



Pain.....

Remembrance.....

Healing

Usha Jesudasan @ Gert Rüppell

***“God has given hope as sister  
—  
her name is remembrance”***

*(Michelangelo)*

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## ***A Consultation in Dublin***

Thirty participants gathered in the Dominican Retreat House in Dublin, where the spirituality of the Priory is rooted in the ancient Celtic tradition of St. Maelruain of Tallaght.

This consultation, organised in cooperation with the Irish School of Ecumenics and the Programme Desks of the Decade to Overcome Violence, and the Health and Healing arm of the World Council of Churches.

Five case studies from Guatemala, South Africa, Cambodia, Germany and Northern Ireland were presented by compatriots with a deep understanding and a first-hand experience of the conflicts in those areas, and the reconciliation and healing processes that have been taking place there. (Rev.

Vitalino Similox & Mr Nery Rodenas for Guatemala; Mr. Wilhelm Verwoerd & Dr. Guillermo Kerber for South Africa; Mr. Mong Hay Lao & Mr. Basil Fernando for Cambodia; Mr Andreas Schulze & Dr. Ralf Wüstenberg for Germany; Ms. Cate Turner, Dr. David Stevens & Dr. Geraldine Smyth for Northern Ireland)

The presentations and the discussions were moderated compassionately by resource persons with wide experience in the field of healing and reconciliation (Canon Paul Oestreicher, Prof. Hizkias Assefah, Prof. Dr. Fernando Enns, Dr Rodney L. Petersen and Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala). The meditative morning worships, dynamic discussions and the diverse experiences brought by the participants, and the thought provoking fruits harvested from the group work (moderated by Prof. Rev. Robert Schreiter, Dr. Geraldine Smyth & Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala) all contributed to the rich experience.

Faced with the terrible experiences of gross human rights violations and conflicts which took away the dignity of human beings, there came a great need to heal memories that were fractured and tortured once these conflicts were over. With the help of five exemplary case studies that have caused widespread and in parts controversial discussions, the participants of the consultation met to understand what Healing Memories could mean in the Christian context.



The case studies from South Africa, Guatemala, Cambodia, Germany and Ireland aimed at showing the various ways in which societies, ethnic communities and nations have come to terms with the problems related to the impact of such large-scale atrocities.

It is assumed that memories of past injustices continue to influence the lives and policies of societies in negative or positive manners, depending on the ways in which they are being dealt with.

The aim of the consultation was beyond just sharing experiences of violence. It was also to work towards understanding the breaking down of human rights and culture of violence that accompanied it. It was decided to produce a workbook on these issues that would help churches, civil society groups and policy makers to assess the needs and options of community healing.

It should be clear from the outset that this consultation, and in consequence, the material on which this workbook is based, deals specifically with large-scale violence and crimes that have had a massive impact on entire nations and ethnic communities. There are many other forms of memories that require careful attention, such as those stemming from domestic violence, accidents and disasters, for example. They too must be the subject of similar consultations.

The first part of this book contains the factual reports from various countries and the reflections that accompany them. The second half, deals with extensive reflections around the themes discussed in the consultation. It is recommended that these be reflected upon and studied seriously in small groups. The third section has been planned as a workbook with ideas, questions, poetry and prose for both small groups and larger congregations.



## *Reflecting the task ahead - 1<sup>1</sup>*

Memories are the means and ways by which our past reaches into our present and impacts our future. Happy memories keep giving us joy; sad memories are a burden; traumatic memories can endanger our lives. "Inwardly, in our own self-perception, we *are* much of what we remember about ourselves....In similar fashion, outwardly, in the way others perceive us, we *are* what others remember about us," writes Miroslav Volf<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, what we do with our memories shapes the manner in which we lead our lives.



Hence, not all memories need healing except those that make human beings suffer and that are impairing relationships between them, within and between groups and peoples. Differently put, "healing" becomes an art to relieve the past of its hauntingly painful and oppressive stings.

We are talking, therefore, of memories which carry with them experiences of evil that we have done, and evil we have been forced to suffer, i.e. experiences of wrongdoing and guilt as well as those of hurt and humiliation. These are apt to set in motion different "Wirkungsgeschichten" (histories of long-term impact). In many cases, experiences of guilt and hurt are entwined because it often happens that victims, in their rage to retaliate the wrong they have endured, turn into perpetrators, and vice versa.

