jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Reconciliation

Socio-Political Dimensions

Volume 6 No.1 January 2003

Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Jnanadeepa (="Light of Wisdom" pronounced as *Jñānadīpa*) is a biannual interdisciplinary journal of religious studies from an Indian Christian perspective. It is closely associated with Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Pune 411014, India.

Jnanadeepa is published biannually, in January and July. Views expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the editors. Manuscripts submitted for publication should be original and cannot be returned (writers' style sheet is available on request); they could be sent (preferrably as a text or RTF file) in a computer diskette or through E-mail as file attachment.

All **correspondence** (requests for subscription, manuscripts, books for review – two copies, please – exchange copies of journals, advertisements, etc.) to:
The Editor, *Jnanadeepa*, Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune 411014, India Tel (office): +91-20-7034968, (res): +91-20-7034169, 7034497 Fax: +91-20-7034801
E-mail:<kurien@jesuits.net> <jdv@vsnl.com>

Subscriptions could be sent from India either by Money Order or Demand Draft.From foreign countries International Money Order or Crossed Cheque is preferred. From Commonwealth countries British Postal Order is preferred. All payments are to be made in the name of ***Jnanadeepa Journal.***

Typeset & print: JDV Computer Centre
Publisher: Kurien Kunnumpuram for Jnana Deepa Publications.
ISSN: 0972-3331

Subscription Rates

Country	*One year*	*Three years*
India	Ind. Rs. 80	Ind. Rs. 200
SAARC Countries	Ind. Rs.140	Ind. Rs. 400
Other Countries (Surface Mail)	US $ 16	US $ 45
Other Countries (Air Mail)	US $ 20	US $ 55
Institutional Rate	US $ 40	US $ 110
Personal Life Subscription	Rs 3,000(India)	US $ 350(Foreign)

Jnanadeepa:
Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Vol. 6 No. 1 January 2003

Contents

Editorial

Today we live in a world where there is growing violence whether it be perpetrated by the so-called terrorists or those who oppose them. Faced with this conflictual situations humans wonder if there is a way out of this spiral of violence.

It is in this context that we see a ray of hope emerging from the recent developments in South Africa. After the demolition of the hated apartheid, the people of South Africa set out on a journey of national reconciliation. This novel experiment in socio-political management seems to hold a promise of peace for people everywhere in the world. That is why we have chosen as the theme of this issue of *Jnanadeepa:* **Reconciliation: Socio-Political Dimensions.**

The first article of this issue discusses at some length the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* set up in South Africa to bring about national reconciliation. The author inquires into the nature and functioning of this commission and points out its positive achievements as well as its inadequacies. He then reflects on the relevance of this experiment for us in India today.

A second article develops a Gandhian perspective on reconciliation. The author traces the significant and prophetic role Gandhi played in bringing about reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims during the dark and violent days of the partition of India. He also calls attention to the spiritual strength that Gandhi drew from religion.

Then there is an article on forgiveness written from the perspective of women. The author points how forgiveness is often prematurely and inappropriately expected of women who have been victims of rape and battering. She describes how rape and battering cause traumatic suffering to the victims. In its pastoral approach to these victims, the church should make it clear that what has happened in unjust and so unacceptable and stand for a reconciliation based on justice for the victims. It should also learn to respect women's body-right as well as their right to be concerned about their own well-being. Only if the church fulfils these conditions has it got any right to ask women who are victims of such crimes to forgive their perpetrators.

There is an article which brings out the socio-political implications of the sacrament of reconciliation. The author points out how right from the early days of the church the social and communitarian dimensions of this sacrament has been emphasised. In fact the healing of community relationships that were broken along with a conversion of heart towards God was the primary reason for celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation.

Included in this issue is an interview with Mr. Tushar Gandhi, the grandson of the Mahatma. Tushar Gandhi advocates interreligious dialogue and collaboration to usher in a bright future for our country. He believes that religion cannot be delinked from politics because it is connected with very thing human. What he finds reprehensible is playing politics by using religion.

There are three articles on violence in this issue though which written for the last issue were kept back for technical reasons. The first of these looks upon September Eleven as a metaphor of tragedy and transgression. It suggests that in order to move away from war and violence we have to give up the exploitative myth which lays stress on 'doing' on mastery. Instead we need to adopt an explorative myth which emphasizes 'discovery' and is open to mystery. Peace is in the last analysis a gift given to those who are open to the way of the Spirit.

The second article examines the relation between religion and violence and comes to the conclusion that most of the violence in the world is caused not by religion but by the nation-state. He also show s why and how religious discourse is used to legitimise the violence perpetrated by other agencies. The third article is a moral theological reflection on violence. After showing that violence is largely the result of injustice, the author pleads for a culture of non-violence and prudent pacifism as a viable Christian option.

There is finally an article on Regional Councils. After showing how regional councils significantly contributed to the growth and vitality of the Church in the first millennium, the author asks us not to look at them as museum pieces of merely historical interest. Not should we try to reproduce them in precisely their former shapes. Rather they offer possibilities of adaptation and creativity, just as they were adaptable and creative in their own day.

It is our fond hope that the readers will find this issue of *Jnanadeepa* with a variety of articles interesting and enlightening.

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ
Editor

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 5-24

Reconciliation The South African Experience and Its Relevance for India

Anthony da Silva SJ
Dept. of Social Sciences, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune

Abstract: Basing himself on the South African experience of apartheid and on the Truthand Reconciliation Commission, the author proposes a model for India to foster communal harmony and reconciliation. The article is both experiential and relevant for our times.

Keywords: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, apartheid, violence, reconciliation, South Africa.

On February 11, 1990, at 4.00 p.m. Nelson Mandela, the Black leader of the African National Congress (ANC), was finally released after 27 years in jail. On that day Mandela walked into freedom for the first time in his entire life. He saw his mission as one to build a new South Africa where peoples of all races and religions would live in peace and equality. But he was also aware of the history of violence against and oppression of his Fellow-Black-South Africans by the White minority Government. Torn between calls for revenge and yearnings for peace, he opted decisively for peace through reconciliation. His colleague and fellow-freedom fighter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, supported him strongly and articulated the same vision when he said, "there is no future without forgiveness."

In 1995 in pursuance of this vision of a new South Africa, the Parliament created the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC). Its principal task was to bring healing to the peoples of this "new" nation by using the weapon of "truth."

This article will analyse the make-up and functioning of the TRC and conclude with a few reflections on the relevance of the reconciliation message for India.

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?

The TRC was born in 1995 out of an urgent need in South Africa to unite and reconcile its Black, White and Coloured (Asian) peoples. The then South African Government of National Unity, made up of the predominantly Black African National Congress (ANC) and the minority White Nationalist Party (NP) passed the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Bill in Parliament. The passage of this Bill enabled the Government to form the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the explicit mandate to heal and reconcile the whole nation. As Cheryl de la Rey says, "Four keywords encapsulate the objectives of the TRC: truth, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation" (de la Rey 2001:253).

Nelson Mandela, the Black leader who headed the ANC, was acutely aware that if South Africa did not go down the path of reconciliation it would be engulfed by a bloodbath of revenge and hatred for the former White rulers of the Apartheid regime. However, a significant majority of the NP was pressing for legislation that would grant full legal amnesty to the former White rulers, rather than talk of reconciliation with a threat of prosecution lurking in the background. Finally, a compromise was struck, the outcome of which was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In order to be able to deal with this amnesty demand while at the same time safeguarding the truth and justice aspects, the TRC formed three working committees: The Committee on Human Rights Violations, the Committee on Amnesty and the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation of Victims.

The Committee on Human Rights Violation was aimed specifically at the needs of the victims. It had to establish the identity of the victims of human rights violations, record their allegations, and seek the names of those responsible for these violations. Only violations committed between March 1, 1960 and May 10, 1994 were admissible by the committee. The second committee, namely the Amnesty Committee, had to consider every case of those applying for amnesty. Through public hearings and in accordance with the stringent norms drawn up for amnesty by the committee, it was to scrutinize applications and accept or reject these for

amnesty. So, in spite of the earlier demand of the NP for a blanket amnesty for all human rights violations, the TRC conceded to amnesty only to political crimes and under certain conditions. The main condition was that those seeking amnesty had to give a full and public disclosure of their actions to the Committee, which in turn would deliberate and decide on the merits of the petition for amnesty. The third committee, namely the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation of Victims, had to decide on policy for awarding reparations and rehabilitation to victims of violations and violence.

The TRC did not follow wholly a judicial process since it could not prosecute or sentence persons. However, it did function as a judicial body in so far as it could investigate allegations, cross-examine the witnesses and grant amnesty to perpetrators of political crime.

The Objectives of the TRC

At the very outset it should be stated that the TRC was a source of confusion for many, especially for the victims of violence who now sought justice. They felt that this talk of amnesty robbed them of justice; they feared that the perpetrators of violence would be getting away lightly, thanks to the amnesty arrangement by the TRC.

However, the vision of the TRC was driven by the interim Constitution of the State of South Africa. The Final report of the TRC states clearly that:

> The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society... These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation, a need for *ubuntu (humaneness)* but not victimization. In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past...(TRC Report: Ch. 5, Intro.).

As is obvious, the overarching mandate given to the TRC by Parliament was the promotion of national unity and reconciliation.

Cheryl de la Rey succinctly presents the objectives of the TRC in the following words:

§ To establish as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights committed during the years of apartheid.

§ To facilitate the granting of amnesty to persons who make a full disclosure of all relevant facts relating to acts with a political objective.

§ To establish and make known the fate of victims, restore their human and civil dignity by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations, and make recommendations on reparation measures in respect of the violations.

§ To compile a comprehensive report of the activities and findings of the TRC together with recommendations of measures to prevent future violations of human rights. (253)

Some Characteristics of the TRC

The TRC had some unique characteristics, which made it both novel as well as controversial. We shall highlight some of these characteristics: a) its public nature; b) its functioning through the three committees; c) its permeating philosophy of *ubuntu;* d) its concept of restorative justice; e) its methodology of "telling one's story;" f) its quest for truth; g) its the provision of amnesty;

a) Its Public Nature

The Commission was open to public participation as well as scrutiny. The 17 TRC commissioners appointed by the President were women and men acceptable to the population. They were of various races and both genders. These persons did not have a high political profile but had high credibility in the community. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "an almost universally acceptable choice and a person of impeccable credentials," (Smith 1997:23), was the chairperson.

Since the hearings were open, many people inside as well as outside South Africa became involved in the proceedings. People were confronted with:

Vivid images on their television screens or on the front pages of their newspapers. People saw, for example, a former security police officer demonstrating his torture techniques. They saw weeping men and women asking for the truth about their missing loved ones. The media also helped generate public debate on central aspects of South Africa's past and raise the level of historical awareness. The issues that emerged as a consequence helped the nation to focus on values central to a healthy democracy: transparency, public debate, public participation and criticism (TRC Report: no. 5).

b) Its Functioning through the Three Committees

As mentioned above, although the committees had clearly spelt out goals, they still seemed contradictory to large sections of the population. The Commission's report states:

Many participants, however, saw a contradiction between the work of the Human Rights Violations Committee, which devoted its time and resources to acknowledging the painful experiences of victims of gross violations of human rights, and the work of the Amnesty Committee, which freed many perpetrators of these violations from prosecution (and from prison) on the basis of full disclosure. ...This tension was deepened by the fact that the Amnesty Committee was given powers of implementation, while the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee could, by and large, only make recommendations. Perpetrators were granted freedom. Victims were required to wait until Parliament had accepted or rejected the recommendation of the Commission. (TRC Report: nos. 8&9).

c) Its Permeating Philosophy of *Ubuntu*

The concept of *ubuntu* (humaneness) seems to have played a significant role in the very conception of the TRC. *Ubuntu*

Which derives from the Xhosa expression *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye Bantu (*People are people through other people"), holds that humanity, the common possession of the entire people, is diminished when even one individual is lost to inhumanity. African jurisprudence is restorative rather than retributive, Tutu explains, because *ubuntu* teaches that the dignity of one is linked to the dignity of all.(Appleby 2000:199).

Furthermore, in the words of the Constitutional Court Judge O'Regan:

> ...Apartheid was a denial of a common humanity. Black people were refused respect and dignity and thereby the dignity of all South Africans was diminished. The new Constitution rejects the past and affirms the equal worth of all South Africans. Thus, recognition and protection of human dignity is the touchstone of the new political order and is fundamental to the new Constitution. (TRC Report n. 81).

These quotations indicate clearly the permeating influence of the concept of *ubuntu*, which is characteristic of the South African culture. It stresses very much the commitment to respect human life and dignity. Moreover, justice is presented as restorative rather than retributive, though the latter is what we are more acquainted with and practise through our judicial systems.

d) Its concept of Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice emphasizes the "restoring of relationships" between victims and offenders and between offenders and the communities. Also the human and civil dignity of the victims was to be restored. One such way this was done by the Commission was by granting victims an opportunity to relate their own accounts of violations of which they were victims. In marked contrast to retributive justice, the healing process is highlighted between humans, since the offences are against fellow human beings.

Also, the stress is on reparation rather than retaliation. Reparation could take the form of community projects like providing housing, employment...etc to the victims. Such a process is also thought to restore relationships and not merely pay back dues to the victims.

Whereas traditional retributive justice does not concern itself necessarily with resolving the conflict, restorative justice would encourage victims, offenders and the community to be directly involved in conflict resolution. State and legal professionals are there to facilitate the process and not take it over.

It should also be said that in no way would the very large numbers of victims have received justice through the normal judi-

cial system. In most cases the lack of sufficient evidence, the unavailability of witnesses, the definite identity of the perpetrators etc. would stymie their legal and civil claims in the courts of law. However, the Commission's process of restorative justice did meet the human and emotional needs of the victims in large numbers even while falling short sometimes of addressing all the legal claims.

e) Its Methodology of "telling one's story"

"Telling one's own story" was the primary means for victims as well as offenders to come to terms with their past. Since it was done in the public forum it had the psychological effect of a "catharsis." For victims, it meant sharing their burdens, doubts and sufferings with their communities and the nation at large. For offenders, it was a freeing experience from the burdens of guilt and an opportunity to seek reconciliation and forgiveness. For both, it was an occasion to come face to face and reach out to one another in an effort to bring healing and closure. As Botman described it:

> Victims and perpetrators and those who thought that they were just innocent bystanders, now realize their complicity and have an opportunity to participate in each other's humanity in story form (Botman 1996: 37).

Michael Lapsley, himself a victim of a letter bomb attack in South Africa, confirms the immense value of story-telling as a method of healing. He gave personal testimony at the TRC and now conducts healing workshops for suffering South Africans; he describes the value of storytelling thus:

> The essence of our methodology is storytelling in the context of journey – storytelling that encourages letting go, the acknowledgement of what is destructive because of what has happened to us. To use a health-related image, you take the bandages off the wounds. By looking at them, you're also cleaning them before fresh bandages are put back on. That happens through the process of storytelling. (Lapsley, 2001: 10).

f) Its quest for Truth

While it is fairly obvious that the quest for truth was the driving force of the TRC, queries about: what truth, whose truth and the

like, kept overshadowing the work of the Commission. For functional purposes the TRC came up with four notions of truth: i) factual truth ii) narrative truth iii) social truth iv) restorative truth.

i) Factual Truth

> The Commission was required to take into account factual and objective information and evidence in the course of gathering or receiving information. Details of what happened to whom, where, when and how were carefully documented and extensive verification processes were also put in place. Furthermore, the Commission studied underlying patterns of violence in order to make inferences and interpret the extensive data it had gathered. Factual truth contributed importantly to countering the disinformation that the Government and others had widely circulated in the past and had been accepted as truth by the public.

ii) Narrative Truth

Archbishop Tutu is quoted in the TRC Report as saying:

> This Commission is said to listen to everyone. It is therefore important that everyone should be given a chance to say his or her truth as he or she sees it... (TRC Report).

In the South African cultural context where oral tradition has great value, the process of story-telling was particularly important. In fact, this was considered a unique feature of the TRC when compared to truth commissions elsewhere in the world. There was recognition that in this method of story-telling there was also healing for the community. Hence, the stories were not presented as arguments in the courts of law but as personal narratives, which were more evocative than accusatory.

Thus, a narrative truth was created which also contributed to the memory bank of the nation for generations to come. This process of restoring and enriching the collective national memory connected with the years of violence and brutality was reinforced and strengthened. Many others could participate and share in these experiences of fellow South Africans.

iii) Social Truth

Social truth has been defined as "the truth of experience that is established through interaction, discussion and debate." Sometimes also referred to as "dialogue truth" its goal was to transcend the past divisions and listen carefully to the complex motives and viewpoints of those involved. Hence, the TRC took pains to invite:

> People from all walks of life to participate in the process, including faith communities, the South African National Defence Force, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties. The public was engaged through open hearings and the media. The Commission itself was also subjected to constant public scrutiny and critique. (TRC Report).

The "dialogue truth" also brought in a culture of transparency after years of oppressive White rule where disinformation and untruths were the order of the day. Furthermore, democracy and people's participation in the process of discovering truth became strengthened and led to affirming human dignity and integrity, one of the objectives of the TRC.

iv) Restorative Truth

Restorative truth sought to place facts and their meaning within the context of relationships between humans and in the context of relationships between the State and its citizens. It sought to go beyond mere facts by initiating a healing process and restoring relationships. It was not enough to merely document what had happened. What was needed was to establish a truth that would contribute to the reparation of the damage of the past and make provisions to prevent the recurrence of something similar in the future.

Restorative truth also emphasized the role of "acknowledgement." Acknowledgement meant placing information that is known on public, national record. As the report states:

> Acknowledgement is an affirmation that a person's pain is real and worthy of attention. It is thus central to the restoration of the dignity of victims" (TRC Report).

g) Its Provision of Amnesty

This provision proved to be most difficult and troubling to many, especially to some of the victims. Many thought that the offenders were getting off lightly. It seemed that all they were required to do was own up to their misdeeds of the past in public and in turn receive amnesty, namely, protection from any future prosecution in the courts of law. However, the matter was not that simple. The Amnesty Committee had worked out stringent conditions and criteria for the granting of amnesty. (TRC Report). Nevertheless the perception continued among many that justice was being delayed for the victims while amnesty was granted more readily to the offenders. Furthermore, some thought that amnesty pointed to a failure to respect the suffering of the victims, while encouraging a culture of impunity for the offenders. All of this indicates the delicate balancing act the Committee had to perform between the need for justice to the victims of past abuse and the need for reconciliation in order to build a new South African society. In fact, the post-amble of the Constitution stated this thinking quite clearly:

> In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction (of society), amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past. (TRC Report).

Thus, the Commission seemed determined to foster the culture of restorative justice while not denying that the customary model of retributive justice would also play a role in South African society, particularly in crimes of a non-political nature. The provision of amnesty and the concept of restorative justice set the stage for the process of reconciliation and forgiveness so much desired by the Parliament of the country.

Reconciliation: A Goal as well as a Process

The ultimate goal of the TRC was reconciliation in the South African society. However, it felt that it should give equal importance to the process that was intended to lead to the goal. Hence, as we have seen above, the process was made transparent, participative and inclusive. It was envisioned that these ingredients would initiate and ultimately help the nation to arrive at reconciliation.

The TRC's Understanding of Reconciliation

The primary understanding of the TRC's notion of reconciliation was its restorative and relational nature. (Tavuchis, 1991). In other words, human relationships between communities and between the State and the people needed to be restored. Reconciliation, which means "to make compatible or to bring harmony," also included concepts of forgiveness and reconstruction of society. But the TRC did not enter into finer distinctions between forgiveness and reconciliation, nor did it permit itself to be totally guided by the Christian notion of reconciliation. It insisted that reconciliation for the TRC remained in the political realm of nation building within the democratic framework of society. (TRC Report). Such a nuanced position was taken out of respect for South African society; while the majority of its citizens are followers of Christianity the nation remains multi-religious and pluri-cultural.

Moreover, the TRC was careful not to equate reconciliation with forgiveness. Forgiveness was viewed as a pre-requisite to reconciliation. Also, forgiveness was not to be associated with the simplistic platitude of "forgive and forget." Rather the TRC's emphasis was on "remember and forgive." The memories of the past sufferings and injustices were precious and to be publicly shared and safeguarded in the treasury of national memories. These could be then re-visited by future generations so that they remember never to repeat this history of violence and injustice. As da Silva says elsewhere, "it is only in remembering that we can call up the courage to forgive." (da Silva, 2001).

Different levels of Reconciliation

Since reconciliation was a process as well as a goal, it permeated the process at different levels. The Commission mentions five levels at which reconciliation was mediated: a) at the level of confronting factual and painful truth; b) at the level of victims and perpetrators; c) at the community level; d) at the national level; e) at the reparation and reconstruction level.

a) At the level of confronting factual and painful truth

Often victims felt a sense of 'closure' when they were provided with some definitive and conclusive evidence about previously considered open-ended cases. However, the reconciliation of victims with their own pain may not have always been smooth or rapid given the complexity of the emotional situation. At times perpetrators too found it hard to be reconciled with factual truth and would go into a denial mode, while at other times their acceptance of the truth relieved them of a lot of guilt and put them firmly on the road to reconciliation.

b) At the level of victims and perpetrators

Victims often felt the need to know whom to forgive and asked that their perpetrators come forward. Father Michael Lapsley, who lost both arms and an eye in a near fatal security police parcel bomb attack, told the Commission: "I need to know who to forgive in order to endeavour to do so." Similarly, a white woman, Beth Savage, seriously injured in a bomb attack carried out by a black liberation organization, said at the hearing: "this experience has enriched my life. I want to meet the perpetrator so that I can forgive him and that he might forgive me."

In another case, one of the policemen involved in the abduction and murder of a black activist, Mathew Goniwe, asked for a chance to meet with the family. After more than four hours of tense discussions the son of Mathew Goniwe forgave his father's killer and embraced him. (Smith 1997). But there were also instances when meetings between victims and perpetrators did not result in reconciliation and may in fact have led to alienation.

c) At the community level

There were violations of human rights also between and within communities. Internal divisions led to conflicts between young and old, men and women, as well as between ethnic and racial groups. It would seem that a culture of violence had penetrated most communities and scores were sought to be settled secretly and with immediacy. The Commission for its part tried to assist in bringing reconciliation to such community problems. However, it would seem

that the predominant focus of the Commission was to bring reconciliation in the conflict between the majority Black community and the minority but very powerful White community.

d) At the national level

The TRC, through the very process of reconciliation it adopted, brought about a new culture of transparency and democracy at the national level. Such a culture facilitated the reaching of the goal of reconciliation at least in so far as a bloodbath between the Blacks and the Whites was prevented. The Commission also sought to restore the dignity of the victims of oppression while restoring confidence in State institutions. These measures made reconciliation a tangible and visible outcome for the nation as a whole.

e) At the reparation and reconstruction level

The concern that reconciliation should impact the disadvantaged of the nation in the form of reparation and reconstruction was predominant in the working of the TRC. However, it seems that due to a scarcity of financial and other resources in the country, the committee on Reparation of the TRC could not quite meet the expectations of the victims and the marginalized in society. There seems to have been a higher level of disappointment here which no doubt undermined to some extent the reconciliation process.

The road to reconciliation for the majority of South Africans means both material reconstruction and the restoration of human dignity. This would imply heavy financial investments by State institutions in upgrading and improving the lot of the ghetto dwellers and slum residents. The task is enormous and maybe the goal of reconciliation has to be viewed as a long-term goal that may span several decades and generations. But the TRC has set the process in motion and the fall-out in terms of healing and restoring of relationships cannot be belittled or underestimated.

Nevertheless, the TRC's partial failure to meet some of the high expectations of reparation and reconstruction on the part of those who came forward and told their story has raised the question of the relationship between truth, justice and reconciliation.

An Evaluation of the TRC

South Africa's unique experiment with truth had some very laudable results while at the same time falling short of its lofty goals of national reconciliation and unity. The TRC's major achievement was that it got the truth out and into the public forum where ordinary women and men of South Africa eke out a living. The voiceless of centuries suddenly were given their voice back and people were listening. As an elderly man in Soweto township said, "When my tormentor tortured me at John Vorster Square, he sneered, 'Shout your lungs out. Nobody will ever hear you.' But at long last people are listening" (Times of India Dec. 11, 2000, 4-5).

The oral tradition of South Africa of telling stories contributed greatly to enriching the national memory bank. Testimonies heard from approximately 21,400 people and running into 5 volumes have been carefully documented and are available to the citizens of the country as well as the world, on the World Wide Web. This is a monumental tribute to the countless victims of the obnoxious Apartheid system that came to be a way of life for centuries in South Africa. Moreover the philosophy of *Ubuntu* and that of 'forgive but remember' was reinforced by the truth ferreted out by the TRC.

Did the truth contribute to national reconciliation as hoped for? This is a debatable question at best. It seems that it did contribute much to personal healing for many thousands of victims and their families. The psychological leap from personal catharsis to national reconciliation is both long and arduous. In addition, it would also seem that Whites participated less than Blacks in telling their story, thus leaving a significant social cleavage in place, in spite of the vision of reconciliation for all South Africans. At least it could be said that the process of reconciliation has begun and now there is no looking back for this young nation.

The question of amnesty for the perpetrators continues to trouble many in South Africa especially those of the victims who feel that in the event justice has been bypassed. This in spite of the fact that the TRC was extremely careful not to accept readily amnesty petitions; besides, it had put in place stringent conditions for approval of such petitions. Maybe the amnesty arrangement would have drawn

less criticism had the reparation and rehabilitation project moved ahead with vigour and commitment. But as mentioned earlier, the paucity of funds and other resources hampered the State's contribution to the march for reconciliation. Understandably, the victims grew disillusioned and in some cases became downright cynical since they could not see any tangible benefits flowing from telling the story of truth.

Now with hindsight it would seem that unless the three committees had worked at the same pace and in much greater tandem the dream of moving from truth to reconciliation was bound to remain elusive. As pastor Piet Meiring, one of the Commissioners of the TRC said:

> Over the last few years, we have produced something of the truth. But we were naïve to think that if truth were brought in through the front door, reconciliation would slip in from the back. Reconciliation only comes hand-in-hand with justice and reparation – and that involves decisions about land, privileges. Reconciliation, we need to realize, does not come cheap. (Times of India, December 11, 2000, 4-5).

Reconciliation: Its Relevance for India

India has a centuries-old tradition of non-violence thanks to its sages and sacred scriptures. Paradoxically, the country has also been racked with wars, communal violence and riots, inter-caste and inter-ethnic conflicts. One wonders why has the philosophy of non-violence not led to a practice of reconciliation in our land? For a brief while, while the nation struggled for its independence under the leadership of the Mahatma, it seemed that reconciliation was both possible and real. But after winning the trophy of independence the practice of non-violence became a memory of the distant past. For Gandhi, non-violence was a cherished belief and a way of life, but for many of his supporters it seemed a calculated strategy to outwit the British.

Rajmol.an Gandhi in his book, *Revenge & Reconciliation,* thinks that while reconciliation is relevant to India, it has remained elusive through most of its history. He says:

> On the key question (of reconciliation), we found that despite a long line of valiant proponents the heterodoxy of reconciliation did not become a dominant Indian or South Asian trait.... revenge was found alive and well in South Asia.... Over and over again, our survey revealed the destructive role played in South Asian history by a habit of distrust and an unwillingness to come together. (1999: 392).

Truth and Reconciliation in the Indian Context

As we have seen in the analysis of the South African experience there can be no reconciliation without truth. But for truth to be manifested it is necessary that there is the goodwill for dialogue, story-telling and the sharing of experiences with fellow citizens in the nation. This process seems not to have been attempted nationally at least since India's Independence in 1947. On the contrary, the trauma of the Partition of the nation, the subsequent wars with Pakistan and the numerous riots between Hindus and Muslims to this day seem to tilt more on the side of amnesia rather than remembering. The tendency towards amnesia leaves bleeding wounds in the hearts of the victims and a haughty arrogance among the perpetrators. In fact, perpetrators of communal violence are rarely if ever punished in India. Enquiry commissions write lengthy reports only to find them buried away in the cupboards of ineffective bureaucrats anxious to curry favour with their corrupt political masters. There is no better insurance for the recurrence of the cycle of violence than to brush under the carpet the untold stories of pain and suffering.

Furthermore, since murder and violence in riots seem to be decriminalized and prosecutions minimized, the savagery of fresh atrocities keeps reaching new heights each time. The most recent conflagration in Gujarat in the year 2002 points to the sophistication and cold blooded manner of executing death and destruction on helpless victims. The undue haste to declare "normalcy" after the mayhem and the speedy closing down of relief camps in Gujarat are hardly signals for the triumph of truth and reconciliation.

A tradition of demonizing the "other" seems strongly inculcated in some of the oral traditions in the country. Thus the

Muslim and the Christian are readily branded as foreigners, whose loyalty to the country is suspect; similarly Hindus are characterized as being idol worshippers. Such negative characterizations and attribution of stereotypes prejudice the discourse between members of communities and serve only to perpetuate suspicion and hatred. So long as the discourse reinforces negative emotions and images of the "other" it is well nigh impossible to initiate a more constructive dialogue along the lines of truth and reconciliation.

In more recent times scholars like T.N. Madan (1992) and Ashis Nandy (1992) have been analysing whether the very concept of secularism embedded in our Constitution as a safeguard against interreligious violence in the country, is itself party to this violence and resistant to reconciliation. Their basic argument is that the modern, western concept of secularism, which separates religion from public life and politics, is simply alien to our cultural experience where religion and all significant expressions of life co-mingle. Therefore, secularism, which is presented as a panacea for religious intolerance, ends up becoming vulnerable to the charge of intolerance towards 'religionists' In other words; it becomes an ideology of intolerance of religion in public life, in a country where such a distinction is at best ephemeral. Further, these scholars claim that tolerance is far better articulated and practised through Indian religious traditions than through an alien and culturally impoverished western concept of secularism. In a similar vein, da Silva in another article also concludes that:

> Indian secularism, the usually proposed antidote to communalism, seems to have failed to check the growth of communalism. (da Silva 1999: 85).

The South African vision of reconciliation drew its inspiration from its own ancient traditions of *Ubuntu*. It would seem that too contributed to its success and easy acceptance by the people. It could well be that we have failed to experience significant levels of tolerance and reconciliation in modern India because we may have also failed to return to our religio-cultural roots and replace secularism with a more proactive Indian vision of tolerance and reconciliation. After all, some of the most tolerant figures in Indian history from the Buddha, to Ashoka, to Akbhar and more recently to Mahatma Gandhi,

all drew their inspiration for tolerance not by denying their religious traditions but by publicly affirming their religious values.

Prospects for Reconciliation

While on the one hand we do not have ready evidence of the kind the TRC was able to generate in South Africa regarding reconciliation, yet our daily experience of living in a multi-cultural and multi-religious India belies the thesis that reconciliation is elusive. So what could be going on in the psyche of the Indians when confronted by violence and injustice? Could it be that their thoughts and feelings are more attuned to revenge rather than violence? While the analysis of wars and communal riots tends to point to a preponderance of evidence in the direction of revenge rather than reconciliation, we also see examples of humanitarian interventions and people coming together to build rather than destroy.

It may well be that the prospects for reconciliation are a lot brighter in rural and peasant India than in its rapidly modernizing cities. One hears only rarely of communal riots in rural India where men and women of different religions live rather peacefully alongside one another. The ethos of reconciliation seems more prevalent in these situations, and conflicts are resolved with less recourse to violence and mayhem. In contrast, urban India with its compulsions of modernization, the strains of reclaiming one's socio-religious identity and the anxieties of eking out a living, pre-dispose the average urbanite to respond to crisis with aggression and anger. In addition, manipulations by political powers of people and situations make reconciliation an unattractive alternative when compared to the speedier solutions delivered via riots, lootings and mayhem. It would seem that there is the potential for reconciliation though no Government to date has seriously pursued such a course of action after any of the nation's more conspicuous riots. The recent riots of Gujarat are only the latest example.

