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INTRODUCTION

DESMOND TUTU'S MESSAGE IN PERSPECTIVE

Hendrik J.C. Pieterse and Peer Scheepers

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, where he had been kept as political prisoner for so many years. Many people felt that this day would become an historic day, one not to forget. Many people witnessed his release right there on the spot. But many millions more witnessed it on television because this historical event was broadcasted all over the world.

In spite of the fact that so many people may have been aware of the historical event taking place that day, not many would have dreamed that within four years Mandela would become President of his beloved country, after democratic elections where the wishful slogan 'one man, one vote' had become a reality. All people, after having waited for decades for democracy and after having waited for hours in front of the polling station, had cast their ballots, no matter what their race.

Mandela had become the leader of a country with both traditional and modern segments; with great differences between blacks, coloureds and whites; with great inequalities between races in nearly all domains of life; with political tensions between whites and blacks, but also between black communities which had frequently led to harassments, fights and killings. But in spite of all these social and political problems, many people from all races hoped and looked forward to a new South Africa in which more equality would become established and political and racial cleavages would no longer disrupt and disturb the country. South Africa would become a country where all would get their share of the cake in a peaceful society where all people, no matter what race, no matter what political ideology, no matter what status one had achieved previously, would live together and cooperate in order to achieve a better society.

These ideas of peaceful developments towards more social and political equality had been spread by many people in the years before Mandela became President. Of course there have been innumerable people at all levels of society who spread the word. But leaders may be considered to be of major importance

in this respect. They were there on the platform when de Klerk was succeeded by Mandela.

First there was Mandela himself, but also former President de Klerk who had contributed to these political developments for which they had both been honoured with the Nobel Prize for Peace. And there was Bishop Tutu who had already in 1984 been awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. He had continuously propagated these ideas via religious institutions but also via all other channels of communication. His influence cannot be underestimated in a country that always has been and still is intensely religious.

Research shows that 94% of the people of South Africa consider themselves to belong to a denomination: Protestant (46%), Roman Catholic (11%), another Christian denomination (19%), or some other non-Christian denomination (18%). This means that only 6% has become secular, which is very little as compared to a rather secular country like the Netherlands where the percentage of unchurched amounts to 55% (cf. Peters, Felling and Scheepers, 1993; Becker and Vink, 1994).

Who is this man, Archbishop Tutu, whose social and political influence may not be underestimated in his capacity as one of the most important church leaders in an intensely religious society? What is his message and how did he communicate it? And how did he become so influential?

Desmond Tutu was born in Klerksdorp in 1931, the son of a schoolteacher and a domestic worker. After matriculating at the Johannesburg Bantu High School in Western Native Township, he chose to follow his father's career. He took a teacher's diploma at the Pretoria Bantu Normal College. He was a teacher at the Johannesburg Bantu High School for a year and then moved to Munsieville High School, Krugersdorp, for three years. It was here that he married his wife, Leah.

In 1958, following the introduction of Bantu education, Tutu decided to enter the ministry in the Church of the Province of South Africa and became an ordination student at St Peter's Theological College, Rosettenville. He received his Licentiate in Theology in 1960 and was ordained as a priest in Johannesburg in 1961. Shortly afterwards he went to study in London, where he obtained the Bachelor of Divinity Honours and Master of Theology degrees, while acting as a part-time curate.

In 1967 he returned to South Africa and joined the staff of the Federal Theological Seminary in Alice and became Chaplain at the University of Fort Hare. He moved to the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in Roma, Lesotho, in 1970, where he held the post of lecturer in the Department of

Theology. This step was followed by a further spell in England as Associate Director of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches, based in Bromley, Kent.

Tutu became Dean of St Mary's Cathedral, Johannesburg, in 1975, but shortly thereafter he was elected as Bishop of Lesotho. By this time South Africa was in turmoil, in the wake of the Soweto uprising of 1976, and Bishop Tutu was persuaded to leave the calm diocese of Lesotho to take up the post of General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). It was in this position as Secretary of the SACC, a post that he held from 1978- 1985, that Bishop Tutu became a national and international figure.

The SACC represents all the major Christian churches in South Africa, apart from the Dutch Reformed Church and the Catholic Church (the latter is, however, an accredited observer of the SACC). An affiliate of the World Council of Churches, the SACC is committed to the cause of ecumenism and to fulfilling the social responsibility of the Church of Christ. Justice and reconciliation feature prominently amongst the priorities of the SACC. As General Secretary of the SACC, Bishop Tutu pursued these goals with vigour and commitment. He built up the SACC into an important institution in South African spiritual and political life, which voiced the ideals and aspirations of millions of voteless South African Christians. Under the leadership of Bishop Tutu, the South African Council of Churches established an effective machinery for providing assistance to the victims of apartheid.

Inevitably, Bishop Tutu became heavily embroiled in controversy as he spoke out against the injustice of the apartheid system. For several years he was denied a passport to travel abroad, but in 1982 the South African Government withdrew this restriction in the face of national and international concern. The name of Bishop Desmond Tutu became synonymous with that of the SACC as he became the leader of a crusade for justice and racial conciliation in South Africa.

