christian love.

May this Synod increase our family unity and may all that we say and do here be pleasing in the sight of God to whom be honour and glory now and for all eternity. Amen.

TRANSLATION OF REPORT

ON PAGE 1 OF

"DIE TRANSVALER"

26/10/62.

"HE WILL NOT FOLLOW IN REEVES' FOOTSTEPS"

The Rt. Rev. Leslie Stradling, Anglican bishop of Johannesburg, said last night at a press conference that he intended keeping out of the politics of the country.

He also regretted that priests and bishops of his church still had to be continually imported from England.

"My concept of the duties of a bishop differs from the concept which Bishop Reeves had of his duties. I do not intend following in his footsteps.

"I do not say this because Church policy prevents me from speaking - even though many friends have advised me to keep out of politics.

"I feel, for example, unhappy about the country's race policies but I think it is now too late to alter them. I assume that separate development must be accepted.

"However I'm not going to let myself be dragged willy-nilly into the political divisions of the country.

"Once you are involved for the first time, you cannot extricate yourself. I think that even Bishop Reeves eventually realised this.

"As for me, my duties as bishop come first. The church is not a political beacon."

When the Bishop was asked by a Non-White reporter whether he would not even give a lead if a great national crisis developed, he replied that he was not prepared to answer hypothetical questions.

"You bowl me over, my Lord" replied the reporter. ("U slaan my dronk").

In reply to a question as to whether he had any comment to make on the statement regarding Bishop Knapp-Fisher by Mr. B.J. Schoeman, Minister of Transport, Bishop Stradling said that in any case, the Government possessed the power to deport all bishops.

Arising from this, the Rt. Rev. Stradling said that he was influenced (bëinvloed) by the degree of freedom of speech which was permitted in the country.

"I am really impressed" he added.

Bishop Stradling also said that he regretted that the Anglican Church in South Africa still had to continually import priests and bishops from abroad.

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