As stated earlier no reconciliation is possible without truth being shared by its people. Hopes for reconciliation therefore soar when one reads about the *Partition Project* initiated by the political psychologist, Ashis Nandy. It consists of a team of social scientists who plan to talk to several hundred survivors in India about their

experience of the partition trauma. It is hoped that such an oral history would enrich the collective memory of the nation and start a process of reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims, between India and Pakistan. Nandy believes that by repressing trauma we only sow the seeds for many more communal riots in the future. However, a sharing of memories may also lead to a healing of memories.

Another sign of hope on the Indian horizon is the work of reconciliation spearheaded by Rajmohan Gandhi, the grandson of the Mahatma. In his *Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR)* in Delhi, Gandhi is contacting assiduously people from Pakistan and India in order to establish a dialogue for peace. Similarly, persons from Kashmir and other parts of India are being mobilized to work out some modus for peace and reconciliation in violence-torn Kashmir. Gandhi claims that we generally do not listen to the neighbour's story. The aim of the CDR is to lend an ear to the stories of the pain of the others.

Finally, the story of Hamzabhai, a poor pushcart owner, selling nylon rope, demonstrates that reconciliation is alive and well in the hearts of ordinary women and men. During the Mumbai riots in early 1993, Hamzabhai lost a twenty-five year old son, who had been stabbed. Before dying, the son told the father who his assailants were. The relatives wanting revenge demanded that Hamzabhai tell them the names. Hamzabhai refused. When asked later what motivated his silence, he said, " I did not want another father to go through what I had gone through." Though one part of him urged revenge, Hamzabhai listened rather to the voice of reconciliation.

Reference

Appleby, Scott R.

2000 *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, New York: Rowman &Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Botman, R.H.

1996 Narrative Challenges in a Situation of Transition, in H.R. Botman & R.M. Petersen (Eds.), *To remember and to heal:Theological and psychological reflections on truth and reconciliation,* (p.37). Cape Town: Human & Rosseau.

da Silva, Anthony

1999 "Combatting Communalism in twenty-first Century India" *Jnanadeepa,* Vol. 2, No. 1, 80-87

2001 "Through Non-violence to Truth" In Raymond G. Helmick, S.J. & Rodney L. Petersen (Eds.), *Forgiveness and Reconciliation,* (p.303). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press

De la Rey, Cheryl

2001 "Reconciliation in Divided Societies." In D. Christie, R. Wagner, D. Winter (Eds.), *Peace, Conflict and Violence,* (p. 253). NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gandhi, Rajmohan

1999 *Revenge and Reconciliation,* New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Lapsley, Michael

2001 " South Africa and the Healing of Memories," in *America,* June 18-25, 2001, p. 10.

Madan, T.N.

1992 *Religion in India,* pp. 394-411, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Nandy, Ashis

1992 "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in Veena Das (Ed.), *Mirrors of Violence,* pp. 69-93, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Tim

1997 "A Nation Examines Its Conscience," in *America,* November 8, 1997, p. 23.

Tavuchis, N.

1991 *Mea culpa: A sociology of apology and reconciliation.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

Times of India, The

2000 (December 11), pp 4 & 5.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report

2003 Retrieved from website: http://www.woza.co.za/trc/1chap5.htm This website contains the Five Volumes of the report of the TRC

Article received: January 15, 2003
Approved: January 30,2003
No of words: 6590

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 25-38

Reconciliation A Gandhian Perspective

Subhash Anand
Dept. of Indian Studies, Jnanadeep Vidyapeeth Pune-411014

Abstract: After situating the unimaginable violence during the independence and partition of India, the author traces the significant and prophetic role played by Gandhi in bringing about reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims, which is relevant for our present India. For the establishment of peace, the spiritual strength that Gandhi drew from religions cannot be underestimated.

Keywords: Gandhi, Indian Independence, Partition Hindus, Muslims.

On 9th August 1947, Gandhi arrived in Calcutta "which was in the grip of communal riots" (Gandhi 1959: 20). He believed that "an ounce of practice is worth tons of speeches and writings" (*CWMG* 1958-1984: vol. 89, 31). Hence, he gets in touch with Hindu and Muslim leaders and pleads with them to do their best to restore peace. He walked or drove through the streets of Calcutta in the company of Suhrawardy, the former Prime Minister of Bengal, both appealing to Hindus and Muslims to shun violence and work for peace. Slowly things improved. "After 14th August no disturbances were reported in Calcutta. Gandhi had calmed the storm. The press paid tributes to the magician in loincloth" (Fischer 1982: 392). On the 15th "men and women were going round hand in hand, shouting, `Hindu-Muslim Bhai Bhai'.. People of both communities visited each other's place of worship" (Gandhi 1959: 33). Commenting on this situation Suhrawardy remarked: "What a wonderful result of only one day's penance on the part of the Mahatma. The entire city is peaceful as if nothing had happened" (Gandhi 1959: 31).

A Nine-day Wonder

This peace was very fragile. Soon there were signs of unrest. On the night of 31st August some Muslims were killed. The place where Gandhi was resting was attacked. Soon there was a major conflagration. Gandhi tried to pacify the crowd, which believed that he was sheltering some Muslims. The next morning Gandhi wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel: "What was regarded as a miracle has proved a short-lived nine-day wonder" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 133). After due reflection and prayer he makes a statement to the press on 1st September:

> To put an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work. It certainly did not last night. What my word in person cannot do my fast may. It may touch the hearts of all the warring elements even in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I therefore begin fasting from 8.15 p.m. to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 132).

When a visitor asked him whether his community could offer him some help, Gandhi told him: "As long as I myself do not take any step, I have no right to tender any sort of advice to others" (Gandhi 1959: 70). Many prominent Hindus and Muslims pleaded with Gandhi not to undertake the fast. They were not only anxious about his health but also realized that were he to die hell would be let loose. Gandhi stuck to his conditions: not promises of peace, but the reality of peace. He told them: "Let evil-doers desist from evil, not to save my life, but as a result of a true heart-change" (Pyarelal 1958: 418). Gandhi's well-wishers did their best to give the greatest possible publicity to his fast. Gandhi had begun his fast on 1st September and now it was the 4th. Responding to the plea of the visitors to put an end to his fast, Gandhi put two sets of questions to them:

> (1) Can you in all sincerity assure me that there never will be repetition of trouble in Calcutta? Can you say that there is a genuine change of heart among the citizens so that they will no longer tolerate, much less foster, communal frenzy?.. (2) If trouble breaks out, since you are not omnipotent or even omniscient , would you give your word of honour that you would not live to report failure but lay down your life in the attempt to protect those whose safety you are pledging? (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 152)

Prominent religious leaders gathered together and, after some discussion, drafted a pledge indicating their acceptance of the conditions implied in Gandhi's questions.

> Then the miracle happened. As the hours crept by and slowly life ebbed out of the frail little man on the fasting bed, it caused a deep heart churning in all concerned, bringing the hidden lie to the surface. People came and confessed to him what they would have confided to no mortal ear. Hindus and Muslims combined in an all-out effort to save the precious life that was being offered as ransom for disrupted peace between brother and brother. Mixed processions consisting of all communities paraded through the affected part of the city to restore communal harmony (Pyarelal 1958: 419).

Gandhi ended his fast at 9.15 p.m. on the 4th. Once again something most unexpected happened. "From that day onwards, through the many months when Punjab and other provinces shook with religious massacres, Calcutta and most parts of Bengal remained riot-free. Bengal remained true to its plighted word" (Fischer 1982: 593-94). In this article I try to answer two questions: What was it that made Gandhi's efforts at reconciliation so effective? What is it that we Christians can learn from his experiments and experiences?[1]

Gifting One's Life

In accepting to be a mediator between two warring groups, Gandhi risked his life. Any person belonging to either party could kill him, and thus generate a very tragic outburst of communal violence. When he reached Calcutta he was greeted by an "excited crowd of young men... They shouted: `Why have you come here?'(*CWMG*, vol. 89: 33; footnote 1). Gandhi refused to budge, and told them: "I am going to put myself under your protection. You are welcome to turn against me and play the opposite role if you choose... You can obstruct my work, even kill me. I won't invoke the help of the police" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 33-34). Gandhi, a person "who desires to trust others" (Gandhi 1959: 51), told them that he wished that they all would also have this trust in the others, the more so if the others constitute the majority: "There is no occasion to distrust the majority in either Dominion"(*CWMG*, vol. 89: 13). He had been cautioned by many but he "was unaffected by the warnings" (*CWMG*, vol. 89:

43). While in Calcutta he was living in a Muslim area, and Muslim volunteers were attending to his needs (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 48).

Gandhi valued communal harmony so much that he was prepared to lay down his life for it: "What is the use of my living? If I lack even the power to pacify the people, what else is left for me to do?" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 134). Reconciliation is a process which involves not only our mind but also and much more so our heart. Gandhi fasts in order to "appeal to everybody to search his heart. It should result in all-round purification" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 137). It is possible that people may not be moved by his appeal for peace, but his fast "may touch all the warring elements" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 132). Reconciliation demands action, and so Gandhi tells us that his purpose in fasting "is to purify, to release our energy by overcoming our inertia and mental sluggishness, not to paralyse us or to render us inactive. My fast isolates the forces of evil; the moment they are isolated they die, for evil by itself has no legs to stand upon" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 150).

Gandhi is aware that some consider his fast a pressure tactic. Regarding his fast at Pune with reference to the Communal Award some told him

> that though the amendment [made by Gandhi] was not to their desire, they accepted it for the sake of saving his life... [but Gandhi says] This was wholly a wrong approach... Truth could not be sacrificed even for the sake of saving a life, however precious it was (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 148).

> Some suggested that a photo of Gandhi fasting would help to restore peace. Gandhi objected: "I do not want to terminate my fast by making use of my picture in this way. The fast should end only when the people are convinced that what they have been doing is wrong" (Gandhi 1959: 86). Some Muslim friends told Gandhi: "God forbid, that anything should happen to you. If so, a great catastrophe will befall us." To this Gandhi replied: "You need not explain all this to me" (Gandhi 1959: 87).[2]

Transcending the Past

Reconciliation is possible only if the parties involved are prepared to forgive one another, because very rarely do we have a vio-

lent situation which is fully the responsibility of one party alone. On the other hand if both the parties start justifying themselves and blaming the other, the process will never end, because seldom do we come across persons who are totally 'neutral'. This is even true of people who involved in violence. Gandhi is quite aware of this human reality. He tells the representatives of one party: "It will profit you nothing to remember old wrongs and nurse old enmities" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 34). We need to begin anew, but this is possible only if we "are able to forget the past. We know how all over the world enemies have become fast friends" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 88).

The way Gandhi went about in Calcutta shows how he himself practised what he preached. When the Muslim League decided to observe 16th August, 1946, as the Direct Action Day, violence broke out in Noakhali in Bengal. The then Chief Minister of Bengal, Shaheed Suhrawardy, was held responsible, if not by commission, then at least by omission. As Pyarelal puts it, he "had been sowing the proverbial dragon's teeth" in Bengal (Pyarelal 1958: 36). Manubehn Gandhi reports that some Hindu demonstrators asked Suhrawardy whether he was responsible "for the great massacre of 16th August 1946." First he tried to disclaim total responsibility, but when the demonstrators told him that he was evading the question, he "finally admitted that he alone was responsible..." (Gandhi 1959: 30). Gandhi was informed either verbally or through letters that Suhrawardy "was not to be trusted and that Hindus had suffered a lot during the tenure of his ministry" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 81). Hence when Gandhi co-opts him as his partner in the reconciliatory process, he is fully aware that this was "no small gain" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 34). In doing this Gandhi not only got the support of those Muslims who accepted Suhrawardy as their leader and spokesperson, but also gave a very powerful demonstration of how people of different faith traditions can work together for peace.[3] Moreover, "due to his old association with the Pakistani leaders, Shaheed had a certain initial advantage which he could turn to good account, if he set about the business in the right spirit and in the right way" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 200). Gandhi made Suhrawardy so much part of his involvement in the peace process that were anybody to insult Suhrawardy he would be insulting Gandhi (Gandhi 1959: 29).

In like manner Gandhi wanted to co-opt those Hindu leaders who appeared to the Muslims to be guilty of communal provocation. Gandhi was aware that "everyone suspects the Hindu Mahasabha..." (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 127). Even then when some ministers of West Bengal informed him that they intended to arrest some Hindu Mahasabha leaders, Gandhi replied: "You should not arrest them. Throw the responsibility on their heads. Ask them what they want, peace or riots. Tell them that you want their help. See what reply they give" (Gandhi 1959: 67). In all this Gandhi is inviting all concerned to rely on the deeper powers within us. Hence his plea: "I would appeal to you to have faith, for faith generates faith and suspicion gives rise to suspicion. Keep on strengthening your faith" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 244). Gandhi was appealing to his fellow citizens to work with faith and mutual trust.

Changing the Present

Reconciliation presupposes mutual understanding. For this both the parties need to speak a language that is understood by the other. Hence Gandhi insists that the Muslims "have to make their Urdu simple. Similarly the Hindus will have to make Hindi more simple. Only then can the two communities understand each other" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 1). There is, however, the need for a deeper purification, a purification of the heart. A community, that has discrimination and disdain for others built into it, needs to change. Gandhi reminds the Hindus that "We kept the fifth *varna* segregated from us. We kept their food separate and declared that they could not live in our midst. We decided to treat them as our slaves. Later they turned to Islam" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 263). This also points to the fact that "the Muslims in this country are all our blood brothers... We must consider why they were drawn to Islam" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 263). Hence "the Hindus have to purify themselves by eschewing untouchability and caste differences. Similarly, Muslims have to purify themselves by giving up their hatred of Hindus" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 34). Purification implies a change of attitude towards the other, and hence giving up the belief that the others are always against them. If we consider others to be fifth-columnists, then they too will see us in the same way (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 246). On the contrary, it is very important that both "the partners have one mind and are believ-

ers in ahimsa" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 121). Then the efforts at reconciliation "are bound to succeed" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 121). Their expression of mutual acceptance should not be merely a mask to make Gandhi happy (Gandhi 1959: 38).

We have communal disturbance when two communities begin to use violence against each other. Hence, Gandhi appeals to people who care for him to refuse "to give way to the instincts of revenge and retaliation even if the whole of Calcutta goes mad" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 142). In any case "retaliation is no remedy. It makes the original disease much worse" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 167). The attitude of not seeking revenge is an expression of our deeper selves, since a "true human being is he who does a good turn for evil" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 175). Not only must we not retaliate, but we need to avoid anything that may provoke the other. Hence, the Hindus much avoid playing loud music near the mosques (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 59). The Muslims on their part should realize "the importance of the slogan `Jai Hind'" (Gandhi 1959: 59).

Two social agencies have a very important role in bringing about peace to a disturbed society. The Press needs "to be extra-wise and reticent. Unscrupulousness will act as a lighted match. I hope every editor and reporter will realize his duty to the full" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 131). Gandhi himself is eager "to utilize it [the Press] in the work of Hindu-Muslim unity" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 67). The Police have a very important function in times of communal violence. "They should make no distinction between a Hindu and a Musalman" (Gandhi 1959: 56). The events in Gujerat in the recent past bring home to us very powerfully the significance of what Gandhi is saying.

Gandhi also believed that women need to be motivated to work for communal harmony. His own experience has showed him how effective they can be. Hence, when addressing a meeting of women, he makes this fervent plea:

> All the women who have come here should call on Muslim women. Women can do much work. My grand-daughter was with me in my Noakhali tour. I used to send her to Muslim women daily. It was amazing the way they talked with her. These women used to test her also. Women should work for eradicating untouchability (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 70).

After he had started his fast on 1st September 1947, Gandhi was asked by his friends whether he was right in doing this. They tried to convince him that the riots are the work of some goondas. To this Gandhi replies:

> The conflagration has been caused not by the goondas but by those who have become goondas. It is we who make goondas. Without our sympathy and passive support, the goondas would have no legs to stand on. I want to touch the hearts of those who are behind the goondas (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 132).

He makes similar statements on other occasions too (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 149, 151; Gandhi 1959: 93). Gandhi presents to us his analysis of the situation: 1. People are basically good, but due to some reason they become goondas and take to violence. 2. Often they are instruments used by others who want violence and yet want to be considered good persons. They are "the gentlemen goondas who are the real creators of trouble" (Gandhi 1959: 94). 3. Even when some people inflict violence, the silence of the others amounts to approval. The truth of what Gandhi said over fifty years ago is amply borne out by the violence that followed the Godhra carnage compared with the peaceful situation that prevailed after the terrorist attack on the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar. The seniors of the gentlemen goondas realized that "a repeat of the post-Godhra violence would be disastrous" for the party in power (Malik, Mahurkar & Unnithan 2002: 32 – 39; here p. 35b).

Shaping the Future

What is it that motivates Gandhi to undertake the difficult task of reconciling Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta? He thinks that because it is the "premier city of India"(*CWMG*, vol. 89: 22), "Calcutta is the key to the peace of the whole of Hindustan" (Gandhi 1959: 96). Hence, he claims: "I know I shall be able to tackle the Punjab too if I can control Calcutta" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 133). If in Calcutta the "Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, could work together, it was bound to have effect in East and West Punjab and the work that they would do here would be the work for the whole country" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 123). His faith was confirmed by subsequent events: "the Calcutta happenings had a salutary effect on Bihar" (Gandhi 1959: 46). Just as Calcutta is significant for the whole of India,

so too India is significant for the whole of Asia. "If India fails, Asia dies" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 221). Gandhi even believed that if we, people of different religions, "live and die for India together... the whole world will follow our footsteps" (Gandhi 1959: 57). Hence, "whatever other people may do, let us keep our hearts clean. We must remember that if we do not do this, we shall become monsters. We have to keep our India pure and clean and we must be tolerant" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 243).

Gandhi reminds the people of our land of the important role India played in the past history. "It has been aptly called the nursery of many blended cultures and civilizations. Let India be and remain the hope of all the exploited races of the earth, whether in Asia, Africa or in any part of the world" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 221). When an eighteen-year old youth told him that history proves that Hindus and Muslims cannot live in harmony, Gandhi replied: "I have seen more of history than anyone of you, and I tell you that I have known Hindu boys who called Muslims `uncle'. Hindus and Muslims used to participate in each other's festivals and other auspicious occasions" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 34). But now violent events have tarnished the image of our country. "The glorious land that was India has become a cremation-ground today. It has become that barbarous" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 243). Gandhi tells his audience about the adverse remarks about India made by Winston Churchill on 27th September, 1947, that as a result of the communal violence India would will experience "a retrogression of civilization" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 253). Gandhi pleads with his audience: "You still have sufficient time to reform your ways and prove Mr. Churchill's prediction wrong" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 255). If our nation is to prosper, then "Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis should live as one" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 238).[4] If India is to prosper we need to feel secure. "How can we govern our country if we live in fear?" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 239). This feeling of security must come from the goodwill we have and not from the arms we possess "Arms can never protect anyone" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 240). Mutual trust is an essential dimension of real freedom. "If communal strife spreads over the whole of India, of what use is our freedom?" (Gandhi 1959: 30).

Gandhi's deep desire was "that the State should undoubtedly be secular" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 51). He rejected "the theory that Hin-

dus and Muslims are two separate nations" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 12). Hence, religious affiliation should not be an obstacle to our realizing a secular state. "A nation does not belong to any particular religion or sect. It should be absolutely independent of either religion or sect. Every person should be free to follow the religion of his choice" (Gandhi 1959: 37). Those who rule our nation should be above partisan loyalties. Addressing the people during a prayer meeting, Gandhi said:

> The police must execute their duties properly. They should make no distinction between a Hindu and a Muslim. I have received complaints from the Hindus that Muslim officers do not pay any attention to them, and from Muslims that Hindu officers neglect them. This should not happen (Gandhi 1959: 56).

People of all religious loyalties should be able to live in peace and harmony. Hence, Gandhi wishes that "those who have left their houses [due to fear] must return to them" (Gandhi 1959: 56). Gandhi was also totally against "the exchange of populations" between the two newly formed countries (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 237). If when searching for employment people are guided by communal loyalties, then "they will never be able to rise, nor will they be able to improve their employer" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 58). In like manner "there should be no distinction made on a communal basis in payment of wages" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 58).

There is a deeper reason why people of different faiths need to live in peace and harmony. This is the fruit of authentic religiosity. Gandhi reminds us that the God who dwells in us and the others "is the same" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 242). This is the reason why "Every faith is on its trial in India" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 5). Therefore, "if the Hindu majority treasured their religion and duty, they would be just at all cost" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 61). "Those who are indulging in brutalities are bringing disgrace upon themselves and the religion they represent" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 32). "No religion can be built up in this manner" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 201). More than our religion, it is the humanity we all share that beckons us to be instruments of peace. Gandhi reminds us of this: "But let us learn at least this much, that our religion does not teach us hatred. This is why I would like to call upon you to be human. If we become human, we raise the stock of India. Today we are bringing the country down" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 264).

Accepting Gandhi's Challenge

After his assassination, all over the world people gave expression to their esteem for Gandhi. Albert Einstein said:

> Gandhi has demonstrated that a powerful human following can be assembled not only through the cunning game of the usual political manoeuvers and trickeries but also through the cogent examples of a morally superior conduct of life. In our times of utter moral decadence he was the only statesman to stand for a higher human relationship in the political sphere (Fischer 1982: 587).

As a votary of satyagraha, Gandhi believed that the only way we can help people to change for the better was to appeal to the human depth hidden in each one of us. As Stafford Cripps, an important member of the Labour Party of Britain wrote: "I know no other man of any time or indeed in recent history who has so forcefully and convincingly demonstrated the power of spirit over material things" (Fischer 1982: 22). A person has soul-force to the extent his life embodies the ideal he projects. "Those who seek justice must do justice, must have clean hands" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 189). Efforts at reconciliation will bear no fruit "if the basic honesty of intention on the part of the leaders and the rank-and-file workers is not there" (*CWMG,* vol. 89: 138).

We are living at a time when "fresh violence is inflicted upon individuals and entire peoples, and the culture of death takes hold in the unjustifiable recourse to violence to resolve tensions" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* n. 38; Eng. Trans, Bombay: 2000: 108*).* In this situation "the Church is called to be deeply involved in international and interreligious efforts to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* n. 38; Eng. Trans, Bombay: 2000: 108*).* This is all the more true of the Church in India. She is called to be a sacrament of reconciliation, especially today, when we see so much violence in the name of religion in our land. We are now faced with a question: What is it that we Christians can learn from Gandhi? Like all of us he too had his weaknesses. When the train he was traveling in on his way to Calcutta stopped in a village in Bihar, he found a big crowd waiting to receive his darshan. Many rushed to the window near which Gandhi was standing. As a result there was a stampede. Gandhi "slapped one of them... [but] although Bapu's slap-

ping was due to his uncontrolled anger, the one who received it took it as a blessing from the Mahatma and another person rushed forward to receive a slap on his cheek" (Gandhi 1959: 18). Since the people were convinced of the basic commitment and honesty of Gandhi, they overlooked his shortcomings. Addressing the Royal Empire Society on October 6, 1948 Louis Mountbatten said that Gandhi "was not compared with some great statesman like Roosevelt or Churchill [by Indians]. They classified him simply in their minds with Mohammed and with Christ" (Fischer 1982: 587).

Gandhi saw himself as an instrument in God's hands. "We are mere creatures in God's hand. Only if God helps us can we protect our honour" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 242). He shares his conviction with us: "I do not have any magic wand with me. Nor do I possess a sword. I have only one thing with me, and this is to recite the name of God and work in the name of God" (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 247). Therefore, prayer is a basic element in the process of reconciliation, it being "the very core of the life of man" (Gandhi 1961: vol. 1, 174). Gandhi advises his friends: "Plead with Him, not with man. Plead with Him who brings redemption to the fallen. He is right in our midst. When He is there to protect us, why should we be angry with anyone or be afraid?"(Gandhi 1961: vol. 1, 174). If we honestly do what we can and prayer is part of this struggle then we have good reason to be confident because "God is always on the side of truth" (Gandhi 1961: vol. 1, 234). When people tried to dissuade him from undertaking a fast to resolve the conflict in Calcutta, he answered: "If God wants to make use of me, He will enter the people's hearts and calm them down and preserve my body. I have started the fast only in His name" (Gandhi 1961: vol. 1, 134 & 159).

Gandhi tells us that the *Bhagavad-gita* was for him "an infallible guide of conduct... [his] dictionary of daily reference" (Gandhi 1927-29: 221). He thinks that his approach "represents the true meaning of the Gita" (Gandhi 1961: 256). Inspired by this text, he worked with "single-minded devotion and indifference to all other interests" (Gandhi 1961: vol. 2: 11). This explains why as a mediator Gandhi was acceptable both to the Hindus and the Muslims (*CWMG*, vol. 89: 21-22; Gandhi 1959: 18). If in his peace-efforts he was able to coopt leaders belonging to both the communities, it was precisely

because he was not perceived as a political rival by either of them. Gandhi was first and last a person totally dedicated to peace. In his struggle he was not trying to create a vote bank, but to touch the minds and hearts of people. The *Bhagavad-gita* shows Gandhi "how the principle of conquering hate by love, untruth by truth, can and must be applied" (Gandhi 1961: vol. 2: 310).

As I noted some years ago (Anand 1995: 561-80), many Christians have been very generous in their appreciation of Gandhi. He reminds us of Jesus, the humble servant of all. The Church in India will be able to effectively mediate reconciliation only when she is seen as a community of this kenotic Jesus, relying not so much on institutional power, prestige, status or on money, but imitating Jesus who is among us as one who serves. This will be possible if like Gandhi we become a community of people who are deeply prayerful. This is also emphasised by Pope John Paul II:

> In Asia, home of great religions, where individuals and entire peoples are thirsting for the divine, the Church is called to be a praying Church, deeply spiritual even as she engages in immediate human and social concerns. All Christians need a true missionary spirituality of prayer and contemplation (*Ecclesia in Asia,* no.23, 69).

Endnotes

1. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is the title Gandhi gives to his autobiography.
2. That Mountbatten shared the same sentiment is indicated by the fact that even before a proper inquiry was made, he said that it was a Hindu who shot Gandhi dead. When he was asked by his press attaché how he knew this, he replied: "I don't, but if it really was a Muslim, India is going to live one of the most ghastly massacres the world has even seen." See Larry Collins& Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, London: Collins, 1975, pp. 440-41.
3. For the actual involvement of Suhrawardy in the violence on 16 August, 1946, see R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *Struggle for Freedom* (*The History and Culture of the Indian People*, XI), Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, pp. 746-50.
4. This talk was with refugees from Pakistan, and hence Muslims were not present among them. This may explain why Gandhi did not include them.

References

Anand, Subhash

1995 "Gandhian Satyagraha: A Theological Model for India", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol. 59 (1995), pp. 561-80, here pp. 261-62.

Collins, Larry and Dominique Lapierre

1975 *Freedom at Midnight*, London: Collins.

Fischer, Louis

1982 *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, London: Granada (reprint)

Gandhi, M.K.

1927-1929 *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 14th rep. (no date).

Gandhi, M.K.

1958-1984 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (mentioned as *CWMG*), 90 vols., New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

1961 *In Search of the Supreme*, 3 vols., ed.: V.B. Kher, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, Manubehn

1959 *The Miracle of Calcutta*, trans. Gopalrao Kulkarni, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pb. House.

John Paul II

1999 *Ecclesia in Asia*, and English translation: Bombay: Pauline Pub., 2000.

Majumdar R.C. (ed.)

1969 *Struggle for Freedom* (*The History and Culture of the Indian People*, XI), Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Malik, Ashok, Uday Mahurkar and Sandeep Unnithan

2002 "Terrorism's New Strategy," *India Today*, (October 7, 2002), pp. 32-39, here p. 35b.

Pyarelal

1958 *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Pb. House

Article received: January 12, 2003
Article approved for publication: Jan 26, 2003.
No of words: 5333

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 39-51

The Sacrament of Reconciliation Its Socio-Political Implications

Errol D'Lima SJ
Systematic Theology, JDV, Pune 411014

Abstract: After analysing the dynamics of reconciliation, the author traces the social and communitarian dimensions of the sacrament of reconciliation. Urging us to support initiatives taken in the direction social-political harmony, the author affirms that the communal strife will not prevail!

Keywords: Sacrament of reconciliation, society, community, forgiveness, justice.

During New Testament times, Jesus' message of salvation was stated in the words: "repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1/15). This called for a change of heart, mind and action and was understood as conversion. In time, the defining moment of conversion was identified with the celebration of baptismal initiation symbolizing the forgiveness of sins and insertion into a community of believers in Jesus Christ. The Church was seen to be this community of believers who came together to celebrate the Eucharist and to pray, as we find in 1 Corinthians 11/18 and 14/19. The church community gave its members a continuing sense of Christian identity by the celebration of sacraments in and for the community. Every sacramental celebration—more particularly the sacrament of reconciliation that is in evidence from the second century—reiterated Jesus' message of salvation that called for a continuing process of conversion. Each sacramental celebration highlighted the moment of baptismal initiation once again so that a person could reaffirm his/her deepening relationship to God in and through the Church. At the same time, it expressed the unity that the Christian community experienced in living out the values proclaimed by Jesus in his 'words and deeds, signs and wonders' (DV 4).

When the early Church had to cope with members who had sinned after baptismal initiation, it understood that the unity of believers had been broken when individuals transgressed God's law. The early Church understood sin as an evil that did violence to relationships between persons and the community to which they belonged. Initially, three major areas were identified in which serious sin was recognized: apostasy (one's alienation from the community of faith), adultery (wounding a community relationship established through marriage) and murder (cutting off a person from the community of the living). The healing of community relationships that were broken along with a conversion of heart towards God was the primary reason for celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation.

Being in a relationship with another is the starting point for building up community. Relationship between persons, groups and peoples ensures the building up and preservation of community. The secular state is also a community in which relationships need to be built up and sustained so that the body politic can reflect unity in diversity. The recent past has raised questions about the very possibility of community as envisaged in the Indian Constitution and by the founding fathers of the nation. Will the unity of India be achieved through coercive efforts where one group is subjugated by another, or will it be born through the free choice of persons who actively foster the unity of the Indian polity as an essential condition for their own wholeness?

In understanding the true meaning of sacramental reconciliation, one recognizes specific dynamics in it that bring healing and wholeness to a fractured community. These dynamics are relevant to our situation in India today where a Godhra-type incident as well as the carnage that followed could happen again. The essay begins by tracing the development of the sacrament of reconciliation and noting some of the dynamics it includes. Next, it reflects on these dynamics and their function in building an integrated secular society.

Part I: The Dynamics in Sacramental Reconciliation

In the Christian tradition, religion is seen as expressing a relationship that is lived out between God and his people. This relationship gives the people a special status; they become a nation, a

community that traces its existence to a founding experience in which God is seen making a covenant with them. The Vatican II term 'People of God' that derives from the biblical images found both in the Old Testament (e.g. Ezek. 37/26-27) and the New (e.g. 1 Pet. 2/9-10) calls attention to a people who responded to the call of God and lived according to his will. This response created and shaped the tradition (Judaism) of Israel's people.[1]

1. Reconciliation in the Scriptures

As a community, Israel had its moments of success and failure. The promises of God's fidelity to his people were met often with acts of infidelity and betrayal. Repentance was part of Israel's life for it was reminded of its true vocation: to be a people united in their response to God's promise. The community of Israel acknowledged its sinfulness and performed cultic acts to purify itself from the guilt incurred by sin. While collective celebrations of the people's repentance were observed in the community, the prophets also called on persons to acknowledge and repent of their individual guilt. Repentance brought about a conversion which included a change of heart that showed in a changed way of life.[2] Both the internal conversion of the individual as well as his/her reconciliation to the community featured in overcoming the sin committed by a person.

