

A new Cathedral-Centre for Pietermaritzburg

ABOUT 1946 it became apparent that the fabric of St Saviour's Cathedral and Parish Church was in a bad state and that maintenance was likely to become, as it has indeed, a great problem. There had to be built, some time, a new St Saviour's, and so a new Cathedral.

That's how the story started, but the rapid change of social life and outlook in the twenty years since then has led to equally rapidly changing concepts in church life and thought. Certainly scientifically and technologically, life has changed as much in those twenty years as in the previous two hundred which, in their turn, had produced greater change than in the previous two thousand years!

The church itself, being on one side a human institution, is under great pressure from the changing society of which it is a part. It is evident that the idea of a Cathedral as being just a huge church in a city is outmoded and seen to be almost irrelevant. The New Cathedral Committee has moved out at an increasingly rapid tempo of thought to present an idea which it believes will meet more adequately the contemporary needs of society in which the Church is called to work.

Marked changes in the Committee's development of thought began only a few years ago. In 1946 the major concern was with building a large hall of worship and little else. The main preoccupation was with the possible design of this hall of worship. There were even discussions on how various designs would be displayed for inspection. In October, 1946, it was recommended that the building should seat 1,500 to 2,000 and on the site "in addition to the Cathedral itself, its chapels and vestries, etc., it is desirable to provide for parochial ancillary accommodation, accommodation for a vergers and accommodation for four servants". There the discussion largely ended. Enthusiasm was lukewarm.

Much of the new thought came into being as a result of the preparation by the Architectural Sub-Committee in early 1965 of a statement of theological pre-suppositions in the building of a modern Cathedral. This was further stimulated by members of the Committee reading various books on the Coventry Cathedral undertaking.

The vision of our project has as a result undergone the following radical changes:

- From the sole idea of a large hall of worship to the concept of a diocesan centre with a hall of worship seating not more than 750-1,000 people.
- From the emphasis on buildings as such to emphasis on "people with a mission".
- From the idea of an authoritarian structure in the diocese to the concept of "adult" shared responsibility.
- Allied with the above, from parochial self-centredness to interdependence in Diocesan Life.

- From a view of the total activity of the Diocese being expressed almost entirely through the parochial system, to a wider view of the Church's mission in society, expressed in additional forms as well.

In all ages a Cathedral is the place in which a Bishop has his chair and in which, to use a phrase found in medieval charters, "perpetual adoration is made". A Cathedral should still maintain these functions and it should set the highest standards in such matters as Church music and experiments in worship.

A Cathedral, however, needs to be something more than that; the Bishop could have his chair in any sizeable church where high standards of worship and controlled experimentation could be maintained. But no, in addition to the Cathedral being intimately linked with the Bishop, it should form a permanent foundation upon which the whole mission of the Diocese to society is built.

Largely out of its conscious failure to communicate with contemporary society (e.g. 1% to 2% of the workers of England go to Church regularly) the church has, quite suddenly it seems, awakened to a sense of the need to do so. This happier circumstance is the result of pressures applied by a rapidly changing structure of society. The New Cathedral Committee itself, has come to realise that "A New Cathedral" just isn't enough.

There is, of course, only one Ministry (both Clerical and Lay) in the Church, but in organisation and function it tends increasingly to manifest itself in two ways:-

- The parochial ministry—that which goes out to society through the congregation within the limited area of a Parish, and
- The extra-parochial ministry which has a wider, yet often specialized, range of concern with those normally not in regular touch with the organised Church.

It is this second aspect of ministry of which the Church is becoming increasingly aware; indeed the circumstances attendant upon the change from a rural to an industrial society seem to be pointing and leading in the direction of secularisation. The non-parochial ministry has won a place — and how right it is — in the consideration of the New Cathedral Committee.

It is evident, therefore, that while a modest Cathedral Church is necessary to replace the decaying fabric of St Saviour's, the Cathedral-Centre must be something more than that. It must be not only the administrative centre of all our Church activity in the lives of the men, women and children of Natal—but its inspiration.

As we consider the concept of a Cathedral-Centre we are led to think of it in two ways: as a "Cathedral of People" and as a "Cathedral of Brick".

