

4. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA. ✓

The formation of a Presbyterian community or congregation in South Africa, dates back to the year 1812. During that year a Presbyterian minister from Scotland, the Rev. George Thom, sailed for the Cape en route to India. On his arrival, he found that the 93rd Regiment, or Southern Fencibles, a Scottish Regiment, was without a chaplain, but that on its own initiative it had formed a Calvinist Society with the object of maintaining regular worship. Mr. Thom thereupon proceeded to form a congregation of the Presbyterian Church. Membership consisted of persons of other denominations, as well as Presbyterians, and in view of the diverse nature of the membership, the church was named the Church of Christ, its administration nevertheless being on Presbyterian lines. This congregation had a varied history and after seven years it ceased to have any connection with the Presbyterian form of government. In 1824 a fresh movement started for the establishment of a distinctively Presbyterian Church in Cape Town, and in 1829 the Church of St. Andrew was officially opened.

Meantime, under a Government scheme, a large number of settlers arrived at Algoa Bay in 1820, and one section of these settlers, under the leadership of the poet Thomas Pringle, formed a Presbyterian congregation and erected a church building at Glen Lynden in the Eastern Province of the Cape. The congregation was composed of both Afrikaans and English speaking Presbyterians. ✓

With the development of the country, and particularly with the discovery of diamonds in the Northern Cape, and later the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, extension work was carried out and congregations were established in growing urban communities. At the same time work was pioneered in the Rhodesias, congregations being formed at Bulawayo and Salisbury, the two main centres, and in Northern Rhodesia.

In 1897, after negotiations between various Presbyterian bodies through a Federal council, the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, was held in Durban, and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was formally constituted.

At that time there were three Presbyteries, 22 European and 10 Native congregations. The General Assembly met for the second time in 1898

but on account of the Anglo-Boer war, was prevented from meeting again until 1900. In the interim the Church had grown to 37 European charges with 8 preaching stations, and in addition to the 10 Native congregations, mission work was carried out in various parts of the country. The Presbyteries of Adelaide, King William's Town, and the Orange River, were added to those already in existence.

Since those early days, the Church has endeavoured to keep pace with the phenomenal economic development of South Africa and the Rhodesias, and has expanded accordingly.

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