But to know that an individual had sinned required an externally observable norm, a standard by which his/her actions were seen to be right or wrong. That norm or standard was supplied by the Torah that comprised all the laws, norms and regulations which taught the people of Israel about God's expectations of them. While the most telling part of the Torah is reflected in the instructions that God gave to Moses on Sinai, the Torah as a whole was understood as the ensemble of the different stipulations present in the covenant that God had made with his people. Those who sinned could be forgiven their sins and wrongdoing through different sacrifices or expiatory offerings (Lev. 4-5), yet a change of heart or disposition on the part of the individual was required (Is. 1:18-19; Hos. 12:2-3; Joel 2:13). Breaking God's covenant meant breaking one's relationship with God and, to that extent, resulted in a person's being separated from the community that had agreed to follow God's instructions.

In the New Testament, in his efforts to proclaim the gratuitousness of God's action, Paul views the functioning of the law like that of a thermometer. Just as a thermometer tells us the extent of a fever, so too the law made the people of Israel aware of the enormity of their sinfulness and wrongdoing: "...if it had not been for the law, I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'." (Rom. 7/7) Persons become aware of their wrongdoing and their subsequent alienation from God and their fellow human beings by measuring themselves against a law, a norm, a standard. At the same time, Paul points out that, through their own efforts, such persons are unable to overcome their alienation and be reconciled to God and to each another: This reconciliation takes place through Jesus Christ and continues in his Church: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..." (2 Cor. 5/18) Reconciliation was understood as originating in God's action and not in human endeavour.

2. Reconciliation in the History of the Church

In the early Church, a sinner who sought God's forgiveness approached the Church through the penitentiary. The penitent was barred from sharing in the Eucharist and was officially grouped with those who were excommunicated.[3] Until the penitent was received back into the community, he/she was obliged to perform a penance so that the perfect love of God could grow in his/her heart and repair the moral order that had been broken. In this pattern of forgiveness requiring several steps before the final act of reconciliation, the communitarian dimension was very prominent. However, because of the cumbersome nature of such a celebration and the migration or movement of persons from one place to another, this pattern gradually fell into disuse. Its place was taken by the Celtic pattern of reconciliation where a penitent could be absolved privately in a single ceremony by an ordained minister with faculties. In this substitution, the communitarian dimension of reconciliation became blurred. In spite of initial resistance from the bishops in Europe to this form of forgiveness, private reconciliation gained ground and remained the standard practice in the Church until recently. In the seventies when the post-Vatican II reform of the sacrament of penance took

effect, the community dimension of sacramental reconciliation was given prominence in the second and third modes of celebration. The communitarian aspect appears especially in the celebration of the word of God at the start of the sacramental action.

Private confession, as the Celtic practice of reconciliation was referred to, was seen by the Church as part of spiritual direction. The pursuit of a holy life implied that a person sought instruction from the ministers of the Church to know God's will and be healed when one acted against it. As a result, reconciliation became a private interaction of one person with another and the social dimension of one's relationship to God through the community was practically lost sight of. With the efforts of the scholastics to determine the nature of sacramental causality in the context of the ordained ministry, stress was laid on contrition, confession and satisfaction or penance which were seen as the acts of the individual penitent in the celebration of reconciliation. The ordained minister's function was seen to be that of a judge in the sacrament of 'penance'.[4] (Evidently the role of a judge in a forensic situation and in the confessional is very different. In a court of law, the function of the judge is to decide whether the accused is guilty or not. This is not the function of the minister in the confessional.) In the wake of Vatican II the communitarian dimension was once again given prominence.

The penance or satisfaction that is assigned to the penitent is not meant to pay God back but to give expression to the forgiveness freely given by God and freely received by the penitent. The persons who have suffered from the penitent's wrongdoing—here we understand the church community itself—must also receive justice if the penitent has truly been forgiven. Justice presupposes a world order in which rights and duties exist and each person receives his/her due. If sin or wrongdoing does violence to another then, in justice, one should make amends to the other for the harm he/she has suffered. Forgiveness is complete when the penitent commits him/herself to a purpose of amendment even though it can happen that other circumstances prevent him/her from fulfilling it.

The Catholic practice of sacramental reconciliation is wedded to the central tenet in Christianity: love of God and love of one's neighbour. (Mat 22/37-38; Mk 12/30-31; Lk 10/27) This central tenet

is seen as the foundation of community-building in the family and in society at large. In loving the other, he/she becomes an extension of oneself. Hence, when violence is done to the other and a person sins and incurs guilt, sacramental reconciliation reminds the violator that it is still possible to affirm the other person as one's own self and offers a means to repair the broken relationship.

The gap between what religions are meant to proclaim and the actual way in which religions are lived will always be present. The Christian proclamation was always meant to be an appeal to the freedom of a person, and love and forgiveness were meant to be its core dynamics. Unfortunately, the Christianity that proclaimed love of neighbour as central to its preaching sanctioned the Crusades and Colonialism, and, along with other religions, found justification for waging a 'just' war. John Bowker states that "virtually all the long-running and apparently insoluble problems in the world, in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Cyprus, the Middle East, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan, East Timor [till it became independent], the Philippines, have deep religious roots."[5] Yet, in spite of past happenings, one can still recognize the dynamics in the practice of sacramental reconciliation that reinforce the universal quest for unity—persons in relationship, one to the other.

Part II: Forgiveness, Justice and Community in Secular Society

Three aspects (dynamics) are clearly linked with the process of reconciliation: forgiveness, justice and community. Forgiveness stresses the acceptance of the other through a free act; justice includes the recognition and the bringing about of a moral and social order in the world, and community is the context and condition in which persons experience their essential and constantly re-founded unity.

A. Forgiveness

In sacramental reconciliation, the priest is asked to take on the role of judge. This job description of the priest has often brought him criticism on the grounds that he is not necessarily holier than the penitent and that this role makes him arrogant and condescending towards the person seeking absolution. However, his personal

holiness is not related to his ability to forgive! His authorization to act as judge does not come from himself but from the Church. There is a difference between the judgment that is handed down in a court of law and in the confessional. In a court of law, it is for the prosecution and the defence to make their points and for the judge to listen to each and decide whether the accused is guilty as charged. The judge can exercise either of two options: he can find the accused innocent or guilty of the charge. If innocent, the judge declares the person innocent and sets him/her at liberty. If guilty, the judge has the duty of sentencing the accused to undergo punishment according to the law books or statutes. In a forensic setting, if the accused is found guilty, he/she receives the punishment that is laid down by statute. For the priest in the confessional, however, there is only one judgment that is handed down to the penitent (the accused who voluntarily accepts his/her guilt before God in humility): full forgiveness, complete pardon. In rendering this judgment the priest represents the unconditional love of God that will always be present to a sinner. Jesus draws attention to this aspect of God when he addresses him as 'Abba' (Mark 14/36), a term of respect that also indicates an intimate relationship between two persons.

When forgiveness is seen as unconditional, the understanding is that God freely takes away the burden of the sinner's wrongdoing. For God, love is its own reason and so too is forgiveness. When relationship is restored, it calls for the building up of trust. Attitudes of fear, suspicion and lingering doubt grow between persons when one party has hurt the other. Similar situations exist when peoples of different regions, language groups and religions feel that they have been the victims of unjust aggression or discrimination. Ultimately, one party does not become reconciled to another because the other party can turn back the clock and then recreate a scenario different from that which is already part of history, but because one decides to forgive freely. A classic example occurred when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 1995 under Archbishop Desmond Tutu to deal with racial abuse during the era of apartheid in South Africa. Its object was not to try whites who had indulged in racial discrimination but to heal painful memories and exorcise hatred that had grown during the years of apartheid.

Forgiveness brings into human consideration a framework of reference that cannot rest merely on the level of human pragmatism or superior force. A framework that does not leave space for a sense of God, mercy and graciousness is too fragile and incomplete to settle issues and questions concerning injustice and hurts suffered by peoples and political states. Human beings remain stewards of creation and must not assume that human codes of law or acts of jurisprudence discount the need for forgiveness. Forgiveness is the unexpected that happens without warning, the cementing bond between persons or parties that opens new vistas for those concerned. One can recall the historic reconciliation treaty signed between Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer in 1963 that paved the way for a new era between France and Germany ravaged by two world wars and at odds with each other for close to a century. No reason can be adduced for both leaders taking a path 'less travelled' and initiating a partnership that has proved to be the backbone of a united Europe.

B. Justice

Justice begins from the premise that there is a God-willed order in the world within which communities can develop and realize their true potential. The same holds for individual human persons. Persons and communities exercise freedom of choice in upholding such an order and creating harmony in society as a whole. However, acts of wrongdoing disrupt this order and prevent persons from developing and realizing their true potential both within themselves and in others. Practising justice that is commutative, distributive and social enables persons to repair that order. Commutative justice deals with a variety of agreements between different parties so that, e.g., just wages are paid, fair contracts made and equitable exchanges prevail between workers and employers. Distributive justice has to do with the way the goods (natural and fabricated) of this world are owned and used for the benefit of all persons. In this regard, the needs experienced by others feature prominently. Social justice is instrumental in bringing about an egalitarian society where workers' rights, ownership of private property and care for the marginalized in society become community priorities. The three types of justice oblige society to make human rights the foundation for the socio-political order that it cultivates.

Persons and communities possess fundamental rights as seen in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (1948). These rights have their source in "the inherent dignity and (of) the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" (Preamble). In a world where the fundamental human rights of every person are acknowledged and respected, a Utopia would exist. But this is not the case. The 20th century saw two world wars, a cold war and the collapse of political colonialism. Race, colour and religion continue to be grounds on which persons and communities suffer discrimination. If communities are to be built in which persons are enabled to exercise their human rights, then programmes of affirmative action like those during the Kennedy era in the U.S., special consideration for those suffering because of caste and class discrimination as envisaged by the Mandal Commission and state welfare schemes for the economically backward must feature in the practice of justice.

Reconciliation demands that justice be given especially to those who suffer. Justice to the marginalized and suffering implies not merely affirming constitutional rights for them but also providing the conditions in which those rights can be exercised. If Liberation Theology stresses human liberation rather than human rights, it is because while human rights are easily affirmed for every person, the effort to enable the marginalized to enjoy them does not come automatically or easily. A concern for justice includes a concern for human rights and also a commitment to the human liberation of those persons. The efforts of voluntary organizations, of NGOs and like-minded groups, to bring justice to all peoples must be supported by all who believe that human rights when practised is the foundation of a just and unified society.

C. Community

Reconciliation reminds us of the primal unity that binds all persons together and which can persist even after unity is disrupted. Sacramental reconciliation—beginning with sacramental initiation as the first defining step of turning back to God—builds on the premise that God has called all persons to be part of his people. Even when persons separate themselves from the community through their misdeeds and sinfulness, they are still welcome to return to the community. This understanding is well described in *Lumen Gentium, no. 13:*

> All human beings are called to the new people of God. Therefore, this people, while remaining one and unique, is to be spread throughout the whole world and through every age to fulfil the design of the will of God, who in the beginning made one human nature and decreed that his children who had been scattered should at last be gathered into one...[6]

Sacramental reconciliation is the defining moment not of unity that is being broken but of brokenness that is overcome by a stronger sense of unity, a unity willed by God. Brokenness can be understood as a challenge to a unity that is logically primal. The quest for community begins with the presumption that individuals find their true personhood in community. Persons who are members of a community experience their unity by sharing with and responding to the needs of others. At the horizontal level, the reality of unity makes itself felt in the need that persons have to belong to a concrete human community; at the vertical level, this same reality may be described as the divine (God) calling a person to himself through the different persons among whom one is placed.

The pattern of Israel being called to be the people of God is repeated in the histories of nations in their efforts to form polities in the world. Yet, many nations have harboured the notions of the 'insider' and the 'outsider' among their peoples to suit the interests of particular groups. The 'insider' is seen as having a natural right to be treated as a full citizen whereas the 'outsider' must make do with what the 'insider' considers his/her due. As a nation, India can be seen as a socio-political entity that requires no single exclusive criterion (religion, occupation or physical features) for a person to qualify as a citizen of the country. In fact India is a mosaic where many races, different language groups and a variety of religions are found. The secular spirit enshrined in the Indian Constitution and its espousal of efforts to build an egalitarian society truly reflect the values proclaimed in the biblical imagery concerning the Reign of God. One who professes allegiance to the Constitution of India and acts according to its spirit is already nurturing and fostering the unity of the Indian nation. It is here that T. K. Oomen rightly calls into question the presumption that there is one mainstream society and that the others (minorities) are outsiders. He claims that the "artifi-

cially constructed cultural mainstream" is "untenable " for the following reasons:

> India is the third largest Muslim country in the world; 80 per cent of the world's Zoroastrians live in India; and the population of Christians and Sikhs exceeds the total population of many nation-states in the world. The Indian Constitution unambiguously attests religious pluralism, that is, respect for all religions.
>
> Second, the traditionist perspective stigmatizes Islam and Christianity in India as products of conquest and colonization. But this position is not sustainable. There is adequate historical evidence to suggest that pre-conquest Islam and pre-colonial Christianity existed in India. Third, the traditionist perspective brushes aside the fact that the overwhelming majority of Indians belonging to 'non-Indian' religions are converts from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is important because these pre-Aryan people define and perceive themselves to be the authentic natives of this country. Only their religion is 'non-Indian'. Fourth, the traditionist perspective, albeit unwittingly, divides the Indian population into insiders and outsiders without providing any rational basis. Further, it does not provide any acceptable mechanism of incorporating the 'outsiders' (except assimilation into the Hindu mainstream) even after several centuries of their nativization in India.[7]

Reconciliation affirms the need to treat the people of the whole world as one community so that a community constituted in one state must itself be seen as a part of a larger whole, the world community. The need for recognizing a world community is seen in political organizations like the Pax Romana, the League of Nations and the United Nations which create patterns of unity. Hence, while accepting that God's plan for the unity of the peoples in India has been made concrete in the state of India, Indians must be ready to build up community with others who constitute another state.

To claim that a group of persons form a community is to describe a process in which a number of individuals accept a common goal as the object of their striving and possess means in common which enable them to attain the goal. The notion of belonging to a community is not static. It is in the becoming that a community can be recognized. The community that calls itself Church is not differ-

ent. Those who qualify as members of the Church are persons who begin living out the process of conversion in the history of their lives. Sacramental reconciliation marks out the historical points in that process during which the conversion process takes place. Each of those historical points is an occasion that marks a completed phase of the conversion process and can therefore be termed as product. The Church community has felt the need to engage in a process of reconciliation with different groups both inside (ecumenical efforts) and outside (secular and sovereign states) its visible confines.

Community becomes possible when a group of persons gradually realizes that what keeps them apart or in attitudes of overt or covert hostility is less important than what binds them together. But such realization takes place in time and, unfortunately, many are made to suffer oppression and persecution in the process.

One may well ask how the Church community itself views itself as process and product. The Church as Establishment tends to see itself as a 'finished' product. Consequent with such an understanding, the Church saw itself as a 'perfect' society that possessed all the means for the ultimate realization of the Reign of God in the world. Such a society (community) viewed its norms of orthodoxy as set up once and for all time, curtailed the practice of other religions in public—this was the case in Spain before Vatican II—and for nineteen centuries refused to allow more than a grudging tolerance to other religions. The present has seen a welcome shift in the Church's stance vis-à-vis other faith persuasions. By entering into dialogue with a religiously pluralist world, the Church has entered the further process of community building and implicitly recognizes that the final product is still to come. The Establishment Church is not familiar with the type of community that will make up the final product. Along with the understanding that God wills the universal community of persons to be at peace with each other there will have to be many occasions for reconciliation. Such a process takes into account the violence that was perpetrated in the name of religion and the injustice done to those of other faiths. This will call for conversion on the part of the Church community.

But just as the Christian believes that the victory of the Risen Christ is more powerful than the worst sin committed by the be-

liever, so too communal strife and the efforts of fundamentalist groups will not prevail against the valiant attempts of those who strive to bring about a just and humane society. Such a society was proclaimed and inaugurated by Christ, and Christians believe it will endure. In this scenario, the Church can offer its reading of the present situation to bring hope and courage to those who commit themselves to the task of nation building. It can reassure them that the obstacles and difficulties are no more than the oblique side of positive efforts to build up community. Further, it can support the efforts of those who labour and suffer to bring about a society that reflects the values enshrined in the Constitution of India.

Endnotes

1. Paul J. Achtemeier (General Editor): *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1985, p. 513: "Judaism, the religion of the Jewish people from the Sinai theophany through the present day... The written and oral Torah perpetually obligated the people to a detailed code of ethical and ritual behavior. The term appears (in Greek) in 2 Macc. 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; and Gal. 1:13-14."
2. *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, p. 861: "The prophets of the eighth century B.C...and those who followed, leveled a strong criticism against merely cultic and liturgical repentance. Amos complains that the people did not turn to the Lord (4: 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Hosea, after describing a liturgy of repentance (6:1-3), says that Israel's love "is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away" (6:4). Isaiah pleads for social justice rather than empty ritual (1:10-17; cf. 58:5-7; Amos 5:21-24). The prophets, therefore, insist upon an interior conversion manifested in justice, kindness, and humility..."
3. This excommunication was not by way of a canonical penalty but meant that the person had to abstain from the Eucharist.
4. It was the Council of Trent that described the function of the minister as that of a judge: "...priestly absolution...has the pattern of a judicial act in which the priest pronounces sentence as a judge." (ND 1628)
5. John Bowker (editor): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford, 1997, PP xxii-xxiii.
6. Norman Tanner (English Editor): *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Volume II (Trent-Vatican II), Sheed and Ward, London, 1990, p. 859.
7. T. K. Oomen: *State and Society in India*, Studies in nation-building, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, PP 126-7.

Article Received: January 10, 2003; Approved: January 30, 2003; No of words: 4936

lawsoflife

A Project of ASSR, Pune

Discover the laws of life
Deepen the ways of life
Spread the rays of hope

Lawsoflife **is a project that fosters life and promotes character building among High School and College students. Conducted by *Associaton of Science, Society and Religion*, it aims to inculcate in the students a sense of respect for life and fellow humans. It is open to all High Schools in India.**

The project enables the students to reflect on their own values in life. It enables them to discover the common laws that permeate life in general and human life in pariticular. Founded by Sir John Templeton, this has become world-wide.

Sponsored by: **Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, I*EARN, John Templeton Foundation.**

For more information contact: kuru@jesuits.net

See www.assrpune.net

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 53-68

Forgiveness and Violence Against Women

Johann M. Vento
Georgian Court College, New Jersey, U.S.A

Abstract: The author notes that forgiveness is often prematurely and inappropriately expected of women who are victimized. The way we often speak of forgiveness does trivialize violent crimes against women and further victimize them. The dignity of women demands that the church explicitly acknowledge the injustice of violent crimes against them, hold the perpetrators accountable for it and seek to heal women.

Keywords: Healing, victimization, violence against women, forgiveness, accountability.

I. Introduction

During the monsoon season of 2002, my husband and I had the privilege to live and study in India. I visited several Roman Catholic churches for Sunday mass during my stay and on one Sunday had an experience that taught me that although there are many differences between India and the United States, one thing was tragically common. In both places, the way the church understands and responds to issues surrounding violence against women can sometimes be uninformed and therefore dangerous. That Sunday the priest preached on a nun from the former Yugoslavia who had been raped and subsequently bore a child, and on the familiar story of St. Maria Goretti. The sermon's theme was forgiveness and how we Christians should emulate these women in their examples of forgiveness. The priest did not use any examples in which men had forgiven gross violations of their physical integrity, only women. Further, he spoke in such a way as to make forgiveness in such situations seem easy and the expected response of all good Christians. His comments did not touch on the gravity of the crimes committed against these women's bodies, on the inviolability of all human

bodies, or on women's fundamental right to be free from such violence; only on heroic acts of forgiveness of what by the end of the sermon, seemed like merely minor infractions after all. There was an emphasis on forgiveness with no clear condemnation of the crime and no clear understanding of the hard work of seeking justice that must take place before such forgiveness can be expected. In a way this is not surprising, as I have also encountered this situation in many sermons at home and in the stories of many women who have been victims.[1] I could not help but wonder how many women present in the church that day had been raped or battered in their lifetimes and how they might be hearing this sermon. Had they approached a priest or other representative of the church for support in the aftermath of their victimization? Had they been told to forgive and forget – to pray for their attackers – to go back to battering husbands? Were they hearing this sermon now as yet another indication that the Christian community is blind to the gravity of the crimes against them?

Forgiveness is often prematurely and inappropriately expected of women who have been victims of rape and battering. The way we speak of forgiveness in theology and in pastoral practice can and often does trivialize violent crimes against women and further victimize them. In this paper I will seek to lay out some proposals for how forgiveness in such instances ought to be understood so that women's experience of victimization may be truly acknowledged and their processes of healing may be *honored* and supported by the church.

While forgiveness is an undeniable value in the Christian tradition, and while the future of the world and any type of humane human society may depend on cultivating the capacity for forgiveness, even of the most atrocious crimes, we must examine what forgiveness means and what conditions make true forgiveness possible. We have learned from Political and Liberation theologies of all sorts that context matters. Therefore, to consider the meaning and possibility of forgiveness in any situation requires attention to the concrete experiences of the persons involved. In any consideration of the topic of forgiveness with regard to crimes of sexual violence and domestic abuse against women, the context of such crimes and women's experience of victimization and recovery must be consulted. What is the nature of violent crimes against women? In what

ways are women harmed and what is involved in the process of healing? How do women who have been victims hear and understand the Christian mandate to forgive? How does pastoral advice to forgive affect the possibility of true reconciliation and healing? This paper will argue that blanket recommendations to women to forgive the perpetrators of crimes against them will not do. In all cultures steeped in patriarchal values, what is needed is conversion: conversion to the belief in women's right to be free from violent abuse, conversion to a frame of mind and a praxis that recognizes and communicates the inviolability of women's bodies and the lamentability of any act of violence against them. Until such conversion takes place, pastoral recommendations to women to forgive will only re-victimize women and impede true healing and reconciliation.

II. The Patriarchal Context of Violence against Women

The causes of violence against women are complex, but not the least among them are entrenched patriarchal values that define women as sexual objects and as appropriately owned or controlled by certain men. These patriarchal values disdain women's physical integrity and well-being. Though perhaps denounced on the surface, acts such as rape and woman-battering are widely tolerated in patriarchal culture and sometimes intentionally used as means to control women. There is a moral callousness that affects all of us who live in a patriarchal context. When crimes against women happen we ask, "What was she doing out at that hour? What did she say to provoke her husband? What was she wearing to attract sexual attention? Such reactions betray an underlying sense that women somehow invite or deserve rape or battering. The result is the trivialization of violent crimes against women. Against such a backdrop, what can the encouragement of women to forgive possibly mean? Does it not run the risk of further burdening women with the responsibility for what has happened to them? Does it not participate in the general tendency to classify acts of rape and battering as somehow less than serious, less than tragic, less than an abomination? In a context that does not defend women's fundamental human right to be free of any form of physical harm and sexual violation, the encouragement to forgive can and often is heard by women as a trivialization of what has happened to them.

III. Taking off Our Patriarchal Glasses to See the Gravity of the Problem

Violence such as rape and battery of women produces traumatic suffering, which, in its destructiveness, can be described as radical de-humanizing suffering. It occurs in epidemic proportions throughout the world. The following will shed light on the prevalence of violence against women in the United States. Sadly, a survey of statistics from almost every country in the world would draw a similarly tragic picture. In 1988 the Surgeon General of the United States warned that violence was the number one health risk to adult women in the United States. In 1992 it was the leading cause of injuries to women aged 15-44 (*Statistics Packet* 1994). Instances of battery and rape are more common than automobile accidents, muggings and cancer deaths combined. The FBI reports that thirty percent of women murdered in 1990 were killed by their husbands or partners and that one in ten women will be physically abused by their husbands in marriage. According to a U.S. Senate report, one million women each year seek medical attention for injuries sustained in abusive relationships. According to the American Medical Association, whose statistics are based not on crime reports, but on the number of women who seek medical care as a result of their injuries, almost one-fourth of all women in the U.S are battered at sometime in their lives by a current or former partner, and an estimated four million women each year are victims of severe assaults by intimates. Further, women battered by intimates account for one-third of all women admitted to hospital emergency rooms. Estimates of the number of battered women who are also raped by their abusers range from thirty-three to forty-six percent. Fifty percent of women in psychiatric care have been victims of rape or childhood sexual abuse. Between one in five and one in eight women will be raped in their lifetimes, either by intimates or strangers, which means that at least 12.1 million women in the U. S. today have been victims of rape (*Statistics Packet*1994).

Rape, childhood sexual abuse and battering all involve the use of force to achieve control over the victim, and they function to deny and override a woman's or girl's capacity for control over herself and her body. They deny the victim her body-right. Many rape victims

report that while the rape was occurring, they were convinced that they were going to be killed. This fear of death is mixed with an intense feeling of humiliation. For many victims, this initial terror and humiliation is followed by shame and self-blame (Waites 1993: 56).

Ruth Seifert, who works with victims of rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina, summarizes the effects of rape, classifying it as a form of torture and an assault on the very identity of its victims:

> A violent invasion into the interior of one's body represents the most severe attack imaginable upon the intimate self and the dignity of a human being; by any measure it is a mark of severe torture. When a woman's inner space is violently invaded, it affects her in the same way torture does. It results in physical pain, loss of dignity, an attack on her identity and a loss of self-determination over her own body (Seifert 1994: 55).

Battering takes the form of slapping, pushing, hitting, punching, kicking, choking, and throwing – onto the floor, down staircases, out of windows. It often involves the use of weapons such as hammers, boards, knives, and guns (Dobash and Dobash 1979: 106). Besides injury, women who are battered are also likely to experience isolation from friends, family, and professional help, economic dependence, inability to find protection from harm, and the immediate debilitating effects of random and unpredictable trauma.

Severe or ongoing abuse through battery or rape or both often result in the condition diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is a physiological condition with serious psychological consequences for victims. It is characterized by somatic disorders, night terrors, eating disorders, self-mutilation, and the inability to act in the interest of one's own well-being, to experience concern for others, and to trust God, self, and others. One researcher describes the effects of PTSD as "psychic death" and "soul murder," which destroy the very identity of the victim (Waites 1993: 22). Women who are victims of such severe trauma require long periods of recovery with explicit attention to regaining the sense of self lost through violence and its aftermath.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is diagnosed when extreme trauma has deregulated the physiological functions that control stress

reactions and, as a result, has generated severe psychological problems. Elizabeth Waites defines trauma as "an injury to mind or body that requires structural repair. The emphasis on structure . . . suggests that the main effect of trauma is disorganization"(Waites 1993: 22). Stressful events trigger changes in neurochemistry and result in changes in thinking and behaviour. Normally, when a person is confronted with an extremely stressful situation, these chemical reactions to stress are good; they are what allows the person to cope with the stress in the moment. Most of the time, these chemical changes are temporary and disappear a reasonable time after the stress is removed. The body re-adapts to normal conditions. But when the trauma experienced is particularly extreme, the micro-structural changes that occur may permanently alter a person's neurochemistry. In these cases the experience of trauma pushes people "beyond their adaptive limits" (Waites 1993: 36).

As the effects of the trauma take their toll, women often lose part of their memory. The loss of memory is itself a further trauma that exacerbates the lack of control the woman feels over her life. In response to lack of control, especially in cases of repeated trauma such as ongoing childhood sexual abuse, self-abuse becomes an attempt at self-regulation, encouraged by feelings of self-hatred, and develops into an addiction over time. Masochism has long been considered a psychological problem intrinsic somehow to femininity. Those who study PTSD in women who are victims of violence now believe that these tendencies are a result of the experience of trauma, and not something biologically intrinsic to women (Waites 1993: 23-49).

The process of recovery from trauma has several overlapping stages, but central to the process as a whole is the ability to remember and to mourn the suffering associated with the traumatic event. Mourning becomes the key to the way the events are remembered and to the function of memories in the process of healing. Dominick LaCapra, who has written about the Nazi genocide of the Jews and the trauma experienced by survivors, argues that there are healthy and unhealthy ways to remember (LaCapra 1998). Healthy remembering is characterized by mourning the event(s) and can lead to what he calls "working through" the trauma and coming to some

possibility for engaging in life and its possibilities. Unhealthy ways of remembering elide the negativity of the events, excuse them, cover over them or sentimentalize them. These ways of remembering prevent mourning by minimizing the negativity of the event, and therefore prevent the process of "working through" (LaCapra 1998: 23). The refusal to face the negativity of suffering and to mourn what has been lost, keeps victims trapped in the effects of trauma.[2] The purpose of the healing process is to allow the victim to face the full negativity of the event and to mourn it in order to be able to heal from the effects of the trauma.

In her book entitled *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman provides a comprehensive treatment of the experience of trauma due to violence against women, the effects of PTSD, and the process of recovery from it. Herman delineates three stages of recovery from post-traumatic stress: the establishment of safety, recovery of memory and mourning, and reconnection with community. Although the stages overlap, and the patient may revisit some of the same issues on a deeper level in a later stage of recovery, the general movement of this process is from a sense of unpredictable danger to a reliable sense of safety, from dissociated memory to acknowledgement of the event, and from stigmatized alienation to reconnection with others and with God. The involvement and support of others is indispensable to the victim in her process of recovery. She needs others to assist in naming what has happened as a crime, as an injustice, and in remembering and facing the gruesome facts of the crime. In fact, the public acknowledgement that a crime has taken place and public action to come to the aid of the survivor are necessary conditions for the possibility of the survivor learning to trust again; these assist her in rebuilding a sense of order and justice.

In the first stage, the trauma victim achieves safety. This includes safety from the person who inflicted the trauma, safety from other potential victimizers, and safety from self-injury (Herman 1992: 174). The central task of the second stage of recovery is remembering. Because memories of trauma are often lost in the process of dissociation, this second stage may involve the slow and difficult work of memory recovery (Herman 1992: 181). The final stage of recovery is reconnection with others or commonality. Herman argues

that after the establishment of safety and self-care, and after the process of retelling and grieving, the survivor is capable of meaningful relationships with others. Noting that a significant minority of survivors become involved in the public struggle against violence against women, Herman maintains that in this final stage survivors are able to be interested in the lives and pains of others and to act on their behalf. According to Herman, reconnection with community, the experience of commonality, brings with it freedom to engage in the wider world, and the will and the ability to act in the best interests of self and of others (Herman 1992: 236).

IV. Conversion to Women's Well-being: A Challenge to the Church

In light of the gravity of the problem of violence against women and the dynamics of radical suffering, trauma and healing, I argue that the church must undergo a conversion. Conversion from what and to what? We must be converted from the common patriarchal assumptions about women and women's bodies and the ways these have affected Christian pastoral practice toward women who have been victims. In order to support victims and help them truly in the long run to forgive, we must eschew the lure of easy forgiveness. Any understanding of what forgiveness might entail for women who have been victims of rape or battering must be formed by the explicit belief in women's body right and in women's right to concern for her own well-being. Without these, the encouragement to forgive participates in the larger patriarchal context that victimizes women in the first place.

A. Body-right

The first belief to which the church must be converted is the belief in women's body-right. Affirmations of the inviolability of women's bodies, women's right to control what happens to their own bodies, and the right to physical well-being are nothing less than revolutionary in the face of patriarchally structured patterns of relation. Patriarchy defines women as appropriately owned by men. Women's sexuality and reproductive capacities are put at the service

of patriarchal concerns. The claim to body-right provides the basis for naming acts of violence against women's bodies as crimes.

