

TUTU ON APARTHEID

In 1984, then Bishop Desmond Tutu, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, received the Nobel Peace Prize. In accepting the prize, he first outlined the tragedy of South Africa's policy of racial separation, or apartheid, and then explained how the battle over apartheid was being waged.

It is against this system [of apartheid] that our people have sought to protest peacefully since 1912 at least, with the founding of the African National Congress. They have used the conventional methods of peaceful protest – petitions, demonstrations, deputations, and even a passive resistance campaign. A tribute to our people's commitment to peaceful change is the fact that the only South Africans to win the Nobel Peace Prize are both black. Our people are peace-loving to a fault. The response of the authorities has been an escalating intransigence and violence, the violence of police dogs, tear gas, detention without trial, exile, and even death. Our people protested peacefully against the Pass Laws in 1960, and 69 of them were killed on March 21, 1960, at Sharpeville, many shot in the back running away. Our children protested against inferior education, singing songs and displaying placards and marching peacefully. Many in 1976, on June 16th and subsequent times, were killed or imprisoned. Over 500 people died in that uprising. Many children went into exile. The whereabouts of many are unknown to their parents. At present, to protest that self-same discriminatory education, and the exclusion of blacks from the new constitutional dispensation, the sham local black government, rising unemployment, increased rents and General Sales Tax, our people have boycotted and demonstrated. They have staged a successful 2-day stay away. Over 150 people have been killed. It is far too high a price to pay. There has been little revulsion or outrage at this wanton destruction of human life in the West. In parenthesis, can somebody please explain to me something that has puzzled me[?]? When a priest goes missing and is subsequently found dead, the media in the West carry his story in very extensive coverage. I am glad that the death of one person can cause so much concern. But in the self-same week when this priest is found dead, the South African Police kill 24 blacks who had been participating in the protest, and 6,000 blacks are sacked for being similarly involved, and you are lucky to get that much coverage. Are we being told something I do not want to believe, that we blacks are expendable and that blood is thicker than water, that when it comes to the church, you cannot trust whites, that they will club together against us? I don't want to believe that is the message being conveyed to us.

Be that as it may, we see before us a land bereft of much justice, and therefore without peace and

security. Unrest is endemic, and will remain an unchanging feature of the South African scene until apartheid, the root cause of it all, is finally dismantled. At this time, the Army is being quartered on the civilian population. There is civil war being waged. South Africans are on either side. When the ANC [African National Congress] and the PAC [Pan-Africanist Congress] were banned in 1960, they declared that they had no option but to carry out the armed struggle. We in the SACC [South African Council of Churches] have said we are opposed to all forms of violence – that of a repressive and unjust system, and that of those who seek to overthrow that system. However, we have added that we understand those who say they have had to adopt what is a last resort for them. Violence is not being introduced into the South African situation . . . from outside by those who are called terrorists or freedom fighters, depending on whether you are an oppressed or an oppressor. The South African situation is violent already, and the primary violence is that of apartheid, the violence of forced population removals, of inferior education, of detention without trial, of the migratory labour systems, etc. . . .

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." God's Shalom, peace, involves inevitably righteousness, justice, wholeness, fullness of life, participation in decision making, goodness, laughter, joy, compassion, sharing and reconciliation. . . .

When will we learn that human beings are of infinite value because they have been created in the image of God, and that it is a blasphemy to treat them as if they were less than this and to do so ultimately recoils on those who do this? In dehumanising others, they are themselves dehumanised. Perhaps oppression dehumanises the oppressor as much as, if not more than, the oppressed. They need each other to become truly free to become human. We can be human only in fellowship, in community, in *koinonia*, in peace.

Let us work to be peacemakers, those given to a wonderful share in Our Lord's ministry of reconciliation. If we want peace, so we have been told, let us work for justice. Let us beat our swords into ploughshares.

(Continued)

God calls us to be fellow workers with Him, so that we can extend His Kingdom of shalom, of justice, of goodness, of compassion, of caring, of sharing, of laughter, joy and reconciliation, so that

the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen. . . .

1. What conventional methods of peaceful protest does Bishop Tutu say the ANC began using as early as 1912?

2. (a) In general, how have the authorities responded to peaceful protest?

b. What has been the result of this response?

3. Why does Bishop Tutu say unrest in South Africa is endemic?

4. In Bishop Tutu's view, what is the primary source of the violence in South Africa? Explain.

5. What does he believe has to happen before peace and security can be realized in South Africa? Explain.