As Vamik Volkan has shown, the long-term impact of hurt and defeat has become a "chosen trauma" in the collective memory of a nation. With this, he refers to processes in which peoples and nations allow a deep traumatic experience to become the exclusive hermeneutical key for understanding and interpreting the meaning of their history. Such a "chosen trauma" submits all historical experiences to the one paradigmatic experience and determines the ways in which contemporary political options are being considered.

*What we do with our memories shapes the manner in which we lead our lives.*

When we talk about "healing of memories", it might be helpful to recall the literal meaning of the English verb "to remember". It speaks of the act of putting together those "members" that have been dis-membered. "Healing" has to do with overcoming the damaging effects of "dismemberment".

One important aspect of "dis-membered" memories is their partiality and selectivity. A person, a group or a nation will only select those aspects of their past that fit their self-image. In many cases this implies that only memories of injustices suffered will be actively recalled while memo-

<sup>1</sup> The following thought are taken from the Letter of Invitation to the Consoltation written by Dr. Geiko Mueller-Fahrenheit

<sup>2</sup> In: the End of Memory. Remembering Rightly in a Violent World, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2006, 24.

ries of injustice committed will be denied. Selective remembering and massive denial go hand in hand.

"Healing" begins when persons and collectives are enabled to enter into processes of "deep remembering". This expression refers to processes that enable groups and peoples to consider their own perceptions of past events through the eyes of the Other, i.e. other victims, but also the wrong-doers and the enemies. "Deep remembering" can also enable victims to get a feeling of what has gone on in the perpetrators. In this way deep remembering leads to reconciliation.

In general, such processes of reconciliation will move through three stages:

The offending party will express a clear and unequivocal statement of acknowledgement of crimes committed together with the necessary explanations, culminating in the plea for forgiveness.

The offended party will need space and time to consider this statement and to come to the conclusion whether or not this statement is acceptable. If the plea is accepted, the offended party needs to make a clear and unequivocal declaration of the granting of forgiveness. This puts the offending and the offended parties on the same level again.

As a consequence of this, both parties will enter into negotiations about how the impact of past injustices can be remedied. For

*"Deep remembering" describes ways in which an acknowledgement of one's own guilt becomes possible together with an empathic understanding of the suffering of the Other.*

this the term "reparations" is often used, but it is misleading inasmuch as it suggests that past injustices and crimes can be "repaired". This is never fully possible. Instead of going for (the illusion of) "repairing past injustices" both parties might want to commit themselves to "prepare" for a more equitable and dependable future. Therefore, a more useful term might be "burden sharing".<sup>3</sup>

Many processes of reconciliation break down because the offending party is unwilling to admit their crimes. Or it may offer an apology that is far too "cheap" to be taken seriously by the offended party. Furthermore, there is often no serious commitment to enter into real efforts of "burden sharing". Instead of facing up to the difficult process of healing through remembering the offending party/government is permitting themselves "amnesty" which further deepens the pain of those who have been hurt. History is full of such "impunity"-cases wrongly labelled "reconciliation". This has contributed to the fact that this notion has received a negative connotation in many countries and churches.

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<sup>3</sup> Processes of reconciliation thus described cannot be confounded with the processes required for the legal treatment of crimes. The judiciary system follows a different logic. This is not to deny that processes of reconciliation can occur in and under legal proceedings.

It is never too late to enter into processes of reconciliation. But we must also understand that such processes are never fully over and finished. There will always be events that stir up old memories and therefore threaten to reopen old wounds and prejudices. So there need to be systems of monitoring the agreements reached. That can be done by establishing legal structures of mutual accountability, annual feast days, rituals of remembering, etc..

For processes of "deep remembering" to be successful, it is important to look at the wider cultural and political framework. A culture that emphasizes aspects of "honour" and "vendetta" will have difficulties to enter into such processes, whereas a concept of the basic communality of all human beings ( e.g.the African concept of "ubuntu" ) will be a great help.

Therefore, if and when churches want to be involved in the "healing of dismembered memories" they will have to ask themselves to what extent they can contribute not only to the monitoring of actual acts of reconciliation, but also to strengthen the wider cultural and social framework that encourages people to enter into them. Hence matters of theology and education, of preaching and worship are at stake, too.

Moreover, it will be important for churches to openly acknowledge their own involvement in selective memories. Many churches remember experiences of hurt and injustice suffered by other churches and/or peoples

*Many churches remember experiences of hurt and injustice suffered by other churches and/or peoples which have formed deep-seated grudges*

which have formed deep-seated grudges. This may well be an important factor for the hidden animosities and prejudices that prevent churches from entering into a more fully committed fellowship with others. Therefore, churches too will have to engage in processes of "deep remembering" if they wish to be taken seriously as agents of healing.