In pastoral practice with victims, Christian communities have often disregarded women's body-right in *favor* of other concerns. When pastors and/or Christian communities encourage women to spiritualize their suffering and to forgive before safety and justice are established, they subordinate the physical inviolability of women to other concerns. The encouragement of passive acceptance of suffering and easy forgiveness of acts of rape and battering betray the tendency to minimize the seriousness of the violation of women's bodies. From the standpoint of women's inviolability, suffering that results from the loss of body-right is a dehumanizing form of suffering which has no benefits or salutary effects. Further, women's body-right and the right to physical well-being must be explicitly understood and affirmed in any reflection on the value of forgiveness in cases of violent abuse. Without a consciousness of the importance of body-right and the fundamental inviolability of women's bodies, communities are ill-equipped to help women secure their safety and to accompany women through the long process of recovery and eventual forgiveness. A strong affirmation of women's body-right will empower women to name their own inviolability and to see the right to control their own bodies as rooted in God's will for their well-being.

B. Solidarity with Self

The second belief to which Christian communities must be converted is the belief in women's right to concern for their own well-being. Belief in this right is precisely what is taken from women in and through the experience of abuse. Women's growth in their ability to claim the right to loyalty to their own well-being is a necessary step in the arduous process of recovery from severe trauma. A firm conviction of the moral and religious correctness of women's active concern for their own well-being is thus a necessary aspect in Christian communities that would support women in this process.

This is not selfishness or narcissism. For too long and with grave consequences women have been led to believe that concern for their own well-being is contrary to their Christian calling to love and

sacrifice for others. Pastoral advice to victims that *centers* on this theme can be deadly for women and represents an appalling fusion of Christian values and patriarchal norms.[3] There is a direct rather than an inverse relationship between concern for oneself and concern for the well-being of all. The option for women's well-being, therefore, always also includes the option for one's own well-being. These theological insights are born out by psychological research into the connection between self-empathy, or loyalty to the self, and the possibility of active concern for others (Herman 1992: 235-36 and Huff 1987: 169) This research has shown that empathy with others and self-empathy are intrinsically related to each other. Thus, rather than being selfish, a loyalty to one's own well-being is a condition for the possibility of concern for and service to others. Solidarity with others, then, necessarily involves solidarity with self.

Violence against women destroys that which God intends for each person: her identity as subject, as agent of her own life, with the responsibility and dignity attendant to becoming responsible for herself. Understood in this way, women have not only the right but also the moral obligation to manifest loyalty to their own well-being.

V. Forgiveness and Violence against Women

In a converted Christian community that affirms women's body right and right to concern for their own well-being, what will be the contours of forgiveness? Feminist pastoral theologians Pamela Cooper-White and Marie Fortune are both clergy women who have had extensive pastoral experience in working with women who have been victims of battering and rape. Their work offers insights into the nature of forgiveness in these specific contexts. They argue that the nature of violence against women and its traumatic effects must be kept in view in any discussion of the possibility of forgiveness by women of their perpetrators. A rush to forgiveness, a mandate to forgive that does not hold the perpetrator accountable for his crimes, minimizes these acts of violence, fails to recognize women's bodies as inviolable and violence done to them as truly lamentable, and frustrates the process of healing in women.[4]

Victims who turn to the church for support are commonly encouraged to forgive. Pamela Cooper-White addresses the danger of this situation, arguing that pastors who advise forgiveness can easily "retraumatize" the victim by seeming to minimize what has happened to her and encouraging her to take responsibility for her perpetrator, when she needs to be concerned with establishing her own safety. Cooper-White and others emphasize a victim-*centered* understanding of the issue. They argue that forgiveness should happen according to the victim's timeline, that it should not be rushed, that it is dependent upon true and reliable repentance or restitution on the part of the perpetraor, or is in some other way brought about by the accomplishment of justice. The focus on justice for the victim places her and her well-being in the *center* of concern (Cooper-White 1995: 254-257).

Marie Fortune's understanding of forgiveness in the case of violence against women is *centered* on the well-being of the victim (although she also argues that holding the perpetrator accountable is also ultimately for his own good as well). Specifically, the conditions she places on the appropriateness of forgiveness point to the need to acknowledge the victim as valuable, her experience as valid, and her right to act as a moral agent in her situation. Fortune does not discard forgiveness as a Christian value, and indeed recognizes its value in re-establishing peace and right relationship. However, she urges against the lure of easy forgiveness that minimizes the seriousness of the act of abuse, denies accountability, and misplaces blame. Such easy forgiveness, she argues, dehumanizes both the victim and the perpetrator, by failing to insist on the inviolability of the victim and the responsibility of the perpetrator.

Fortune defines forgiveness as "a letting go of the immediacy of the trauma, the memory of which continues to terrorize the victim and limit possibilities" (Fortune 1995: 203). She argues that when forgiveness occurs, the victim is freed from seeing everything in life through the lens of her victimization. Anger no longer controls her. But it does not mean she will not ever feel angry again, and it does not mean that the initial injustice is covered over, forgotten, or deemed excusable in some way. This process of forgiveness takes a great deal of time and is only possible after the victim is safe from further

harm, the injustice has been acknowledged and the victim has had time to work through the feelings of anger at the violation (Fortune 1995: 203-204).

Fortune seeks to avoid sentimental or facile understandings of forgiveness, which she believes are widespread, and she insists that any question of forgiving the perpetrator begin with the explicit acknowledgement that what happened should never have happened. She argues that forgiveness in the case of violent victimization cannot mean forgetting or, more importantly, classifying the *offense* as a non-*offense*. For Fortune, any discussion of forgiveness must stay focussed on the fact that what happened is not acceptable. Fortune sees forgiveness in the larger context of making justice. It is one step on the road to making justice where there has been injustice, and a step that requires certain conditions to be in place before it is possible: "Truth-telling, acknowledgment of the violation, compassion, protection of the vulnerable, accountability, restitution, and vindication are the requirements for doing justice and mercy in the face of violation and injustice" (Fortune 1989: 114).

Thus the forgiveness that Fortune recommends is part of a larger process of reconciliation based on justice for the victim. This process will include acknowledgement of the wrong, true repentance, and restitution on the part of the perpetrator. Citing Luke 17:3-4 where Jesus commands his followers to forgive those who wrong them, Fortune emphasizes Jesus' injunction to first rebuke the offender, that is, confront him or her with the injustice and hold him or her accountable. Fortune also points out that in this passage forgiveness follows repentance, which she says in the case of sexual offenders and batterers takes a long time and involves complete accountability for their actions, participation in therapy, and a demonstration that they have truly turned from this behavior (Fortune 1995: 204).

Justice flowing from acknowledgement, true repentance and restitution on the part of the offender is the ideal, in Fortune's view, but she admits that such complete accountability from offenders is rare. She argues that other forms of justice can help the victim come to the point of forgiveness. A satisfactory resolution of the crime in the justice system is one form. A clear and insistent message from a

pastor and/or from the Christian community that what happened to the victim is criminal and undeserved, and that they are sorry that this happened to her, is another. What each of these examples has in common is the explicit recognition that the abuse is sinful and that it is fully the perpetrator's responsibility. According to Fortune, victims need to hear and believe from at least one other person that what happened to them is utterly unjustified. This emphasis upholds the inviolability of the victim, because it avoids the minimization inherent in forgiveness urged or tried too soon. Finally, although we can name elements that need to be in place for forgiveness to occur, Fortune argues that it is a grace that cannot be effected merely by an act of the will on the part of the victim, extorted by the perpetrator, or forced by a pastor:

For the Christian, it is finally the power of the Holy Spirit that enables the healing process to take place. This spiritual power gives the victim the strength to forgive, to let go. It gives the victimizer the strength to repent, to change. It gives the church the strength to help both persons in the justice-making process. But the power of the Holy Spirit is released only when justice is made manifest for the victim and offender. Whenever there is an attempt to cut the process short and jump to premature reconciliation, the possibility of authentic healing is lost (Fortune 1995: 205).*

Conclusion

In some ways the understanding of forgiveness in cases of violence against women set forth in this article parallels much of what we have learned from the truth commission movement around the world and in particular of the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa. Crimes of rape and battering are gross violations of human rights. They result in trauma that debilitates victims and their communities. They happen in epidemic proportions around the world. The truth commission process holds to the necessity of bringing to light crimes against humanity, speaking the truth of what happened in individual instances, supporting victims and affirming their feelings of outrage and pain. We may settle for no less for the victims of violence against women. A Christian church must surely always uphold the value of forgiveness, but it must just as surely always

explicitly uphold the inviolability of the human person, body and soul. To the extent that we have failed in the past by imposing on women a rushed mandate to forgive without first helping her to heal and seek justice, we must repent. In opposition to patriarchal customs and practices to the contrary we must be converted to belief in women's body right and right to well-being. I will end with a quote from Desmond Tutu quoted by Chapman: Reconciliation is not about being cozy; it is not about pretending that things were other than they were. Reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing up to reality, is not true reconciliation and will not last (Chapman 2001: 201).

The dignity of women demands that the church explicitly acknowledge in word and practice the injustice of violent crimes against them and seek to protect them and aid them in their healing. The human dignity of perpetrators demands that the church hold them accountable for their actions. In such circumstances we may pray that the Holy Spirit will bless all with true reconciliation.

Notes

1. In the U.S., of course, the most recent and public instance of clergy disregard for victims and their experience is the clergy child sex-abuse crisis. Beyond the crimes themselves, it has been the fact that Bishops covered over the abuses, reassigned priests and thereby endangered more children that has shocked and saddened American Catholics. Even as the church tries to address this scandal, victims' right groups argue that a full understanding of sexual abuse and its effects is lacking.
2. It must be noted that victims during and in the immediate aftermath of the victimization will often minimize what is happening through dissociation and memory loss as part of a survival strategy. Victims should not be criticized for doing this, since this is a coping strategy that functions to protect the victim from the immediacy of the event. Facing the full impact of the suffering and working through the trauma can only take place some time after the traumatic event in a protected environment, once physical safety has been established.
3. As Felissa Elizondo, among many feminist theologians, has argued, Christian moral thought has recommended self-abasement and servitude as "virtues" for women and confused them with the Christian virtues of humility and self-sacrifice (Elizondo 1994, 106).
4. An intriguing study of the meaning of forgiveness in the New Testament is found in Frederick Keene. Keene focuses on power relationships and argues that forgiveness

is only possible "down the power scale," (the more powerful in an oppressive relationship forgiving the less powerful) or between those of equal power. For Keene, the New Testament neither commands nor recommends that the oppressed or abused forgive their abusers (Keene 1995).

References

Chapman, Audrey, R.

2001 "Truth Commissions as Instruments of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," In *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick, S. J. and Rodney L. Petersen, 257-77. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.

Cooper-White, Pamela

1995 *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Dobash, R. Emerson and Russell Dobash

1979 *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy,* The Free Press.

Elizondo, Felissa

1994 "Violence Against Women: Strategies of Resistance and Sources of Healing in Christianity." In *Violence Against Women*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Shawn Copeland, 99-198. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Fortune, Marie M.

1995 "Forgiveness: The Last Step." In *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Sourcebook*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Maria M. Fortune, 201-206. New York: Continuum.

Fortune, Marie M.

1989 *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship*, San Francisco: Harper

Herman, Judith

1992 *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence — From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.* New York: Basic Books.

Huff, Margaret Craddock

1987 "Woman in the Image of God: Toward a Prototype for Feminist Pastoral Counseling." Ph.d. diss., Boston University.

Keene, Frederick W.

1995 "Structures of Forgiveness in the New Testament.," in *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian*

Sourcebook, ed. Carol J. Adams and Maria M. Fortune, 121-134. New York: Continuum.

LaCapra, Dominick

1998 *History and Memory After Auschwitz.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Seifert, Ruth

1994 "War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis." In *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer, 54-72. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Statistics Packet

1994 National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women. 3rd Edition, Philadelphia.

Waites, Elizabeth

1993 *Trauma and Survival: Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women.* New York: Norton.

Article received: November 12, 2002
Article approved: January 2, 2003
No of words: 5550

JPJRS 6/2 ISSN 0972-3331,Jan 2003 69-75

What would Gandhiji Do Today? Interview with Tushar Gandhi

Interviewer K. Pandikattu
JDV, Pune 411014

*Abstract:*The following is an interview with Tushar Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi (Bapuji) on the occasion of the Gandhi's death anniversary. The topics covered are the recent communal violence in India, the role of politicians and of the ordinary people.

Keywords: Gandhi, Godhra, communalism, religions, India.

Tusharji, we will be happy if you can share some of your reflections with the readers of Jnanadeepa. *Can you tell us something personal? How are you related to Mahatma Gandhi?*

Mahatma Gandhi had four sons. Harilal, Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas, I am the grandson of Manilal Gandhi, the second son of Gandhi.

What is your profession now? Educational and social?

Yes I work with the internet and I am the managing Trustee of Mahatma Gandhi foundation, which has various social welfare as well as educational programmes.

Can you explain something more of your educational activities.

Education is more of information. We are creating the most comprehensive electronic archives on the Mahatma. This is going to be available to people on the web so that they can take whatever information they wish according to their specific need. And the other motive of the electronic archive is to save the work of Mahatma Gandhi in an electronic format so that in the future something will be available even when the physical things deteriorate. At least the electronic copies will be available.

Coming to the topic about religious dialogue and harmony, what do you feel about the present situation?

Well I think it is very necessary to talk on this subject now because there is a misconception that when you say that the problems are being caused by religion today, people feel that we are criticising religion. But it is not really religion that is being criticised, but it is the version of religion that is being propagated today, which has been twisted to suit the needs of vested interests. And this I speak in general. I do not single out any one community or religion. But as a general rule today religion has been corrupted for the selfish motives and needs of people. And that is what is causing the problem. We have to fight against that. We have to expose the corruption in religion. And instead of others' criticising – a Hindu criticising a Muslim, or a Muslim criticising a Hindu or a Buddhist ciriticising Christian – if we all look internally towards our own self and try to improve them, we will be much better off. That is what is required. That would be a constructive dialogue, instead of coming and saying that my religion is good. In fact all religions are good. But if we have the guts and honesty to say that there have been certain bad elements that have crept into our religion, and certain bad practices have come and dominated this religion, then that is the way we will serve our religion and its faithful followers. That is what is required today.

Tell us more about the reconciliation that you would visualise, now that the situation is so bad. There is no use ignoring or denying what has happened. What would be the next step in terms of reconciliation?

I think, if you want to really reconcile the differences we have and we want to live in peace, we have to accept the fact that there are different races of people, there are different people following different ways of life. But for me religion is a way of life. I have always maintained that if I want to tolerate somebody else, that means I am bottling up my anger and my displeasure. I am bottling up my hatred of the practices of that person. And that bottling-up capability or capacity will be finite. And one day I will lose that capability. It will be like an electric fuse which has a fixed tolerance and after that it blows. When the time of tolerance breaks, the hatred that spews out

would be so devastating that it really annihilates or creates massacres which are unimaginable. I would rather understand my opponents or the other person's necessities and why they practise what they practise. I would be much better of if I were to learn of them and accept that person with all the differences. And thus I will be able to overcome my irritation towards that person's practices. And to say that it is his or her right to practice that. Then I should not feel irritated, as my practice should not irritate that other person. When that understanding is born, then we will really be able to live together. When such understanding and acceptance is experienced, we will be able to live and grow together in harmony.

Such a acceptance will be through understanding and respect. I had an experience in my political life: Two years back Bakrid and Mahavir Jayanthi were falling on the same day. Jains follow ahimsa and Bakrid is the day of qurbani. The Muslims give qurbani in the form of goat or animals. So some poltical vested interested spanned up the anger in both the communities and Jains went and demaned that Mahavir Jayanthi be declared as ahimsa day and no slaughter should take place on that day. It should be banned. So the Muslims rose up in arms and said that to us the qurbani is paramount. And we will do the qurbani. Now the Jains are violating their own belief of non-violence by imposing their will on the other person. Ture ahimsa does not allow you to impose your will on the other. The Muslims were also violating their understanding of qurbani. Because the true qurbani is supposed to be sacrificing something that is most dear to us. And beloved to you. If giving qurbani was most dearest to them, sacrificing that right of giving qurbani would have been the greatest sacrifice on that day. But they did not look at it in that way. The Muslims wanted to give the qurbani and the Jains wanted to impose their will on the Muslims. Both were violating the corner-stone of their own principles. And that is the kind of spark which can lead to holocaust. And we intervened. We requested them to please accept each others' practices. You say, "I will ignore his practice of qurbani." And you say, "I will perfom my qurbani in such a way that it does not offend my Jain brethren." Be considerate to each other. And that is what happened. They said fine. Although we do not agree with this practice of Muslims, we will be understanding enough to accept

that. The Muslims said, yes, we understand the Jains' necessity and we will take that into consideration and will moderate our practise in that manner. And thus the whole situation was diffused. It was diffused only through understanding not through tolerance. Because Jains would never have been able to tolerate animals being slaughtered on Mahavir Jayanthi. And the orthodox Muslims will not have tolerated the refusal of their rights to give qurbani. It happened in 1998and 1999 in Mumbai. Those were the two years when Bakrid and Mahavir Jayanthi coincided.

Coming to the present situation, especially in Gujarat, I want to ask you: if Gandhiji were alive today what would he have done?

If Bapuji were alive today, Gujarat would not have happened. Unfortunately all of us, who call ourselves liberal, have been sleeping on past laureals for two long. Gujarat did not happen overnight. Gujarat did not burn because of Godhra. Godhra did not happen overnight either. This has been simmering for a long time. Gujarat has been cultivated to become the fire, cauldron of violence. The hatred and mistrust of each other have been very scientifically propagated in society. Minds have been very systematically poisoned against each other. When all those things were happening, the liberals just kept quiet and said that these are just aberrations and will go away. But the planning and strategy of five years of the Sangh Parivar culminated first in the Godhra happening and then the entire Gujarat. They did not occur over night. The Hindus did not suddenly became angry after Godhra. What Godha achieved was that some of the Hindus who would not have tolerated such a thing, were led into the tragedy that was unfolding. Bapuji would have seen signals long back. And he would have started working long back to see that these kinds of flash-points were never reached. We all are trying to dig the well after the fire has not only started but consumed the house. Bubu would not have done that.

What are your suggestions?

In Gujarati there is a saying that the morning is the time we wake up. If you have woken up at noon and realise it, we can still take it as a beginning. I think we need to work now. We should all learn the lesson. We have slipped up in the past. But now we would

not let it happen again. We won't let Gujarat be replicated in other parts of the country. We will not let hearts be divided all over the country and the world. We will not allow anybody to kill our brother and sisters. We will have to. We will have to be pro-active. We cannot be reactive any longer.

Concrete visions in the political areas?

In political arena, I would suggest that as soon as possible politics of religion should be stopped. I won't say religion should be delinked from politics, because religion can't be delinked from any human being. Finally politics is made by human beings. What is unhealthy is not really the safeguarding or promoting of one's religion with the use of one's political practices, it is playing politics using religion. We must be aware of the fact that fanaticism is not a Hindu prerogative. There is fanaticism in the Muslim field, there is fanaticism in the Christian field. Human being is by nature, somehow or other, a fanatic. We must learn to address fanaticism. I refuse to react only to Hindu fanaticism. I refuse to acknowledge that fanaticism is a Hindu prerogative and terrorism is an Islamic prerogative. It is human beings who are terrorists or fanatics. We have to fight them everywhere.

What would be your suggestions and comments for the ordinary people?

I would tell ordinary people not to follow the sheep mentality. Today we have all become flocks of sheep. We have shepherds who lead us through their rhetoric and make us do things. If we have thought for ourselves or our intellect, we would never have done that. We lost the power to question our leaders. That is why corruption in politics is so rampant.

Narendra Modi tells us that since Muslims have three wives they will have 25 children and we believe it. How many Muslims today have three wives? Show me the number? And if we they have three wives, how many of them have 25 children? If they have 25 children, how many of them are growing up to become responsible citizens? Half of them die in infancy and you will see in large Muslim families at least two or three siblings who are mentally challenged. How many Muslims have three wives? Nobody has asked Narendra

Modi. Everybody says: ten Muslims with three wives and five children. So thirty Muslims each year. So let us kill 20 off of them. Use your intelligence and think of the biological probabilities and possibilities. Listen to your inner voice.

They told you that Ram Mandir is here, and you start worshipping that place. Otherwise you did not even know of that place. Ram lives in our hearts. How can he be imprisoned in a stone building. Unless we have the capacity to think, using the intellect given by God, we cannot be genuine. But we love to become sheep. We accept Bal Thakery. Since he is the leader we follow him blindly. We accept Laloo Prasad Yadav as the leader and we follow him blindly. When are we going to use our grey cells? When do we think of our own welfare? Think of the continuance of our own life!

How do you suggest reconciliation on a personal, one-to-one basis?

One of the things to be done is to learn not to seek revenges in history. Forgiveness should be practised more than preached. That can be done on a personal level. The other thing is that we need to respect the other persons' rights and practices. We must respect everybody's right to practicse their own faith. Practices which are harmless to others. I am not saying that if your neighbour is a murderer, you must respect and allow him to murder. Harmless practices should not cause irritation. We must learn to understand each other.

There must be a spiritual laboratory in every school. Our educational curriculum must have religion as a subject in which every religion is impartially taught. It is a utopian situation. When a Moulavi teaching Gita and a Pandit teaching Koran is the ideal. Because the Moulavi will always teach Koran better and the Pandit will always preach the Gita better. If they reverse their role, we will learn the real meaning of those books. If we will it, it can happen. Finally, they are men of God and they should know all things in the name of God.

How do you visualise the future of our nation in 20-25 years?

I am an incorrigible optimist. I see hope in the most hopeless of situations. I am sure that India had sunk to unplummable depths

even in the past, and has risen to glorious heights by the endeavour of its own people. I feel that if we all come together and work towards that goal, it will happen more easily.

We have the mentality of *thatha-astu*. We all think that one day God will get up and say *thatha-astu* and then all the problems will be solved.

The day we realise that we can, we truly will be able to. The British had ruled over us. The day the entire nation got up and said enough, they had to leave. We have lived as brothers and sisters for centuries. The aberrations of few decades cannot destroy that ever. So I am an eternal optimist, not only on the social and religious fields but also in political situation.

Thank you, Tusharji.

Welcome. It was nice talking to you.

Interview Conducted: Jan 30, 2003
Approved: Jan 31, 2003
No of words: 2428

Dialogue as the Way of Life

An Advaitic Interfacing of Religions and Sciences According to Bede Griffiths

Kuruvilla Pandikttu SJ

Born as an Anglican, Bede Griffiths (1906-93) converted himself to the Catholic Church. After coming to India, he was fascinated by Eastern traditions and Indian monastic movement. The life of Bede Griffiths brings together dialogically the Eastern and Western cultures, Hinduism and Christianity, science and religion. Born as an Anglican he joined the Catholic Church, came to India and embraced the Eastern way of life without in any way giving up his Christian and Western roots. He has attempted to bring together modern science and contemporary mysticism leading to a fulfilling human existence. The profound Indian notion of *advaita* may be regarded as the philosophical basis for his quest. Based on the life experiences of Griffiths, we are convinced that today's world need dialogical interaction among and between sciences, religions, cultures, So we plead for a culture of dialogue where individual identities are affirmed, mutual differences celebrated and ongoing exchange fostered.

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 77-100

September Eleven: A Metaphor of Tragedy and Transgression

Francis X. D'Sa SJ
JDV, Pune 411014

Abstract: Basing himself on September 11, as a metaphor, the author discusses the notion of violence and traces its deep-rooted causes. Finally the author sees the answer to the violence in the emergence of a new "explorative" myth and in the cosmic confidence of love.

Keywords: Mystery, mastery, myth, violence, peace, community.

When one alone dreams, it remains a dream
but when many join in the dream, it becomes a reality.
Archbishop Romero

0. Introduction

If September Eleven (2001) has shown anything then it is this: events of such magnitude are not mere happenings that die out unnoticed or just fade away; rather they enter the realm of language and have a life of their own in the form of metaphor. Metaphors are in fact linguistic avatars that keep the original event alive. Long after the event metaphors keep the fire alive that was ignited by the event. Life-giving metaphors fan fires that spread warmth and light; they promote life. If, however, they are anti-life their flames of hate and frustration wreak havoc and devastation. September Eleven is a metaphor of the latter sort for it was born in violence and it breeds violence. Both the sides (the terrorists and those fighting terrorism) to whom we owe this metaphor are wholly and undeniably violent though both may proclaim that their real and final goal is justice (in case of the former) and security and peace (in case of the latter). The terrorists by definition (and probably by their own proclamation) use terror-tactics to achieve their ends. And those fighting terrorism have recourse to methods that human right activists would unhesitatingly declare to be unacceptable; their violence is on a scale that is much

greater than that of the terrorists themselves.[1] But strangely both share a common belief that *the ultimate solution to any dispute lies in the use of violence.*[2]

What seems to escape their notice is that such a stance is tantamount to asserting that it is the strongest person, the strongest group, the strongest party, the strongest nation, the strongest multinational company or corporation that sets the norm for what is ultimately right. In the long run might arrogates to itself the position that it alone is right. It is this conviction that persuades nations to continually keep on arming themselves and updating their arsenal so that they remain, if not stronger than, at least as strong as their neighbours. It is this conviction that has led to the economy depending to a great extent on the ammunition industry.[3] It is this conviction that has created a situation in which the most powerful nation dictates to the rest of the world how political and economic problems are to be solved and in the process transgresses accepted forms of treating prisoners and respecting weaker nation states with different visions of God, World and Man.[4]

At work behind all this is the Mantra: the more powerful a nation, the more secure it is. Here deterrence is the magic word. Though deterrence may prevent a war the cost of deterrence is not less tragic.[5] In the case of India and Pakistan, for instance, the astronomic sums spent on armies and ammunitions have kept the majority of their peoples in misery.[6] War brings misery on all; but deterrence keeps those whom our armies are meant to protect perpetually poor.[7]

This is in no way to say that war is to be preferred to deterrence. This is only to point out the disastrous consequences of a mentality that believes only war and violence can solve regional, national and international problems. Politicians take us for a ride when they make us believe that where there is no deterrence war is a real possibility.

Those who agonize over the innocent victims of such violence realize that it is impossible for a belief like this to deliver the goods. Violence can only produce through a spiraling effect further violence. The path of violence is basically a negative path, a path of

destruction and more destruction because more sophisticated weapons only mean more extensive and more speedy destruction. Weapons may prevent war but they cannot lead to peace.[8]

Simplistic as this philosophy sounds so widespread is its adherence. One encounters it not only in the military sphere; it is at work also in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious fields as well. The more powerful a lobby is the more it is convinced that its position is more right than that of the less powerful lobbies. The stronger a nation the more right it believes it has vis-à-vis the weaker nations.

After the attack on the World Trade Centre and on the Pentagon, the map of the political world has changed and is changing. Friends have been jilted and in some case enemies have turned friends. The battle-lines are being drawn differently: the terrorists vis-à-vis those fighting terrorism; not like before the capitalist camp against the socialist, or the North-South divide.

The point that should make us pause to think is this: Is not the present situation in fact a consequence of the war-mentality itself? On the background of a war-mentality can there be any solution that is not violent? The fight against terrorism is a *war* that is not less violent than the attacks of the terrorists and therefore cannot really be the solution we are seeking. It is really part of the problem.

1. The Metaphor of September Eleven

Metaphors are born, not created. The birth of a metaphor is an ex-pression (what is pressed out) of a specific state of affairs and it symbolizes a deeper process in reality.[9] Not every happening in history gets baptized with a name. Only privileged events enter the sphere of language in the form of metaphors. The power of a metaphor is in proportion to the diverse responses it evokes. The "holocaust" is one such metaphor. But metaphors are not only negative; there are positive metaphors too like Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Narmada Bachao Andolan.

A metaphor is a world in miniature. It evokes a world depending on the kind of metaphor it is. Amnesty International evokes not

only a sense of justice in the face of injustice meted out to helpless prisoners; it also brings to mind the selflessness, dedication and commitment of some people to helping such prisoners get justice. The vast but almost impenetrable world of unjust practices towards prisoners is one aspect of the metaphor; and the other is the goodness of people that makes them risk their lives – selflessly – in the cause of persons caught up in a helpless, perhaps even hopeless, situation. Since such a world is not a cold rational world but a world where commitment is at work it touches one to the quick – provided one is sensitive to issues of justice and fair-play.

The fatal day of September Eleven has become so powerful a metaphor that like a flash of lightning it has revealed unambiguously the true positions of the world's nation-states. Putting it simplistically (and this is what is happening most of the time), September Eleven has allegedly divided the world into those who are for and those who are against terror. This is how the calamitous day is being understood at least for the time being. Without doubt September Eleven is a violent metaphor. It is also a tragic metaphor because there is going to be no end to the spiral of violence and counter-violence that it has engendered.[10]

September Eleven evokes strong emotions on all sides. For some it is the embodiment of terror; hence their determination to fight against terrorism and to wipe out the terrorists by all conceivable means. For others it is part of the holy war against injustice in the form of capitalism, consumerism and cultural imperialism. For these September Eleven was a declaration of war; the first salvo was meticulously planned and precisely fired against the symbols of the world's military might and economic power.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. A metaphor is not like ornamental language that is in effect superfluous and therefore dispensable. Being in the nature of evocative language, a metaphor is not limited to a specific dimension of reality as does, for example, informative/descriptive language but evokes all possible levels of reality. Looking at our metaphor more closely we discover that it is a symptom of the clash of two ways of thinking, almost a clash of two civilizations (as Huttington had foretold – a thesis we were not prepared to accept when he presented it). The clash that September

Eleven embodies illustrates the power of the metaphor. In its tragic expression it highlights the inability (or perhaps the unwillingness?) of the two sides to make the effort to understand the other, to communicate peacefully and to dialogue and settle their differences non-violently.

Deeper still it is a tragic testimony to the growing inhumanity of the world's economic[11] and political order, on the one hand, and to the increasing vulnerability of religion to being highjacked for political and ideological purposes, on the other. To believe that the economic and political order of the world has nothing to do with terrorism is to live in a fool's paradise. But as Indians we believe that the economic and political sins of the first world are not exempt from the law of Karma. Some day they will have to reckon with the consequences. Indeed the reckoning appears to have begun already. Is it, for instance, an accident that the so-called "muslim" terrorists are from those very "Islamic" countries whose autocratic rulers are being supported by those who are fighting terrorism?

September Eleven has unfortunately and without any real basis given Islam a bad name. This has as much to do with a media that is biased against Islam as with religious leaders who have very little of the spirit of that noble religion. The media insist on speaking of "Islamic" terrorists, hardly noticing the contradiction between the religion of peace ("Islam") and terrorism. Terrorists cannot by any definition be associated with religion, even if they profess to belong to and act in the name of a religion. Similarly, leaders with political ambitions who for social, economic and political reasons take religion and their followers for a ride and consequently cannot be given the name of "religious" leaders, even if they claim to be religious.

Furthermore, our metaphor has also fanned the flames of fanaticism, chauvinism and fundamentalism. Fanaticism because the reaction to one kind of fanaticism is another kind of fanaticism. Chauvinism and nationalism that are emerging in some countries are a far cry from the kind of democratic behaviour their founding fathers dreamed of for their people. The reaction to this variety of nationalism will be also of a negative kind. There is no reason to believe that the Law of Karma will make an exception in the case of these countries.

Our metaphor has however brought forth in some cases heroism and humane behaviour in the best sense and in the highest degree. People have forgotten their differences and have risen to the occasion to be of service to the victims and their families. In a way, September 11 has created a wave of "sympathy and compassion" all over the world. People of good will have shown their feelings of community and solidarity across all distinctions of political, economic, social and cultural systems. They have not only condemned the dastardly action of the terrorists and expressed their genuine feelings of disgust. Indirectly they have shown that such suffering has in a strange way united the world – to some extent.

