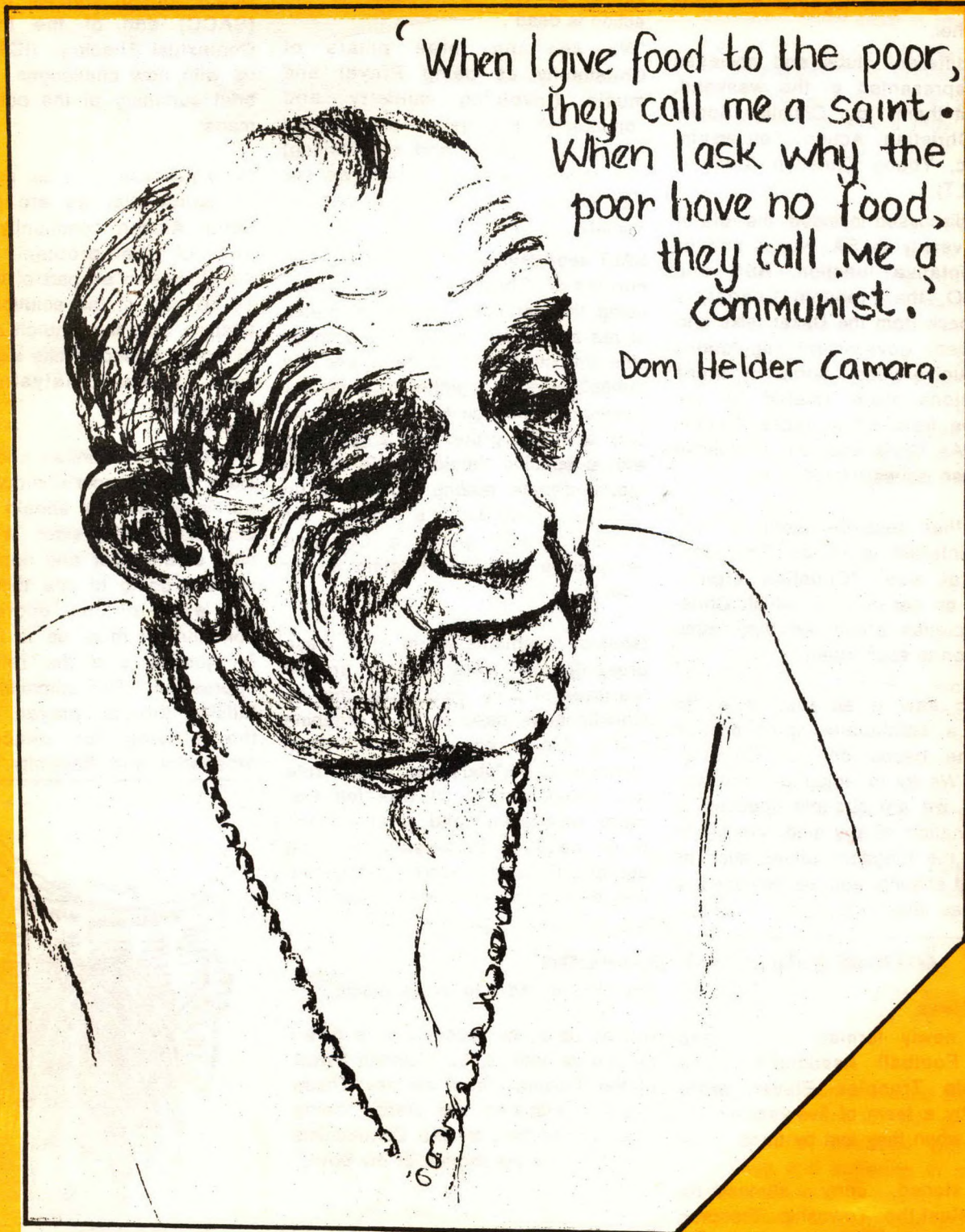


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# SALT

A SASPU AFFILIATE 

VOLUME 4 NO. 4



'When I give food to the poor,  
they call me a saint.  
When I ask why the  
poor have no food,  
they call me a  
communist.'

Dom Helder Camara.



# Christian Soc's :

## CHRISTIANS & THE SRC WEEKEND

In August, Christian Societies, under Wits SRC, were asked to participate in a leadership weekend. Participation was seen as important in order to update ourselves with what is happening on our campus, and to find out what the SRC was doing. We saw it as a positive experience for societies to come together and meet each other.

Many different clubs and societies were represented at the weekend, amongst them four Christian Societies (Christian Action Fellowship, Cathsoc, Young Christian Students and SALT).

Issues discussed included: the role of the University in SA, Nusas and its representative function, BSS and SANSCO, the Freedom Charter, a report back from the Dakar talks and the recent government regulations about universities. Some of these discussions were related to the societies from which representation came. As Christians, we discussed how these issues related to us.

Two further sessions were of particular interest to us as Christians. The first was: "Christian organisations on campus", in which Christian societies presented their aims and vision to each other.

Cathsoc saw it as their role "to create a community spirit around everyone based on our Christian beliefs. We try to integrate faith and life and we are strongly opposed to discrimination of any kind. We try to act out the Kingdom values such as love and sharing, and we see spiritual growth as important".

### C.A.F broadcasting corporation

Sports News.

