



Desmond Mpilo Tutu

Mr. Chancellor,

The honour which we are about to bestow is of the deepest significance, both for the University and for the peoples of the Caribbean which it represents. In conferring our degree, we seek also to demonstrate symbolically our unequivocal support of the struggle for freedom in South Africa, against the monstrous evil perpetrated on its people by a Government which has banished from its mind all sense of justice and all feelings of shame. The outcome can never be in doubt,

*For Freedom's battle once begun
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son
Though baffled oft is ever won*

But we wish to go further, to ask: what have these islands, far removed from the scene of conflict, small in population, possessing neither great wealth nor power, diminutive in political stature — what have these islands to contribute to this great struggle? And the answer must be nothing . . . nothing if not the example they set in the cause of freedom, nothing if not their respect for human dignity, nothing if not their concern for the poor and dispossessed, nothing if not their commitment to the wretched of the earth.

Alas South Africans must pay a heavy price. For in the words of the celebrated American hero Frederick Douglass:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground. They want the rain without the thunder and lightning . . . Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and never will . . . Men may not get all they pay for in this world but they must certainly pay for all they get.

The purchase of freedom has many dimensions; there is the physical dimension: witness the pain and suffering in the townships of the Transvaal, and the economic dimension: witness the agony of the Commonwealth at Nassau; but there is also the moral dimension which dignifies and gives substance to all other efforts in this noble cause. Our thoughts focus today on the latter, on its leader, whose figure stands so vividly from the South African canvas, who follows boldly the path of non-violent protest even as Ghandi and King before him. He has chosen to love his enemies, he blesses those that curse him, he does good to those that hate him and he prays for those who despitefully use and persecute him. He is a mystic and the sages tell us that a mystic who is a man of action, and a man of action because he is a mystic wields a tremendous power over other men.

We bid welcome and I present Desmond Mpilo Tutu, scholar, social activist, Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Nobel Laureate, moral leader of the South African nation in their struggle for freedom.

Desmond Tutu is a native of South Africa, born in 1931 in the dusty outskirts of the gold-mining town of Klerksdorp in the Transvaal to Zachariah and Aletta Tutu, both of Bantu stock. His was a Christian family of Methodist persuasion, his father teaching in a Methodist mission school. But the family later joined the Anglican Church in deference to an older sister, and when Tutu was twelve, they moved to Johannesburg where his parents found work at an Anglican missionary school for the blind. It was here that his compassion for the deprived was fully aroused, and it was here also that his legendary meeting with Father Huddleston took place. Then a parish priest in the black township of Sophiatown, Huddleston was the leading white Christian voice raised against apartheid. Fate decreed that he should visit, almost daily for twenty months, the sensitive, impressionable teenager while he was hospitalised for tuberculosis. Tutu's scholastic bent soon became apparent, to the extent that when he graduated from Western High School in Johannesburg, he determined to study medicine. It was not to be. Lacking the financial support for medical training, he read for an Arts degree at the University of Johannesburg and after graduation turned to teaching as a career. His progress in this profession was however, short-lived, just three years, from 1954 to 1957, a period which saw a further tightening of the cruel bonds of apartheid. Mission schools for Africans were closed, but with the introduction of a new system of Bantu education, deliberately designed to limit further the upward mobility of Africans, he had had enough. Although only recently married, he felt compelled to resign as a mark of protest. This was the final turn of events which led him inexorably to his life's mission: the Church. In retrospect, his experiences and frustrations seemingly were but a preparation for the career on which he presently embarked. He entered the Community of the Redemption, the religious order to which Father Huddleston belonged, and began theological studies at St. Peter's College in Johannesburg. There, his spiritual commitment deepened in an atmosphere of prayer, meditation and daily communion. In the real world outside, racial suppression worsened. He and the world stood aghast and wept at the horror of the Sharpeville massacre. In 1961, the year he was ordained an Anglican priest, South Africa was forced out of the Commonwealth.

