



## **Desmond Tutu: Spirituality, Social Justice and Leadership**

### **Tutu in quotes**

Selected by Dr Roger Williamson (March 2022)

#### **Mandela on Tutu**

“The struggle against apartheid required and itself produced men and women of courage. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is one such outstanding patriot.”

President Nelson Mandela (1994) in “Foreword” to Desmond Tutu, *The Rainbow People of God* p. xiii

“Desmond Tutu shows each of us how to transform our pain and sorrow into hope and confidence in the future.”

President Nelson Mandela on the cover of Desmond Tutu: *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for our Time*

#### **Black Theology**

“Black theology is ... the theology of the oppressed, and to this extent it is a theology of liberation.”

Desmond Tutu, Paper for conference in the UK on Black Theology 1973, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 120

“Would you say Moses was a religious leader or a political leader? Was God acting religiously or politically when He set free a slave people?”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 64

“By and large, what the West decides as counting for, say, academic excellence is academic excellence for the rest of the world. This has occurred in theology as well. Black theology is a repudiation of this Western arrogance.”

Desmond Tutu, Paper for conference in the UK on Black Theology 1973, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 117

“In South Africa when they banned books, we told the government the book they should have banned long ago was the Bible, for nothing could be more radical, more revolutionary, as we faced up to the awfulness of injustice, oppression and racism.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 64

“Elections are usually just secular political events in most parts of the world. Our election turned out to be a spiritual, even a religious experience.”

“Yes, our first election turned out to be a deeply spiritual event, a transfiguration experience, a mountaintop experience. We had won a spectacular victory over injustice, oppression, and evil.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* pp. 5-6, 7



## Christianity among the Faiths

“Our God would be too small if he was not also the God of Gandhi”

Desmond Tutu, Birmingham 1989, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 7

“Do we really have to be so ridiculous as to assert that what Mahatma Gandhi did was good, but it would have been better had he been a Christian?...”

“We should want to deal with other faiths at their best and highest, as they define themselves, and not shoot down caricatures that we want to put up”

Desmond Tutu, Cape Town 1992, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 15

## Ethical and Spiritual Leadership

“Desmond Tutu is principally a pastor. His ministry stretches beyond St. Augustine’s Church in Orlando West II (Mzimbhlope) Soweto where his parish priest. It goes beyond the member-churches of the South African Council of Churches where he is General-Secretary to embrace the whole of South Africa. Its impact reverberates around the world.”

Buti Tlhagale (1983) Roman Catholic Priest at Regina Mundi, Soweto, subsequently Archbishop of Johannesburg, in Desmond Tutu, *Hope and Suffering* p. x

“Jesus said, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all, all, all, all, all’ (John 12:32 KJV) – black, white, yellow, rich, poor, clever, not so clever, beautiful, not so beautiful ... All, all, all belong: gay, lesbian, so-called straight. All, all are meant to be held in this incredible embrace that will not let us go. All.”

Desmond Tutu, Southwark Cathedral 2004, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 56

“In God’s family, there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian – all belong.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 20

“But behind every Gandhi, every Mother Teresa, every Romero, every Mandela, there are millions of people who are living lives of love and heroism.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 115

## Tutu as a Global Moral Leader

“There is no peace in Southern Africa. There is no peace because there is no justice. There can be no real peace and security until there be first justice enjoyed by all the inhabitants of that beautiful land. The Bible knows nothing about peace without justice, for that would be crying ‘peace, peace, where there is no peace.’”

Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture 1984 on the Nobel Peace Prize website; also reprinted as “Apartheid’s Final Solution” in *The Rainbow People of God*



“Graca Machel and I spent New Year’s Day at the funeral of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a beloved friend and first Chair of the Elders. His passing on December 26<sup>th</sup> saw a global outpouring of sadness, but also many recollections of wonderful, inspiring moments of his rich, joyful and courageous life ... Arch was a driving force in making The Elders what it is today ...”

Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and current chair of The Elders, on their website 7 January 2022

“In 1987 we produced *Children on the Frontline: a Report for UNICEF on the Status of Children in South Africa* ... The report gave both statistical and case-study data on the plight of South African children caught in the double jeopardy of structural violence, created by a racist political and socio-economic order, and physical violence, which scarred not only their bodies but their psyches as well. ... We cautioned against the brutalising impact of violence on the children of South Africa, both as its victims and as its perpetrators. We cited Archbishop Tutu’s prophetic stance and his outright condemnation of both police brutality and the ‘necklace’ murders of suspected police informers as equally dehumanising.”

Mamphela Ramphele, *A Passion for Freedom*, pp. 218-9

### **On the schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in Nigeria**

“Very recently, one million Tutsis were assassinated by their Hutu fellow-Rwandans. The members of Boko Haram are Nigerians. They have turned viciously on fellow-Nigerians, their most horrendous atrocity being the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls, forcing them to become Muslims and selling them off as child brides for only \$12.”

Desmond Tutu, *In God's Hands* p. 110

“If those schoolgirls were really members of our families in a way that we all acknowledged, would we countenance their abduction in such a cold-blooded fashion by abductors who declare that it is wrong to educate girls and that they will be sold for \$12 each?”

Desmond Tutu, *In God's Hands* p. 40

### **Spirituality as the Wellspring**

“Dear Child of God, all of us are meant to be contemplatives ... Each one of us is meant to have that space inside where we can hear God’s voice.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream*, p. 99

“I am deeply thankful for those moments in the early morning when I try to be quiet, to sit in the presence of the gentle and compassionate and unruffled One to try to share in or be given some of that divine serenity... People often ask about the source of my joy and I can honestly say that it comes from my spiritual life – and specifically from these times of stillness. They are an indispensable part of my day regardless of what else I might face.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* pp. 100-1



“For Christians, who believe they are created in the image of God, it is the Godhead, diversity in unity, and the three-in-oneness of God which we and all creation reflect. It is this imago Dei too that invests each one of us – whatever race, gender, education, and social or economic status – with infinite worth, making us precious in God’s sight.”

Desmond Tutu, speech to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Geneva 2001; in *God is not a Christian* p. 30

“The principle of transfiguration says nothing, no one and no situation, is ‘untransfigurable,’ that the whole of creation, nature, waits expectantly for its transfiguration, when it will be released from its bondage, and share in the glorious liberty of the children of God, when it will not be just dry inert matter but will be translucent with divine glory.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 3

“Our suffering can become a spirituality of transformation when we understand that we have a role in God’s transfiguration of the world.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 71

“This is a moral universe, which means that, despite all the evidence that seems to be to the contrary, there is no way that evil and injustice and oppression and lies can have the last word. God is a God who cares about right and wrong. God cares about justice and injustice. God is in charge”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 2

## **Action at Community Level**

“In Xhosa, we say ‘Umntu ngumtu ngabantu’. The expression is very difficult to render in English; but we could translate it by saying, ‘A person is a person through other persons.’”

Desmond Tutu, *God is not a Christian* p. 21

“We have a jurisprudence, a penology in Africa that was not retributive but restorative. In the traditional setting, when people quarrelled the main intention was not to punish the miscreant but to restore good relations.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 57

## **Tutu’s Inspiration for Younger Generations**

From the Oration at Steve Biko’s Funeral:

“We, too, like the disciples of Jesus have been stunned by the death of another young man in his thirties. A young man completely dedicated to the pursuit of justice and righteousness, of peace and reconciliation. A young man completely committed to radical change in our beloved land.”