In the newly formed 'Hearts and Minds Football Association, 'the Township Troopies Eleven were rocked by a team of five-year-olds in Soweto when they lost by three goals to one'.

Clearly stoned.....sorry.....stunned by their defeat, the Township Troopies then detained the five-year-olds under the State of Emergency regulations.

Y.C.S., an inter-denominational society lives according to Christ's values, integrating their faith and life. "As Christians we believe that we are part of the society and we question how this society affects our Christianity."

The theology of C.A.F. is based on James 2: 17 - 26, "Faith without action is dead".

"We see the three pillars of Christianity as being Prayer and music (involving ministry and community); Evangelism and support (involving support and counselling) and social awareness (where we see our Christianity as being part of society)."

SALT sees itself as an Ecumenical and non-racial Christian media group, using the particular means of media to put across our vision. "We emphasise the integration of faith and life through working together to bring the Kingdom of God on earth. We are not only a media group but a grouping with a specific theology. We aim to create debate among Christians on campus, providing a forum for discussion and giving a Christian perspective to issues relating to our lives."

General comments made after these presentations were largely around the issue of unity. People felt that as Christians we need to be a grouping that is able to represent the Christian community, i.e. "stand up, play a role and speak out". It was felt that more discussion and joint actions were needed, increasing informal contact through working together and developing an understanding of our different theologies.

The joint Christian society structure was seen to be important for working together on campaigns and initiating others from a Christian perspective.

The second Christian session questioned the role of Christians in South Africa today. In answering this question, John Lamolo of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), provided us with new challenges. Here is a brief summary of the points that he made:

"It is necessary for us as Christians to realise that we are part of the South African community. We are part of the problem and must therefore also be part of the solution. To be part of the solution, we must analyse both the Church and society. All social sciences take sides in some way when analysing social structures.

The Gospels definitely show that God sides with the poor and oppressed. In our analysis we should follow the Gospels in taking sides (ie. be on the side of the poor and oppressed). If we are going to see things through the eyes of the oppressed, our commitment must be to the struggle for justice and the relief of this oppression. This commitment can be fulfilled through prayer, action and the striving for peace, health, prosperity and fraternity."

Your Frank and Alternative Media.

But as usual no reasons were given for the detentions, but Captain Swart of the Troopies team did say: "These five-year-old kids are clearly being used and trained by the Communists to undermine the morale of my boys."

Good Night- Next News report in SALT - Dakar Conference - Fiasco or Breakthrough.

Courtesy, Mike van Graan.



# WHAT'S UP !



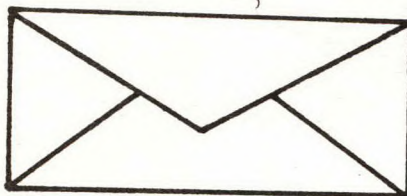
Dear SALT

I found an article in your last issue (Vol. 4 No.1) to be very interesting. The article, entitled 'Sharpeville', spoke about taking a stand as Christians against injustice. Indeed, this should be a priority.

Yet I cannot agree with the statement 'Jesus Christ, in standing up for his beliefs and for human rights, was condemned to death'. While it is true that Jesus was a man of Justice, he primarily came to give us a way out of death to eternal life (John 3 :36). He died because he claimed to be God (regarded by the Jewish leaders, as the ultimate blasphemy) and because he is God (the only sinless man ever to have lived and so the only one able to take the punishment for our rebellion on himself [1 Peter 2:22,24 ]

Our good news is that through this man Jesus, our relationship with God, our father and creator, can be restored. It is not because we agree with Jesus' ethical code and his principle of love for one's neighbour that we strive for Justice, but rather because we can now know God, the source of all love. This is why we have the desire and the strength to work for true justice in South Africa today.

Yours in the love of Christ  
Lynn Ballard-Tremeer



*Editorial response : Jesus Christ, as Son of God, stood up for his beliefs and for human rights. To understand and interpret the Gospels, it is essential to have some knowledge about the context which the evangelists write about.*

*We as SALT agree that Christ died because he claimed to be God, but also that His death was brought about because this claim, and His teachings threatened the leaders of the time. The expulsion of the dealers from the Temple by Jesus "...came to the ears of the chief priests and the scribes and they tried to find some way of doing away with him; they were afraid off Him because the people were carried away by His teaching." (Mark 12:18,19)*

## MEETING TIMES

SOC	TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SUNDAY
SALT	12.35	226 STUDENTS UNION		226 STUDENTS UNION			
ANSOC	7.30am		6H 214				
	12.25				SS11 WORD ALIVE	5H 214	
	7.00pm						ST GEORGE'S PARKTOWN
S.C.A	12.35			SS11	SS11 WORD ALIVE		
CATHSOC	12.35		INFORMAL MASS (NEW)	SOCIAL	PATH + LIFE (NEW)	TRINITY	
	7.00pm	NEW TRINITY HALL					STUDENT MASS (TRIN)
C.A.F	12.35	SERVICE SS11					
	3.00pm						SERVICE ROOM
	6.30pm		BIBLE STUDY SANCTUARY				DRAMA BOX FOYER
	7.00pm					DRAMA MANDELA ROOM	
METHSOC	12.25		6S7		6S7 BIBLE STUDY		
Y.C.S.	12.25		ROOM NEAR BOX THEATRE			1.00pm MEDICAL SCHOOL	
C.C.C.	12.35				SS11 WORD ALIVE		
	7.00 - 9.00pm				SANCTUARY		
W.C.F	12.35	SANCTUARY			6S73		