## Reflecting on the text

Pain and memories of violence and suffering destroy us physically, emotionally and spiritually. We would like to forget the painful, bad memories that were inflicted on us so that we can move on with life. But can we? Is it right that we forget the pain and suffering perpetrated on us by others? Does that suffering have no any value? Can we forgive those who hurt us? These are some of the questions that the passage above raises.



We live at a time when we have been experiencing episodes of ethnic and religious cleansing in different parts of the world. Given the rather dreadful and horrific situations that many people have experienced, how do we relate to those who have been the perpetrators of pain, suffering grief and loss? How do we look at a group of people who have wiped out whole families and neighbourhoods for no reason other than that they were of a different faith, colour or ethnic origin? Can we forgive a group or community that has hurt us so badly and taken away all that we possess and hold dear — our homes, children, parents and livestock, and not wish the same on them? Can we live again in peace with those who have instilled chilling fear within us? Can we face those who have threatened our existence and the very core of our faiths and stand side by side with them, and share bread with them again in friendship and peace?

As Christians we know that we cannot go on inflicting pain for pain, hate for hate, and death for death. What then is the alternative? Where do we find it? How do we experience it? How do we bring it to life? Does the alternative for violence lie in our hands?



We who have not been victims of violence, hate, prejudice or fear, need to think creatively about how we can answer these questions. We cannot be apathetic and indifferent to wrongs, which allows evil to continue. Those responsible for evil succeed not because of their commitment to it, but because others who recognise evil do nothing to resist it. We need to form groups and think seriously and discuss issues of justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and ways to bring healing to those whose wounds are raw and bleeding. We need to search for answers within our families, our faiths and our communities. We need to search for answers that will help us heal each other and enable us to look to the future with hope.

If you are a Moslem, a Jew, or a Christian; whether you worship on Friday, Saturday or Sunday, you belong to one of the worlds three great remembering religions. Our Scriptures invite us to remember. Pervading the Hebrew Scriptures is the Exodus story: from slavery to freedom -

whenever the Jewish people misbehaved or became morally lost, the prophets would chastise them with the words, "remember when you were slaves in Egypt. Remember the God who walked with you, who talked with you and led you out of the suffering and pain of slavery."

In the Eucharist, we remember Jesus. The scriptures ask us to remember, so that we will not forget. What kind of memory is it that we are invited to have in Scripture: it is redemptive memory - memory of good that comes out of evil; of life that comes out of death. And in the Jesus story - the betrayal, the suffering, the crucifixion, the death and the resurrection to new life. These are life- giving, transforming, healing memories.

There is another kind of memory - destructive memory - memory that fuels conflict from one generation to another - memory that is soaked with poison. Memories where the elders teach the young to hate - they tell the stories, they remember and there is venom connected to the memory. Such memories need healing and liberation.

When Nelson Mandela was in London in 2007, Prime Minister Gordon Brown described him as "the greatest person of our generation."

And indeed perhaps he is. That is because after walking out of twenty seven years in prison, he did not say, " Let's go out and get them" , but " Never, never, and never again should people do to one another what was done to us".

This ancient poem written so many centuries ago, feels so right even today, as it brings to mind the pain and sorrow we carry around us.

*Sorrow stalks me in an old coat  
The color of churned water.  
I have worn it for years--it  
no longer fits, tugs tight the waist  
where I have grown under cove,  
spreading like roots, like grief,  
swelling in rows of deep rhizomes  
long after sowing. How often  
can a heart break? When  
might I be rid of this old coat?*

How do we transform destructive memory to life- giving memory? Perhaps the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness begins with the passage from knowledge to acknowledgment. Where the pain and suffering is not borne in silence and hidden away, but is told, listened to with compassion and acknowledged as truth. As hurting individuals, communities and nations, we need to do this to be able to move through pain and come to a point where we can begin to live healed, meaningful, joyful lives.



## Reflecting the task ahead - 2<sup>4</sup>

### Seeking for a relational revolution

We found that the values that aid communities as they journey on the path of healing memories are those that are restorative, as opposed to retributive ones. It was clear that this path is only made possible by ordinary people, each one deeply valuing the other,



and recognising the divinity and sacredness of our sisters and brothers even if they are our enemies. In telling our stories, we learnt how important it is to share, communicate and listen to each other's sad experiences.

### Healing of Memories as a Process

The two principal moments in the healing of memories that the consultation dealt with were: witness and retelling the story.

