# Introduction

In 1978 I was a Maths. Lecturer at the College of Further Education in Hull. I had been Ordained as a Priest in the Diocese of York a year before and was functioning as a non-stipendiary Priest. I had formed a weekly discussion group at the college which met during the lunch hour. A dozen or so of us discussed current affairs, politics and religion. The Rev’d Gordon Francis- Kerr was the University chaplain at the time and a close friend. He asked me if I would like to meet Bishop Richard Wood who had recently been exiled from Namibia. I had no idea of the man at that time but nevertheless welcomed him to address the discussion group. He spoke of his deep concern with regard to Nuclear Weapons. This was followed by a question-time.

After what turned out to be a fascinating and challenging hour I invited Bishop Richard to join me for lunch in the refectory. On the way to lunch, Richard asked me “Who was that chap who kept asking those right-wing questions?” I explained that the gentleman in question was a member of staff and a very devout Christian, but …..; I hesitated for a brief moment. Richard put his episcopal arm around my shoulder and spoke in hushed tones; “But you mean that he’s really a pain in the arse!” After that moment, I never ceased to be deeply impressed by his amazing honesty, sincerity and wisdom. However, the story of my friendship with Richard really began twenty-one years before in 1958.

At that time, I was an undergraduate at the University of Cardiff. I was not a member of the Theological Society. I had been brought up in the Rhondda Valley and a choir boy in the Anglican Church in Wales. Church going, had become a thing of the past but I was attracted by a notice in the common room which advertised a lecture by the Rev’d Trevor Huddleston on Apartheid in South Africa. Wandering along a corridor in the college I came across a figure dressed in a cassock. “You must be the Rev’d Trevor Huddleston” I said, with a measure of awe. “Oh no,” he replied in a strong Welsh accent “he is a far more holy looking man than I am.” This was Fr. Bruce Davies, the Chaplain of the University, who led me to the lecture room and introduced me to the man himself!

In my teens, I was taught that it was not a good thing to mix politics with religion. This was, so I thought, good Anglican teaching based on that of St. Paul. I was therefore quite amazed to hear Fr. Huddleston talk so passionately about the evils of the apartheid system in South Africa. He told us about the brutal methods of repression of the indigenous black population which were committed by the South African government. He spoke about the teaching of Jesus concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God; a kingdom of peace and justice. He challenged us to consider our own commitment to this kingdom and the urgent need for action. My understanding of Christianity changed. Like many others in that audience, I bought his then recently published book ‘Naught for your Comfort’. I began to attend church at St. Dyfrig’s in Cardiff and became a close friend of Fr. Bruce. Incidentally, he attended my ordination at York Minster, twenty years later!

Bishop Colin Winter, another priest whose writings I admired greatly was ordaing priest in 1957. He began his ministry in a working-class parish in Eastbourne. It was here that Joost de Blank wrote in 1959 inviting him to become rector in Simonstown in Cape Province, Sought Africa. Joost de Blank was a courageous and outspoken critic of apartheid, but it was proving difficult for him to find priests to come to South Africa at that time. In his book ‘Namibia’, first published in 1997, Colin Winter says that in 1959 he knew very little about South Africa, but before leaving England he went to see Father Trevor Huddleston. He writes; “I remember how nervous I was at being ushered into Huddleston’s presence when he was working in a predominantly black area in Knotting Hill in London. He discussed the South African situation with me at length. Time and again in my life I have reached back to his classic, ‘Naught for your Comfort’, to take courage from the man and from his vision. Would to God that our church in South Africa had produced more men like him.”

Colin Winter, a married man with five children, worked in Southern Africa for thirteen years, becoming Dean of Windhoek in 1965 and Bishop of Damaraland (Namibia) in 1968, prior to his expulsion by the South African government in 1972.