## JOINT FORUM

The Joint Christian Societies forum was established last block in an attempt to bring Christian societies closer together. We started off discussing what we believe and what the vision of our society is. In the future we hope to have debates and talks and perhaps tackle a joint venture as a forum. If you would like to know more about the forum, please contact Lynn Rees

## COMPUTER STUDENT

The Catholic Archbishop of Pretoria and the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg are asking Cathsoc and Ansoc respectively for help from a computer student. They are offering a holiday job to a Computer Science student at 'Theological Education by Extension' College in which both Bishops are engaged. Please contact either the Cathsoc or Ansoc chaplains if interested.

## C.A.F DRAMA DAY

It was at 2h30 pm, 14 June 1987 at the Box Foyer that everything began. People trickled in, but soon there was jubilant singing and ululation for the start of the festival.

CAF presented the dramas - "No Mas" and "Eleven years on", and SUCA came up with "Minutes of Silence". It was just the beginning - 'the eagle has landed'.

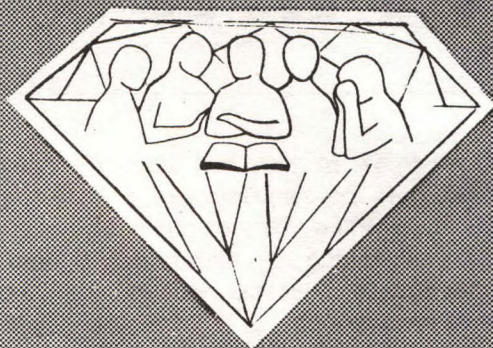
From the 'Drama Festival', people saw that drama could be an effective way to evangelise, challenge, educate and above all conscientise.

We wish to thank all who supported the drama festival, but especially all Christians who prayed for the success of the occasion.

The CAF Drama Group is available, to perform 'No Mas' and 'Minutes of Silence' for all special occasions and events, and can be contacted at: Box191 Wits 2050



# FREEDOM CHARTER



Father Albert Nolan of the Catholic Church says that because the churches are called to read the 'signs of our times,' the Freedom Charter should be taken seriously as one of these signs, and as one of the places we must look to for the prophetic voice of God. In view of this statement, we decided to take a closer look at the Charter, The coming anniversary of the U.D.F., and its move to adopt the Charter.

About 30 years ago, a few prominent progressive organisations undertook to consult communities throughout the country to listen and learn from the people themselves about what their real demands, aspirations and grievances were. When we make careful comparisons between values expressed in the Freedom Charter and the values in the Bible, and the social forces of the different Churches, we find that they are the same.

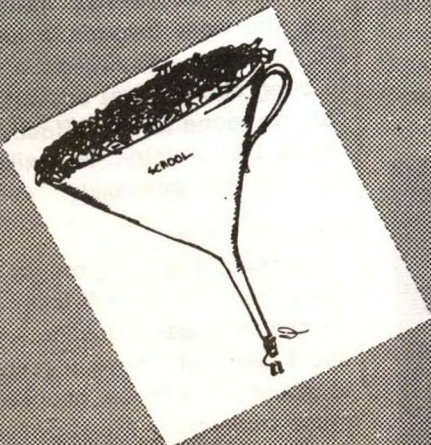
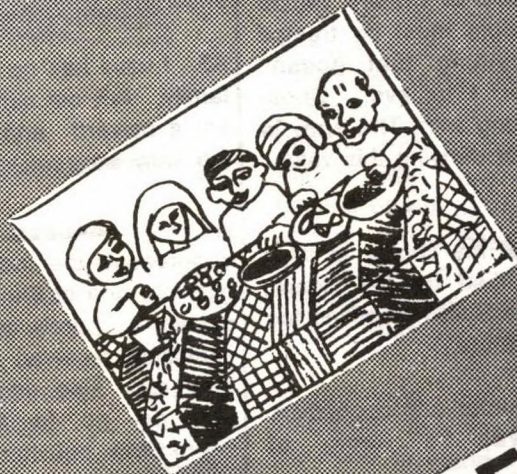
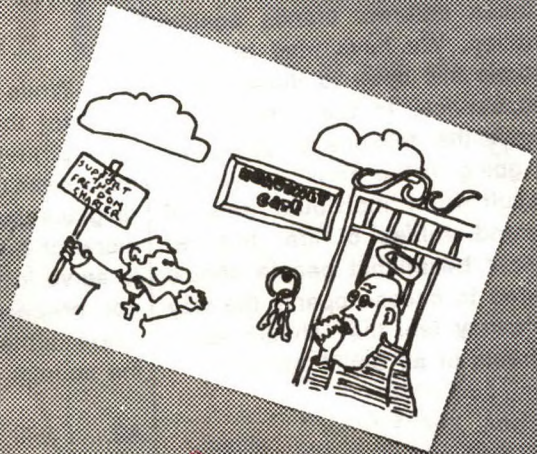
The Charter calls for an end to discrimination: "All laws that discriminate on the grounds of race, colour and sex shall be repealed." It calls for equal status and opportunity for all people of South Africa. Equality is one of the most cherished values of the Bible. We are all made in the image and likeness of God, and the Church has always preached respect for the dignity of every human being. Much of the Charter is an appeal for basic human rights: -the right to vote, the right to education, housing and work, the right to form trade unions, to travel freely, to receive medical care and so on.