All this and more is symbolized by the destruction of the towers and the terrorists along with their victims in the metaphor of September Eleven.[12] What, however, we need to examine further is what the metaphor is silent about.

2. The Myth of Might is Right

Human history could generally be summarized as the on-going explicitation of the war-mentality that has dominated human consciousness. The war-mentality refers to that consciousness that implicitly but very effectively takes for granted that in the last analysis only war and violence can solve all disputes.[13]

It is such an aggressive background that is operative in our cultures. This is equally true of the way we understand [and practise] our religions and of our approach to the world of human beings. Rarely and in exceptionally few moments do cultures refuse to fan the flames of hate and division but historically speaking, religions have more often than not jumped on the band wagon of war and violence to solve disputes and disagreements.[14]

Similarly, relations between individuals and societies are founded on the basis of strength and aggression, and not on the basis of love and the greater common good. Cultures, however advanced, have mostly violence in-built in their systems, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. Indeed the more advanced a culture is the more it appears to invent increasingly violent modes of relating and dominating. This is so true today that peace has merely come to mean "no war". Vis-à-vis such a situation the generalization that

there is hardly any culture that can be said to be a culture of dialogue will not seem too far off the mark. If at all, it is only the dialogue of "arms" that seems to make sense on the war-horizon. Consequently all dialogue is merely about the quantum of arsenal. A nation is judged to be great in proportion to its military might, not its humanizing, liberating and holistic qualities, to say nothing about dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Economic relationships are a good example of the way a war-horizon functions. A so-called good economic theory rarely talks of the greater common good of the majority of human beings but mostly aims at the good of a nation or a group of people ruling a nation, overlooking and perhaps even taking into account the "collateral damage" done to weaker peoples and nations. Social relations are not about liberating people but about building infrastructures that protect "us" against "them" and are generally tilted in favour of the rich and the strong against the poor and the weak.

Personal relationships are no better. They turn out to be more like business relationships where the question is who gets the most or the better of the relationship. Relationships between men and women are a matter of conquest (if it is a question of love) or of commodity (if it is a matter of employing someone) or subordination (as in the case of patriarchy).

The war-mentality is most evident in the way we are going about the world around us. The sense of mystery about rivers, oceans, air, mountains, valleys, animals, forests, etc. seems to be disappearing as fast as some of the species of life. Instrumentalization of nature has come to be our 'normal' mode of interacting with the world.

Not surprisingly, then training for war is a top priority of nation states, completely overlooking, if not neglecting, training for peace. Hence peace which is paraphrased as the absence of war is said to be something that victorious armies bring about; not a peace that is of the nature of a gift which people of good will receive [from above] when they work for an egalitarian society where justice is the foundation and harmony the goal.

3. Paradigm Shift: From an Exploitative to an Explorative Myth

In such a context we have to reflect on the meaning and implications of the horizon of peace. We have neither the experience nor the imagination to really understand what this means. We only have our negative experiences deriving from the horizon of war and aggression. But we also have the yearning for peace, a peace that pervades all areas of life, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Here questions like the following may arise:

How would the horizon of peace work in our respective fields? What kind of societies and what kind of a world order can it bring about? How can it deal with and revive the smaller and simpler cultures that are being condemned to die? What kind of systems of education can it provide? How can it approach Mother Earth in a peace-ful way? What holistic understandings of religions can it promote? What kind of peace treaties can it help work out for warring nations? What kind of models can ensure healthy, egalitarian and complementary relationships between men and women?

The paradigm shift has to be from the horizon of war which is exploitative to the horizon of peace which is explorative. The former lays stress on 'doing', the latter on 'discovering'. The dominance of the doing-model leads to overconfidence and hybris because it is exploitative. The discovering-model suggests a relational approach because it is explorative. The former aims at 'mastery' of the world, the latter discovers 'mystery' (depth-dimension) in every single thing. Doing has to be guided by discovering. That implies that doing has to be subordinated to discovering if exploitation and manipulation are to be avoided.

The task may seem to be almost impossible but we have no alternative except to begin from the very beginning and start spelling out our ideas, our yearnings and our dreams about a world that is founded on peace and rejects every form of violence as a solution.

To accomplish this task we need to develop a hermeneutic of suspicion which challenges the traditional expressions and formulations of the values and meaning-structures of our cultures. To put it positively, we have to ask ourselves the following:

Are our cultures open to other cultures? Do they promote dialogue with and understanding of other cultures or they suffer from a superiority complex and look down upon other cultures? Are they outgoing, ready to learn from others or do they believe that they are self-sufficient and so have nothing to learn from others?

3.1 The 'Exploitative' Myth and the Attitude of Mastery

The paradigm of making-and-manipulating is founded on reason. This could be paraphrased in the following manner: In the long run reason is sufficient to find solutions for all our problems if we work hard enough to solve them. Accordingly all our reliance is solely on human reason and human capability. Ever since the enlightenment the stress on reason has been increasing, indeed to such an extent that today reason is gradually being taken to be not only the single most important faculty of humans; it is even considered to be the highest. Human reason along with human capability is supposed to have no limits at all. We have reached a state where we have come to believe that we can do anything. It is only a matter of time and patience.

Reason analyses and reasons out step by step the different layers of an argument or a situation. Our age makes use of reason to see how we can subdue and exploit persons, nations and Mother Earth and, if possible, bring everyone and everything under our control. Reason has become the ultimate authority on which we build our life and our civilization. Though there are many who believe in the immaculate conception of science, the brain child of reason, there are others who are not willing to buy this. Reason, they say, can function at a certain level only and so is unable to have access to other levels of reality. If we live and act only on the basis of reason (as we usually do) then the will-to-power becomes the dominating factor in our lives. This is the foundation of the exploitative mentality.

Raimon Panikkar has, in his characteristic manner, drawn attention to the inordinate homage we pay to reason in the following three Sutras[15]:

a) Reason is not the whole of Logos. b) Logos is not the whole of Man. c) Man is not the whole of Being.

In contrast, our present model of constructing the world of meaning is built on the supremacy of human reason, the self-sufficiency of human capability and the centrality of the human being in the world. Making, doing, producing as reason tells us to do – this is the myth that animates our age, a myth which to a great extent neglects the attitude of being open to and discovering the other dimensions of reality.

It is true that reason like light brightens the way and therefore is indispensable. Indispensable? Yes, but not sufficient. We also need understanding to recognize that the way that is lighted up is really our way. Reason reasons out but it is the understanding that understands. Reason analyses and deduces but it cannot do so without understanding. Reason is based on understanding. Without understanding reason cannot function. Any reason in order to be reasonable has to be understood but understanding cannot be reasoned out. Hence, to neglect the realm of understanding and to focus on reason alone is to have a one-sided view of the understanding process.

As a matter of fact reason does not constitute the whole range of human consciousness. Human consciousness is more than reason; it also includes understanding. Take, for instance, a joke. It cannot be reasoned out; it needs to be understood. Or again, take love. Love is not founded on reason though one may seek reasons for love. Love needs to be experienced, understood and enjoyed. In other words, there are areas in life where reason cannot enter, much less function.

But today's Mantra is different: Make love, not war! That is to say, both love and war are reduced to the same level, the level of making and manipulating. We are led to believe that love like war can be made! Humans can make anything today. And reason supports and says: You may do whatever you can! Do whatever you are capable of. The effect of this is that we have begun to believe that *we can accomplish anything! We are self-sufficient!* With that we have succumbed to the old temptation of wanting to be like God!

Now the self-sufficiency of human reason and human capability are clear symptoms of the disease which the Greeks called *hybris*. *Hybris* is overconfidence, overconfidence in oneself and that

too to the extent of being blind to the claims of reality on us. See where this attitude has led humankind.

First, look at the phenomenon of *militarization*: its scope, its scale, and its strength![16] *Nuclearization* will henceforth remain a permanent threat! Compare the preparations for war with preparations for peace, to say nothing about improving conditions in the rural areas.

Second, take *globalization*: some of its aspects are a new form of *colonization*, a form that is now riding roughshod over small cultures and in the process is simply ignoring the smaller systems![17]

Third, see what the overall state of the *environment* is! In some cases the damage, we are told, is beyond repair.[18]

Fourth, examine the dominant *political and economic systems* which are at work in nations that are said to be products of the enlightenment, systems that have no place for their own poor and helpless, to say nothing of the poor peoples of the world![19]

Fifth, scrutinize the *social systems* of our times and see how the weak, the aged and the helpless are pitted against the bold, the bright and the beautiful and ask whether *women, especially in India,* can escape the age-old discriminations and prejudices.

Sixth, probe into the *religious traditions* of the world and examine whether they are *liberative* and liberating systems or whether they are systems that *legitimize* oppression and discrimination.

Could one have a more inhumane world where the luxury of the few is paid for by the misery of the vast majority, where peace is understood as no war, and where the question of the humanity of women and dalits is hardly considered to be an important issue?

The happening of September Eleven is a symbol of *hybris* on the side of terrorists as well as on that of the anti-terrorists. Both are convinced that *they* can defeat the other side, that *they* can lead people to victory, justice and prosperity! What is implied is the conviction that human beings are totally self-sufficient. Of a piece with this kind of thinking are the characteristic points of departure of the mindset of our times: Action, not passion, reason, not reasonableness, initiative, not inspiration. The attitude of discovering-and-receiving

as a constitutive element is lacking to a great degree. We are all falling prey to this malaise.

It is from this perspective, I suggest, that we have to view our present predicament and to become aware of the source of the gigantic problems that we are facing. Whatever problem we may be tackling, be it that of women or of war, of poverty or of population we have to ensure that we do not neglect major areas of life, and that our solutions do not become part of the problem by introducing side-effects that are worse than the problems we set out to solve (like in the case of nuclear energy). September Eleven stands as an epitome of such a path. *But the very fact that the exploitative myth draws attention to what is lacking in our present situation could help in the emergence of a new myth and a new attitude.* With that I mean the explorative myth and the attitude of discovering.

3.2 The Explorative Myth and the Attitude of 'Discovering'

The explorative myth is characterized by discovering-and-receiving.

What is discovering? The attitude of discovering presupposes openness. When I am listening to a joke, for instance, I am not reasoning out, rather I am pondering over and opening up to what is being said. And it is precisely *understanding* (and not reasoning about) what is being said that *makes* me break out into laughter. I do not break out into laughter by myself and on my own, as it were. It is the bottom-line of the joke that makes me break out into laughter. To enjoy a joke one needs openness to an aspect of life over which one has no control. You have to let go even though you are not sure where the bottom-line of the joke is going to hit you. Laughter is the resonance of the joke. It is a response that is not determined by reason but is evoked when one is open to 'receiving' a joke and discovering its bottom-line.[20] Such opening up is a *response* but a response is not something passive. At the same time it is not a producing, a making, a doing. As a response it is in the nature of a resonance. But no joke however powerful is going to make a person laugh who has no sense of humour, that is, a person who is not open to the humorous side of life.

If discovering presupposes openness, openness presupposes the attitude of receiving what is discovered. Just gazing at what is discovered is not enough; we have to receive what is discovered. An open person is not like an open box! Openness in a person has something dynamic to it. Indeed receiving is so closely linked to being open and discovering that without receiving both of them would be mere words. It is the attitude of receiving that gives them the finishing touch.

More importantly, however, when we receive and really take in we do so with much attention, otherwise it becomes a mechanical transfer. When we receive something or someone we do so with heightened awareness. We concentrate and focus on and listen to, and ponder over what is being said. In this way receiving is connected with listening, concentrating, pondering in the heart, understanding.[21]

3.3 The Mastery and the Mystery Models

The difference between the two attitudes is that of mastery and mystery. In the doing attitude guided by reason we see the mastery attitude at work. Doing has an important part to play in our lives but the doing of the mastery attitude is really our un-doing. It is a doing from a will to power, control, and mastery. It is one-sided and partial, and is the product of blind overconfidence, emerging as it does from blindness and leading to deeper blindness. It instrumentalizes everything and everyone. We see this clearly in the problems that our world is facing today. The mastery attitude is symbolic of our lack of faith (hope and love).

The mystery attitude is one of openness, an openness that takes one in the direction of wholeness and harmony. It does not take boundaries for granted but ever seeks to go beyond them. The doing that emerges from the mystery attitude is like laughter that emerges when we catch a joke. It flows spontaneously without an act of the will. It springs from what we have understood and comes out from a heart that is opened up.

4. Openness to the Way of the Spirit

To my mind, a very good example of the discovering-and-receiving attitude is to be found in the pericope of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).

"And their eyes were *opened* and they *recognized* him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road and *opened* to us the Scriptures?" Lk 24: 31-32

The attitude of openness is a gift of the Spirit! Only She can open us up, only She can help us to understand and to discern. And if something makes sense to us, we have to remember that it is She who makes meaning in life possible. If this Spirit were to animate us and our world we would be in a position to withstand the power of money and militarization, to struggle against injustice and instrumentalization and to overcome problems like sex and gender differences.

In other words, this is the age of the Spirit, the Advisor, the Counsellor, the Consoler, the Inspirer, the one who renews the face of the universe and of human history. It is from her that we have to implore an attitude that is totally absent in the happening of September Eleven, namely, *trust in the force of love and not trust in the love of force.*[22] Armed forces cannot annihilate terrorism totally but only forces armed with the Spirit of love and justice can do that.

How do we go about this? To teach someone to love, to write a poem, to crack a joke is indeed a difficult, if not impossible, task. But we can be open to love, open to poetry, music and art, open to learn to laugh at ourselves. We can support people who are capable of doing this. We can open our eyes to the many good things that are happening in this world, search for people in the world who are doing wonderful things in their own small way. The positive attitude of mystery is one of openness and hope while that of mastery is one of calculation and expectation. It is openness that we need to cultivate, openness to a world which is the sacrament of God's love and which Christians call creation.

The way towards a solution is to cultivate and give priority in our lives to the world of the Spirit, to the mystery attitude from which alone genuine doing and making emerge. If we wish to learn from history then we have to remember that any doing which is manipulative will be our undoing. But a doing that emerges from receiving, hearing, listening, understanding and contemplating will bring out the right kind of response!

That is to say, our paradigm has to change: from the doing mode to the discovering mode, from the manipulative attitude to the mystery attitude, from the primacy of reasoning to the primacy of responding and resonating.

The solution then lies not in the primacy of doing but in that of discovering. Discovering the presence and work of the Spirit in the world.

In that case September Eleven could evoke a new meaning and bring forth a new world: a passover from a metaphor of tragedy and transgression to a metaphor of transcendence and transformation. Not a world of hybris but a world of hope, hope in the world of the Spirit, not in the world of matter. Not neglecting human effort but relying on and in communication with a world that is our first beginning and final fulfilment. Transcendence is not 'something' that is other-worldly but 'something' that houses our being, 'something' that turns the house of our being into a home, 'something' that teaches us to discern between a house and a home. This is Jesus' paradigm of the kingdom of God, that is, of a world which is our ultimate home. The transformation that follows from this has to do with "love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:23).

Thus September Eleven could be both a warning and a reminder. A warning that if we and our world continue moving in the disastrous direction of that ruinous day the future will indeed be bleak, that is, if there is going to be any future at all. And a reminder that there is the path of dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures that in the long run is the only way for the survival of human beings and their planet. Peace is not just 'no war' but an attitude that has the concern of the whole universe at heart and listens and learns from the perspective of the welfare of all beings.[23] One of the important ways to peace is dialogue at all levels. For dialogue is an expression of 'cosmic confidence'. As Panikkar puts it:

> Cosmic confidence is not trust in the world, confidence in the cosmos. It is the confidence *of* the cosmos itself, of which we form a part inasmuch as we simply are. It is a subjective genitive: the confidence itself is a cosmic fact of which we are more or less aware, and which we presuppose all the time. If the cosmos, understood here as a name

for the entire reality, had not an intrinsic 'consistency' and were not the very source of all our values, we could not develop that basic attitude which is at the root of all our thoughts and feelings".[24]

In other words, cosmic confidence refers to the Spirit of love and understanding at work in the world. Cosmic confidence means being animated and led by that Spirit. In the very tragedy of September Eleven there is the real possibility of the birth of a new paradigm of dialogue and discernment and the arrival of a new age where the Divine Mystery will teach us new ways and we shall learn to walk new paths. All our 'doing' will then be in the nature of a response to the divine initiative. Though we may not beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks (because the age of nuclear missiles that cannot be recycled has replaced them[25]), nation shall learn to dialogue with nation, "neither shall they learn war any more."[26]

Notes

1. See what the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade has to say, http://www.ncf.ca/coat/

   September 11: A pretext for war" (Saturday, April 27) Join us to hear two speakers: Michel Choussudovskyand Barrie Zwicker. (at Montpetit Hall, 125 University Ave., University of Ottawa).

   In their presentations, Barrie and Michel will discuss how the terrorist attacks of September 11 have been used as a pretext to unleash the so-called "War on Terrorism" whose real purpose is to project U.S. military, political and economic control over Central Asia and elsewhere. Barrie's controversial new video, "The Great Deception," will also be shown.

   See also the warning given by the Inter-Faith 'Sign-on' Statement on Terrorism, National Council of Churches, USA, http://web.archive.org/web/20010920003821/www.ncccusa.org/news/interfaithstatement.html:

   Second, we offer a word of sober restraint as our nation discerns what its response will be. We share the deep anger toward those who so callously and massively destroy innocent lives, no matter what the grievances or injustices invoked. In the name of God we too demand that those responsible for these utterly evil acts be found and brought to justice. Those culpable must not escape accountability. But we must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life. We pray that President Bush and members of Congress will seek the wisdom of God as they decide

upon the appropriate response.

2. This belief however is not restricted only to these two groups but is pretty widespread . In a way one could even go so far as to state [as a working hypothesis] that this belief seems to constitute the base of all cultures except in the case of the Quackers and perhaps the Jains. See R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament.* The Way to Peace (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), Chapter Thee, Toward a Philosophy of Peace. Nine *Sutras* on Peace, 13-25.

3. How flawed are arguments in favour of arms bild-up is convincingly shown by Baker Spring from the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies in "Myths about Missile Defense and the Arms Race", Published by The Heritage Foundation,214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E. Washington, D.C. (July 13, 2000). http:// www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1385.html

   See also "Scientists' Declaration on the Nuclear Arms Race" set forth by the Union of Concerned Scientists in August 1977. Though not fully in favour of total disarmament, the document states the following:

   The arms race is in full swing! The roughly twelve thousand strategic warheads of today are likely to become thirty thousand long before the end of the century and the tens of thousands of tactical weapons augmented also. These increases and the improvements in missile accuracy, retargeting capability and invulnerability lead to greater "flexibility"—and so to the greater likelihood of starting nuclear weapons' use. What results is the undermining of the balance of terror. New weapons now in sight will further decrease the stability of this delicate balance and will make the monitoring of future arms agreements more difficult, if not impossible, without gaining decisive military superiority for either side.

   The superpowers' belief that security rests with potent nuclear armaments is more and more shared by other nations. The strategic arms race stimulates the proliferation of nuclear weapons among nations some of which may be weak or irresponsible, and thus more likely to resort to the use of nuclear weapons in a local war. Such wars could easily widen, thus adding to the likelihood of a final immense nuclear holocaust between the superpowers.

   More than ever it is urgent now to slow down and ultimately to stop the nuclear arms race, thus improving the stability of the nuclear stand off and setting the stage for reduction of the great inventories of weapons.By the year's end, over 12,000 scientists and engineers had endorsed the Declaration.

4. Following R. Panikkar I shall employ Man only when the context refers to the three centres of Reality God, World and Man. These are the

substantivizations of the three primordial adjectives: the divine, the cosmic and the human.

5. See the summary of the Forum "The WTO and the Global War System which was organized by American and Canadian peace groups as part of civil society activities surrounding the Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in November, 1999.

   The forum examined the links between economic globalization, the WTO and militarism. It looked at how the WTO's promotion of economic globalization undermines security, creates conflict and promotes militarism. There were four speakers at the forum. Susan George opened the forum by discussing how the current economic system is creating economic and social strife around the world. Mark Ritchie then discussed the history of the Bretton Woods institutions and their original purpose to promote peace. Alice Slater discussed how nuclear weapons are defending American corporate interests, and how the U.S. Space Command envisions the militarization of space to defend American "interests and investments." And Steven Staples closed the afternoon by discussing how the WTO promotes war economies by protecting military spending and the arms industry. He also offered case studies showing how corporations have been able to use WTO rules and dispute panels to block peace-building economic strategies of peace activists.

6. See the Canadian magazine *COAT* (Coalition to Oppose Arms Trade) 47 (March, 2002): Divide and Rule: Understanding the India-Pakistan Conflict. Apart from the historical information and comments on the supply of arms by Canadian Military companies there are useful charts giving details of military exports to India and Pakistan.

7. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament.* The Way to Peace (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), 111, quotes Rodrigo c Carazo Odio, former president of Costa Rica and in 1983 president of the United Nations University of Peace (Teilhard Review 18 [1983]: 87): "in the developing nations there is one soldier for every 250 inhabitants, but one one physician for every 3,700."

8. See Panikkar's Nine Sutras on Peace, Chapter Three, Toward a Philosophy of Peace *Cultural Disarmament.* The Way to Peace (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 15-23, esp. Sutras 3-5:

   3. Peace is neither conquered for oneself nor imposed on others.
      Peace is received, as well as discovered, and created.
      It is a gift (of the Spirit).
   4. Victory never leads to peace.

5. Military disarmament requires cultural disarmament.

9. For a more precise usage of 'symbolize' than the popular usage see footnote no. 7 on K. Rahner and R. Panikkar.

10. An illustration of how the spiral of violence can be contained we have in the Buddhist tradition in the story of Prince Dighåvu of Kosala who remembering the advice of his dying father's advice about forgiveness spares the life of the one who has murdered his family and usurped his throne. Mahåvagga X.ii.3-20. Reference from George M. Soares-Prabhu, "'As we forgive': Interhuman forgiveness in the Teaching of Jesus," *Concilium* 184 (1986), 57.

11. See Aidan Rankin, *The Ecologist* 31:9 (November 2001), 47: "Economics, originally the science of household management, is reduced to number crunching, more a modern superstition than a science. Instead of treating it as the servant of humanity, we allow it to take on a life of its own and become our master. We worship economic forces and markets with a zeal uncomfortably close to religious mania."

12. See, for instance, Basarab Nicholescu, "The Unfathomable Pornography of Binary Thinking" *Bulletin Interactif du Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires* n° 16 – Février 2002 (Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires). http:// perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret/ – 10 mars 2002,

    Is it merely accidental that the new century begins with an act of horror that marks for ever the imagination of our generation and of those to come? The capacity of human beings to forget is certainly infinite, but it can't act on symbols. And it is precisely a symbol that was aimed at by the cold and implacable brain of an esoterico-technological engineer who conceived the act of staging the castration of the economic and financial power thought of, till now, as untouchable.

    We can't keep silent and accept, certainly not in an involuntary way, what is at the end of the road: the self-destruction of our species. It is crucial to ask questions about the roots of this horror if one really wants to put oneself on the road to a new kind of learning reality.

    One lesson I draw myself from the period we now live in, starting September 11, 2001, has to do with the unfathomable pornography of binary thinking. This phenomenon is not new. Modernity invented all kinds of deaths and ends as a consequence of binary thinking: the death of God, the death of man, the end of ideologies, the death of Nature, the end of history and – tomorrow – the end of science and the end of religions...

    A second lesson I draw is the necessity to rethink the problem of the sacred. We *illiminated* the sacred in what we thought to be an act of freedom, of liberation of the human being. Thus appeared the reign of relativism in the name of which one can assert anything and also the

contrary of anything. The terrorist acts "in the name of God (or that of the Good)" and those who fight the terrorists act also "in the name of God (or that of the Good)." Which God? Are there as many Gods as there are religions?

I think that a new vision of learning must integrate the search of the transcultural and of the transreligious attitude. The transreligious attitude is not simply a utopian project – it is engraved in the very depths of our being. The transcultural (transreligious) designates the opening of all cultures (religions) to what cuts through them and transcends them. If the transcultural and transreligious attitude were to find their proper place in modernity, a war of civilizations could not take place.

Basarab Nicolescu is a theoretical physicist at CNRS, University of Paris, a member of the Romanian Academy and President of the International Centre for Transdisciplinary Research (CIRET = Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires).

13. More appropriate than the expression "horizon of understanding" (or preunderstanding, Vorverständnis) is Panikkar's usage of "myth". Myth is not restricted to understanding only but is the comprehensive background of all our living, loving, believing and knowing. We cannot know myth directly but only indirectly through our beliefs, metaphors and values.
14. We do not have to go very far to illustrate this. The conflict between Croats, Bosnians and Serbs (an European example), or what is going on at the moment in Gujarat with some fanatical Hindus going after Muslims (an example in our own country which has preached Ahimsa for thousands of years) or the holy war of the Muslim terrorists and President Bush's holy war against terrorists (an international example).
15. R. PANIKKAR: "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel – A Meditation on Non-Violence", in: *Cross-Currents* 29:2 (1979), S. 214-215.
16. See, for example, R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament.* The Way to Peace (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995),107:

    The total cost of killing an 'enemy' in Julius Cesar's time was $1.00. World War I had to pay $20,000. World War II, $115,000. And the Vietnam War cost $300,00 per dead enemy. In World War I, 90 percent of those killed were military; in World War II, 50 percent; and in the Vietnam War, only 10 percent (ninety percent of those killed were civilians). The Gulf War was even worse. (Data collected by Frank Barnaby of SIPRI, Stockholm.)
17. See John Feffer, "Militarization in the Age of Globilization", *New Global Affairs Commentary* available in its entirety at: http://www.fpif.org/commentary/0111mic.html.)

As a result of the September 11 attacks, the dangers of globalized militarism—the deregulation of weapons markets and the privatization of militaries—has become apparent even to the Bush administration. Weapons can end up anywhere; terrorists can raise funds in deregulated financial markets and unregulated black markets; private armies can rival state militaries. State subsidies for military production, protected by the security exception, have only increased the number of weapons available. In this new era, international institutions should permit government subsidies, investments, and taxes that scale down arms production, redirect funds from the military to the civilian sector, and otherwise dismantle the economic motor of globalized militarism. This is the one type of security exception to free trade regulations and budget restrictions that makes sense in a world awash in weapons.

18. See Thomas Berry, *The Great Work; Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 199:

    As happened at the moment when the amount of free oxygen in the atmosphere threatened to rise beyond its proper proportion and so destroy all living beings, so now awesome forces are let loose over the Earth. This time, however, the cause is from an industrial economy that is disturbing the geological structure and life-systems of the planet in a manner and to an extent that the Earth has never known previously. Many of the most elaborate expressions of life and grandeur and beauty that the planet has known are now threatened in their survival. All this is a consequence of human activity.

19. See the *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty.* http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/

    At the start of a new century, poverty remains a global problem of huge proportions. Of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion live on less than $2 a day and 1.2 billion on less than $1 a day. Eight out of every 100 infants do not live to see their fifth birthday. Nine of every 100 boys and 14 of every 100 girls who reach school age do not attend school. Poverty is also evident in poor people's lack of political power and voice and in their extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, personal violence and natural disasters. And the scourge of HIV/AIDS, the frequency and brutality of civil conflicts, and rising disparities between the rich countries and the developing world have increased the sense of deprivation and injustice for many.

20. But obviously openness alone is not enough to enjoy a joke. One has to belong to the region or the culture where the joke is at home. Normally one takes this aspect for granted when one cracks a joke.

21. Understanding means following what is said, what is happening. Following however can be taken in two senses: One, to follow something

as when we say, "Do you follow what I am saying?" And two, following in the sense that someone following someone as the disciples followed Jesus. But the two meanings of understanding are very different indeed because they function on two very different levels of awareness. The first kind of following is really what we usually call understanding and the second refers to 'what makes sense'. We cannot understand love as we, for instance, understand the dynamics of a story (first level). On the other hand, even if we do not understand the phenomenon of love it still could very well make sense to us (second level). If the first level refers to understanding, the second refers to faith. This is an ontological approach to faith. It builds on the openness of our being. In a very primordial sense faith is the openness of our being.21 It is here that myth emerges and resides. Whatever change of attitude is desired and is desirable it has to take place here.Understanding and believing, being two poles of the same continuum, are intimately related but not identical. Believing surpasses understanding. Beliefs are not the same as believing. They are the *expressions* of believing. An act of faith is not to be identified with its expression. It is the expression that understanding concentrates on.

22. Cfr St Augustine's words (Letter to Darius, 229, 2): "It is more glorious a thing to slay wars themselves with the word than human beings with the sword; and to win or keep peace with peace than with war." Quoted from R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament.* The Way to Peace (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), 61. See also George M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Synoptic Love-Commandment. The Dimensions of Love in the Teaching of Jesus", *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, (Ed). Francis X. D'Sa (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series Vol 4, 2001), 110-125.
23. See the "Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence", Building a Culture of Peace *COAT* 41 (July 2000).
24. "A Self-Critical Dialogue", *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, Joseph Prabhu (Ed.) (New York: Orbis, 1996), 281. Panikkar elaborates and clarifies what he means by cosmic confidence: "Cosmic confidence is not our interpretation of the world. It is that awareness which makes any interpretation possible. What the principle of non-contradiction does in the logical field the cosmic confidence performs in the ultimate order of reality." Ibid.
25. See "Plowshares vs. Depleted Uranium", *COAT* 41 (July 2000), http:// www.ncf.ca/coat/
26. Isa 2:3-4.

References

Berry, Thomas

1999 *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future,* New York: Bell Tower.

Carazo Odio, Rodrigo

1983 *Teilhard Review* 18.

COAT (Coalition to Oppose Arms Trade)

2000 "Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence," Building a Culture of Peace *COAT* 41 (July).

2000 "Plowshares vs. Depleted Uranium," *COAT* 41 (July), http:// www.ncf.ca/coat/

2002 "Divide and Rule: Understanding the India-Pakistan Conflict," 47 (March).

Feffer, John

"Militarization in the Age of Globilization," *New Global Affairs Commentary* available in its entirety at: http://www.fpif.org/ commentary/0111mic.html.

Nicholescu, Basarab

2002 "The Unfathomable Pornography of Binary Thinking" *Bulletin Interactif du Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires* n° 16 – Février.

Panikkar, R.

1979 "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel – A Meditation on Non-Violence," *Cross-Currents* 29: 2.

1995 *Cultural Disarmament, The Way to Peace,* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.

Prabhu, Joseph (ed.)

1996 "A Self-Critical Dialogue," *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, New York: Orbis.

Rankin, Aidan

2001 *The Ecologist* 31: 9 (November).

Soares-Prabhu, George M.

1986 "'As we forgive': Interhuman forgiveness in the Teaching of Jesus," *Concilium* 184.

2001 "The Synoptic Love-Commandment. The Dimensions of Love in the Teaching of Jesus," *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, (Ed). Francis X. D'Sa, Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series Vol 4, 110-125.

Spring, Baker

2000 "Myths about Missile Defense and the Arms Race", N.E. Washington, D.C: published by The Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. (July 13).

The Union of Concerned Scientists

1977 "Scientists' Declaration on the Nuclear Arms Race" (August).

World Development Report 2000/2001

2001 *Attacking Poverty,* available at http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/.

Websites

http://perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret/ – 10 mars 2002.

http://web.archive.org/web/20010920003821/www.ncccusa.org/news/interfaithstatement.html:

http://www.fpif.org/commentary/0111mic.html.

http://www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1385.html

http://www.ncf.ca/coat/

http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/

Article received: August 15, 2002
Article approved: November 16, 2002
No of words: 8692

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 101-120

The Hijacking of Religion Unmasking Violence Discourse

John D'Mello
Dept. of Social Sciences, St Pius X College, Mumbai

Abstract: The author studies the relation between religion and violence within the special context of India. He tries to unmask religious discourse on violence and contends that most of the violence in the world is not caused by religion but by the state.