*Witness* is the moment when a community decides to verbally address painful memories. Silence about what has happened is broken, and painful memories become part of the living community.

The act of witnessing or testimony involves a number of dimensions:

- Witnessing is an act of fidelity toward the dead. It rescues those who have died from the "second death" of being forgotten. In so doing, it summons the memory of the dead into the living community.
- Witnessing attests to loss and absence. The acknowledgement of loss is vital to the grieving process. Absence has been described as the point where the seen and the unseen meet. Witness here takes the form of lament.
- Witnessing begins a quest for the truth—first forensic or objective truth, then other forms of personal and social truth (see below).
- Witnessing makes memory more public and shareable. It is the key to building a new, shared narrative of the community that moves from loss to redemption.

*Retelling the story* is the process of constructing that narrative. It involves gathering testimony, engaging in truth-seeking and truth-telling, and producing a narrative that is not fixated on the toxic character of past events, but rather provides a horizon for the future—a horizon that takes the landscape of the past into account.

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<sup>4</sup> Evaluation Paper produced by Dr. Manoj Kurian and Prof. Robert Schreiter. We have taken the liberty to amend the paper by taking elements of it into other parts of the document (e.g. Understanding Concepts)

What does a healed memory look like? A healed memory does not disappear or lapse into oblivion. It can remain troublesome. But it has lost its toxic character, its capacity to poison the present and exclude the future. The wounds that remain can even become sources of healing for others. Here the image of the wounds remaining on Jesus' transfigured body after the resurrection (John 20) is paradigmatic for the process of the healing of memories.

*A healed memory does not disappear or lapse into oblivion. It can remain troublesome. But it has lost its toxic character*

The healing of memories can be looked at as requiring three dimensions in order to be successful or complete. The first is a *cognitive* dimension: people have to understand what happened. Here processes of truth-telling are important. Second, there is a *psychological* dimension: there must be a process of emotional healing that changes the affective relationship with the traumatic events. Third, there is a *moral* or *spiritual* dimension that locates the traumatic events in the web of relationships with others, with the world and with God. This latter dimension is concerned with developing and maintaining a sense of the world as a mean-

ingful place.

In seeking the healing of memories, it is important to attend to the *trajectory of memory* over time. It is not untypical that, immediately after traumatic events, people will be silent about what has happened. It is as though silence can entomb the memory and keep it from contaminating the present. A reason often given for silence is sparing one's children and grandchildren from the horror of what happened. One finds this pattern after the experience of the Holocaust among Jews and Germans, and after the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Eventually though, the memories begin to spill. They may come out in a displaced fashion (emotions connected with a new object) or under the questioning of those children who had been "spared" the memories in their childhood but are now asking questions as adolescents or young adults. A key moment for the survivors of the traumatic experiences comes at the end of their natural lives. There will be a twin concern of coming to terms (a kind of "reconciling") with those memories and integrating them into their lives (a moment of "personal truth"), as well as a concern about how those events will be remembered by subsequent generations. The first concern is often addressed to the survivors' grandchildren. The second is addressed through the erecting of monuments (for example, the proliferation of Holocaust memorials in North America and Europe as the survivors of the Holocaust are now in their seventies and eighties).

In the case of severely traumatic memories, the generation who experienced them as adults are often unable to reach healing. It is left to their children—who wish to be faithful to their parents and their parents' memories yet must live toward a different future than have their parents—to bring about healing. By not bearing the full weight of the memory of the past, they are able to see more options for the future—a future that remembers the past but is not controlled by it.

While ideal conditions and a theological understanding of reconciliation might dictate that there must always be complete truth and full justice for genuine peace reconciliation to be achieved, ideal conditions never prevail. Retrieving objective truth might end up making divisions in society deeper than was the case before (hence the debate in some countries as to whether truth commissions should even be considered). The end of a conflict is sometimes only a truce in armed fighting; no other conditions in society have fundamentally changed (e.g., in Guatemala). What kind of justice can be hoped for? It is important to recall here are that the attitudes that inform struggle and resistance may become counterproductive in the rebuilding of society. In struggle and resistance, one may pose absolute principles that serve as a focal point for maintaining the struggle. Moreover, one may be committed to those absolute principles for different reasons, yet be able to join the struggle alongside those who differ. When it comes to rebuilding a society, however, building consensus among differing parties is necessary and compromises have to be made. Hence a different kind of leadership skill is needed. That is why those who lead a struggle against oppression often fail as leaders in the post-conflict situation.