The Charter also demands that the wealth of the land be shared by all for the well-being of all. Sharing is a central Christian value. In the Acts of

the Apostles, we read about the first Christian community and the way those people shared. The Charter challenges us in the same way.

In other words the Freedom Charter calls for an end to all forms of discrimination and dependence, and for the establishment of a society in which everyone is joined equally in the spirit of love and friendship. The Charter challenges people to organise democratically against the injustices of our society. As Fr. Langeveld says, this means not acting on behalf of the people, but with the people for our liberation, so that we might all learn to share and enjoy our common humanity.

In conclusion it is clear that the formation of the Freedom Charter marks a precious moment in our country's history. It proclaims the value of human life, summing up the feelings of the people in it's clauses. In Christian terms it can be seen as a call to repent. In it we recognise ourselves as part of a fundamentally unjust and repressive society where the values of love and humanity are despised and degraded by indifferent attitudes both in ourselves and in society. Most importantly, the Freedom Charter encourages us to take a more critical look at our motivations and assumptions.



**A SIGN OF  
OUR TIMES**

# Some Answers to the

*Q.1: What inspired you to take the stance you have chosen to?*

*Q.2: If you had the choice again, what would you do? Do you regret your choice?*

*Q.3: Did you encounter opposition from your family etc. in making your decision?*

*Q.4: State briefly what your objection was.*

*Q.5: Where does your Christianity fit in with your choice?*

We interviewed a few people who have taken different stands against conscription. We have tried to show the options still open to those facing national service. In the interviews it is apparent that reasons for going and for not going to the army are varied, and result from individual sets of values and values of life. This reaffirms our belief that people should be allowed to choose openly the way in which they feel they should serve the interests of all South Africans.

## 1) Nell Mitchell.

A1. My understanding of my Christian faith and of Christ's values was that all people must be treated as people. Anything that doesn't share this value, I believe, Christians can't go along with. The army is the chief culprit in denying this value.

A2. I don't regret my choice at all. I could have qualified for the Board, but I feel that the Board identifies too closely with the State.

A3. I didn't encounter any opposition, but there was a lack of understanding.

A4. Far too many Christians hold their ties of race and nation too closely, but I think that instead a Christian should have a sense of solidarity with everyone else regardless of race or nation. Being part of an army requires you to identify too strongly with a country and conflicts with my idea of solidarity.

A5. I was in Detention Barracks for 6 months, but I refused to wear an army uniform, so I was transferred to jail.

## 2) Bryce Graer.

A1. While at varsity, I had very different thoughts about what to do, mainly staying here but objecting, but I wasn't prepared to lie about my religious beliefs. My stand is purely moral or humanist. I am not prepared to serve in the S.A.D.F. at all and I'm not prepared to go to jail for six years either, I would rather leave the country.

A2. I will regret for many reasons leaving the country. My entire family is here, and this is my home, but avoiding the military is far more important.

A3. I have had no opposition from my family, but old school friends think I am a coward and that I am taking the easy way out.

A4. I believe that the army suppresses the individual, and turns him into one of the masses. I see the system as purely image-building. The individual receives no benefits in the long run. Also, in South Africa, if you do go to the army, it is impossible not to be conceived as choosing sides.



A5. I am not a strong Christian, rather a humanitarian - and I believe that human life is valuable. I come from a strong Christian background and that has influenced my thinking. I believe that the taking of another life doesn't make for being a better human being.

## 3) Anonymous

Explain why you went to the army and what it was like in terms of your Christian values?

- When I was in the army I had a lot of pressure from my friends there. I had the option then of going to jail or opting for Non-combatant status. Being straight out of school, I had not yet fully thought about my Christian values. It was at that stage too much of a sacrifice to go to jail, and opting for not carrying a weapon was an easier choice - "Live by sword; die by sword."

What are you going to do about camps?

- I'm not going to do them. I'm prepared to do alternative service, if it is of a progressive nature, and I can still work towards a just peace. It's my responsibility as a Christian to bring about a just society, and this can be done more effectively from within the country, so exile for me isn't really a possibility.

Why the change?

- My faith is a lot stronger, and I'm trying to live out Christian values. I believe in equality, justice and peace and I feel that I have a responsibility to stand up and be counted among those working for a just peace

# Army

## 4) Andrew Brown.

A1. When I first went into the army, I was not aware of the options available to me, and besides it was too late to take a stance. All the while I was in the army, I tried to reconcile my Christian faith with my experiences, and found that I couldn't. I found it unacceptable to bear arms, but it was difficult to decide what to do, the cost / benefit was important.

A2. I applied for Non-combatant status for my camps and I don't regret my decision at all, it affected my whole life, and not only my views towards the army but to everyday life as a Christian.

A3. I encountered very little opposition from guys in the army, they didn't know quite what to make of me. My family were a bit unsure, but generally people accepted my decision.

A4. I had Non-combatant status for camps.