Keywords: Violence, terrorism, religion, state violence, religious discourse.

In his editorial introduction to the book "Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World," Mark Juergensmeyer begins in the following way:

> Violence has always been endemic to religion. Images of destruction and death are evoked by some of religion's most popular symbols, and religious wars have left through history a trail of blood. The savage martyrdom of Hussain in Shiite Islam, the crucifixion of Jesus in Christianity, the sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Sikhism, the bloody conquests in the Hebrew Bible, the terrible battles in the Hindu epics, and the religious wars attested to in the Sinhalese Buddhist chronicles indicate that in virtually every tradition images of violence occupy as central a place as portrayals of non-violence (Juergensmeyer 1992: 1).

From the above citation of Juergensmeyer one may be led to the impression that religion is the major source of violence in the world, even though Juergensmeyer himself does not subscribe to this view. One might however be tempted to attribute the rising violence in the world, as many 'post September 11' newspaper articles did, to the variable of religion. The situation, I feel, is far more com-

plex and such a simplistic, straightforward cause-effect analysis is problematic to say the least. It is the premise of this paper that most of the violence in the world today is not caused by religion, but is state-driven. Not only was the birth of nation-states associated with violence, (vide the English, Russian, Chinese, French revolutions), but the nation-state is the only agency that has the means, the money, the technology and a military-complex to unleash a scale of violence of alarming proportions. By far the greatest amount of violence in the world is state produced, state supported or a reaction to state repression.

If this is true, then why is religion associated with violence? The clue to an answer lies, I imagine, in discourse theory. Strictly speaking, religion has little to do with violence (Schilleebeeckx 1997: 131). However, the nature of religious discourse is such that it can be used as a tool by the state and other agencies to 'legitimatize' violence. Thus, indirectly it does have a part to play. The purpose of this paper is to try to understand how religious discourse is used as a legitiming force.

1. Religion provides the language, the mythology, the imagery, which can then be used by political or politico-religious leaders to motivate people to violence.

2. Religion is a powerful source of identity; so if political leaders use religious discourse, based on the majority religion, to construct a national identity, the door is open for violence against minorities.

3. The variable of religion is used as a smokescreen or external 'peg' to conceal deeper economic or material interests, which are the real causes of conflict.

The purpose of this paper then is not to develop an apology for religion but to unmask the discourse by which religion is linked with violence. Specifically, the paper's task is twofold: to establish firstly that the so-called 'religious violence' compares minimally to the scale of state violence; secondly, to understand the role of religious discourse in explaining the association of religion with violence.

Different types of violence

If violence is defined as "the destruction of life, limb or property," perhaps it might be best to begin by an elementary classification of the different types of violence experienced in this world. The focus of this classification would be the 'perpetrator' of violence, rather than the 'victim' of violence. Eqbal Ahmed affords a brilliant starting point with his taxonomy of terrorism (2001). I propose to modify his typology, adapt it for violence and flesh it out with examples of my own. While Ahmed spoke of five types of terrorism, I would suggest six types of violence.

1. One type of violence is the violence perpetrated by individuals. Under this category I would include homicide, abuse, assault and battering as well as every form of discrimination, whether of gender, race, or age. In all these cases, violence is committed by an *individual,* whether out of revenge, jealousy, or any other motivation.

2. Another type of violence is the violence of organized crime. Here I would include the loss of life and property that results from delinquents and gangs, whether professionally organized like the mafia or even those not so well orchestrated, but generally associated with businesses like gambling, narcotics and land acquisition.

3. The third type of violence is called religious violence, *in the strict sense*, that is to say, violence committed by religious persons or religious organizations. Under this there are at least two categories: a) the violence resulting from certain types of religious expansion and conversion (including the Crusades, the Caliphate conquests and colonial expansion) b) the violence against those who challenge religious truth or dogma (Inquisitions and persecutions of heretics). Religious violence, in both senses of the term, is generally considered a phenomenon of the past. Religious conversions by force are on the decline and likewise persecution because of religious truths is fast disappearing from today's world, though one might come across some sporadic instances, like the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie or the silencing of certain theologians.

4. There is a fourth type of violence, not mentioned by Ahmed, but very prominent in liberation theology literature (see Davies 1976:

130ff). This is institutional or structural violence, the violence of an unjust law or unjust policy, or the violence enshrined in social customs and traditions. The law of untouchability, the 'deliberate' lack of basic amenities, drinking water, electricity in Indian villages, the tradition of dowry, unjust labour laws, or unfair international trade practices, are typical examples of this type of violence, often sanctioned and legitimized by the state but also by other agencies. According to Sobrino institutional violence is the root of all types of violence (Sobrino 1997/4: 39). The suffering and harassment from institutionalized violence gives rise to most change-oriented groups – dalit or feminist groups, environmental groups or worker unions - that eventually want to rectify these unjust policies. Thus, women consider their secondary status in society a form of institutionalized violence, which gives rise to all the other types of violence, like rape, wife battering and prostitution. The deleterious, long-term effects of institutionalized violence have been well brought out by liberation theology.

5. The fifth type of violence refers to the violence of certain revolutionary groups or movements. These are people who are protesting a cause and want to be heard. They generally have an issue that they want redressed, but the tactics they use classify them as violent. At one end of the continuum are the extremists, often called terrorists, because even their symbolic (read suicidal) actions end in violence; at the other end of the continuum are the moderates, more confrontational, who use minimal violence. Even though many of these groups may have a very strong religious motivation or ideology, they are actually political in nature and are wrongly classified as "religious groups." Thus, for instance, the Al Qaeda or Hamas groups, the Zionist or Meir Kahane factions, the I.R.A. (Irish) or the E.T.A. (Basque group), the Tamil Tigers or the Bajrang Dal, Baader Meinhof or the Italian Red Brigade (Juergensmeyer 2000)[2] all have (or had) political or nationalist goals. They are more political than religious. Even those groups with an apparent religious ideology actually have political intentions.

6. The sixth and most important type of violence is state violence. It is the most important because it has caused the greatest number in loss of lives and the largest destruction of property in the

history of this world. State violence goes under various names: *repression* against citizens, whether fully sponsored or supported; and *aggression* against other nations, whether overt or covert. One example of overt repression would be when the Republic of China crushed the Tien-an-mien rebellion; whereas an example of covert repression is what happened in India in Gujarat and Mumbai when the government and police stood idly by or positively supported a pogrom of violence against the Muslims (Bannerjee 2002 and Lewis 2002). With regard to violence against other nations, the US bombardment of Iraq with subsequent sanctions is a form of overt aggression, whereas its support of the Contra movement in Nicaragua was more covert and subtle.

The purpose of this entire panorama was not so much to draw a somber, pessimistic view of the state of the world, as much as to situate the role of religious violence in this entire scenario. One conclusion which surfaces is that the notion of 'religious violence' is a blurred category to say the least. Firstly, it can refer to strictly religious violence (when violence is restricted to fighting over a matter of religious truth or dogma) but this is diminishing in today's pluralist world (Houtart 1997/4: 3).[3] Secondly, the term religious violence can also be used to refer to instances of institutionalized violence that are religiously sanctioned (like caste) but even here religion is only the "canopy" or "external justification"; the real root cause is economic, social status or political power. Lastly, we have also seen that the label of religious terrorism has been used with regard to revolutionary movements that have a religious inspiration and use a violent strategy, but this is a misnomer as these groups are actually political in mission and in nature.

Religious violence Vs state violence

The second conclusion that emerges from the above classification is that in terms of scale religious violence is minimal compared to state violence. If a good indicator were 'loss of lives' then comparative figures will illustrate the point. The New York WTC bombing of Sept 11 has been described as the work of religious terrorists. Even if one accepts this for the sake of the argument (I would however strongly dispute it; more appropriately it was the action of a

political group), in that bombing 3000 persons lost their lives, whereas the initial bombing of Iraq by the US (a clear case of overt aggression of one nation against another) left over 200,000 dead (Thobani 2002: 107). To take the more recent instance of Afghanistan, I have not yet seen exact figures of the number of lives lost in the bombing of Afghanistan (another example of overt aggression) but UN estimates report that over 3 million Afghanis have been rendered homeless (Thobani 2002: 111). No one can dispute that in terms of loss of lives and property, religious violence is Lilliputian in comparison to state violence.

The sociologist who has devoted a considerable time researching the question of the nation-state and violence is Anthony Giddens. For him the nation-state is the pre-eminent holder of power in the modern era. It has implemented violence at a new level because it has been able to mesh industrial production with military strength. The stupendous scale of military expenditures by both developed and developing nations is an indicator of the military society we are living in today. At no other time in the history of the world has the global military complex been so threatening or, as Giddens phrases it, "the combined spread of industrialism and of the nation-state system has served to ensure that every state across the globe now possesses armed strength far in excess of that of any traditional empire" (Giddens 1987: 254). If Giddens is right, then the inescapable inference from this is that we are living today in a militarized war culture. Not only is our vocabulary and terminology war-like (words like bombard, conquer, blast, defeat, etc are now transferred to everyday situations) but it is as though the entire environment we breathe in is highly inflammable and we are sitting on a powder-keg ready to explode at any minute. This overall situation is the remote cause of much of the violence in the world. Religion at most can only be an ancillary or aggravating factor.

Going by statistical studies, Quincy Wright, covering a fairly vast period from 1482 (the Conquest of Granada) until 1940 (World War II) listed 278 instances of war that were fought between members of the modern family of nations. The most combative nations were: Britain, France, Spain, Russia and Germany (Wright 1965). Lewis Richardson, a Quaker, making a more detailed list, examined

the period from 1820 to 1952 and found 315 instances of wars, with 78 combating nations. According to Richardson, by far the largest number of wars was caused by economic and territorial factors. Religion could be said to spark the cause of conflict in just 15 % of the cases (Wilkinson 1980).

Very often when people, (especially media personnel), talk about violence, they seem to have at the back of their mind "terrorist violence," and of the different types of terrorism, they are thinking mainly of "terrorism" that stems from a religious motivation. So the frame that dominates the mind when talking of violence is religious terrorism. This is misleading. The purpose then of this broader classification of violence is to demonstrate that religious violence or even violence that is religiously motivated is hardly the main perpetrator. State violence is by far the greatest and most dominating culprit.

Why then does religion have a bad name? Why is religion associated so much with violence? Why do people speak about the logic of religious violence, when they should be speaking about the logic of state violence?

Discourse theory offers us a clue. Both religion and violence are discourse-related. So when religious discourse is usurped or hijacked we have a highly explosive situation. This situation is exploited by the state or other agencies and violence ensues.

The importance of discourse[4]

Discourse is very powerful. Michel Foucault has forcefully demonstrated this in his book:, *I Pierre Rivierre* (Foucault 1975). The definition of truth, according to Foucault, in the matter of a crime committed, is the result of a contest of discourses – legal, medical, criminological, psychiatric. The domain (or discourse) with the most powerful vocabulary has the ultimate power to categorize, label, assign punishment and define the truth.

Discourse starts with events; interpretations or constructions are placed on these events and an interpretative discourse is developed. It is this discourse, when embodied within a community, which plays a powerful role. David Apter, a foremost analyst of violence,

tells us "Without discourse, events may explode, burn brightly for a moment, then sputter and go out. It is only when events are incorporated into a discourse that the context for violence builds up, and becomes self-validating and self-sustaining" (1997: 11). According to Paul Brass, whether to define an occurrence of violence as an isolated instance of crime, as a riot or as a pogrom depends on the choice of discourse and is therefore an inherently political action (1997: 4,5).

Language and vocabulary are crucial in discussions about violence. For instance, calling a person a "terrorist" already prejudices the issue and judges the person's action negatively. If instead you were brought up, within the revolutionary sub-culture the same person would be labelled a "freedom fighter." That is why the Reuters news agency has decided to drop the word "terrorist" and instead use the more neutral word "militant." It all depends on who controls the main media channels and where you stand vis-à-vis the dominant culture. Using Noam Chomsky's words, "Consent can be manufactured," depending on who is doing the manufacturing. So often we hear the expression 'terrorists are evil because they kill innocent lives" and we tend to agree with it. Whereas a nation-state may be allowed to kill thousands of innocent lives and just because it is part of the meaning-making agency, the same loss of innocent lives is termed "collateral damage" and no one disagrees.

Having seen the salience of discourse, we shall now enquire into how the hijacking of religious discourse is accomplished.

1. First of all, religion has the language, imagery and mythology to generate passion, intensity of feeling and deep commitment. Religion is able to command such loyalty and zeal precisely because it can connect the mundane with "ultimate concerns."

One of the great symbols that religion can offer is the image of "*cosmic war*" (Juergensmeyer 1992:145-60). This is a powerful image because it recasts a conflict between two ordinary terrestrial groups into the metaphysical conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Thus, it makes the ordinary protagonist feel that he or she is part of some great cosmic war. Secondly, every group will try to project the idea that God is on their side. This pro-

vides the identity and opposition, "we" versus "they," with 'we' being on the side of the good, and 'they' being the enemy. Thirdly, when an ordinary battle is transposed into fighting the "war of God," the protagonist becomes an instrument of God's vengeance and therefore violence against the enemy is justified. Lastly, the image of "fighting for God" becomes the perfect explanation for sacrificial death. In case one loses one's life, one need not be troubled; one becomes a "martyr."

Now, we can understand why V. H. Dalmia, the then president of the VHP, told an assembled crowd of half a million Hindus in New Delhi's boat club in 1991 that "the struggle for Ayodhya is a continuation of the ancient battle of the Ramayana" (Fineman 1991). By comparing the Ayodhya struggle to a mythological battle, Dalmia was very subtly also comparing the 'kar sevaks' to religious heroes of the Hindu epic and thereby elevating them in the process. It is for the same reason that Balasaheb Thackeray also called the Ayodhya struggle a dharma yuddh (holy war) (*Saamna* editorial as cited in Katzenstein, Mehta and Thakkar 1997: 385).

Uma Bharati, a VHP spokesperson, went a step further and demonized the Muslims likening them to the demon Ravana... Addressing a multitude, she declared: "We could not teach them with words....now let us teach them with kicks. Let there be bloodshed once and for all. The holy men who lay the foundation of the temple will destroy the tyrant just as Ram had vanquished Ravana" (Katherine in Arvind Sharma 1994: 99-100).

Osama bin Laden, for instance, months before the bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, declared in a public broadcast that American actions in the Middle East were "a clear declaration of war on God, his messenger and the Muslims. Jihad is therefore our individual duty" (cited in *India Today* 2002: 34).[5] By turning the struggle against Americans into a war on behalf of God, he was able to call up numerous young men to work for his organization. George W. Bush Jr., President of the US, uses similar discourse in trying to get all the American people on his side, when, post September 11, he termed Osama, "a destroyer of everything good" and termed Iraq, Iran and N. Korea as the "axis of evil" thereby

registering the almost-unanimous consent and backing of the American people for his 'war against terrorism'.

This 'cosmic war' image also offers a justification for violence. In a situation of warfare everything is justified. In time of peace, these same actions may not be permissible Thus Godse defended his assassination of Gandhi by saying that it was "moral" though "illegal" (see Jayvant Dalvi's play *Mee Nathuram Godse bolthoy*). Perhaps a good example of the use of religious ideology to inspire commitment is seen in the difference between the two ideologies of the moderate *Gush Emunim* (Zionist block of the faithful) and the extremist American *Jewish Defence League* (founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane). For the Gush Emunim, Jews must be thankful that God has given them the state of Israel. For Kahane and the JDL, Israel is given to the Jews by God as *an instrument of revenge*, so that they can take revenge against all those who had discriminated against the Jews, God's chosen ones (Ehud quoted in Juergensmeyer 1992: 48-49). The ultimate aim of the JDL, like that of Ariel Sharon, is to bring a million more Jews to populate all Judea and Samaria. When religious discourse reverberates with themes of revenge, (and then it is no longer *religious* discourse) it is no wonder that members of the JDL are willing to be violent.

Lastly, religious mythology offers tremendous courage, because it offers a reward - paradise and after-life - to all those who may have to die for the sake of a religious cause. Marytrdom becomes a sacrifice for a greater good. Thus, the diary notes of Mohammed Atta, the militant who allegedly piloted one of the planes into the World Trade Center, speak about life after death, and tell of how he encouraged his fellow militants by describing images of rewards that God will give to all those who die for 'His' cause.

The important point to note is that the 'cosmic war' image is made use of equally by political agents and by religious leaders with political aspirations – *for political and nationalist purposes.* Thus, whether we are talking about the Sangh Parivar or the JDL, the Al Qaeda network targeting America or Bush targeting specific nations, the goals are all political. Religious images are expropriated to inspire and motivate their constituents and followers towards achieving these political goals.

2. Secondly, religious symbols and rituals can be co-opted to create a religious-national identity, which is potentially violent to minorities.

Religion – A source of identity

In the present world, due to a number of forces consequent upon globalization, people feel lost and long for an identity. *Economically*, there is a loss of jobs; *socially*, there is a feeling of loss and dislocation caused by migration from rural areas to the urban slums; *culturally*, a sense of insecurity as a result of the homogenizing and hegemonizing impact of the modern (mostly Western) world, which has ripped apart the familiar world of secure values and ideals (Kakar 1996: 187). At such a time religion steps in to provide the most stable and secure form of identity.

Religious identity touches the core of one's being. 'Who am I?" and "what should I do?" are the two central questions in a person's search for identity. And if the answers to these two questions are given more satisfactorily by religion than by any other variable, then religion becomes the strongest source of identity, more preferred than identities based on class, profession or other criteria. Thus, even during the height of the violence against Sikhism in Delhi in 1984, Sikhs were proud to display their religious identity even at the cost of being beaten up. They refused to discard the external markers of their religious identity – beards and turbans – even if it meant inciting the violence of the Hindu mobs (Bannerjee 2000: 19). Similarly, in the United States, even after September 11, many Muslim women continued to wear the burkha or chador, openly exhibiting their religious identity, in spite of having to face suspicion and discrimination.

There is no doubt that religion, with its encompassing Weltanschauung and entire corpus of myths, provides meaning and order to one's entire existence, which is vital at a time when the world appears to have become meaningless and values precarious (Kakar 1996: 189-190). The only other identity that comes close to religion in terms of unifying a collectivity is nationalism. That is why when religion teams up with nationalism the combination becomes highly combustible.

Religious nationalism of the Sangh Parivar

Given the fact that religious identity is so cohesive, we can understand the campaign of the Sangh Parivar to assimilate religious identity with national identity. Their strategy was to 'use the liberation of the alleged birthplace of Rama' (in other words use religious symbols, Ram and Ram Rajya) to forge a Hindu national identity. Put simply, religion was being hijacked for political purposes. This campaign was undertaken not by Hindu monks or swamis, but by politicians, Hindu Nationalists, who are not otherwise serious about religion, nor are they well versed in religious texts or theology. Their strategy was twofold: on the one hand, the struggle for the recapture of the sacred centre of Ayodhya was constructed into a struggle for national identity. This was accomplished through a whole sequence of religious symbols and rituals, which were basically Hindu but were projected as nationalist – starting with the Ramayana serial aired on public TV, the Rath yatra of L. K. Advani, the process of defining the birth place of Ram as historical, the Ram *shilanyas* (with processional carrying of bricks to Ayodhya), the Mahayanas and the audio cassette campaign, culminating in the demolition of the Babri Masjid, and the eventual construction of a new temple. The primary aim was the construction of a Hindu identity and consequent outlawing of minorities.

On the other hand, national identity was also being forged by an entire discourse against "the enemy." The concept of the outsider or the "enemy" is very instrumental in drawing a community together. The collectivity bonds together, forgetting their individual differences to focus on the "other," the 'enemy'. Thus, according to the Sangh Parivar's discourse, anyone who is not Hindu, is not nationalist. This has put all minorities, Christians, Muslims and tribals, outside the pale of the Hindu rashtra, and therefore potentially anti-nationalist. Muslims in particular were the favoured targets, especially since the antagonism with Pakistan is simultaneous and contemporary. According to the Parivar, Muslims at heart are pro-Pakistan and hence can never be trusted to be loyal to Bharat Mata. The bursting of firecrackers by a few Muslims after Pakistan's victory in a cricket match against India becomes incontrovertible evidence that Muslims are traitors to Mother India (Kishwar 1998: 259). It is be-

cause of this 'enemy' propaganda that minorities in India in recent years have been victims of atrocities – massacres and pogroms, one after the other, of Muslims, Christians and tribals, the most recent being the post Godhra pogrom against the Muslims in Gujarat, in which 800 persons lost their lives.

"Nationalism," according to Kishwar, "has caused more bloodshed and hatred than any other ideology in recent times. The two world wars, other devastating twentieth century wars, the current bloodshed in East Europe and the war between Iran and Iraq have all been rooted in nationalism" (Kishwar 1998: 252). The nationalist discourse, trumpeted by the Sangh Parivar in India, and raging for the last two decades, has been insidiously hijacking religious categories for political gain. It is the chief reason why vast numbers from the silent Hindu majority are slowly joining the ranks of the violent minority. It is the biggest factor for the violence against minorities, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or tribal.

Religious Nationalism of Iran

Iran is the paradigm of religious nationalist revolutions. Again it is a mistake to consider it a religious revolution. It was a political revolution that rode on the wings of a religious discourse. The Ayatollah Khomeini reinterpreted the meaning of the Ashura celebrations (the first 10 days of Muharram). The mourning for Hussain was altered to emphasize the collective outrage against oppression. In the words of the Ayatollah, "the month of Muharram is the month in which the leader taught us how to struggle against the tyrants of history, by attacking the 'Yazids' of the present age" (Juergensmeyer 1994: 52).

The chief tyrant or Yazid was the Pahlavi Shah, his introduction of Westernization and 'the consequent perversion' of Islam. The Shah had replaced the Islamic code with a secular code, had used Muslim schools and seminaries for secular purposes, had promoted the liberalization of women, and with it introduced a culture of Coca-Cola, discos and girlie magazines. The Ayatollah inveighed against all this in his discourse of re-Islamization. Eventually, the Shah was overthrown, and a new religious nationalist regime installed, but not without loss of lives.

> Some 7000 people were executed for crimes as varied as homosexuality and believing in the Bahai faith. For a time bands of young people in the Hizbollah (Party of God) roamed the streets, attacking anyone or anything that appeared anti-Islamic, even taking a group of hostages from the American embassy in Teheran (Juergensmeyer 1994: 55).

The Iranian revolution was a revolution that succeeded on the grounds of religious nationalism and at the cost of bloodshed. There is now a fusion of Iranian nationalist goals with Shi'ite political ideology. Once again religion was hijacked for political purposes, even though this time by a religious leader.

These two examples of India and Iran have demonstrated how political agents have used the cohesive powers of religion, including its symbols and rituals, to construct nationalist identities. This religious nationalist identity has then been the basis for violence against minorities and those who think differently.

3. Lastly, the variable of religion is used as a veneer, a smokescreen, an external 'peg' that conceals deeper economic and material interests.

Marx and Engels documented long ago in their historical studies that many of the so-called "religious wars" in France and Germany were deep down economic struggles between the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. Studying events further back in history, Jeanine Estebe analyses the religious wars of the sixteenth century (with their culmination in the 1572 St. Bartholomew massacres) as an expression of class hatred, a rising of the poorer peasant Catholics against the richer Protestant Huguenot merchants (Estebe 1968 and Quoted in Davis 1973: sec. III).

Following the same instrumental model, there are political analysts who, using a class-based analysis of BJP politics, ascribe the Indian communal conflicts to a strategy of the upper class *Brahmin elite* to increase their vote bank and ultimately monopolize the Indian economy and political power (Ram 1998). Asghar Ali Engineer is one such political scientist who argues that "Communal tension arises as a result of the skilful manipulation of the religious sentiments and cultural ethos of a people by its *elite* which aims to realize its political, economic and cultural aspirations by identifying

these aspirations as those of the entire community" (*Communal Riots in Post Independence India:* 34).

Perhaps the best example where religion has been used as a smoke-screen is Pakistan's hijacking of the separatist movement in Kashmir, *painting it over with religious fundamentalism* and injecting pro-Pakistani, jihadi elements into it. The separatist movement was not a religious movement at all. Its ethos was always multicultural and multi-religious. It was a simple movement for self-determination, representing the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The movement is now dominated by pro-Pakistani, jihadi groups whose radical extremism will not rest until the entire land of Kashmir is part of Pakistan (Muzamil 2002). It was and will always be a movement to gain control of the land of Kashmir but has been projected as a religious movement of Islamic peoples.

Moving to another continent, Paul Nzacahayo explains the story of Rwanda's miseries as both economic and eco-political. The story of Rwanda, he suggests, should be discussed in terms of the powerful trying to monopolize the resources, education, land, employment and finance (Nzacahayo 1997/4: 14). Rwandan society is divided into: Hutus 84%, Tutsis (15 %) and Pygmees (1%). So, if it was merely a question of tribal warfare, one can understand why Hutus were killing Tutsis and vice-versa, but how does one explain Hutus killing other Hutus? Unless, of course, it is also a question of power and land as well.

It would be truly naïve to describe the most notorious struggle in today's world between the Palestinians and the Israelis as a struggle between two religions. No doubt, religious factors have complicated the conflict, but deep down, no one can deny that it is a struggle for land. Likewise, even the war in Bosnia is not just a struggle for cultural identity, it is also a question of a struggle for resources. While religion may be the extraneous factor, the deeper causes are economic and political.

Why then do people speak of religious wars? Why then do the media refer to conflict as between Jews and Muslims, Christians and Protestants, Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, etc. Todd Gitlin (1980) showed how certain variables like religion can

become an easy and convenient "peg" or "handle" around which data and bits of information can more easily be pigeonholed. It is far more difficult and sometimes downright dangerous to unearth and expose the deeper-lying, vested economic and political interests. To take an example from family life, when a woman is battered by her husband, she goes to the police station to make her complaint. The attendant police officer takes down her complaint but when trying to attach it to a legal crime or misdemeanor, he files it under "dowry harassment" since dowry harassment is a common, well trodden path on which women's complaints are generally handled. At the present time, there is no legal provision specifically against wife beating, but there is one for dowry harassment (Flavia 1992: 23).[6] Hence, most wife battering cases are filed under the umbrella of dowry harassment. This becomes a problem later, because when questioned by the magistrate as to whether there was any dowry harassment, should the woman answer in the negative, the case is summarily thrown out of court. Similarly, the media classify "conflicts" and "violence" under the rubric of religion rather than economics or politics; for the media it is often a question of sound bytes; those sound bytes which are shorter and more manageable are more newsworthy than long-drawn out accounts, by which the entire historical, economic and political contexts are explained. It is more sensational and eye-catching to refer to an incident involving Muslims and Hindus, Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Muslims than to narrate the same incident in terms of more complicated economic and class variables.

The media have always been shapers of thinking. However, when the media use the 'simpler' categories of religion to understand conflicts, then religion becomes a smokescreen that conceals the deeper economic and eco-political interests that underlie these conflicts.

Conclusion

Having seen the various contexts in which religion is often caught up in a violence that it has not generated, the question now remains: what then is the role of religion?

The purpose of religion, as always, is to liberate people from the shackles that bind them. This is what Jesus did. This is what the

Buddha did. This is what Mohammed did. This is also the aim of the Vedas, the Gita and the Upanishads. Thus the aim of religion is violence reducing. This violence reducing role of religion, however, has been understood in two ways.

On the one hand, religion has been understood to reduce violence in a symbolic or ritualistic way. Religious ritual becomes the outlet for violence. According to Rene Girard who advocates this theory, the ritual scapegoat is the object on which violence is ventilated. The ritual, therefore, by drawing off violence symbolically, prevents the greater violence which might have resulted, had the ritual not been enacted (Girard 1977 and Girard 1986). In this way religion is violence reducing. Mahatma Gandhi for instance undertook a sacrificial 'fast unto death' whenever an ethnic conflict broke out in the country. He became the scapegoat to avoid the far greater ethnic violence that might have resulted.

On the other hand, a second powerful way in which religion reduces violence is by bringing about 'greater awareness'. The role of religion is understood as 'uncovering', 'revealing' or 'unmasking' the subtle manner by which all discourse is manipulated (especially religious discourse) for political and economic ends. An awareness of how religious discourse is used to legitimatize unjust structures can be very liberating and frees one to practise religion in an authentic manner. This is the great role and challenge of religion.

This is also its great ambiguity. Religion is very powerful and effective but in the wrong hands it can be the instrument by which the state and its political agents can let loose tremendous violence. The responsibility lies with those who wield religious discourse.

Reference

Apter, David

1997 "Political Violence in Analytical Perspective" in Apter David (ed.), *The Legitimization of Violence*, New York: New York University Press.

Bannerjee, Sikata

2000 *Warriors in Politics: Hindu Nationalism, Violence and the ShivSena in India*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Bannerjee, Sumanta

2002 "When the Silent Majority backs a violent Minority" in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Commentary), Mumbai: (March 30).

Brass, Paul

1997 *Theft of An Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence,* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Davies, J. G.

1976 *Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution,* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis books.

Sobrino, Jon

1997 "Religion and Violence: Outbreak and Overcoming: Latin America: Guatemala/El Salvador" in *Concilium* 4, New York: SCM Press and Maryknoll, Orbis books.

Davis, Natalie Zemon

1973 "The Rites of Violence: Religious Rites in 16th Century France" in *Past and Present* 59 (May) section III.

Ehud, Sprinzak

1992 "Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Meir Kahane: The Ideologization of Mimetic Desire" in Juergensmeyer (ed.), *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World,* London: Frank Cass.

Engineer, Asghar Ali

2000 "The Causes of Communal Riots" in *Communal Riots in Post Independence India,* Hyderabad, India: Sangam books.

Eqbal, Ahmed

2001 "The political terror of those who want to be heard" in *Asian Age*, published posthumously on Oct. 9.

Estebe, Janine

1968 *Tocsin pour un massacre,* Paris.

Fillingham, Lydia Alex

2000 *Foucault for beginners,* Chennai: Orient Longmans.

Fineman, Mark

1991 "The Wrath of Rama" in *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, (May 19).

Flavia, Agnes

1992 "Protecting Women Against Violence" in *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol 27, (April 25).

Foucault, Michel

1975 "I Pierre Rivierre Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister and My Brother... A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century," trans. by Frank, Jellinek, New York: Pantheon books.

Giddens, Anthony

1987 *The Nation-State and Violence*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Girard, Rene

1977 *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Girard, Rene

1986 *The Scapegoat*, trans. by Yvonee Freccero, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gitlin, Todd

1980 *The Whole World is Watching*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Houtart, Francois

1997 "The Cult of Violence in the Name of Religion: A Panorama" in *Concilium* 4, New York: SCM Press and Maryknoll, Orbis books.

India Today

2002 New Delhi: (Jan 7)

Jayvant, Dalvi

"Mee Nathuram Godse bolthoy."

Juergensmeyer, Mark (ed.)

1992 *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*, London: Frank Cass.

Juergensmeyer, Mark

1994 *Religious Nationalism confronts the Secular State*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2000 *Terror in the Mind of God: the global rise of religious violence*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Kakar, Sudhir

1996 *The Colors of Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Katherine, Young

1994 "Women in Hinduism" in Arvind Sharma (ed.), *Today's Women*

in World Religions, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod, Uday Singh Mehta and Usha Thakkar

1997 "The Rebirth of the Shiv Sena: The Symbiosis of Discursive and Organizational Power" in *Journal of Asian Studies* 56 (May).