Desmond Tutu, in Mothabi Mutloatse (ed), *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches; The Right Reverend Desmond Mpilo Tutu*, Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 13



From his time as Chaplain at Fort Hare University during student protests (1968):

“We had been surrounded by police, with dogs snarling at us. We were petrified, for nearly two hours. Some people were crying ... The staff of the university, the white people - some of them armed – these professors were watching and nobody said a word, nobody ... Desmond [came] almost from nowhere, in a cassock... broke the police cordon and came to be among us. I recall moving scenes of young women kneeling to pray with Desmond for blessings. Even today when I recall that I get very emotional. For me that was the greatest example I could think of, of what to be a priest was about.”

Nyameko Pityana quoted in John Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace* p. 111

“Dear Child of God, as I hope is now clear, you are God’s partner, and you matter. Only you can fulfil your part in God’s dream.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream*, p. 129

## **Gender and Sexuality**

“... Desmond Tutu, on a visit to Zanempilo [Dr Ramphela’s medical clinic], tried unsuccessfully to get the chauvinists among my male colleagues to regard domestic chores as part of the responsibilities of being adult. He told them about the joy of washing his own children’s nappies while his family were living in England in the 1960s. That shocked me too, but I hoped in vain that my colleagues would at least consider dishwashing acceptable.”

Mamphela Ramphela, *A Passion for Freedom* p. 208

“My hope is that one day ... all will have equal rights. For me this struggle is a seamless robe. Opposing apartheid was a matter of justice. Opposing discrimination against women is a matter of justice. Opposing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a matter of justice.”

Desmond Tutu, Southwark Cathedral 2004, in *God is Not a Christian* p. 54

“I myself could not have opposed the injustice of penalising people for something which they could do nothing about – their race – and then have kept quiet as women were being penalised for something they could do nothing about – their gender: hence my support for the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate.”

Desmond Tutu, Southwark Cathedral 2004, in *God is Not a Christian* p. 55

## **Peace and Conflict Resolution**

“I am President of the country ... I have set up the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] They have done not a perfect but a remarkable job and I approved everything they did.”

President Nelson Mandela, quoted in Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography*, 1999, p. 532

“I want to see a resurgence, a revival, a renaissance of so many of the wonderful attributes and values that Africa has.”

Desmond Tutu, Benin, West Africa, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 29



“When I was serving as president of the All Africa Council of Churches, I went to Rwanda one year after the genocide there that claimed the lives of more than half a million people. I saw skulls that had machetes embedded in them. I couldn’t pray. I could only weep.”

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* p. 12

“Any right-thinking person would want to condemn unequivocally all of that massacre and killing and genocide without qualification.”

Desmond Tutu, Kigali, Rwanda, after the genocide of 1994, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 33

“There can be no future unless there is peace. There can be no peace unless there is reconciliation.”

Desmond Tutu, Kigali, Rwanda, after the genocide of 1994, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 35

### **Healing the Deep Wounds of History**

“True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the hurt, the truth”.

Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream* pp. 55-6

“An unexamined and unacknowledged past finds all kinds of skeletons emerging from all sorts of cupboards to bedevil the present. Just ask General Pinochet.”

Desmond Tutu on the lessons from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, London and Copenhagen 1994, in *God is not a Christian* p. 40

“Those who have wronged must be ready to make what amends they can. They must be ready to make restitution and reparation.”

Desmond Tutu, sermon at a church leaders’ conference, including churches which had supported apartheid, 1990, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 28

“Racism, xenophobia, and unfair discrimination have spawned slavery, when human beings have bought and sold and owned and branded fellow human beings as if they were so many beasts of burden”

Desmond Tutu, speech to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Geneva 2011, in *God is not a Christian*, p. 51

On the situation of First Nation people in Alberta, Western Canada:

“The water in many parts is not potable; fish are dying, covered in cancerous sores, and the First Nation people are bearing the brunt of all this degradation. They used to grow their own food. It is getting increasingly difficult to do so. They have depended on fishing from time immemorial, but now many fish are suffering and dying from cancer.”

Desmond Tutu, *In God’s Hands*, p. 105