## 5) Anonymous.

A1. My objection is both moral and religious. Religious in the sense that the army claimed to be fighting in the name of Christianity. It confused and angered me that this was how people saw their Christianity. I have done five camps since National Service.

A2. -

A3. I very much regret going to the army, it was a very bad experience - But in my efforts for survival, politics were diminished. I am not prepared to go to jail for my beliefs, but being in the Medical Service I feel that I can do some good.

A4. I encountered opposition in that it created emotional distance and a lack of understanding from my brothers.

## 6) Gunter Winkler.

A1. I objected to military service based on religious ethics. I was recognised by the Board of Objection, as a religious objector (category 3) to do community service for six years. In my statement to the Board, I said that I believe it is wrong to split the religious aspects of life from the political. I wasn't prepared to back down from my beliefs because they were part of my faith.



A2. My fundamental motivation is religious, that is my faith and understanding that working for peace is one of the fundamental commandments. In order to make the decision, one needs to analyse society - not either just go, or just say that God commanded that "Thou shalt not kill."

A3. I have no regrets and would make the same choice again. I do feel compromised in a way, that having been through the Board (who only recognise religious objectors), the separation between the religious and the political has been made.

A4. My family was very supportive, and my brother Harald has also been before the Board, although he was rejected.

# Building Bridges

SALT visited Tom Wasse, who has recently been released after spending eight and a half months in detention. Tom's deep faith has been a source of inspiration to many people. This faith was not only his support through detention, but also strengthened his commitment to Christian values. Our main aim in interviewing Tom is to show the role which Christianity plays in his life and how his faith was strengthened during his detention.

Tom Wasse was born in Johannesburg in 1953. His parents taught their five children to love others and treat them as equals. Tom was educated at Marist Brothers College, Observatory. After that he attended Wits and studied for a B.A. degree. At Wits he joined the Catholic Society (Cathsoc) and eventually became its chairperson. He began to live out his faith with fellow students. Tom was previously detained for three months in 1977. After his release he worked full-time with the Young Christian Students (YCS) movement.

Tom saw the importance of the role of Whites in bringing about a just South Africa. He then became active in the white community through his involvement in the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC).

We talked to Tom about his Christianity and asked the following questions.

**What does Christianity mean to you?**

Christianity means, to me, a belief in God, Jesus and the Church. This belief has many dimensions. As a follower of Jesus Christ it is a priority to build the kingdom of God on earth. This kingdom is the concrete reality of love, justice and equality. Building the kingdom of God has social and personal implications. Christ came to build the kingdom through taking an option for the poor and oppressed. Christ's life-style showed that almost inevitably this option and struggle results in suffering on the part of the individual. "...whoever saves his life

must lose it." (Luke: 9:v.24.). Spirituality to me means accepting the movement and challenge of the 'Spirit' and internalizing the values of the kingdom of God. There is a need to sacrifice oneself and accept suffering and through accepting these challenges and actively working to bring about change - the kingdom will come.

**Have you always seen your faith in this way?**

No, the transformation in my thinking from what I call "sacramental consumerism" to what I believe now, can actually be pin-pointed to a National Catholic Federation of Students (NCFS) conference in 1975, around the theme of 'liberation'. Before this turning point, I saw the Church as having a set of Sacraments which are consumed on an individual basis, a reflection of the consumer society in which we live. I "consumed" the Sacraments as a means of getting into Heaven.

My family background influenced my sense of justice and at school I was torn apart by the implementation of apartheid. Christianity also told me that apartheid is wrong. I had picked

up the social teaching of the Church but my social concern was never transformed into political concern.

There was a period in my life when Christianity seemed irrelevant to the South African situation. It was through discovering the message of liberation in a new way that I rediscovered the relevance of Christianity. Christianity now meant for me taking political options, options for liberation. Christians

cannot be politically neutral: Jesus stressed that one must read the "signs of the times".

This requires a social analysis - firstly identifying who the poor and oppressed are, and secondly, asking why they are poor and oppressed. This social analysis requires a political science with an option for the poor and oppressed in its perspective. Thus realising Christian values meant for me taking an option

for the progressive democratic movements. This in turn led to my involvement in UDF and JODAC. There are many who accuse Christians who do this kind of analysis of being communists. This is reflected in Dom Helder Camara's statement, "When I give food to the poor they call me a saint, when I ask why the poor have no food they call me a communist." However doing social analysis and being politically involved is an intensely Christian activity.

The reasons given for my detention were my involvement in these movements. Since it was the practice of Christian values which led to my involvement, I believe that ultimately I was detained because of these values. Christianity permeates every aspect of life. It is individual belief. The fundamental evil in our society is the political evil of

apartheid and we must transform this society. This transformation can only come about through our realisation that God works through human beings. We have to be the mediators through which God can change society. One can only come to know God through the struggle to bring about this transformation - this was confirmed during my detention. When Christianity comes to mean solely an individualistic relationship with God, this usually functions to prevent people from becoming involved and opting to transform society. There is an individual choice in faith, but central to the Christian faith is the option for the poor and oppressed. Our relationship with God must be interpreted through this.

**What effect did detention have on you spiritually?**

First of all we need to speak about the purposes of detention, these being to maintain white privilege and domination through the political structures and strategies of the government; to crush and weaken the anti-apartheid movement generally; and to break down and demoralize detainees by inflicting intense suffering and pain thereby hopefully getting the detainee to question his

commitment and to re-orientate, or at least neutralise their activity.