Kishwar, Madhu

1998 *Religion at the Service of Nationalism,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, Prakash

2002 "Gujarat Genocide: Who is Guilty?" in *Subalterns,* vol. 10, New Delhi: ISI, (April-June).

Muzamil, Jaleel

2002 "My Lost Country: What Hope Is There for Kashmir?" *The Observer,*(Sunday, Feb. 10).

New York Times

1995 Jan 26.

Nzacahayo, Paul

1997 "Religion and Violence: Outbreak and Overcoming: Africa: Rwanda" in *Concilium* 4, New York: SCM Press and Maryknoll, Orbis books.

Quincy, Wright

1965 *A Study of War* (2nd ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ram, P. R.

1998 "Hindutva Offensive: Social Roots Characterization" in P. R. Ram (ed.) *Secular Challenge to Communal Politics: A Reader,* Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra.[1]

Schilleebeeckx, Edward

1997 "Documentation:Religion and Violence" in *Concilium* 4, New York: SCM Press and Maryknoll, Orbis books.

Thobani, Sunera

2002 "War Frenzy" in *Terrorism, Imperialism and War,* compiled by Ram Puniyani, Mumbai: BUILD Publications.

Wilkinson, David

1980 *Deadly Quarrels: Lewis Richardson and the Statistical Study of War,* Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Article received: June 10, 2002
Article approved: July 12, 2002
No of words: 6699

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 121-139

Violence
Moral Theological Perspectives

George Therukaattil MCBS
Chair of Christianity, University of Mysore

Abstract: After analysing violence, terrorism and war theologically, the author pleads for a culture of non-violence and prudent pacifism as the viable Christian option. We need to foster wise and bold initiatives towards peace.

Keywords: Conflict, peace, education, war, violence, terrorism, just-war.

We are living in a critical period of history after the brutal attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon of the United States on September 11. As Noam Chomsky has remarked, it is a historic event that is going to change history (Chomsky 2001: 8). Reflecting from a moral theological perspective and making an analysis of it and the response of the global coalition against terrorism, the question becomes relevant: Can we solve the menace of terrorism through war and alliances? Will it really root out terrorism permanently? Or will it escalate violence and lead to a spiral of violence? What possible options are there to fighting this war against terrorism and dealing with the situation that has led to it? And the more fundamental question that arises is: Should we exist together with a philosophy and theology of non-violence or perish together with a spiral of violence?

Terrorism is one of the greatest threats to the survival of humankind today. It has become a burning issue and poses a great challenge to human community. The notion of terrorism is complex. Terrorism may be defined as "the use of violence – as a matter of policy - to cause terror in people, usually so that those individuals will change their beliefs or allegiances" (Ashford 1998: 311). There

is a more fundamental issue with the question of what counts as an act of terrorism, because of late there is a tendency to use the term terrorism outside its more traditional place as a form of violence against governments and citizens. Thus, for example, the term is used in the debates about multiculturalism, racism, racial vilification, exposure to constant racial insults and threats (Ashford 1998: 311-318). The term 'terrorism' is also used in the debates about ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and narrow nationalism.

In addition, the question about terrorism is extremely complicated in today's world. On the one hand, the terrorists are organized and supported by political forces or people like bin Laden, using revolutionary, ideological and religious fanaticism for their own ambitious purpose and games of power. On the other hand, powerful countries like the USA tend to develop counter-revolutionary strategies that provoke terrorism by their injustices. Besides these, there are also hidden terrorisms that are written into the very system of globalization and market economy.

Of course, acts of terrorism must be distinguished from acts of violence that may be regarded as actions of 'just war'. According to St. Augustine, "Just wars are usually defined as those which avenge injuries, if a people or city, on which war is waged, has neglected either to punish what has been done wickedly by its own (citizens) or to give back what has been carried away" "(*Questions on the Heptateuch* 6, 10). But Augustine is careful to add that war is not a matter of taking revenge on others but rather a means of punishment or correction. Thus, though war or deterrence with strategic, tactical or conventional weapons must always be considered a pre-moral evil that must be avoided in principle, there can be circumstances in which the risk of a pre-moral evil can be justified, as for example to avert fundamental threats against those values which are considered to be essential for the existence of human persons as social beings: fundamental human rights such as the life and political freedom of civilians. So, while the effects of particular acts of violence may not be condoned, they may be condoned, when seen as punishment or justified retribution for re-establishing a proper order or for wiping out terrorism altogether. This is because it is the task of the State to establish and maintain a just political order within which human lives

can flourish. And since human lives can flourish only when persons are free to meet their obligations, the State has the responsibility to recognize, guarantee and defend these necessary freedoms against perversion and attack (Stob 1978: 193).

But as there are no clear-cut principles to determine when the concept of a 'just war' is correctly invoked, the invocation of it could be manipulated for the purpose of political expediency. Hence it is better to use the term "justified defence" instead of "just war". Only defence can be considered a right. War, even if it is for defence, is a very reluctant necessity and a last re, ort because of the many evils like love of violence, insensitivity and hatred of neighbour, feelings of revenge and reprisal that accompany it. Hence, from a moral theological perspective, the crucial question is not war or retaliation but defence, and only 'justified defence'. And the pre-eminent criterion of the right in defence is respect for the fundamental raison-de-être of defence itself, and that must be guaranteed by the principle of discrimination or non-combatant immunity. And in the extreme case where military and lethal means are considered, the logical structure of the *ius ad defensionem* is a calculus of value in which a pre-moral evil (the use of war or of deterrence as a means) is weighed against the possibility of avoiding a greater pre-moral evil.

In the light of this reflection, does the response of global coalition against terrorism demand Christian moral endorsement?

Resolution of terrorism through counter-violence is the brute way. It only breaks and wounds communities further, giving birth to new conflicts and reopening old ones. It is not the rational way, much less the Christian way. Retaliation and avenging the wrong doers can never be a response to end terrorism. It only makes us fall into the trap set by the terrorists as it accentuates fanatic fundamentalism from which the terrorists would want to reap benefits for their purposes. In the desire for retaliation it is always humanity that loses out. And as in all wars, it is the poorest of the poor who bear the brunt of them. The present war on terrorism by its asymmetric alliance only produces the spiral of violence and provokes enmity between the West and the Islamic world. And when the immediate victims of terrorists as well as those who counter terrorism are the poor and innocent citizens, no appeal to the merits or demerits of specific

foreign policies can ever justify or even purport to make sense of the mass slaughter of innocent persons.

Analysing further the issues politically, we find that the terrorist attack on September 11 is a creation of the USA and the West. For quite some time now the USA and Europe have acted with arrogance and ignorance toward other societies. They have pursued misguided and unjust policies. They have been casually slaughtering people all over the world. Is this not terrorism? Is this not a calculated use of violence to attain political goals through threats, intimidation and coercion? And now after the war in Afghanistan too, which killed thousands of innocents, the USA and Britain are lauded for the success. This silent genocide gives a good deal of insight into the situation and into the culture of Western civilization. The wealthy nations have to make a real self-examination here.

The USA and its Western allies are largely responsible for the global terrorist network that carried out massive atrocities all over the world. They have justified ruthless power, nationalistic and proxy wars and hatred of other nations, for fulfilling their own narrow selfish interests. These powers through their political and economic policies have reduced the economy of developing countries and created flagrant inequality in the world. Through their foreign policies, they have overthrown democratically elected governments and installed dictators and stooges in many Third world countries.

Besides, the people behind the attack on September 11 are the creation of the USA through its political policies and through its sale of armaments. It is the USA, with the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which hatched the *Taliban* and *Mujahidin* by giving arms and ammunitions to them through the ISI. It was the USA which created Osama Bin Laden. He was profusely helped economically and militarily by the USA to fight the Soviets. The USA is responsible again for the present-day terrorism. Having become the only superpower, the USA dictated the rules of global trade to suit its vested interests. It bombed Sudan, Iraq and Yugoslavia without any regard for the role and authority of the UNO. It went about killing people wantonly anywhere in the world in contempt of legal procedures and courts of law without presenting evidence to the world. It supported Israel's illegal military occupation of the West

Band and Gaza (Arun 2001: 11). By its support of Israel against Palestinians as well as its endless sanctions on Iraq and injustices in Arab countries, the USA has destroyed millions of innocent people in Islamic countries. Thus, the USA has not been less terrorist in the last five decades, than the so-called terrorists.

It is within such a complex scenario that we try to develop a moral theological perspective on the issue of violence and terrorism. Moral theology as a reflection on Christian faith as a liberating event, includes always an Exodus, a Passover. This is particularly so in our time. We need to leave behind an age of violence and enter trustfully into the new millennium in which the cultures of the Third world will be more decisive than those of the Western world. Christians have to get out of their man-made security to make room for the firmness, trust and fidelity that comes through faith. In the ongoing Exodus, Christians have to opt for the victims, the downtrodden, the powerless people, the modest cultures, the poor nations by taking up public positions and facing even grave risks. Those Christians in the wealthy countries have to take steps to spread the benefits of the 21st century in the whole world and reduce the risks. Only the radical Exodus of transcending narrow communal loyalty and selfish nationalism and opting for the poor with a commitment to non-violent means of liberation can free humanity from violence and ideologies that glorify the sharpening of tensions, conflicts and terrorism. This choice to be peace-makers is an absolute condition for the Exodus that brings hope for the future. "For a Christian, creative, unbending dedication to non-violent action is the most valiant expression of faith in the Redeemer of the world, the Prince of peace who revealed the power of truth and love unto death on the cross" (Arun 2001: 409). Leaving behind the trust in armaments and wars, Christians and Christian nations have to turn away from any thought about 'holy wars' and crusading traditions.

Corresponding to such moral theological reflection, Christian nations must take the leâd to evaluate situations and develop active and creative means of non-violent change. The powers of non-violence have not yet been adequately activated by Christians in socio-political issues. In order to be a prophetic voice and a true liberating witness, the Church has to oppose the silent violence precipitated by

unjust economic and political structures that create abject poverty which is the breed;' g ground of terrorism. The Church and especially her authorities must be continually alert so that they do not become instruments of any governments. The Church has often vehemently opposed the violence by the victims and the oppressed classes, while it has not as much opposed the less publicized violence against the poor and innocent people precipitated by unjust structures and oppressors. She has often failed to be a peace-maker. Instead '...she has taken part in a war-mentality through coalescence with cultures marked by false elitism" (Häring 1981: Vol. III. 406). She has not accustomed herself to be active in struggles for human rights, social justice and peace that concern public life.

In the light of these reflections, the first thing that USA and all of us should ask is: What motivated the hijackers to sacrifice their lives? Why did they carry out such a horrendous attack? What is its real cause and source? What forms of commitment should we take with regard to the oppressive systems and structures for bringing about peace and justice in the world? How should we behave in the face of oppressive and unjust institutional violence? Should we just sit back and passively observe the violation of the rights and dignity of the poor people. Everyone should be equally shocked by the unjust suffering imposed by the selfish and powerful on the poor and downtrodden.

Analysing the September 11 terrorist attack we find that it is an act of vengeance resulting from the injustices meted out to Islamic nations. Studying and looking deeper into the real cause and source of the terrorist attack on September 11, we see that it is only a symptom of the great scandal of a world divided by large and flagrant injustices and inequalities. It is a sign that there are serious problems within the social system that must be corrected. The first question the international community should raise is this: Have we done enough to remove the economic structures which violate the rights and dignity of people and produce such an abyssal difference in the form of an ever-widening gap? Have we done everything in our power to promote justice and to create grace-filled structures for a better world of equality and justice?

Today's widespread escalation of violence, terrorism and mutual contempt is symptomatic of the failure of the existing insti-

tutions and structures to provide a holistic vision, a sense of purpose and mission to create a peaceful person in a peaceful society. The situation of widespread violence and terrorist attacks should shake us into an awareness of the deep social malaise we are in. It should provoke deeper reflection and honest self-examination. The global alliance formed today against terrorism tends to forget the fundamental cause and source of terrorism itself. The event of September 11 shows how prolonged tyranny can damage gravely the fundamental rights of the individuals and the common good. It shows how abject poverty is driving people to become terrorists. It is often the poor people or half-educated and unemployed rural migrants, who constitute the lower classes in the congested and overcrowded cities, who easily fall victims to the manipulations of terrorists like bin Laden and get recruited to their band.

All organized as well as spontaneous outbursts of violence and terrorism have political and economic roots. They are reactions against the unjust structural and institutional violence in the world today. There is violence due to ethnicity, social inequalities, economic oppression, fundamentalism, narrow nationalism in the world. There is the Superpower's desire for hegemony with national security complexes. The Superpower sells arms to both sides in the wars and conflicts. Terrorism is also propagated by the highly sophisticated arms selling agencies. We are living in a world of collective injustice, group egotism, aggressive and acquisitive mentality. There are people who want to be in power and subjugate everyone. They are ready to perpetrate ruthless violence to be in power. It is a world with a network of conflicts and spirals of violence that operate nationally and internationally. The arms dealers work on fomenting them.

So while searching for remedies, we have to first look into the root cause and source of terrorism. Basically it is a question of denial of human rights and injustice. We need to realize that justice within nations and between nations as well as human rights of individuals and communities are basic human demands both in times of peace and in times of war (Arokiasamy 2002: 4-5). The criminal nature of silence and neutrality in the question of global injustice and abject poverty should be questioned. Bold and imaginative initiatives should be taken out to bring about global solidarity for peace and justice.

Our common concern should be building a fraternal world and our common task should be declaring war against the global tragedy of poverty, illiteracy and consumerism rather than the "war against terrorism". These shared concerns would certainly generate an inner coherence of vision and purpose for bringing about global solidarity.

In the light of the above reflection, there is a need to interpret Moral Theology's principles on violence differently. In general, the theology of justice and non-violence are seriously distorted by people to serve their own interests and those of the class to which they belong. Violence seems to have become endemic in our daily life. As it appears, the system has no solution. The victims of oppression are totally alienated and can do nothing unless the political and operational revolution explodes. The only hope for them lies in revolutions. But revolution has been branded as sinful, and revolutionaries have been branded as sowers of hatred and bloodshed. Traditional Moral Theology, with its classist character, denounced revolutionary engagement and searched for theological formulations coherent with the praxis of capitalism and imperialism. It is those with a vested interest in the *status quo* who brand revolution as sinful.

Only if we listen in solidarity to the cries of the victims of oppression can we understand what violence does to people, see its inhuman face and eliminate it. "If we are to break the poverty-barrier for almost two-thirds of the earth's people, if we are to continue to inhabit the earth, there has to be a revolution in the relationship of human beings to the earth and of human beings to each other. The churches of the world have now to choose whether or not they become part of this revolution" (Beich, *Document no.A1).* Moral theology should interpret differently its principles on revolution and violence. "It should deal with questions of illegal violence challenging the injustice of those who exercise a monopoly over legal violence through the mechanism of state power" (Therukattil 1988: 227). Then there could be just revolutions and liberating violence.

A theology of just revolution and liberating violence is most relevant today when so many lives are sacrificed by prolonging an economic structure that has ceased adequately to serve the needs of the poor. A 'liberative violence' in desperate situations of structural

violence or oppression, where only it can change the unjust situation, has to be justified as a means for an urgently needed social change to liberate the poor from an established, permanent and grievous violence. Violence which sheds blood in planned revolution may be a lesser evil than the violence which, though bloodless, condemns whole population to perennial despair. If violence is justified in self-defence, then why shouldn't it be justified as a means for removing unjust situations? "Violence should not be divorced from the conflict situations in which it is exercised... A distinction must be made between, on the one hand, the 'calculated' use of revolutionary violence .... and the violent 'explosions' of people long suppressed who have reached the limits of their endurance" (Bonino 1983: 109). Many of us tend to condemn open and insurrectional violence, while at the same time we condone the subtle and institutional form in which it thrives in the body politic. We are shocked by the violence on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, but we are not shocked at the hidden violence of misery imposed on millions created by unjust economic and political structures. Moral theology should have a pronounced bias towards the poor and the powerless. The Christian can never forget the special claim of the poor and his need to tilt in their favour. The people seeking revolution are usually those who are poor and oppressed – a fact though it cannot justify revolution or violence but nonetheless is an important consideration.

Terrorism is an offshoot of globalization and consumerism. Though we do not claim to possess full knowledge of the motivations of the attackers and their sympathizers, what we do know suggests that their grievances extend far beyond any one policy or set of policies. The attackers despise the overall American ethos and the entire American way of living. For example, consumerism as a way of life or the notion of freedom with no rules, the notion of the individual as self-made and utterly sovereign, owing little to others or to society, the weakening of marriage and family life, plus an enormous entertainment and communications apparatus that relentlessly glorifies such ideas and beams them, whether they are welcome or not, into nearly every corner of the globe. The Americans must put aside their national selfishness and ambition to dominate other nations. They must review their foreign policy and especially their approach to the problems of Islamic countries (Arun 2001: 11).

The Christian ideal in the face of violence is reform by love, forgiveness, persuasion and nonviolent means. As Pope John Paul II has said, "No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness" (Peace Day Message, I January 2002). Historic grievances shall never be compensated for by present retaliations. For Jesus non-violence implied enlightened forgiveness. Enlightened forgiveness does not mean submission to the will of the evil doer, but putting one's soul against the will of the tyrant. Such active forgiveness can be practised only from a position of strength, not from one of weakness. Such forgiveness may result in the change of heart in the evil doer. One of the best things that President George W. Bush did in the whole mess of September 11 attack was to go almost immediately to a mosque and meet Muslim leaders after September 11 and then to break the fast of Ramadan in the White House with a meal. Such acts of magnanimity and forgiveness will help the terrorists to ponder about their ways.

It is here Mahatma Gandhi's *satyagraha*, that is, the dedicated and complete non-violent struggle grounded in Truth, Justice and Peace, becomes most relevant. It is the most consistent and effective method to break the spiral of violence and hatred that is tearing our world apart. "*Satyagraha* liberates the world from the friend-enemy mentality, and thus from the vicious circle of fear and threat" (Häring 1981: 410). Active non-violence counters evil through ways other than violence. Non-violence not only resists evil, but if properly employed resists it more effectively than violence does. It liberates the oppressor who is also enslaved by the structures, which he dominates. It is an expression of spiritual power and spiritual strength and "constitutes in itself a witness against illegitimacy and cries out for its rectification and fundamental transformation" (Srisang 1983: 27). *Satyagraha* is active and not passive, it requires the cooperation of all, and it is obedience to the highest dictates of justice and of conscience. *Satyagraha*, 'holding firmly to Truth' is a dynamic attitude. The truth is in the future of which we need not have a clear picture. *Satyagraha* is a leap of faith into the unknown, the Lord of the Future. Holding the Truth is to struggle in hope and in love, trusting that the struggle for justice is never in vain for 'Truth surely conquers', *Satyam eva Jayate'*

Effective and active non-violence is something very challenging and demanding. It does not work unless we free ourselves from the lust for power and the culture of enslaving consumerism and greed. Peace in the world depends on the peace we achieve within ourselves. It is not to be interpreted as non-resistance. "Nor is it passivity and resignation in the face of violence and injustice. Jesus was not opposed to resistance or struggle against injustice. He did resist evil. He did not run away from his opponents. Nor did he give in to them. In fact, he actually raised the level of conflict by openly siding with the poor and the oppressed against the established authorities" (Podimattam 1990: 500).

The Gospel non-violence is not against the struggle for justice which in certain conflictual situations, may burst out into violence against a situation of 'manifest, long-standing and oppressive tyranny' (as Pope Paul VI says in *Populorum Progressio*) which makes recourse to violence lawful and necessary. While the Christian ideal is non-violent persuasion and reform by love, our doctrine of sin informs that force, violent or non-violent, is necessary to prevent evil and injustice. We need to be reminded that non-violence can become a power in the hands of the powerful to protect their status and privileges and to keep the *status quo.* Violence is by no means a Gospel value. Yet there are human situations in which only some forms of violence would seem capable of removing another form of violence. In this situation we are not only confronted by problems of non-violence or violent resistance against internal injustice, but also the problem of security and national defence against external threats by means of non-violent actions or military power.

In situations where violence is necessitated for security reasons, the governments should see that the social costs are proportionate to the end. In other words, defence measures must be in accordance with the national and international common good and, this cannot be realized without a preferential option for the poor. "This implies that from an economic view, the costs of defence may not be at the expense of social security and the promotion of social participation of the economically vulnerable, nor of the research and development of means that are necessary to resolve the problem of hunger and underdevelopment in the third world" (*National*

conference of Catholic Bishops 1986: n.24). Distributive and productive justice requires that we do not spend too much for military affairs so that we do not have enough resources to produce what would meet the basic needs of the poor inside and outside the country (no. 24).

The Christian conscience must always look for peaceful means of effecting social change and not wait for the situation to become so bad that violence becomes inevitable. The prophetic and social dimension of conscience as the voice of the 'Other' and 'others' and its formation by listening to the voice of the voiceless should be more and more emphasized (Therukattil 1987: 41-68). "Christian creativity cannot allow itself to be trapped in this dilemma of violent action or inactive nonviolence. Passivity and self-centredness are contradictions of the gospel, and God will require an account from us for the people who are forced to suffer due to our passivity, as well as for those who, driven by our passive attitude, ended up convincing themselves that the only way of bringing justice to the poor was the way of violence" (Antoncich 1987: 142).

Even in situations where violence is necessary to restore peace and order, it has to be in the context of sincere efforts of pursuing peace and reconciliation. It has to be tempered by an 'involved transcendence', as Mahatma Gandhi would say, with no hatred toward the oppressor. Such an 'involved transcendence' is the only way of breaking the spiral of violence which breeds further violence and injustice. But as often happens for the sake of quick efficacy, resorting to violence and bloodshed is not Christian. An authentic Christian moral perspective must recognize that it is God who ultimately establishes the fullness of justice.

But in the meanwhile, there is need to "renew and strengthen the movement of a global solidarity for justice and peace for all" (Arokiasamy 2002: 3). All of us will have to develop a truly global consciousness about what our responsibilities are to each other and what our relationships are to be. "The cry of no war therefore has to become a movement for global solidarity of people in a common effort for justice and peace. The deeper imperative behind all measures to fight terrorism has to be the imperative of justice within nations and between nations. We have become too accustomed and

immune to the inequality of the economic gap between rich and poor, between developing and developed countries. The so-called "war against terrorism" must begin with a serious effort to overcome the gross inequalities, economic, social and political, in our world community. It has to become a shared commitment of peoples and nations to correct fundamental injustices and thus to build peace. There can be no fight against terrorism without a probe into the causes of violence and the context out of which it arises. We need responses based on the criteria of our humanity and faith that hold promise of justice, peace, freedom and solidarity for all. We need creative responses worthy of our dignity. The project of peace-making is not an optional extra for Christians. In dialogical solidarity with all people of good will, we have to respond to the challenge of peace" (Arokiasamy 2002: 4-5).

Considering a world divided by huge injustices and with the structures of international injustice, we have to fight for a global ethics, based on the *humanum* and comprising the basic values, ideals and truths common to all cultures (trans-cultural values or core values). Hindu ethicists distinguish between *Sanatana dharma* and *vishesha dharma*. The *sanatana dharma* is inherently trans-cultural and trans-temporal and consist of values like tolerance, respect for life, social justice etc., without which social life would be impossible. We need such an ethics for protecting and fostering our fraternal communion and solidarity, especially in the context of international injustice and ecological crisis. Arguing for a meta-ethic with trans-cultural values does not eliminate contextual interpretations. A global just humanist ethic that can bring together the needs and concerns, the will and aspirations of differing cultures and ideologies may be the most responsible response to hidden terrorisms. Commitment to human rights and social justice should be based on a vision of the whole of humanity as a brotherhood/sisterhood of all and the Father-hood/ Motherhood of God. It should be based on a vision of *dharma*, a duty or obligation. The value of Justice has to be trans-valued by the trans-cultural value of charitable justice. Today when one can hardly act correctly locally without thinking globally, we need such an ethics with reciprocal obligation between people of one place and another and between different generations (Therukattil 2000: 195-214). We need then a globalization of humanity, a human solidarity

within a shared earth and a common destiny, within a plurality of perceptions, faith experiences, within the dialectic of the local and the global. In brief, we need a prophetic moral theology that will critique "prince and priest, market and mammon, multinationals and war merchants and all hegemony and all plunder of the poor" (*Final statement of the 4th General assembly of EATWOT*) by the superpowers or local magnates.

After the event of September 11, interreligious dialogue of life and action to foster peace and harmony has become all the more relevant. It has become an obligatory path for eradicating the cancer of competitive communalism that has infected world society. Through interreligious dialogue, we learn and understand the specificity of other's faith, which in its deepest level would make us inter-human by its demand of love of the neighbour (Arokiasamy 1991: 306-307). In such dialogues on theological level, we should be reminded that harmony between various religions would not come about by a 'world theology', "but by the development in the various traditions of specific theologies which, taking religious pluralism seriously, will assume their mutual differences and resolve to interact in dialogue and co-operation" (Dupuis 1991: 281). Arising from such dialogical interaction, cooperation for the building of the larger human community should be forged.

But unfortunately what we witness today is that religions have not come up as agents for resolving terrorism. Their valuable specificity, their original call to basic human communion and true openness have not been made use of for educating the public to refrain from encouraging terrorism by harbouring the terrorists in their homes or helping them in any other way. Terrorism would not succeed without public support. The world community and the governments in various countries have not sufficiently tapped the foundational inspirations from the core values of all religions and ideologies to motivate people towards non-violent struggles and make them work together for building mass movements for lasting peace settled on the foundation of justice ."It is through dialogue, not weapons, that controversies are resolved," said Pope John Paul II during his visit to Kazakhstan soon after the tragic event of September 11. Differences are bound to arise between communities, cultures,

countries and even more between civilizations. And as Huntington affirms: "... the religious resurgence throughout the world is a reaction against secularism, moral relativism, and self-indulgence, and a re-affirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help and solidarity" (1997: 98). Although one may not agree with Samuel Huntington's thesis of the inevitability of the 'clash of civilizations', at least one can agree with his central argument that there is a resurgence of cultures and civilizations today that are asserting themselves, causing a sharpening of the tensions and divisions and it is of utmost urgency to look for paths that lead to reconciliation, dialogue, and collaboration (Menamparambil 2002: 176). Many problems can be solved through real dialogue and international understanding. Demonizing Islam and branding it as fundamentalist is not helpful. Such an attitude would only further terrorism. It would only create a prejudice towards the Islamic community and provoke enmity between the West and the Islamic world. It would only encourage antisocial elements in the Islamic world to resort to terrorism. "In the context of the emergence of 'fundamentalism in several Islamic countries' and the alleged 'Islamic aggressiveness and obscurantism,' it may be good to look at what Islam has contributed to the modern West and through Western experience to the rest of the world" (Menamparambil 2002: 180-181).

Besides interreligious dialogue, dialogue between cultures and traditions is also required; dialogue in which there is collective search for the causes of violence and hatred that leads to terrorism. It is not so much dialogue with the terrorists, but with all people, especially with Islamic countries which have openly condemned the attacks in the USA. This will help the Americans to find the answers for the causes of terrorism in the world and reasons why Osama bin Laden is still not captured. It will help them to bring about 'infinite justice'.

Dialogue on various levels is essential for curbing and wiping out global terrorism. Such dialogue means visioning, planning and arriving at practical strategies for peace and harmony. An alignment of enlightened and critical people of good will and people who long for peace and global solidarity for justice is to be created for arriving at strategies for united action. It is joint action to bring about a transformation in society, in a neighbourhood, in a city and in a

country. It should aim at a change of minds and hearts, attitudes and perspectives. It should aim at an interior silent revolution of eradicating any trace of violence from the mind and heart. What we need is a "universal inclusive heart that can accept even violence in a non-violent way" (Mulloor 2002; 139). Dialogue is more powerful than the physical forces of guns and bombs. It has the soul-force of the inner and spiritual power of the transformed attitudes (Edwin 2002: 11).

We have to alarm public opinion and shake the conscience of those who participate in terrorist attacks. The terrorists and their foster fathers make use of people in desperate situations. They instrumentalize religious faiths because they know that religions only provide the basic motive and sustain the people whom they make use of for their malicious designs. Of course, in the case of terrorism, through communalistic interpretations the religious motives are distorted or misused deliberately for personal gain in the form of economic and political power. bin Laden has found that show of religion is the best propaganda tool that he can use in order to keep the masses belonging to contending ethnic groups and colliding regional interests united and loyal (Menamparambil 2002: 190). As Asghar Ali Engineer contends, religion is not the root cause of communal conflict but "is rather a powerful instrument in the hands of those *interests* which seek to play their games through it" (1984: 2-3).

Terrorism can finally be overcome only by social, economic, and political reform. But in the meanwhile, we need to tap the resources of good will and common sense for the work of wiping out terrorism. The issue needs to become the concern of everyone. What Moral Theology can do in this context is consciousness-raising to form a world-wide and strong public opinion against this great menace. A strong message should be given to the terrorists that justice cannot be achieved through violence. It should be "followed by a concerted effort in union with all peaceable people to convince public opinion, legislators and civil authorities how urgent it is to build up a strong movement against war and for peace and justice. It is not just a matter of defence of one's rights. We need a purposeful and comprehensive education and exercises to uproot mutual fear"

(Häring 1981: 410-411), all feelings of hostility, contempt, distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies. World opinion against terrorism is to be aroused. There should be efforts to bring to public consciousness the hidden conflicts and conflict-situations before they explode in such a way that they can no longer be managed. The art of dialogue, reconciliation, arbitration and patient development of healthier relationships also are to be studied.

An approach of wisdom and a bold initiative to mould and shape a united world of peace and brotherhood/sisterhood is what is needed today. Research into the preconditions of positive peace, peace-education and research into conflicts must also be a priority in Christian ethics. It should study and inquire into the various forms of 'unpeacefulness' and awareness of hidden conflicts, their causes. In the context of a Christian peace-ethics, limited use of violence must always be related not only to the fundamental Gospel values of non-violence, but also to prudent pacifism, which is very sensitive to the negative long term effects of the spiral of violence.

If only all Christians and all Christian nations reflected the spirit of St. Francis' prayer for peace: "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is sadness, joy; where there is darkness, light!"

References

Antoncich, R.

1987 *Christians in the Face of Injustice: A Latin American Reading of Catholic Social Teaching,* New York.

Arokiasamy, S.

1991 "Specificities of Faiths and Humanization" in *Responding to Communalism,* ed. S. Arokiasamy, Anand.

Arokiasamy, S.

2002 "Editorial: Global Coalition or Global Solidarity" in *Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflection,* January.

Arun, Joe

2001 "Can War Destroy Terrorism" in *New Leader.* Vol. 114, no. 20. November.

Ashford, Sue

1998 "Terrorism" in *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, chief ed. Ruth Chadwick, New York: Academic Press, Vol.4.

Augustine

Questions on the Heptateuch, 6, 10.

Beich, Charles

"Creation, Technology and Human Survival", *Document no.A1 (WCC publication service).*

Bonino, J. M.

1983 *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*, Philadelphia.

Chomsky, Noam

2001 "The New War Against Terrorism" in *Frontline*, Nov.23.

Dupuis, Jacques

1991 "Theology of Religions, Christian or Universal?" in *Responding to Communalism*, ed. S. Arokiasamy, Anand.

Edwin, Victor

2002 "What We Need Now is a Synergy for Peace" in *New Leader*, Vol. 115, no. 2, January 16-31.

Engineer, Asghar Ali

1984 *On Developing Theory of Communal Roots*, Bombay.

Häring, Bernard

1981 *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Slough, 1981, Vol. III.

Menamparambil, Thomas

2002 "Encounter of Civilizations" in *Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflection*, March.

Mulloor, Augustine

2002 "Jesus and Violence", in *Jeevadhara: A Journal of Christian Interpretation*, March.