After a short period of parish work as curate, he seized the opportunity to go to London to read Theology at King's College, London, first for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity and subsequently for the Master of Theology degree. This precipitate release, from the harsh institutionalised racism of South Africa to the liberal atmosphere of student life and the quiet duties of a priest in southern England, had the most profound effect on his psyche. His reaction to this, his first real experience of freedom, was to draw strength from it and to commit himself even further to the liberation of all oppressed South Africans. Thereafter, the pace of his advancement in the hierarchy of the Church quickened. On his return to South Africa in 1966 he lectured at the Federal Theological Seminary, then at the University of Lesotho, developing in the process, a reputation for inspired and skilful teaching as well as expanding his gifts as a preacher. Sensing the limitations of an academic career, albeit in Theology, he changed direction again by accepting an appointment in England as Associate Director of the Theological Education Fund, with responsibilities for the disbursement of funds for World Council of Churches scholarships. His second sojourn abroad ended with his return to South Africa as the Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg. While there, after a period of meditation, he published an open letter to the Prime Minister of South Africa, proposing a series of changes which could lead to a peaceful end to discrimination and racism. His letter remained unanswered, his advice unheeded. That year, Soweto exploded in unprecedented rioting resulting in the death of over six hundred Africans. A year later he was consecrated Bishop of Lesotho and threw himself with characteristic zeal into his duties in the mountainous parishes of that country. We must understand that Desmond Tutu was a man very much on the move, for after only a year as Bishop he accepted an invitation to become the first Black Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. Up to that time the Council's major activity was lending assistance to imprisoned Africans and their families. Under Tutu, with the African nationalist parties banned, it became one of the principal organs of black protest. He himself had become an international figure, respected and acknowledged as a Christian leader of outstanding courage and resourcefulness.

From this point onwards he has been perceived by the ruling Government as a dangerous opponent of its policies. They have been outraged by his uncompromising attack on the forcible removal of Africans from their homes to barren so-called tribal lands; they have railed at his outspoken support of economic and finan-

cial pressure on South Africa by the international community. For his bold and fearless stand, his passport was confiscated in 1979 and again in 1981. We are told that he travels with documents on which his nationality is described as undetermined. Yet he has escaped harsher treatment, insulated by his moral stature in South Africa and the wider international community. He is totally without fear, sustained by his deep Christian faith, supported by a devoted wife and family and surrounded by a faithful flock. To use his words: *"The most awful thing they can do is to kill me and death is not the worst thing that could happen to a Christian"*.

He has given open and unqualified support for the banned African National Congress and pressed again and again for the release of its leader, Nelson Mandela. In 1984, while on leave as a visitor to New York City's General Theological Seminary, he received news that he had been named the Nobel peace laureate "as a renewed recognition of the courage and heroism shown by black South Africans to their use of peaceful methods". It was a fitting tribute to an extraordinary man. Later that year he was elected Bishop of Johannesburg and in 1986 he was elevated to the highest rank of the Anglican Church in South Africa when he was consecrated Archbishop of Capetown at a memorable service at St. Georges Cathedral, attended by a congregation of fifteen thousand. Here are some of his words on that occasion:

"As the Church we are set as a sign in the world, the first fruits of the Kingdom, to demonstrate what God intends human society to be — united in rich diversity, to demonstrate that Christ has indeed broken down the middle wall of partition, and so we must accelerate the pace of true non-racialism".

Yet for all the intensity and seriousness of his mission he is full of joy and sparkling wit. His witness is never dull. He is a happy person at peace with himself. Our own honour to him this evening is but the latest in a long list of honours received, which leads us to the suspicion that perhaps the receiver is indeed the giver.

We wish now only to reaffirm our continued support to him and to the people of South Africa until victory is theirs — when the whip will be burnt to ashes, the chains melted, the fetters broken and the irresponsible power forever destroyed — for they too are the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

*... Sleep, as ants
Cross over your eyelids
You have never possessed anything
as deeply as this
This is all you have owned
from the first outcry
through forever
You can never be dispossessed*

Mr. Chancellor, I request you, by the authority of Senate and Council to admit Desmond Mpilo Tutu to the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.

SPECIAL CONVOCATION — 1986