It is important in all of this to identify what people mean when they talk about reconciliation. While the churches' definitions of reconciliation may be cast in absolute and hardly attainable terms, it must be able to recognize these intermediate steps in the reconciliation process so as to sustain hope in the process. A final word about reconciliation as process and goal: if too much stress is laid on the reconciliation as process (seeing it as open-ended and never ending), people will lose hope and give up on the process. If too much is made of reconciliation as goal only, people will become disillusioned and cynical.

*Retrieving objective truth might end up making divisions in society deeper than was the case before*

### **Intercultural and Inter-religious Considerations**

Many small-scale societies have rituals for reconciliation. These are necessary because such small societies would not survive if enmity is allowed to fester over long periods of time. These rituals should always be taken into consideration in developing larger social practices of reconciliation.

When looking at rebuilding nations after conflict, the concepts of "thick" and "thin" cultures may be useful. A "thick" culture is one that emphasizes bonds of history, shared suffering, kinship, and relationships as the resources out of which a national culture can arise. A "thin" culture is constituted by an ideology that serves as a starting point. Thus, East Germany was a "thin" culture, emphasizing its beginning in socialism and the "new man" that socialism promises. It therefore took no responsibility for Germany's Nazi past. Thin cultures may be the entire basis there is in building a nation-state where there are few commonalities, but thin cultures often have little resilience when placed under strain.

Many of the concepts used in reconciliation today are religious in origin. They are however understood or interpreted differently in differing cultures and religious contexts. This may lead to the fact that one concept may not be readily understood by those of other religious traditions.

#### The unique role of the Christian religion

The role of the churches in the healing of memories can include many criteria:

If the churches constitute a significant presence in society, they can provide a powerful moral voice, even in pluralist settings. The South African and Guatemalan situations are examples of this.

The churches may take on the role of one of the actors in civil society.

Inasmuch as much of the language of healing and reconciliation is Christian in origin, the churches can assure that the language is not misused (e.g., the language of sacrifice in narratives of suffering).

Healing and reconciliation transcend mere application of techniques. They have a spiritual and moral quality that can be rooted theologically in biblical and church traditions, and can be interpreted or translated into other discourses.

*Healing and reconciliation transcend mere application of techniques. They have a spiritual and moral quality*

Ritual and symbol play an important role in healing, since they go beyond what words can express. The churches—especially those with strong liturgical traditions—are an important resource here.

Healing and reconciliation involve creating a variety of social spaces that are safe, hospitable, and capable of touching transcendent realities. The churches can utilize their resources in fostering and sustaining those spaces.

Sustaining hope (or managing expectations) is key to successful reconciliation processes. Here again, biblical traditions, narratives of suffering and liberation, and the horizon of hope are all within the churches' biblical and historical resources.

From the examples in Guatemala, South Africa, Northern Ireland and Germany, we see the key role that faith communities continue to play in the healing and reconciliation process, both in the macro and micro societal environments. It is clear that there is a crying need for Psycho-social support in communities in the aftermath of conflicts, which governments and public services are not able to address adequately. Societies are forced to pick of the pieces of broken communities. The intrinsic resilience that communities possesses and cultures contribute can be enhanced by the constructive engagement of religious and faith communities. But for this to occur, religious communities are called to acknowledge and deal with their contributing and palliative role in conflicts. We as members of faith communities are also challenged go beyond the closets of indi-

vidualistic piety and communally engage in the wider conflagration that consumes the whole house (representing is our society).

The Passover meal, the Eucharist, the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, His crucifixion, resurrection and continuing accompaniment, reveal that the Christian faith potentially provides the secure space to face truth in a context which reminds of the enduring faithfulness of God. The faithfulness that extends from the distant past, which we are exhorted to remember, stretching across the present moment, to the far future we are challenged to look forward in faith.

To deal with the past and face reality today, however onerous the present may be, with an assurance of liberation and victory:

- to see the suffering that communities, sisters and brothers endure today as the suffering of Christ which he invited us to partake in;
- to thirst and strive for justice, liberation and healing of all - today, in the land of the living;
- to deal with conflicting memories of defeat- victory, shame- pride, victim- perpetrator, exploiter- exploited as our common burden, yearning to weave a new and healing narrative;
- to lament in ways as to mourn and be healed, rather than cultivate bitterness and hatred;
- to strive to forgive and seek forgiveness;
- to work for a future where we are able to deal with each other truthfully-

Intentionally channelling religions as instruments of peace rather than become weapons of war.

