

Who Is My Neighbour?

Parts of a letter from an African teacher at an African Training School, sent to a Fish Hoek member of the Black Sash

Dear Mrs. —,

Thank you very much for the interesting letter you wrote to Isaac. He was so excited that he came to me breathless. I think he did not expect such an early reply. I feel I should also say how grateful I am to you for all the support you give to Isaac. . . .

We follow with very great interest the practical application of the Lord's great commandment of love as practised by that silent "Black Sash" organisation. My belief is that we can only live in harmony if we know what each other's rights are. It's very selfish of one group to dismiss the other section as if we did not have the same feelings. Of course, we know that in South Africa whoever tries to tell the truth is branded communistic and anti-social. We are not worried so much about this as we know that truth always triumphs over falsehood and charity over ego-centric ideas. What does give one concern is the fact that so many people are blind to the suffering and inhumanity which are caused by selfishness and fear.

We thank God that in such a black confusion there is an organisation that silently keeps a vigil even outside the notorious once-respected House of Parliament. We thank God we have mothers brave enough to forsake sleep and comfort in order to try to divert this wicked tide from overflowing and drowning South Africa.

I can't understand why we go to church and pray when we still persist to oppress and discriminate. We thank God for the light He sends to such organisations as the Black Sash and the many like. We thank God for such men as Dr. Livingstone, Abraham Lincoln, Alan Paton, Mrs. Margaret Ballinger and many such great heroes who speak the truth without

Soos ander ons sien

DIE Black Sash laat spr. [Mnr. M. D. C. de Wet Nel] dink aan 'n ou aasvoël wat nie meer sy prooi kan vang nie en altyd soek na iets waarop hy kan toesak.

— Die Burger.

any fear of contradiction. I do not see how we can go on unless we know that even the poor African boy in the kitchen is a human being who was made in the image of God. . . .

We should thank God who has given the Black Sash a clearer answer to the question: "Who is my neighbour?" It is meet that we should thank God, especially because He has not left us desolate. We still see brave men and women who cross the borderline of apartheid — though they be White.

An Allegory

JOHANNES SMITH, known as Joe, was a likeable fellow. Having taken a course at an Agricultural College he had, by mixed farming and modern methods, turned the wide acres inherited from his father into a valuable farm.

He was lavish in hospitality and liberal in giving. He knew his own mind and stated his views concisely when occasion offered.

Owning thousands of sheep, he regarded stock theft as the most abhorrent of crimes. Farmers, he maintained, cherished their stock like pets. Natives sometimes said that their stomachs were screaming for meat, but even that was no excuse for them to steal. He admitted, in a public speech, that most farmers agreed that £1 a month was low pay, but the workers were always free to move on.

The time came when, released from a body grown infirm, the soul of Joe mounted to the sky.

"Wait!" said an Angel, hovering before the heavenly gates.

"Why?" asked Joe, not accustomed to being kept waiting.

"You are not yet ready to leave the Earth. You must go back."

"What for?" demanded Joe.

"To learn compassion."

"But I no longer have a body," said Joe, feeling this to be conclusive, for he had left instructions that he was to be cremated.

"Provision has been made," said the Angel. "You will be accommodated in the body of the next baby to be born to a black labourer of yours. If hunger gets past endurance do not regard it as an excuse for you to steal."

The Angel paused and looked benignly upon Joe. "Bear in mind that if your family cannot manage on £1 a month they will have the freedom to move on."

— E. H.