

T E X T John, 14:8

"PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH GIVE I UNTO YOU.
LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED NEITHER LET IT BE AFRAID."

I thank the Federation of South African Women for giving me the honour of opening and presiding over their prayer meeting. I have attended a number of prayer meetings by the Cradock branch of the A. N. C. Women's League and my impression of them is that they are doing a lot of good to the community. I must say the same about the Federation. Although this is the first National Prayer Meeting since Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams led over ten thousand women to Pretoria to beard the lion in its den against women's passes we can anticipate the effect of this gathering to be many times more useful than that great national move.

WHAT MEAN WE BY THIS SERVICE ?

We are bringing to life that act of supplication, that act of self-sacrifice to which I have referred above and asking God to make it a perpetual memorial of the national struggle for the liberation of African womanhood. When God accepts this service of special pleading in accordance with the accepted Christian standards or forms of prayer, then we can be assured of having put up a stone building upon the foundation of Rock, the chief Corner Stone of which is none other than Christ Himself, and in His own words in answer to His disciples on when the Kingdom of Israel would be restored, Christ said "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His power, but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. This means that those people who have received the Holy Ghost have also received power to bring about that peace in which there would be for every body freedom of movement and no pass laws; that peace in which every body will enjoy freedom of speech, when the people will enjoy freedom from fear and freedom from want. The Spirit of God will come down upon this crowd here and fill us with zeal to preach the gospel of peace, pray for the cessation of manufacturing of dangerous weapons for man's destruction such as Hydrogen Bombs and such like.

THE CHURCH AND THE NATION

From Abraham onward, according to the Scriptures, God had a church through which He could work out Man's salvation. He began with a man Abraham to whom He gave great promises. Later, Jacob who was an example of a family, then Moses who led the Jews into a nation, then the prophets and kings who built up Jewish nationalism and lastly His Son Jesus who came to establish a kingdom in which all races of the world could meet peacefully, but please make no mistake about this kingdom. There was no room for nationalism as the world knew it.

Just as the first and the second verses of the Book of Genesis say that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form and void until the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters so with the Church. It was without form and void and darkness covered its face until the Spirit of God descended on Pentecost Day and moved upon her face. In other words the Spirit of the Creator brooded over the chaotic world and by the long process of evolution produced order, beauty and harmony which we are called upon to reproduce in our religious ceremonies, in our lives as individuals, families and nations as well as in our race relationships.

The Lambeth Conference which met last year in England passed the following resolution which supports our idea of right relationships between the Church and the nation as well as among races:

- R. 104: THE CONFERENCE DECLARES THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED ^{WITH} ANY PARTICULAR POLITICAL OR SOCIAL SYSTEM, AND CALLS UPON ALL CHRISTIANS TO ENCOURAGE THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO RESPECT THE DIGNITY AND FREEDOM OF PEOPLE WITHIN THEIR OWN NATIONS AND THE RIGHT OF PEOPLE OF OTHER NATIONS TO GOVERN THEMSELVES.
- R. 110: THE CONFERENCE AFFIRMS ITS BELIEF IN THE NATURAL DIGNITY AND VALUE OF EVERY MAN, OF WHATEVER COLOUR OR RACE, AS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS BELIEF THE CONFERENCE AFFIRMS THAT NEITHER RACE NOR COLOUR IS IN ITSELF A BARRIER TO ANY ASPECT OF THAT LIFE IN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY FOR WHICH GOD CREATED ALL MEN. IT THEREFORE CONDEMNNS DISCRIMINATION OF ANY KIND ON THE GROUNDS OF RACE OR COLOUR ALONE.
- THE CONFERENCE WOULD URGE THAT IN MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETIES MEMBERS OF ALL RACES SHALL BE ALLOWED:
- (a) a fair and just share in the government of their country;
 - (b) a fair and just share in the control, development, and rewards of the natural resources of their country, including advancement to the highest level of attainment;
 - (c) the right to associate freely in worship, in education, in industry, in recreation, and in all other departments of the common life.

OUR LORD'S ATTITUDE TO JEWISH NATIONALISM :

He attacked it constantly and vehemently for its blindness and its proud patriotism cf. Luke 10:30 The story of the Good Samaritan and Matthew 20:33-43 The parable of the husbandmen or farmers about whom He said "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." What are those fruits He refers to? The fruits of peace which are, as I have said above ~~are~~ the products of a long process of evolution i.e. order, beauty and harmony. We must bring about that order by working for a state in which every person will enjoy the dignity of the life of a human being. A writer has stated in a book: "If Christianity is the trustee ~~of~~ of generations yet unborn, and if it believes that spiritual health and mental happiness can come only as a result of the principles which it upholds, and has inherited from our Lord Himself, it is necessary for the churches to release the profoundly explosive revolutionary form which lies at the heart of the things they believe about God, about man, and about the world. The totalitarian state whether left or right is anti-Christian; both a revolution and a religion. History shows that in the birth of a new era it is always the revolutionary who acts as the midwife". Now in what way can we say Christ was a revolutionary of His days? I think what I have said above in my quotation of the story of the Good Samaritan determined our Lord's attitude to Jewish nationalism. As I have said the Jews had grown to this nationalism. They had to wander about in the wilderness for 40 years. Moses their great leader did not see the new land; and so they had a history which formed part of their religion which was passed from generation to generation but they narrowed it to themselves and regarded themselves as the chosen race. When some Prophets pointed to the Messiah who would not only save Israel but all mankind they were not fully understood for they were like people who lived many years ahead.

In the same way Christ was misunderstood and because of His attitude towards Jewish nationalism He was finally crucified. But being the Son of God He had come to die and rise again in order to establish the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which the Church is trying to establish, a Kingdom which the United Nations ^{Organization} is trying to find for the world and a Kingdom which I believe the Federation of South African Women is trying to find for South Africa.

This act of this Prayer Meeting might appear as an interruption to the status quo. The whole purpose of the Christian life is precisely to produce that profound interruption in life which is the very essence of the revolutionary idea. The main thing which the Christian always and everywhere seeks to do with people is to convert them, that is, to change them so that their wills and desires face another way ^{from what} which has hitherto been normal with them.

Our Lord said Christians would be the salt of the earth, but He also said it is possible for the salt to lose its savour. The clever dictator has taken notice of that and instead of open persecution to the church he has offered temporal security and tried to tame ~~them~~ it to subjection, leaving it to him to deal with the so-called religious agitators or political parsons.

Our Prayers to day:

The Federation will pray for our Country so that it may follow the leadership of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Prince of Peace.

We will pray for our children and our homes so that there may be peace and happiness in all.

We will pray for freedom in our land, and for the right sort of education in our schools.

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We will pray for our Leaders, more especially for those who are banned, and those who are deported that they may be released.

We will pray for those who are facing the Treason Trial in Pretoria, and for the Judges who are presiding over the case, as well as for the Advocates who are defending the accused.

Lastly we shall for God's Blessings upon the President, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Federation of South African women in their endeavour to establish a Society which will bring about understanding, love, and fellowship among the women of all races in this land.

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FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963

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