In my case, motivation for my activities is based on my Christian values. Ultimately it was my beliefs which were challenged by detention. A massive battle goes on inside of one, one becomes a war-zone; a site of struggle. One either reaffirms one's beliefs or throws them out. I wasn't prepared to throw my Christian faith out of the window. Suffering is a great leveller. It purifies one of all sorts of extraneous motivations such as individualism and status. Detention challenged me to ask of myself whether I was prepared to suffer for my beliefs. I accepted that my involvement could lead to detention. This made me realise that to take this option one must be prepared to suffer. One does not take an option for detention, it "comes like a thief in the night". Through the experience of detention, I identified more with the suffering of Jesus and of many others. I felt that Jesus was with me. My relationship with him was deepened. My faith helped to carry me through my experience of suffering.

**How do we let other Christians realise this?**

Christians must be seen to be deeply involved in working with progressive democratic movements. Christians need to be witnesses, to challenge the "pie in the sky" type of Christianity by making their faith a reality in their lives. One does not need to abandon the sacraments, but to bring the question of social justice into one's worship. The middle-class need to be brought into contact with the reality of the poor, and whites in general need to be made aware of the reality of apartheid. Christians need to challenge the Churches to take sides. Reconciliation does play a role, but as the Kairos document says one cannot reconcile good and evil, justice and injustice. To build a bridge one must choose a side to build from - one cannot start from the middle. The churches have the message of Jesus, but do not always practise it.





# IS GOD BLIND?

In the midst of injustice, repression and violence, we often wonder if God is blind. If he is not, then we might well ask, "does He care?" Isaiah 59 gives us an insight into these and other questions we might be asking. I derive encouragement from the guidelines scripture gives us.

## *Isaiah Begins With God.*

Isaiah affirms that God is not incapable of saving. He is not deaf. So often in times of trouble, we blame God. Isaiah knows this. His first statement is to assure us, that the problem lies, not with God but rather with ourselves. God has not left us - He has created no barriers. Our sin has raised the barrier between us and God. It is this sin that has to be dealt with if we are to know God's salvation.

## *The Nature of our Sin - The State of the Nation.*

Isaiah identifies for us the sins that make God angry. Let us be quite clear that God gets angry. In verse 16, Isaiah describes God as being "outraged".

2.1 The absence of truth.  
vs.3 "Your lips speak lies"  
vs.4 "They rely on empty arguments"  
vs.13 "We have conceived lies in our hearts and repeated them in slanderous and treacherous words"  
vs.14 "Truth stumbles in the marketplace and honesty is kept out of court so truth is lost to sight."

As is the case in all repression, truth is the first casualty. Apartheid and its concomitant injustices have been built on a host of untruths and half-truths. We were told that separate development was God's will; we have lived through info. scandals. We live under a continual disinformation campaign (courtesy of the SABC) and the present State of Emergency ensures that we will not know the whole truth of the state of our nation. To compound the matter, our relationships with each other in this country have been shrouded in a mist of suspicion, half-truths and myths, so we cannot even begin to know the truth about who the people sitting next to us are.

Truth, however, is an attribute of God. Jesus said: "I am the truth." It is foolish to think that He will look on unmoved whilst truth is set aside for the sake of expediency (especially when it is done in the name of "preserving Christian values"). Let us be quite clear, then, that God is angry about the absence of truth in our land. God's anger has a salvific purpose. We cannot shrug His anger off by saying that He is angry with the leaders of the country and not with us. Many Christians have let the Government do their sinning for them. A Christian's response to God's anger should always be repentance - a turning from sin to God.

But how are we to do this? If we, as the Church, are to be obedient to our Lord and Master, if we are to reflect the truth that is part of His nature, Then it is time for us to ensure that all people of South Africa know what is happening to their brothers and sisters in this country. We need to set up formal and informal channels of communication within the Church and work tirelessly so that people might be released from the slavery of fear and suspicion and be set free to embrace each other as Children of God. If the "Whites only Elections" taught us anything, they taught us that the Church still has much work to do with its white membership in this regard.

No one political movement or party has a monopoly on the truth. To stand for truth does not mean taking sides with any particular group. The Church is not about the business of political power. The moment at which that becomes a factor, truth will become a negotiable factor and we will be back to square one. The Church is never neutral - it is avowedly for truth, justice and peace and it is opposed to injustice, oppression and violence. The Church needs to take its stand for truth but it must also not allow itself to be swallowed up by any group, for then it will cease to be the Church.

DAVID NUBE  
(METHSOC CHAPLAIN)

# EDITORIAL

This, our second edition for 1987, has been a very special one. We have grown together and become more than just a Christian media group. We are a group of committed friends with a common theology and vision. Ours is a faith that affects every aspect of our lives. We therefore need to respond to people, events, and issues on the basis of faith.

In our central theological focus, we have explored the bible verse Matthew 5:1 "You are the salt of the earth . . ." The theological reflection around this verse was developed during a 'Theology Day' held recently by SALT and at which we gained perspective on where SALT is now by sharing our beliefs and values.