Let us also see enduring values of loving kindness, compassion, justice and harmony that are common to all faith traditions, can guide us, to a future where truth will truly set us free.



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## Gross Human Rights Violations

Gross Human Rights Violence (GHRV) refers to acts such as genocide, torture, death squad murders, disappearances, abductions, slavery, mass rape, and ethnic cleansing. These actions result in death, maiming, physical pain, bodily violation, deprivation of freedom, and deprivation of home and means of livelihood. Included too is the deliberate besieging of cities, towns and villages with the aim of mass starvation of the inhabitants, and the deliberate blockage of food and medical aid to devastated areas. Acts of war, such as the bombing of civilians in cities is of a similar nature, and is excluded by the rules of the Just War and the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, though this has been widely disregarded in 20th century practice.

**In human terms** this means that throughout the world, in war torn or violent areas, men, women and children have just disappeared never to be seen again. Their families have searched years for them and faced much suffering and pain. Apart from these soldiers have raped and kidnapped women, and tossed new born babies into the gutters to die. These actions have brutalized ordinary men and women whose lives were suddenly felled apart by such horrible violence. They need to leave this violence behind to rebuild their families and communities. How can they do so? Whom do they turn to for healing? Their lives and particularly their memories need deep healing. The need to face their pain again while telling their stories of suffering and loss. They also have to somehow reconcile with their perpetrators, no matter how difficult it may be so that they can continue to live to the fullest potential that God had in mind for them when He first made them.

**The Commission on Human Rights 1999, described Gross Human Rights violation with the following words:**

14. (The) difficulty (lies) in distinguishing between gross and less serious human rights violations. This cannot be done with complete precision. According to the conclusions of the Maastricht Seminar on the Right to Restitution, Compensation and Rehabilitation for Victims of Gross Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which took place between 11 and 15 March 1992, "the notion of gross violations of human rights and



fundamental freedoms includes at least the following practices: genocide, slavery and slavery-like practices, summary or arbitrary executions, torture, disappearances, arbitrary and prolonged detention, and systematic discrimination". The conclusions state further that "violations of other human rights, including violations of economic, social and cultural rights, may also be

gross and systematic in scope and nature, and must consequently be given all due attention in connection with the right to reparation".

15. It will be fairly obvious that any list of gross human rights violations will include most large-scale violations: genocide, disappearances and the like. Torture or arbitrary and prolonged detention may be used on a single person and constitute an individual case, but genocide, slavery and slavery-like practices and arbitrary or mass executions are all large-scale human rights violations. In fact, experience shows that large-scale violations are always gross in character and gross violations of individuals' rights such as torture or arbitrary and prolonged detention, if unpunished, either lead to large-scale violations or indicate that such violations are already taking place.<sup>5</sup>

Such GHRV is reported in this booklet from Guatemala, South Africa, and Cambodia. It must be remembered too that recent history is full of examples of Gross Human Rights violations all over the world as they have occurred against indigenous populations, inter-ethnic races such as in Rwanda, in the Sudan conflict and else where.

**In human terms**, official terminology and words do not make much sense when you are the victim of large scale loss, pain and suffering. When all your family have been in killed, your family home destroyed and looted, your pets and cattle killed or burnt your heart breaks with pain and anger. The pain is either cold and numb, or boiling hot for revenge.

## Civil War

A civil war is a war in which parties within the same culture, society or nationality, fight against each other for the control of political power. Thus a civil war is "a violent conflict within a country fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the center or in a region, or to change government policies".[1] Everyday usage of the term does not entail clear threshold for how much violence is necessary to qualify a conflict as a civil war, opposed to terrorism or low-level political strife.



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Some civil wars are categorized as revolutions when major societal restructuring is a possible outcome of the conflict. An insurgency, whether successful or not, is likely to be classified as a civil war by some historians if, and only if, organized armies fight conventional battles. Other

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<sup>5</sup> COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities  
Forty-fifth session GENERAL E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/10\* 8 June 1999

historians state the criterion for a civil war is that there must be prolonged violence between organized factions or defined regions of a country (conventionally fought or not).

Civil wars were fought in Northern Ireland, of which this booklet contains witness about the attempt to reconcile and heal memories after years of conflict. But again, there are many places around the globe, where such civil wars are either fought since some time (Democratic Republic of Congo; Philippines; Kashmir . Chechnya) or burst out from time to time (Basque; Kurds,)

In human terms, civil wars destroy friendships and good relationships. Those who were your close friends yesterday, look upon you with suspicion today and tomorrow. Even if they stand by you, there will soon come a time when they will have to decide between themselves, their family and you. In a civil war, even families take up the gun and machete against each other. All loyalties disappear, values that maintain relationships fade away and only violence remains.

