

'HOPE AND SUFFERING'

BY DESMOND TUTU

FOUNT BOOKS, 1984

"To be neutral is not to be just and fair and impartial, because to be neutral is in fact to side with the powerful! This assertion stands out for me above all others in Bishop Tutu's collection of conference speeches and sermons, all of which reverberate with his characteristic strengths - profoundly sustaining faith in a God who is on the side of justice, and a steely refusal to be compromised on issues in which he believes absolutely. As Trevor Huddleston has written in introduction to the collection, it represents "the authentic voice of Christian prophecy in our day." The book crystallised Desmond Tutu's liberating theological stance. Couched always in frank, unpretentious language, his theology is related to the wider themes of discrimination and oppression, concentrating on "Black's" he writes, "have been pushed around really from the time the Whites first set foot on South African soil."

A THORN IN THE FLESH

We become immediately aware of the stature of the Bishop - his determination, at whatever expense to himself, to remain a thorn in the flesh of the government, as an impassioned voice, never allowing himself to be duped into believing that what is legal must necessarily be moral. Whoever he is addressing the tone is consistently courteous but insistent - liberation is costly, but liberation

of the oppressed in our country can and will happen.

He never forgoes an opportunity to draw on Biblical sources to reinforce his message and reveal the wider human implications underlying any situation. His countrymen, who have lost self-respect and basic freedom must be Exodus people, journeying out of a land of suffering. And he writes of the necessity of this affliction, not in the spirit of cloistered, academic idealism, but as one daily surrounded by human pain.

CONFRONTED WITH POVERTY

He lives alongside the starvation, the forced removals and has had to administer the sacrament to Winnie Mandela in a crowded street because guards refused him entry to her house. His case is reinforced by the warm humour which issues out of such suffering, by deep compassion, and above all with visionary longing for the unity of all peoples and races. It is this hope, and

humanity which resounds throughout his writing, in its direct, yet profound language, the Bishop's refusal to let the Church off the hook on crucial political issues, and his own resistance to being silenced into submission. He addresses the Eloff Commission, investigating his activities in 1982,

"They may remove a Tutu, they may remove the South African Council of Churches, but God's intention to establish His Kingdom of justice, of love, of compassion will not be thwarted."

I would advise anyone to read this courageous book. It is concerned with South Africa, and yet reflects the connections between oppression of any kind, and Desmond Tutu's vision of freedom from that oppression which must survive and resound through it:

"After this I looked and saw a vast throng, which no one could count, from every nation of all tribes, people and languages standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were robed in white and had palms in their hands, and they shouted together:

'Victory to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!'"

Revelation 7:9-10



BIBLE STUDY

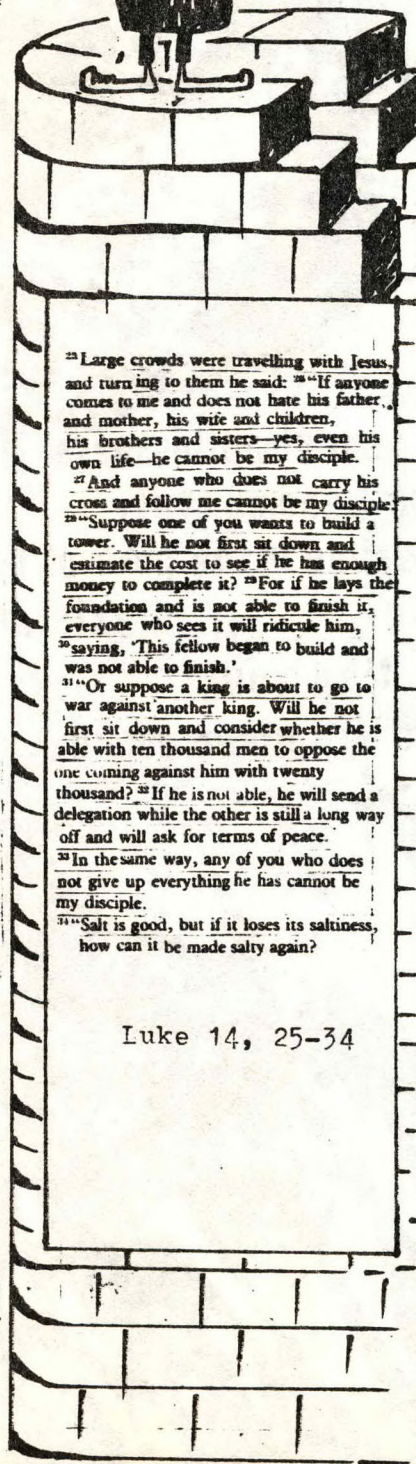
counting the cost of discipleship

LOSS

1. Family (father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters)

Jesus does not concentrate on the hatred for ones family, but rather shows an alternative for the traditional, patriarchal family structure. (see Jesus: "who is my mother?" Luke 8, 19-21) He calls for the creation of a community that is based on a free choice, a vision and a calling. This community must be prepared to suffer hatred, expulsion and persecution by the existing society for the sake of the new alternative (also known as the kingdom of God).

2. Your life, Everything



²⁰ Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²¹ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²² And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²³ "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁴ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ²⁵ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' ²⁶ "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ²⁷ If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ²⁸ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. ²⁹ "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?"

Luke 14, 25-34

GAIN

1. Vision

Our gain is to share the vision of Christ and to share his lifestyle. As we become part of a new community we share in a life style that is based on the principle of servicing rather than power, humanism or spirituality.

2. Discipleship

We become part of a new community that bears the characteristics of a group that wants to change society:

- i) it's an alternatively structured community where the church serves those in need.
- ii) members have made a rational decision and know the cost of commitment.
- iii) members have a clearly defined lifestyle that is different to the lifestyle of the existing society. They work actively toward a world without privileges (i.e. without the right to be served) and a world where everyone has equal rights.

3. The Cross

In its time it was used for execution of political prisoners. "Take up your cross" hence not only refer to innocent suffering or an attitude of humility but refers to the fate of a revolutionary. If we want to follow Jesus his fate will become our fate and his fate was : . . crucifixion..



A PSALM

O Lord,
You are the Absolute.
A most holy God
You alone are all-powerful.

Yet,
You have chosen to
Manifest your strength,
Through the
Weakness of
suffering.

But
In your powerlessness
You become real,
Because in the pain of our
existence
we find you,
And are given peace....

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