National conference of Catholic Bishops,

1986 "Economic Justice for All, Pastoral letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy," Washington.

Podimattam, Felix

1990 "Violence and struggle for Justice" in *Jeevadhara*, November.

Samuel P. Huntington

1997 *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of the World Order*, New Delhi.

Srisang, Koson (ed.)

1983 *Perspectives on Political Ethics: An Ecumenical Inquiry*, WCC, Geneva.

Stob, Henry

1978 *Ethical Reflections: Essays on Moral Themes*, Grand Rapids.

Therukattil, George

1987 "Conscience: Voice of the Voiceless" in *Indian Theological Studies*, March.

1988 "Doing Moral Theology with the Downtrodden and Integral Human Freedom" in *Louvain Studies*, Fall.

2000 *The Claim of Justice in the Third Millennium*, Bangalore.

Article received: June 2, 2002
Article approved: July 3, 2003
No of words: 6752

JPJRS 6/1 ISSN 0972-3331, Jan 2003 141-153

Regional Councils

Norman Tanner SJ
Campian Hall, Oxford, U.K.

Abstract: The author pleads for the revival of Regional councils which are one of the most important factors in the growth and vitality of the Church during the first millennium. Flexibility and adaptation to the circumstances could doubtless be found in regional councils. Regions are coming to be seen as increasingly important in our global society. While people want to be part of the whole human family, they also seek smaller units of which the region is coming increasingly to be appreciated. For Christians, therefore, regional councils seem well suited to our new millennium.

Keywords: Regional Council, Future of the Church, Canon law, Church history.

Having spent two decades on ecumenical councils, I am glad of this opportunity to focus on regional councils.[1] They may seem lower-level councils of little authority and therefore small beer in the theme of this Conference, 'Authority and Governance in the Church'. Such an attitude, however, reveals a modern misunderstanding about the nature of authority in the Church, partly an unintended result of Vatican I's proclamation of papal infallibility and over-emphasis upon papal teaching. That is to say, there has grown up in the last century and a half a dangerous dichotomy between the teaching of ecumenical councils and the papacy on the one hand and all other teaching on the other: the former touches on papal infallibility and therefore is to be exalted whereas the latter is not and so can be dismissed as of little consequence.

Regional councils were, in reality, one of the most important factors in the growth and vitality of the Church during the first millennium. There was then much less of a dichotomy be-

tween them and, on the other hand, ecumenical councils and other institutions of church government: they went hand in hand with each other, each was dependent upon and understandable in terms of the other. In the Middle Ages, in the West, following the sad schism between the eastern and western churches, beginning in the second half of the eleventh century, regional councils continued to play a role, though one of less importance than in the early Church: a dichotomy between the papacy and other authorities began to emerge. After the council of Trent (1545-63), regional councils were definitely in decline. They lost their initiative, their legitimate role came to be largely confined to executing the decisions of higher authorities, whether they be ecumenical councils or decisions of the papacy. This demise of regional councils, and the culture of dialogue they embodied, has been one of the greatest blows in the history of the Church, a principal reason why the Church has found it so difficult to remain up-to-date.

These are sweeping statements, how do the facts support them?

Early Church

The classic collection of conciliar material, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, edited by Giovanni and his successors, reveals the remarkable number of regional councils during the Church's history, especially in the early centuries: fifty-three volumes in the final version of this monumental work, each averaging more than 600 folio-size pages, take the councils down to 1870.[2] The ecumenical councils are well covered yet the majority of pages are devoted to regional councils. The more recent editions of regional councils in the fourth to seventh centuries in Africa (i.e., the Roman province of Africa, in the Latin-speaking western half of north Africa) and Gaul (i.e., principally modern France but including some neighbouring areas in modern Switzerland, Germany and Belgium), edited by C. Munier and C. de Clerq, in the Corpus Christianorum series, focus more closely upon these two regions.[3] For Carthage alone records survive of eighteen regional councils between 393 and 419. For many of

these councils we know little more than that they took place. Clearly our knowledge, both in terms of the number of councils held and the topics treated, is only the tip of the iceberg of what was in fact going on. It should be remembered, moreover, that the total Christian population in the early church was only a fraction of what it is today — at most a hundred million in comparison with over a billion today - which makes the number and quality of the councils at that time all the more remarkable. Undoubtedly regional councils were at the centre of church order in a way they cannot be considered to be today, at least in the Roman Catholic church.

The strongest statement of the importance of regional councils in the early Church comes from canon 5 of the first council of Nicaea I in 325. The canon treats of excommunication and it ends with regulations regarding the rights of those excommunicated to appeal to a provincial council against their sentence.

> Concerning those, whether of the clergy or of the laity, who have been excommunicated, the sentence is to be respected by the bishops of each province, according to the canon which forbids those expelled by some to be admitted by others. But let an inquiry be held to ascertain whether anyone has been expelled from the community because of pettiness or quarrelsomeness or any such ill nature on the part of the bishop. Accordingly, in order that there may be proper opportunity for inquiry into the matter, it is agreed that it would be well for synods to be held each year in each province twice a year, so that these inquiries may be conducted by all the bishops of the province assembled together, and in this way by general consent those who have offended against their own bishop may be recognised by all to be reasonably excommunicated, until all the bishops in common may decide to pronounce a more lenient sentence on these persons. The synods shall be held at the following times: one before Lent, so that, all pettiness being set aside, the gift offered to God may be unblemished; the second after the season of autumn.[4]

The purpose of the council, according to the canon, was disciplinary: to provide a mechanism for deciding about excommunications. Discipline, or church order, remained a fundamental role of regional councils in the early Church but they were not afraid of discussing the great theological issues of the day. One might say, to generalize, that whereas decisions about

doctrine were the principal concern of the ecumenical councils of the Church's first millennium and those about church order were important but secondary, for the regional councils, taken as a whole, the order was reversed; though in a fair number of the latter, especially when doctrinal controversies were particularly acute, theological issues predominated. Often, as one would expect, doctrinal and disciplinary issues were interlinked and cannot be separated out.

The importance of councils in the life and government of the Church was stated most eloquently by the second council of Constantinople in 553. In this case, too, it is an ecumenical council that is speaking and in the first place it refers to ecumenical councils but the passage goes on to a more general recommendation of discussion at all levels in the Church.

> 'The holy fathers, who have gathered at intervals in the four holy councils [i.e., the first four ecumenical councils, Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon] have followed the examples of antiquity. They dealt with heresies and current problems by debate in common, since it was established as certain that when the disputed question is set out by each side in communal discussions, the light of truth drives out the shadows of lying.
>
> The truth cannot be made clear in any other way when there are debates about questions of faith, since everyone requires the assistance of his neighbour. As Solomon says in his proverbs: "A brother who helps a brother shall be exalted like a strong city; he shall be as strong as a well established kingdom" [Proverbs 18,19]. Again in Ecclesiastes he says: "Two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their toil" [Ecclesiastes 4,9]. And the Lord himself says: "Amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" [Matthew 18,19].' [5]

What was the influence of the regional councils in the early Church? This is a difficult question to answer and we must beware of imposing modern notions of direct influence: diocesan, provincial or other regional councils influencing ecumenical ones as if there was a direct chain of command. Of course there was influence of one council upon another. We may think of the influence of Antioch and other regional councils in 324 and early

325 upon the first (ecumenical) council of Nicaea later in the year 325; of Sardica (c.343) upon the successful reception of Nicaea; of Rome (680) upon the diothelite teaching of Constantinople III (680-1). Or the negative influence, in the sense that it produced a reaction, of Sirmium (357) and its 'Blasphemy', or the 'Robber' council of Ephesus in 449 which led to the reaction of Chalcedon, or the iconoclasm of Hieria (757) which was countered by the iconophile decisions of Nicaea II (787). But we must beware of a false teleological view of church history that, looking back from where the Church is today, sees the development that has occurred as inevitable and, as a result, wants to find the links in this chain of development. The actual situation was far more fluid, the end result less inevitable, at least in human terms. Another point is that it was not until the council of Chalcedon in 451 that the list of ecumenical councils came to be fixed. Beforehand, and for many communities long after, it was not clear which councils should be considered ecumenical: as a result the distinction between them and regional councils, including the difference in their respective authorities, was far from clear.

Keeping the Church Abreast and Ahead of Its Time

More important than looking for the precise influence of one council upon another, or upon the Church more generally, is the fact that councils were being held frequently and in many places. There was a general atmosphere of debate: councils, regional and other, provided a forum for views to be expressed and heard. The comments of Gregory of Nyssa regarding popular debate about the Trinity are well known. 'If in this city [of Constantinople],' he said, with the continuing Arian controversy in mind, ' you ask anyone to change money, he will first discuss with you whether the Son of God is begotten or unbegotten: if you ask about the quality of bread, you will receive the answer that the Father is greater than the Son; if you suggest you require a bath, you will be told that there was nothing before the Son was created!'[6] Gregory was speaking in the aftermath of an ecumenical council, Constantinople I in 381, yet his comments might well apply to the ambience surrounding regional councils of the time.

Regional councils helped to keep the early Church up to date, indeed ahead of its time. We can see this in terms both of church order and government and of doctrine. In all sorts of ways the early Church was ahead of its time in the social and political orders. For example, it accorded more rights to women than did secular society: slaves, too, were offered more hope and opportunity within the Church than in society at large. We need more studies on the role of women and slaves in councils. We know that women presided at two ecumenical councils – the empresses Pulcheria at Chalcedon in 451 and Irene at Nicaea II in 787 – and it would be good to know more about their role, and that of slaves, both direct and indirect, at regional and other local councils. Councils enabled the Church to be more democratic and representative than secular society. Of course one must beware of being over-optimistic in this respect. Bishops were the core members of regional councils, in this sense they were quite hierarchical: though more research needs to be done regarding their composition. Some families or individuals dominated the councils of a region just as they dominated its main see. We may think of the power of Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, until he was deposed by the regional council held in that city in 268; or various families who held sway over the see of Alexandria and hence over the councils in that region. Even so, councils may have meant that Christians sensed their voices were heard and their concerns met more than most people felt in society at large.

Today, on the contrary, the Church is in danger of falling into the pernicious trap of exaggerated counter-culturalism. While in the first millennium the Church accepted what was best in the forms of secular government and then went beyond them, now many in the Church are placing excessive emphasis on the government of the Church being different from that of secular society – that it has its own hierarchical forms of government that have nothing to do with secular democracy – and on the need for the Church to be counter-cultural. Earlier the Church had less fear of other institutions: it was readier to adopt for itself the good elements in them, to use and then to improve upon them, to give

a lead in society rather than to follow reluctantly or to distance itself unnecessarily. We saw a revival of this leadership in government, on the part of the Church, at the time of Vatican II, but the momentum does not seem to have been maintained. The councils of the past, including regional councils, open our eyes to hopeful possibilities for the future.

An eye for the future appears in the teaching of the early councils as well as in their institutional forms. They produced creeds and other doctrinal statements that endured for many centuries, indeed unto the present day. They were able to find words and expressions that not only brought the Church abreast of its time but somehow successfully foresaw developments in the future. How can this remarkable achievement be explained? Two factors seem to be decisive. First, the frequency and regularity of councils. They formed a continuous, ongoing process in which regional councils were essential. Above them, so to speak, were the ecumenical councils and it is their statements that we chiefly remember, but these can only be understood within the framework of many regional and local councils, as mentioned earlier. Secondly, the principal of unanimity. Councils were not like Congress or the Senate in this country, or Parliament in my own country, or most other national assemblies, where a majority of one is sufficient to pass a law. For the councils of the Church, unanimity, or virtual unanimity, has always been sought, so that their decrees are the result of consensus rather than a majority verdict. As such they reflect the collective thought and experience of many individuals, both those who attended the councils in question and many others who were directly or indirectly involved in their preparation. They show the collective thought of the Church, local or universal, and so are more likely to be prescient towards the future than are the ideas of one or a few individuals; however necessary individual initiatives may be on occasion.

Middle Ages and Later

When we turn to the Middle Ages, at least in the West, we find a much more 'from above' approach to councils. Two factors

seem to be decisive. First, the absence of the conciliar tradition of the eastern church. The councils of the early Church were held predominantly in the East and it was there that the conciliar tradition principally developed. The loss of the eastern influence, as a result of the schism between the eastern and western churches, meant a loss of this more democratic approach. Secondly, and accompanying this development, was the Gregorian Reform movement. Also beginning in the second half of the eleventh century and deriving its name from its most important figure, pope Gregory VII (1073-85), the movement exalted papal authority, initially in order to bring about reforms within the western church, and as a result there was increased emphasis upon papal authority over councils. The point is seen most clearly in the general or ecumenical councils of the western church of the period, Lateran I in 1123 to Lateran V in 1512-17. Apart from three of them towards the end — Vienne (1311-12) which saw tension between pope Clement V and the king of France, Philip IV, and the councils of Constance (1414-18) and Basel (1431-49), which clashed with the popes of the time — these councils have been described as 'papal councils'. That is to say, the council's decrees were largely prepared beforehand by the pope and his curia and the role of the council was little more than to approve, or rubber-stamp, this prepared legislation; there was relatively little discussion or making of the decrees by the council.

This 'from above' approach then impacted upon regional councils. Their role changed, to oversimplify, from initiating discussion and action to implementing or communicating the decisions of higher authorities: either the ecumenical (or general) councils or the papacy. The new role is well illustrated by those of the English church in this period, most notably the numerous regional councils - diocesan, provincial and national - that were held in the thirteenth century to implement the decrees of the fourth Lateran council of 1215.[7] Regional councils in the aftermath of the council of Trent (1545-63) were dominated by the implementation of this great council. Those held by Charles Borromeo in his huge archdiocese of Milan in the late sixteenth century are

obvious examples. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were regional councils of more independence, especially in France and the German-speaking lands, but they came to be associated with schism: Gallicanism in France, Febronianism in Germany. The whole conciliar programme gradually fell under a cloud of suspicion. Hostility to general or ecumenical councils, on the grounds that they might lead to a revival of the claims made in the fifteenth century by the councils of Constance and Basel to superiority over the papacy, filtered down to a suspicion of all councils as possible rivals to papal authority. Fear of the conciliar ghost remains with us today in many quarters of the Roman Catholic church. The restriction to an advisory role, and to a tightly controlled agenda, of the recently established biennial synods of bishops is one example of this fear; hostility to initiative on the part of episcopal conferences is another.

Regional Councils and the Future

The demise of regional councils represents one of the gravest wounds in the history of the Church. The lack of these and similar forums for discussion is an obvious reason why the Church has failed to keep abreast of the times or to give a more credible lead. It may also be seen as a major reason why Christianity has made little impact on the other major world religions of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as well as upon the rationalism of the Enlightenment and upon modern and post-modern secularism. Christianity's success has been largely, in terms of conversions, with peoples of more primitive beliefs and religions. Its relative failure with more sophisticated belief-systems is striking and surely due in part to the absence of proper structures for debate among Christians. Regional councils were a resource of the early Church, a treasure that would be highly relevant today and probably greatly prized by any successful business organisation or government, yet it has largely been thrown away. The Church now appears constantly on the defensive in the face of modern civilization and its challenges. It prospers in time of persecution or in a minority situation, yet as soon as some prosperity or a new

situation arrives it seems incapable of coping in a positive way. The brilliance of the Christian message is dimmed by the inability to adopt appropriate structures for its assimilation and proclamation: in marked contrast to the early Church when, in part thanks to regional councils, the Christian community grew in size and even more remarkably in depth of understanding.

In the desire to update the Church, much attention has recently been given to reform of the papacy and the possibility of another ecumenical council. Pope John Paul II invited ideas about reform of the papacy in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* and Archbishop Quinn, present here at this conference, has provided perhaps the most acclaimed response to the pope's invitation in his book.[8] Cardinal Martini of Milan, and others, have indicated the desirability of another ecumenical council. Too much hope, in my opinion, should not be put upon reform of the papacy and the Roman curia. It is notoriously difficult for any institution to reform itself, so that waiting for such reform may be waiting too long. Ecumenical councils, at least the more successful ones, seem to come unexpectedly. Few expected Vatican II, even fewer foresaw its remarkable success: the Holy Spirit blows where She wills. My own feeling is that Vatican II has not yet been properly digested and another ecumenical council soon might be more divisive than helpful. Regional councils, on the other hand, present a surer and more predictable basis. That they take place regularly is more important than precisely what they discuss and decide: they are deeply rooted in the Church's tradition and therefore of impeccable orthodoxy. They can be revived and promoted without awkward questions about their legitimacy.

Regional councils, moreover, are important for the Roman Catholic church's ecumenical progress with other christian churches. All the other mainstream churches accept some form of conciliar government and criticize the Catholic church, explicitly or implicitly, for having largely abandoned it in favour of more hierarchical institutions. As a result, the only forms of government that are likely to be acceptable to these other traditions,

in a united Church, are those with a conciliar basis. Emphasis is often laid upon the need to call a new ecumenical council at which all the churches will be represented. Maybe this is right but ecumenical councils are usually 'one off' occasions and waiting for the next one may be waiting too long. Regional councils are a sounder and more realistic possibility. They can be promoted, as mentioned, as being fully in conformity with the early tradition of the Catholic church and in accord with the practices of other christian churches, as institutions that can readily take root again without the need to wait upon the unpredictability of an ecumenical council and without engaging in the negativity that criticism of the papacy often entails.

Conclusion

You may feel that this paper ought to have begun with a definition of regional councils and that it has failed to provide one throughout. The conference has papers scheduled on ecumenical councils, plenary councils and episcopal conferences. Where do regional councils fit in? I may say, in defence, that the 1983 Code of Canon Law, as well as the index of the Canon Law Society of America's *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, provide entries on ecumenical, episcopal and finance councils, parish pastoral councils, plenary, presbyteral, provincial and religious councils, but none on regional councils! There seems to be no clear definition of a regional council and that may be good. It lies somewhere between an ecumenical and a diocesan council, but precisely where may be best left vague. There was never any attempt in the early or medieval church, or even later, so far as I am aware, to define precisely the status of a regional council in the way that it was for ecumenical, provincial and diocesan councils.

'Council' comes from the Latin *concilium*, to 'call together.' 'Synod', the parallel word, from the Greek óývoäoò, is more evocative, deriving from the two words óýv, 'together', and ôäüò, 'way' or 'journey': people making a journey together, a beautiful image of the pilgrim church. There is nothing mysterious about a church council, basically it is just this, Christians coming together to discuss mat-

ters important to them. They offer many possibilities and great flexibility. Of the first seven ecumenical councils, women presided at two of them, as mentioned earlier: all of them were summoned, presided over, directly or indirectly through their officials, and their decrees promulgated, by laypeople, namely the eastern emperors of the day and the two empresses. Indeed at the first and arguably most important of all of them, Nicaea I in 325, the emperor Constantine was not even a Christian inasmuch as he had not yet been baptised. Thus we see the Holy Spirit working outside the Church. All of them, moreover, were held in the East, in modern Turkey. Similar flexibility and adaptation to the circumstances could doubtless be found in regional councils. So we look at them today not as museum pieces of only historical interest, nor as institutions that can be reproduced again in precisely their former shapes. Rather they offer possibilities of adaptation and creativity, just as they were adaptable and creative in their own day. Regions, moreover, are coming to be seen as increasingly important in our global society. While people want to be part of the whole human family, they also seek smaller units of which the region – be it a region within a country, or a whole country, or a group of countries – is coming increasingly to be appreciated. For Christians, therefore, regional councils seem well suited to our new millennium.

Notes and References

1. Until recent times the words 'council' and 'synod' were synonymous. In the late 1960s Pope Paul VI, following the promptings of the second Vatican council, introduced into the Roman Catholic Church biennial synods of bishops, whose purpose was to advise the pope on various issues. Thus there emerged, in the RC Church, a distinction between synods, whose role is advisory or consultative, and councils, such as Vatican II, which have legislative and executive power. Since 'council' is more common in English, it is the word normally used in this essay, except in quotations or elsewhere when "synod" is clearly indicated. For 'regional' see the comments in the Conclusion.
2. G.D. Mansi and others (eds.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 53 vols. (Florence, Venice, Paris, Leipzig, 1759-1927). Reprinted in Graz, Akademische Druck- und Verlaganstalt, 1960-2, with an index volume.

3. C. Munier (ed.), *Concilia Galliae A.314-A.506*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, cxlviii (Turnholt: Brepols, 1963); Clerq, C. de (ed.), *Concilia Galliae A.511-A.695*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, cxlviii A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1963); C. Munier (ed.), *Concilia Äfricae A.345-A.525*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, cxlix (Turnholt: Brepols, 1974).
4. N. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London and Washington DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), i, p. 8.
5. N. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 108.
6. J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1844-64), xlvi, col. 557.
7. D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke (eds.), *Councils & Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, I: A.D. 871-1204*, 2 Parts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); F.W. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, *Councils & Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, II: A.D. 1204-1313*, 2 Parts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). The late medieval councils still await publication in this series and meanwhile are best found in D. Wilkins (ed.), *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, A.D. 446-1718* (London, 1737), vols. 2 and 3. For the implementation of Lateran IV by the English councils, see M. Gibbs and J. Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215-1272, with special reference to the Lateran Council of 1215* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).
8. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy*, New York: Crossroad, 1999.

Article received: July 12, 2002
Article approved: August 22, 2003
No of words: 4640

JPJRS 6/2 ISSN 0972-3331Jan 2003 155-159

Book Reviews

Errol D'lima & Max Gonsalves (eds.), ***What Does Jesus Christ Mean? The Meaningfulness of Jesus Christ amid Religious Pluralism in India*** (Proceedings of the 21st Annual Seminar of The Indian Theological Association, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, April 25-29, 1998), Bangalore: (Indian Theological Association, 1999), rep.· Dharmaram Pubs., 2001, 204 pp., Rs. 125.00.

This book has three parts: 1) papers presented at the meeting; 2) reports of workshops; and 3) the final statement. In "Is Christ the Unique Saviour? A Clarification of the Question", Michael Amaladoss explains the different ways the word 'unique' can be understood. But since uniqueness as historical implies an eschatological dimension (p. 12), I do not see how it is different from uniqueness as eschatological (p. 14). In his list he could also include other senses in which 'uniqueness' can be and has been understood: 'uniqueness as revelatory'("Jesus Christ is unique because he has shown that suffering is salvific and death is not the end of everything" (p. 175), and 'uniqueness as moral/paradigmatic' ("the mandate of Jesus to make disciples would mean imparting the values and an ethic of life that Jesus taught" (p. 182). He observation that "very few people who speak about the uniqueness of Christ seem to explain the role of Jesus as saviour. Yet I think this is crucial" (p. 15), is very timely because there can be no Christology without a Soteriology, nor a Soteriology without a Christology.

In "The Significance of Christ in Christian Tradition and Christological Reflection in India", Jacob Parappally points out that the Christological development in the past was the attempt of theologians to relate to their context "of pluralism of religions, philosophies and cultures" (p. 24), and "the mission to the Gentiles" (p. 25). He also reminds us that an undue insistence on their individuality by the Individual Churches of India "hampers communion among them and the communitarian witness to the significance of Christ in India" (p. 41).

Jacob Kavunkal, examining the "Indian Views of the Significance of Jesus Christ", informs us that "The earliest attempts to express the mystery of Jesus Christ in Indian terms were those of the Jesuits Thomas Stephens and Robert De Nobili" (p.51). A little later he states: "It is interesting to note that the first attempts at an Indian Christology came from a group of informed Hindu leaders" (p. 52). I am not sure what Kavunkal wants to say because the "attempts to express the mystery of Jesus Christ in Indian terms" were also "the first attempts at an Indian Christology." Kavunkal states that "The initial expressions of the Indian Christian experience were more on the level of terminology borrowed from the Indian philosophical systems" (p. 53). He refers to Brahmabandab Upadhyaya (1861-1907). Perhaps the picture needs to be completed, because we also have Narayana Vaman Tilak (1861-1919) who, in his hymns, speaks of Jesus as the mother. Tilak has his roots in the Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra.

In "The Self-Understanding of the Church in India", Kuncheria Pathil informs us that "in the development of the identity and self-understanding of the Church we could identify certain constants all through the history of the Church. Faith in Jesus Christ as fully man and fully God, acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God... are some of these constants" (p. 97). An attempt at interpreting Jesus which implies a rejection of any of these constants would not be a legitimate development.

Joseph Pathrapankal examines "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism: A Biblical Critique". He maintains that "The faith commitment of the disciples of Jesus was such that for them it was at the same time a doctrinal commitment through which they tried to establish that Jesus of Nazareth was the unique and universal saviour of the entire humankind. That does not necessarily mean that it has metaphysical validity at all times, for all place, and for all" (p. 125). A little later he asserts: "For believers in Christ, Christ is absolute and unique for them. There is no question of changing their loyalty from one religion to the other. What they have accepted as their conviction must be safeguarded and valued as a treasure and there is no compromise possible in religious commitment" (p. 127).

Two questions come to my mind. a) If the acceptance of the traditional belief "does not necessarily mean that it has metaphysical validity at all times, for all place, and for all," then does it have validity for us in India today? If the answer is in the positive, then how do have

this assurance? If the answer is in the negative, then would not a thorough inculturation require that we hold on to the values of Jesus, but abandon our confession of his person. b) Is the relation a Christian has *vis-vis* Jesus Christ different from the relation followers of other faith traditions have *vis-a-vis* their founders or God as understood by them? If the answer is in the positive then are not the Christians making a very special claim about Jesus? If the answer is in the negative, then were not our ancestors who accepted Jesus and his Church fundamentally mistaken? If so must we not return to the faith tradition which our ancestors followed before they became Christians, and correct a major historical mistake?

I shall not comment on the Workshop Reports and the Final Statement. That will require another writeup. The fact that the book has been reprinted, means that it meets a need. Some books answer questions, others raise questions. This book does both.

Subhash Anand

Joseph Kottackal, ***Behold Your Mother: Mariological Studies,*** Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India, St.Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, pages: 100. price: Rs. 45.

This book is a clear and systematic introduction to Mariology. With a creative fidelity to the Biblical witnesses and the Patristic traditions of both East and West, and by dialoguing with the present day theological studies and exegetical findings on the theme of Mary in the salvation history, the author, J. Kottackal introduces both the Marian dogmas and related issues in Mariology in a simple and lucid style. This introduction to Mariology has eight chapters. In the first chapter itself the reader is introduced to the theological reflections on Mary by presenting a brief survey of the contributions of both Eastern and Western Fathers to the development of Mariology. In the second chapter the biblical foundations of Mariology are presented. The author affirms that the place of Mary in the Bible cannot be ascertained by searching for some specific verses and by analysing them using the historical critical method. In fact, Mary is place in the Bible must be seen in the context of salvation history. In the light of the NT articulations about Mary and her relation to Jesus certain passages and references in the OT, traditionally considered as the prophetic foreshadowing about Mary's role in salvation history, are meaningful. Matthew's interpretation of Is 7:14 (Mt 1:23) itself

gives an indication of the early Church's interpretation of the OT as foreshadowing the specific intervention of God in the incarnation of His Son and therefore the place of Mary in God's plan of salvation. Throughout this short introduction to Mariology, the author has taken care not to use the Scripture, as some others are tempted to do, to support any dogmatic statement by reading into the text interpretations which do not stand the test of correct exegesis. In the past the inclusion of such "proof texts" stunted the growth of Mariological reflections and did a great disservice to Mariology at the face of those of who oppose Marian dogmas and minimise Mary's role in salvation history. J. Kottackal, being a Scripture scholar, has also presented the problems with regard to certain traditional interpretations of the Scriptural passages in relation to Mariological reflection and has taken a convincing and balanced position with regard to Scriptural foundations for Marian dogmas.

The author discusses the themes of Mary's Divine Motherhood and her virginity in the third chapter. Besides the NT references to Mary as the mother of Jesus ,a brief mention about the controversies that led to the declaration about the dogma of Mary's Divine Motherhood and the meaning of Mary's virginity in the context of her commitment to participate in God's plan of salvation are included in this chapter. Certain questions raised about Mary's perpetual virginity are reasonably answered by the author. However, being the central themes of Mariology, Mary's Divine Motherhood and the meaning of her virginity could have been treated a little more elaborately.

The fourth chapter deals with the theme, ' Mary the Type of Church'. This was a favourite theme of the Fathers who saw Mary as the embodiment of ideal Christian discipleship as well as the symbol of the Church, the community of New humanity in Christ. Mary's special place in the work of redemption is discussed in the fifth chapter. Both the maximalists' over enthusiasm to highlight Mary's role in the plan of salvation in such a way that it obscures or denies Christ's unique mediatorship and the tendency of the minimalist not to give adequate importance to Mary's cooperation in the redemption of humankind are two extreme positions. The author avoids both these extremes and in the light of various theological reflections on this issue concludes that Mary's mediatorship is to be understood on the level of the solidarity of all humans, their essential inter- relationship among themselves.

The chapters six and seven deal with the two Marian dogmas, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. The author briefly explains the development of these dogmas both in the Eastern and

Western traditions. He introduces the reader to the deeper meaning of these dogmas for a better understanding of both the origin and end of Christian life and its implications for a committed Christian life. In the concluding chapter the author briefly explains the origin and developments of various Marian devotional practices and some information about Marian Apparitions.

J. Kottackal has succeeded in presenting in this short introduction a clear and systematic theological reflection on the Marian dogmas, their biblical foundations, a brief historical sketch on their development, controversies and questions raised with regard to these dogmas and related themes. The author makes adequate references to Eastern and Western Fathers and modern theologians and his concluding reflections to the themes discussed in each chapter are scholarly and balanced. This book is, indeed, a valuable introduction to Mariology.

Jacob Parappally MSFS

OMEGA
Indian Journal of Science and Religion

Published by
The Institute of Science and Religion, Little Flower Seminary
Aluva – 683 101, Kerala, India.
israluva@yahoo.com

First of its kind in India, *Omega* is a pioneering enterprise at the creative interface between Science and Religion, particularly from the Indian perspecive. Omega is published biannually in June and December.

Omega stands for a value-based integration of the theological, philosophical, ethical and societal implications of the revolutionary developments in modern science into the diverse strata of human life, both at the academic and popular levels.

Omega covers a wide range of themes in science and religion exploring the constructive rapprochement between religious studies and natural sciences like

Modern Physics
Evolutionary & Molecular Biology
Modern Genetics
Biotechnology and Ecology
Neuroscience
Cosmology
Astronomy (Indian and Western)
Indian philosophy
Indian religions
History of science
Philosophy of science
Computer technology
Artificial intelligence (AI)
Indian sciences like Ayurveda, Yoga, etc.

Omega will be pluri-religious in its nature and outlook with the editorial board members and board of consultants representing all the major religions of India. Its Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Job Kozhamthadam, Founder-President of the Association of Science, Society and Religion, Pune and Member of the Indian National Commission for the History of Science, Indian National Science Academy, is assisted by an editorial board and board of consultants representing a wide spectrum of scholarship in natural sciences, religion and philosophy at the national and international level.

Subscription Rate

	1 Year	*3 Years*
India	Rs. 100	Rs. 250.00
Foreign (Air Mail)	$30	$ 80.00

jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Fundamentalism has been a burning issue in the contemporary world. While there are some common elements in the phenomenon we describe as fundamentalism, they are also different in various areas of life. The next issue of *Jnanadeepa* will deal with fundamentalisms found in different contexts.

Back numbers of *Jnanadeepa* are available:

1/1 Our Commitment to a United India
1/2 Beyond the Colonial Past
2/1 Vision of a New Society
2/2 Contemporary Quest for Freedom & Liberation
3/1 Conversion: Interdisciplinary Perspectives
3/2 Formation of Religious Leaders
4/1 Peace: Interdisciplinary Perspectives
4/2 Models of Authority
5/1 Science, Religion and Postmodernism
5/2 Religion and Violence

ISSN 972-33315