In this edition, our emphasis in all articles, has been on Christian practice in relation to issues and not merely responses to current events. Through interviewing people off campus and on campus we felt that we gained additional perspectives and insight into issues such as spirituality, women in the Church, conscription and action through faith.

Our interview with Tom Wasse, a man fully involved with people of this country, revealed his commitment, love, compassion and humility and proved an example to all Christians. Dave Nube's (Methsoc Minister) article "Is God Blind?" is an inspiration to all to stand up against the injustices of society.

It has also been Salt's aim to try to be a forum for Christian Societies. We encourage all Christians to continue submitting articles and urge you to respond to articles within this edition. Finally, we also see the need to all write, as Christians on campus, to witness the Good News to all, being fully aware of the importance of becoming fully involved with the people and problems of our time, just as Jesus did.



KAREN VANNIEKERK  
HEINRICH BARTELS  
MARYJACOB  
ADAM FOUCHÉ  
KATHLEEN MEENAN  
LYNN REES  
MARY VAN DER RIET  
TRACY RUSER  
OF THE  
EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

# 'YOU ARE THE SALT of the EARTH'

MATT. 5:13

The central question, when trying to understand what Christianity is, is to ask what we, as Christians, are called to do? The answer is clear enough: follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. But what does this mean in the context of South Africa and the struggle in our country today?

Throughout the gospel, Jesus taught us, by his actions, how we should live. We must thus not only read the Bible, but we need to understand it, to theologise.

What then did Jesus mean when He said "You are the Salt of the Earth. But when Salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless and must be thrown out for people to trample on." (Matt.5:13)

Salt flavours, purifies and preserves. It is potent and essential for the body. Just as Salt is essential and just as a little has a tremendous effect on food, so we are essential on this earth and need to have an effect on everyone. We have to find ways to affect the lives of others. This we cannot, however, do alone. Just as a single grain of Salt is useless, without uniting, sharing and working together we cannot create change. Why must we want change?

If we want to follow Jesus we need to live as he did. Jesus was a man deeply involved with the people and problems of His times. He loved everyone but was strongly opposed to the injustices of His time, siding with the poor and the oppressed, the beggars, prostitutes, widows, orphans, also the poor in Spirit. Surely then it is our duty, as Christians, to become involved with the people of our country, to identify who the poor



## DO YOU MEASURE UP TO SALT ?

and oppressed are and to have compassion for them. In this country, political structures have oppressed the majority, have created the poor and a time in which injustice, violence, and repression reign. In order to bring about justice and peace, we cannot remain neutral, lose our saltiness. We have to take sides. In our case this involves joining the struggle against those forces that create injustice.

We need to witness by our humility. Salt is insignificant on its own; one adds Salt for the sake of the food, not for the sake of the Salt. Salt's value is in its service. Similarly we must be a serving people, a people valued for our humility. We also need to

realize that all Salt grains are the same, we are all created in the image of God. Because we value people, we need to transform and challenge them so that together we may bring about the Kingdom of God.

Salt on its own is useless, similarly faith without the context of life, is useless. We need to develop a strong personal relationship with our Father but this faith also needs to be shared with others. Faith does make a difference - it changes and it liberates.

We also need to recognise that Salt is not a sweetener. Salt can inflict pain. When rubbing Salt into a wound, it purifies, cleanses and ultimately heals, but it is, at the same time, extremely painful. If one does not continue nurturing and dressing the wound it will scar - we need therefore to remember that trying to change worldly values to those of the kingdom is a slow and gradual process. In our context, involving oneself with people may be painful, taking sides may be painful, challenging others on their values may be painful; being challenged itself may be painful; but ultimately it is a healing process. One inflicts pain out of love, pain that produces healing.

In carrying out Jesus' greatest command, that we love one another, we need to stand up against those values that are not based on love such as hate, injustice, violence and individualism. We need to spread the Good News of love, peace and hope. SALT, a Christian media group on Campus, attempts to witness the message of liberation in the Gospel challenging all Christians to work towards change so that God's Kingdom will be established on earth where a peace based on justice, truth and love shall reign.



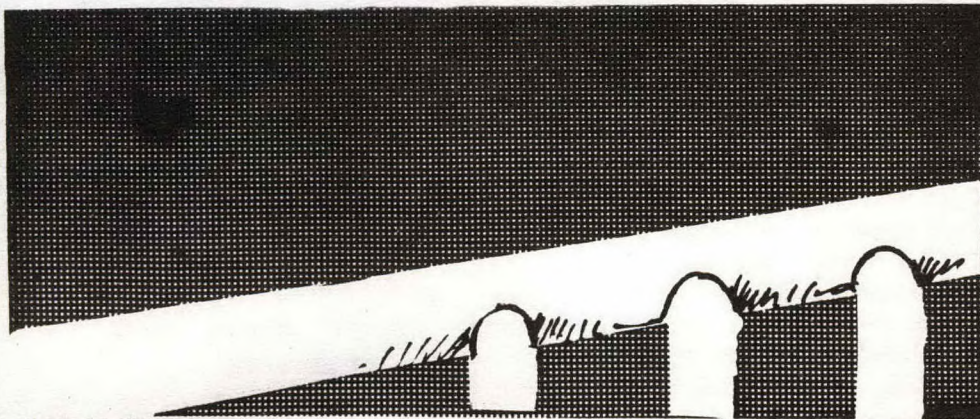
# Reconsidering Christianity . . .