In 1984 Bishop Tutu's contribution to the cause of racial justice in South Africa was recognized when he received the highest award the world can offer – the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1985 Bishop Tutu was elected as Bishop of the Diocese of Johannesburg. In this capacity he did much to bridge the chasm between black and white Anglicans in South Africa. His office as Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg was of short duration, as in 1986 he was elected Archbishop of Cape Town. In electing him, the Anglican Church placed its trust in him as its spiritual leader and showed its confidence in his pursuit of racial justice in South Africa.

In 1987 he was elected as President of the All Africa Council of Churches. Before the unbanning of the African National Congress and other political

organizations in 1990 there were many critics of Archbishop Tutu who, despite his protestations to the contrary, predicted that he would enter political life. These critics have been proved wrong. He has not sought a political position. Instead, he has become a principal mediator and conciliator in this difficult period of our history.

Archbishop Tutu was elected a Fellow of King's College, London in 1987. He is Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape and a member of the Council of the University of Fort Hare. He holds honorary degrees from a number of universities, including Harvard, Columbia, Aberdeen, the Ruhr, Oxford and Kent. He has received many prizes and awards in addition to the Nobel Prize, notably the Prix d'Athene (Onassis Foundation) (1980); the Family of Man Gold Medal Award (December 1983); and the Martin Luther King Jr Nonviolent Peace Prize – Atlanta, Georgia, USA (January 1986).

Before 1990, Archbishop Tutu's vigorous advocacy of social justice made him a figure of great controversy. Today he is seen more as an elder statesman with a major role to play in reconciliation. He played an important role in facilitating contact and reconciliation between various political groups in seeking peaceful, non-violent change in South Africa. He is one of the very few people who appear to have the standing to establish reconciliation between white and black.

We feel no need to elaborate on the importance of Archbishop Tutu in an intensely religious country where church leaders are unconditionally respected because they represent the core of religious beliefs that so many subscribe to. Equally important as his religious views are his political views as well as the ways in which he has propagated them. One may safely state that Tutu is one of the leading representatives of South African liberation theology, a profound prophetic theology that has been developed in the context of apartheid.

To fully comprehend this, we do feel the need to pay attention to the context of apartheid that has developed over the decades. In *Chapter 1* we will describe important historical events concerning matters of apartheid after the Soweto uprising in 1976. In *Chapter 2* we relate to these historical circumstances in which liberation theology has emerged. We will try to summarize the core set of views in liberation theology as an introduction to those who have not yet had the opportunity to become familiar with these views as well as a background for our analysis.

The core of *Chapter 3* is dedicated to the way in which Archbishop Tutu has spread the word both on religious and on political matters, leading to our main questions in the empirical analysis.

- 1 Which crucial themes, both concerning liberation theology as well as political matters, has Archbishop Tutu adopted in his sermons and public speeches?
- 2 How often has he elaborated on these crucial themes in sermons and public speeches?
- 3 In what ways has he related these crucial themes to each other and to political themes?

Together with these questions we will also ask the theological question, namely, on which theological ideas Tutu bases his prophetic preaching in order to expose the apartheid regime and proclaim the coming liberation by the Liberator God.

Having ascertained in his biography that Archbishop Tutu may have been controversial but has nevertheless been respected over time and within all racial communities and no matter what the situation, three other questions in the empirical analysis seem to be important focusing on his sermons and public speeches:

- 4 Has Archbishop Tutu emphasized different sets of crucial religious and political themes over time?
- 5 Has Archbishop Tutu emphasized different sets of crucial religious and political themes in the presence of different audiences?
- 6 Has Archbishop Tutu emphasized different sets of crucial religious and political themes in violent versus non-violent contexts?

These questions called for further theological questions, namely: If there is evidence of different sets of crucial religious and political themes over time and in the presence of different audiences, what is the reason for this from a theological point of view? Furthermore, what is Tutu's theological stance on violence if there is proof of different sets of crucial religious and political themes in violent versus non-violent contexts?

In order to answer these questions, we set out to subject a number of sermons and public speeches, given over time, to different audiences, in the context of violent and non-violent situations, to so-called qualitative analysis. For information on the selection of the sermons and speeches, as well as the date and circumstances in which they were spoken and written, see Table 5. Both the principles and the practices of the method of qualitative analysis as well as its application to content analysis will be introduced in *Appendix 1* with a view to introducing readers and students to this method.

Next the results of these analyses will be presented in *Chapter 3* providing answers to the descriptive empirical questions stated above. We will also interpret

the results theologically in order to understand and explain some aspects of Tutu's theological thinking.

Knowing that the result of an important study in Germany on political preaching has shown that the communicative culture of this kind of preaching is authoritarian, we analysed the sermons and speeches to seek an answer to the question of the communicative style of Desmond Tutu. The result of this research is reported in *Chapter 4*.

An important issue for everyone who communicates a message is the question of how Bishop Tutu succeeded in motivating people to act in the way they acted to contribute to the struggle for liberation in an effective way. This study is discussed in *Chapter 5*.

South Africa and many other countries are faced with the challenge of liberation from socio-economic conditions which dehumanize people. Based on the insights we gained from Desmond Tutu's approach, some concrete guidelines on prophetic preaching with a view to liberation from such conditions are given in *Chapter 6*.