

University College of Fort Hare,  
P.O. Fort Hare, Alice, C.P.  
Union of South Africa.  
20-11-59

C2.204

Dr Henry P. Van Dusen,  
Union Theological Seminary,  
Broadway at 120th Street,  
New York 27, N.Y.  
U.S.A.

My dear Dr Van Dusen,

I must at the outset apologise for my long delay in replying to your letter of October 14, 1959. The University College of Fort Hare has been passing through such troublous times and I have been so deeply involved in these matters that it has not been possible for me to attend at once to the heavy correspondence I have received during this period.

You may know that the Union Government has passed a law--the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Act--empowering it to take over the College and to convert it into a purely government institution. Under the powers granted to him in terms of that Act the Minister of Bantu Education dismissed a number of the English-speaking members of the staff. As far as the African members of staff, including myself, were concerned, they were offered continuation of employment in the form of what are called "State posts" which will be governed by civil service regulations. After giving the matter very careful consideration my wife and I came to the conclusion that the new set-up at Fort Hare involved such a fundamental alteration in our conditions of service that we decided that on academic grounds alone, to say nothing of anything else, we could not stay on. I have accordingly tendered my resignation, with effect as from December 31, 1959, although this will involve me in serious financial loss as far as my pension rights are concerned. We found it very difficult to decide to sever our connection with a place with which we have been associated for so many years, but the more we think about it, the more we are satisfied that we have done the right thing.

It was in the midst of this critical period in our lives that your letter came. Both my wife and myself were completely overcome by the news that the Senior Faculty at Union was prepared to nominate me to the Board of Directors for appointment as Visiting Professor for the academic year 1960-61. We spent a very happy year at Union during the academic year 1952-53, but we never dreamt that that honour would ever be extended to us again. I cannot tell how much we appreciate your kindness to us especially at this critical time.

I have noted the points raised in your letter about the major change you propose in the terms of appointment and the possibility of making my services available to other theological schools and churches. I have also noted the two conditions which you feel should be attached to the appointment. I myself would welcome a position in which I did not become involved in situations which might prove embarrassing to Union Theological Seminary ~~star~~ to me during my stay there or subsequently.

There are, however, certain difficulties which would have to be cleared out of the way before I could accept your kind invitation. The most important concerns the question of passport facilities. As you may know since my return to South Africa in 1953 the Union Government has twice refused to grant me passport facilities and I am not sure whether they would consider an application from me favourably. I intend to make application in the ordinary way but I think it would be helpful if you would also take up the matter with the Union authorities both in Washington and in Pretoria. There is of course also the question of a U.S. visa for which your good offices might be required.

The second problem I should like to mention is that at the same time that your invitation came to hand I received a similar one from the New School of Social Research in New York and a little later another from Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., both for the academic year 1960-61. It would obviously be impossible for me to accept all these invitations unless they could be taken consecutively. This fact is recognised by the New School of Social Research which, however, suggests that I should start with them for at least one term, even if I accept other invitations thereafter. Our own preference would be to start with Union. At all events none of these invitations can be accepted unless I can be assured of passport facilities.



Thirdly I have of course to consider alternative plans in South Africa in case I should be unsuccessful in the matter of getting a passport. In any case I have to be engaged in some work between January 1, 1960 and the time when I succeed in getting passport facilities, if at all.

For these reasons I am not in a position at this stage to give you a definite reply, but must content myself with saying that I should be glad to accept the appointment on the conditions contained in your letter, provided successful arrangements for the trip to the U.S. can be made in the time available.

With kindest regards from my wife and myself,

Yours sincerely,