In an interview with SALT, Joe Seremane, an SACC (South African Council of Churches) field worker related his experiences from seeing hypocrisy in Christianity as a political activist until his present post as a Christian field worker.

Joe was born in Randfontein in 1938. He did his matric at Madebane High in Western township (formerly Western Native Township). He then went to Wilberforce Teacher's Training Institution where he qualified as a teacher in 1959. His teaching career lasted until 1963, when he was sent to Robben Island for six years as a political prisoner. After leaving prison he survived as a hawker until 1975 when he was employed at United Tobacco as a salesman. In 1976-78 he was detained again as a political prisoner. In 1975 he started a B. Proc. degree at UNISA. He discontinued however, while in prison. In 1980 he joined the SACC.

*What does Christianity mean to you today?*

My faith means salvation for my country, especially in the present situation. Salvation will come to our country through listening to the Holy Spirit. We must be true to the teachings of our faith. My Faith tells me to search for the lost sheep. (Jesus came into the world, not for the angels, but for you and I). The Church draws people together and reconciles! It has relevance and goes beyond political or denominational boundaries. My Christianity is a long term process and vision. In South Africa we need to act with this understanding. We are all one in Christ, and are not oblivious of the role the Church has played in this country in the past (for example the preamble to the present government constitution). However the bottom



line is that this is God's world, his earth. I observe and respect human rights, for human rights are indivisible. We cannot reject what God has given us.

***We know that you have not always been a Christian. What caused you to reject it?***

I saw Christianity as the bed-mate of oppression and exploitation. I believed it. The well-known visage of the Bible and gun symbolising the role of the Church.

I was born and baptised into a Christian family. I was a member of the Anglican Church in which I served. A white priest served us and my experiences of him largely caused me to reject Christianity. Within the township he was well loved by my friends and I, yet at an early age became aware of certain contradictions. The Anglican Church in town was for whites only. One day as young boys, longing to see the priest, we went to visit him at his parish; he refused to receive us at the front door and sent us to the back. In my home my parents always treated him as a welcome guest. His behaviour took me by surprise. I began to see hypocrisy - it says one thing and does another.

***You are a Christian now. How and when did the changes occur?***

In April 1976 I was detained under Section 6 of the terrorism act and held for a period of 28 months. This period was worse than my six years on Robben Island. At this stage I relied on my political beliefs and convictions; there was nothing more important. During this period of detention, I was tortured, you could say 'until the point of death'. While being gagged and tied by hands and feet, I was slung over a pole with

electrodes on my head. I was kicked and shocked for long periods during my detention. The torture continued until I reached a stage of feeling no more pain. Within myself a quiet, peaceful dialogue was taking place.

I was detached from the whole experience, as if moving from the plane of life to the plane of death. I accepted it. My mind went blank and then something came into it, which had not been there for many years. It was then that I said 'God receive soul'. I heard a soft, yet very firm voice saying 'I have created life and no-one will remove it but me'. At this point they stopped torturing me. There was a change in the way they related to me. I asked myself whether they were afraid of me. Were they afraid that I was dying? No, it was not possible - others had died before and after my close encounter with death. I rationalised it, and then realised that they had changed too. An Afrikaaner policeman told me one day that he and his mother were praying for me every day. God was reaffirming himself to me.

On my release, a few months later, further discoveries challenged my previous view of Christianity. From my wife I learnt that the people in my Church; people that I had previously

mocked and persecuted, had prayed for me all the time during those 28 months. I was startled by this fact. Another surprise was that my family, in my absence, had been supported by the South African Council of Churches (SACC). It was these three things: God's intervention in my torture, my acceptance by the Church I had rejected, and people showing care for my family, that made me think again. Previously I believed that one rejected those that refused to cooperate - yet Christianity did not. I started remembering some of the teachings of my youth. I remembered arguments I had with my mother. On one occasion, I took my cassocks in which I served and trampled on them - showing my contempt for Christianity. My mother at one point agreed that the people in the Church were hypocrites, but told me that there was room for one more. After my detention I realised who she meant - it was me! I now see that in Jesus Christ's foolishness there is wisdom, and in his weakness there is strength.

***What does your present work involve?***

We are examining how we interact with our community as Church workers - how do we handle conflicting ideologies? We are all God's people and therefore the lost sheep must always be sought. My energy is for liberation - not for arguing over symbols. If we get stuck on symbols, we lose the objective. We should join hands and transcend the barriers - we have the ability and the gifts to do it.

#### LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Cathosoc invited Brian Gaybba to clear up some of the many misconceptions about Liberation Theology. The talk was based on the understanding of salvation as the basis of liberation theology. Salvation is not only freedom from sin, which destroys our relationship with God, but also freedom from the effects of sin in society, which destroy the community.

With this understanding, Liberation Theologians call for association and involvement with the oppressed.

If we cannot understand the Gospel clearly because of the social structure, we need to change these structures. Another basic tenet of Liberation

Theology is that the way we act affects the way we think, whereas other theologies have tried to work from thinking to action. Professor Gaybba also pointed out several criticisms of this theology and some of these were discussed after his talk.

**Collection Number: AG1977**

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**PUBLISHER:**

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

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