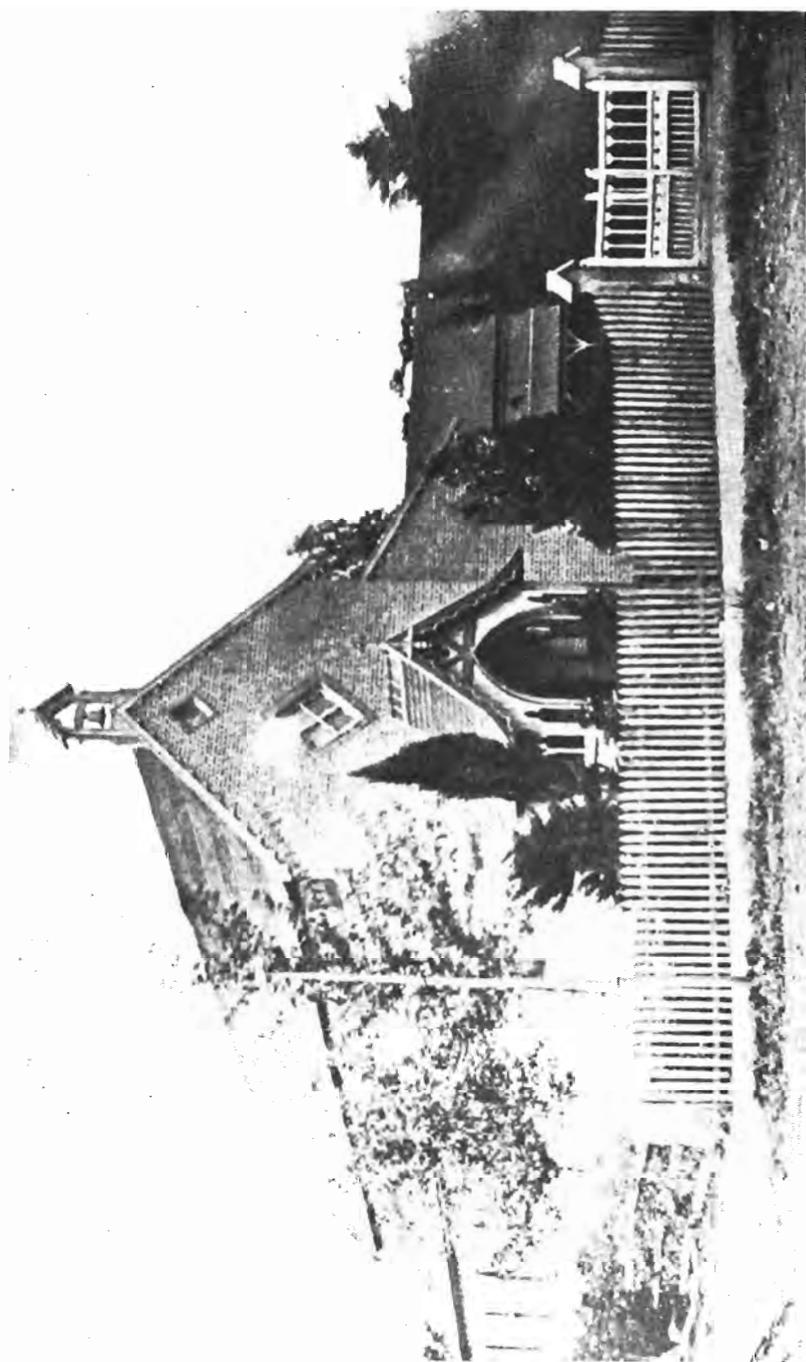
The "Cathedral of People" is concerned to keep closely in touch with what is going on in all parts of the world, the nation and the diocese, and seeks to cater for the needs not only of the Anglican Church but of society.

The "Cathedral of Brick" must be FUNCTIONAL (in the way that a mill or airport buildings are functional). The bricks and mortar must be diligently planned so as to make the mission of the people most effective.

Just as the "Cathedral of Brick" will be seen to embrace the far away activities of the conference house of *Koinonia*,¹ so the "Cathedral of People" will be seen to embrace a wide-spread society of those who belong to the non-parochial ministries. At present these men and women frequently are singularly detached from the "Diocese" and are sometimes, in the case of the ordained members,



Kenneth B. Hallowes, Bishop Suffragan of Natal.



St Saviour's Cathedral, *circa* 1870.

thought, or even spoken of, as “not proper clergymen”—meaning that they are not in charge of a local church. This produces a sense of “not belonging”—which is also observable among lay workers who too often feel “out on a limb”. Yet, both ordained and lay, these people are now seen to be, as much as parish clergy, part of the fulfillment of the social aspect of Episcopacy.

This company embraces Chaplains of schools, colleges, universities and hospitals, the religious orders, those who work among the sick, the deaf, the needy, those who run hospitals—where does it end? All of them seek, for God’s sake, to meet the needs of men, women and children, whether in sickness or in health.

