



Hatred Turned Into Fight To End Bitterness

LIFE
AND
FAITH

Learning that one's father has been buried alive by 60 tribesmen as a sacrifice is enough to shatter anyone's faith.

Agnes Hofmeyer was no exception. She refused to believe there was a God who could allow that to happen to her father, a Kenyan coffee-plantation owner.

She said the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s against British rule and to drive white men out of Kenya was based on superstition and evil spiritualism.

The Mau Mau followers were told that, if their campaign of violent resistance was to succeed, a "good" white man had to die to placate the gods and make restitution for the sins of other white men.

"So they chose my father," said Mrs Hofmeyer, her voice now without bitterness.

"One night 60 Africans broke into our home, killed my stepmother and carried my father to the top of Mt Kenya and buried him alive."

Out Window

Mrs Hofmeyer and her husband were overseas when they heard of the death.

"I was absolutely shattered. My faith went out the window," she said.

"I thought I never wanted to go back to Africa, never wanted to see a black man again. All I wanted was revenge."

However, Mrs Hofmeyer has turned the events of that night and the bitterness and hatred she then felt into a fight against bitterness and hatred between different races.

She said she heard a clear message from God to have no bitterness, no hatred, but to fight harder to bring about a change of heart to black and white people alike.

Strange Life

That was not the only time Mrs Hofmeyer lost her faith in God.

Born in Kenya, she was brought up to a Christian belief and in a life strange to most white people.

Mrs Hofmeyer was one

of the Leakey family, well known in Africa in the fields of anthropology and archaeology.

Her father built the homes she knew as a child with his bare hands, and there was always the threat of lions and other predators.

There were no schools nearby, and when her mother died when Agnes was eight years old, her father sent her to an aunt in England to be educated.

She spent 10 years in England, where she said she gradually grew away from her faith in God.

However, her aunt introduced her to a meeting of people involved with Moral Rearmament, which intrigued her.

Soul Search

"I was intrigued because that group of people knew what they were doing, why they were doing it and they had a purpose in life.

"I felt it was important enough to take back to my country. They said if I wanted to change the world I had to look to myself first."

After much soul-searching, she rediscovered her faith.

Her father and stepmother later also became involved in the Moral Rearmament way of life.

"My father realised he had treated the workers on the farm very unjustly and badly sometimes. He gathered them together and apologised, began to live up to his convictions and became much loved and respected."

Other Whites

Ironically, it was probably this respect which led the Mau Mau to choose him as a white man "good" enough for a sacrifice to the gods.

After his death, Mr and Mrs Hofmeyer started trying to bring people of different races together.

They were told of injustices done to black Africans, but Mrs Hofmeyer said at first she

"always used to make the excuse that it was other whites involved."

However, she said she was told by God in prayer one day that she must be responsible for the sins of her race and for putting them right.

The Hofmeyers have lived in Johannesburg for the past 33 years, working to break down racial barriers and apartheid.

Mrs Hofmeyer said the apartheid system in South Africa was gradually breaking down, but not as fast as she would like.

Mr and Mrs Hofmeyer left Auckland for Australia last week and will return to Johannesburg in the middle of this month.