## Racism

According to UN International Conventions, "the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."<sup>6</sup>

This definition does not make any difference between prosecutions based on ethnicity and race, in part because the distinction between the ethnicity and race remains debatable among anthropologists [3] (A. Metraux (1950) "United Nations Economic and Security Council Statement by Experts Problems of Race" in American Anthropologist 53(1): 142-145) ) According to British law, racial group means "any group of people who are defined by reference to their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origin".<sup>7</sup>

The most recent example of Racism as a gross human rights violation comes from South Africa. Due to the immense violence experienced under the White system reconciliation and healing became and becomes a vital issue. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, of which a report was given during the consultation, contained in this booklet, became worldwide known as a paradigm shift in conflict resolution and handling of gross atrocities. Yet history has had more



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<sup>6</sup> (UN International Convention on the Elimination of All of Racial Discrimination, New York, 7 March 1966)

<sup>7</sup> (Racist and Religious Crime - CPS Prosecution, Policy, The Crown Prosecution Service, Section 2 What do we mean by Racist or religious crimes. (<http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/rrpbcbook.html#Section2>))

race and ethnic based human rights violations than any other kind. Examples being the Holocaust, the Pol Pot Massacres, the Rwanda killings, to name a few.

**In human terms**, racism hurts. It hurts badly as it looks upon a person of another race and ethnic community as "non human". "You are not like us, you do not look like us, so you don't belong to the human race." At worst, racism takes away all sense of a person's dignity and self confidence. It leaves behind instead, a deep sense of rejection and seething violence.

## Oppression



Oppression is defined as an excessive exercise of authoritative power over people using injustice or cruelty whether in the economic, political, physical or emotional domain. There is both external and internal oppression. External oppression is the unjust exercise of authority and power by one group over another. It includes imposing one group's belief system, values and life ways over another group. External oppression becomes internalized oppression when we come to believe and act as if the oppressor's beliefs system, values, and life way is

the only reality. One of the most experienced forms of internalized oppression as an effect of external ones, is the violation of Human Rights for Women. Although part of the Universal Declaration is signed by almost all Nations, there is no where the mention of the violation of women's rights. Almost everywhere there are degrees of accepted violation from culture to culture. The degrees of this violation lead to a universal dimensions of a Gross Human Rights Violation.

**In human terms**, the violence of oppression has weighed heavily on humankind since the beginning of history. Men who had muscle, land, intelligence, wealth and weapons controlled lesser important ones through conscious, forceful, violent actions to prevent them from having what they had - land, wealth, education and power. Fear, violence, and keeping them as poor and as ignorant and dependent on them as possible were the tools men used to oppress others.

**Arbitrary and extrajudicial killings** Extrajudicial killings are performed without legal authority. Agents of a state apparatus in most cases military and/or police carry out this type of punishment if they come to the conclusion that a person is an imminent threat to national security. However there is no definition as to what exactly is a threat to the security of a nation.. So anyone with different ideologies and political opinions can be considered as dissidents and become victims of such acts. The existence of extrajudicial punishment is considered proof that some governments will break their own legal code if deemed necessary. In fact the number



of governments breaking and disregarding their own and international law on Human Rights, Habeas Corpus is increasing. Non-governmental or non-state actors (Liberation Movement etc.), including private individuals, have also resorted to different forms of extrajudicial punishment, though such actions are called assassination, murder or vigilantism. *Extrajudicial killings have been performed in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, India, Bangladesh, and Guatemala to mention a few places.*

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**In human terms,** these killings are sinister and fearful as they are authorized by the state machinery without legal authority. The unexpected knock on the door, the sudden grab at a market place, the bag quickly placed over the head and whisked away.....such killings and disappearances wear away at the trust and confidence people have in their rulers.