It needs no great powers of prophecy to suggest that with the rapid industrialisation of Natal, the changing social structure will demand new ways of ministry in the Church, and that, too, must be borne in mind in thinking of the Cathedral-Centre. Indeed, the possible functions of a Cathedral-Centre are many, and the Committee had to consider the following:-

- (a) **THE NON-PAROCHIAL MINISTRIES:** In some Dioceses, corps of Cathedral Chaplains have been formed, to which all non-parochial priests belong. A similar organisation of full-time lay workers could be attached to the Cathedral-Centre, however far from it geographically individuals may be. It becomes their spiritual home, their centre—a place where someone is held to be responsible for their welfare, and from which, because of their association with the Cathedral-Centre, their status, both subjectively and objectively, is better secured.
- (b) **A COUNCIL HOUSE:** The Chapter House of the Cathedral should be in reality a contemporary council chamber big enough for larger committees that guide the life and development of the Diocese.
- (c) **EDUCATION CENTRE:** Education of clergy and laity will play an increasing part in the life of the Diocese—education which is concerned with spiritual and moral welfare and social affairs. Educational courses should emanate from a committee (which could include representatives from Diocesan schools and colleges) sitting at the Cathedral-Centre. *Koinonia* should be regarded as the residential extension of such activities.
- (d) **PERMANENT “COLLEGE”:** At the Centre there might be a small college of clergy and laity which should be responsible for the maintenance of this “Cathedral of Men and Women”—this would include the Cathedral Clergy.
- (e) **BOARDING FACILITIES:** On a small scale accommodation might be built for visiting speakers and members of committees coming in from far away places.
- (f) **SHARED MEALS:** A refectory is called for, so that those attending conferences and committees, as well as the “College”, can readily experience the particular virtues of fellowship associated with a shared meal.
- (g) **THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH:** The conception of a Cathedral functioning also as a parish church remains, of course, at the centre of the complex of buildings, along with the deanery and a clergy house.
- (h) **DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION:** The offices of Diocesan Administration would naturally be a part of the Cathedral-Centre.
- (i) **CHRISTIAN UNITY:** Though the demands of Spirit-led movements are difficult to assess at any given point of time, a mind that is open to the future impact of Ecumenical movements must be maintained in planning the function of the Centre.

- (j) INTER-RACIAL CONCERN: The specific relationship of each racial group towards the Cathedral-Centre should be studied and plans made to meet as fully as possible the needs implicit in each relationship.

It is believed that in the provision of accommodation for the functions mentioned above, and in other ways, too—the “Cathedral-Centre of Brick” will demonstrate the significance of the “Cathedral of People”—that purposeful association of clergy and laity often referred to as the “Diocese”—whose mission is not only to the faithful but to society at large.

At the same time the Committee produced a Chart laying down what would be required of a New Cathedral. The Chart was triangular to express the threefold FUNCTION of a Cathedral:—WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, and ADMINISTRATION.

Under Worship would be included facilities for liturgical services, assemblies such as Synod, etc. Fellowship would include facilities for eating, meeting, teaching, drama and games. Administration would include facilities for diocesan offices and the various departments of the Diocese. This Chart it was thought would be the main guide by which the Architect would be enabled to translate the concept of a Cathedral-Centre into bricks and mortar.

During the past twelve months, however, new difficulties have arisen; the development of the city has altered considerably, particularly in the lower end of Church Street, and as a result further thinking has taken place. It is strongly felt by the Parishes in Pietermaritzburg that two central Churches in the city are neither necessary nor desirable. This would mean that the two parishes of St Peter’s and St Saviour’s need to amalgamate as they proposed to do in 1957, and so become the central Cathedral Parish. What a wonderful healing this would be of the unfortunate schism which occurred following the Colenso troubles of 1868!

We know then what we want. We have a clear description of the sort of Cathedral-Centre we want, and of the functions it should perform. But where is it to be sited? This is the question which, as yet, has not been answered. Obviously the most attractive answer is to accept the generous offer made by St Peter’s Vestry meeting in 1957, and to build on the St Peter’s site. The size of the Cathedral-Centre envisaged in the 1966 report would make it practical for such a complex to be built on this site, without having to demolish the existing St Peter’s Church. (The historicity of this building, housing as it does the tomb of Bishop Colenso, makes its preservation most desirable.) But we still do not know if this is possible and we are unable to move until there is some resolution of both legal and other difficulties.

The other possibilities are to build on the site at the lower end of Church Street, or on the site presently occupied by St Saviour’s. For various reasons but mainly because it would still leave two central churches in the city, neither of these solutions is satisfactory.

As we face one difficulty after another it would almost appear that we are being told to be patient and to wait. However, it is now twenty-five years since the project was first mooted, and I cannot blame those who cry out “How long, O Lord, how long?”

KENNETH B. HALLOWES, *Bishop Suffragan of Natal*

Note:

1. “Koinonia” is the Anglican Church Retreat conference centre at Botha’s Hill, where a great deal of educational work is carried out. The Greek word means “fellowship”.