#### [Article 3](#)

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

#### [Article 4](#)

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

#### [Article 5](#)

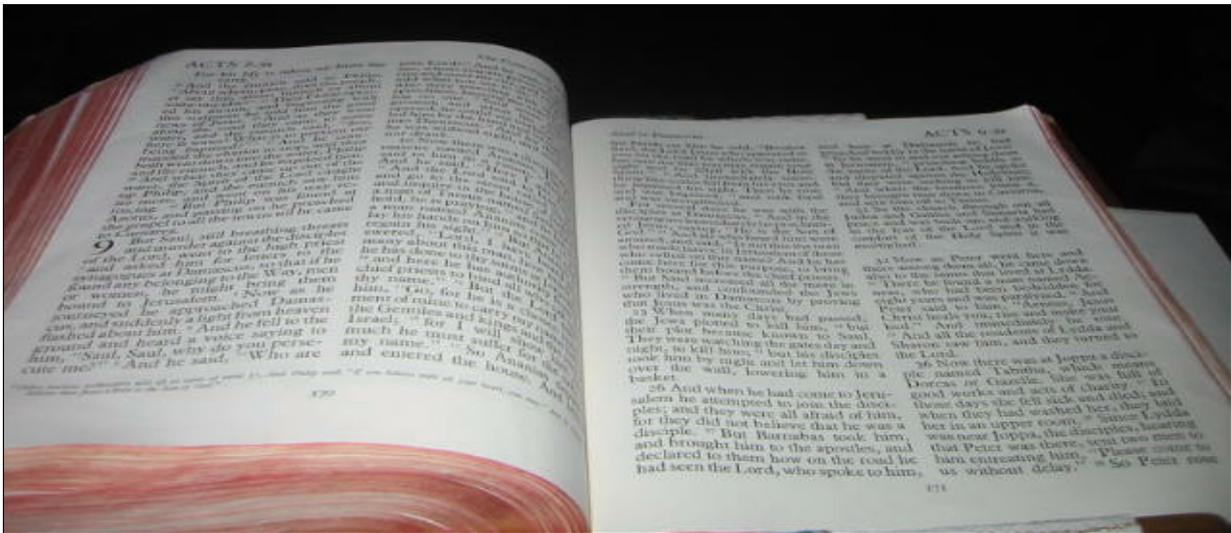
No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

#### [Article 6](#)

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Universal declaration of Human Rights

# REMEMBERING THE BIBLICAL PAST



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Healing of memories and memorizing what has happened, is an important feature of human life. Memorizing is the process by which we allow the past to connect with the present.

All of us have been hurt or have hurt others in the process of our relationships. Memories haunt many people. Memories also have a restoring function. So how we remember our past is vital to how we deal with our present, particularly after experiences of violence, conflicts and gross human rights violations. These painful memories need to be dealt with before we come to build a more peaceful and reconciled community.

Reconciliation is at the core of the Christian message so it is important to look at biblical resources to understand the difficult concepts of reconciliation, healing and forgiveness. Ancient Israel used the method of recalling the blessedness of goodness, deliverance, and liberation. They were told to remember not just these times of oppression and cruelty, but also their final deliverance from it during every celebration of the Shabbat. Remembering becomes a vital element for interpreting the present, in the light of the past. It becomes an opportunity to relocate in time in memory, and also gives us a chance to connect with others who have similar memories. This memory includes the decisive acts of God in the history of the Hebrews and particularly, His act of deliverance from the oppressive rule in Egypt.

The Old Testament, in many places tells of the redeeming, reconciling Yahweh, as in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 31.

*29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.*

*30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

## REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE



We observe the termination of an old perception of revenge. Evil doing (The fathers have eaten sour grapes) is no longer punished down the generations (the children's teeth are set on edge.). Rather "every one shall die for his own iniquity" will be held accountable for his / her actions. Till now, the old order of revenge - if you hurt me, then I will hurt you back in the same way - worked well. But now Yahweh promises a new order. The atrocities and their consequences can no longer be shifted down the line to the children and their children's children. The wrong doer is held responsible for his or her own acts. This new

concept is important for our understanding of reconciling with the wrong actions of fathers and mothers in the past. It gives the next generation, a clean slate when they are not burdened by the heavy sins of their parents. How is that going to happen?

*31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*

*32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:*

*33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*  
(St. James Bible)

## REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE

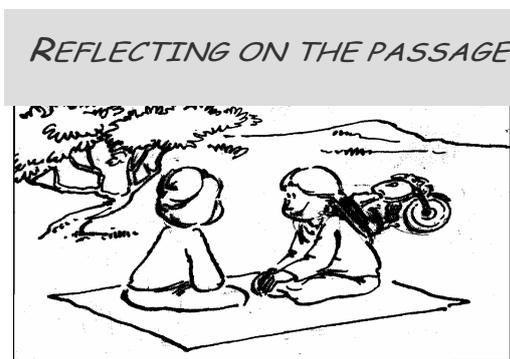


In the passage above, we observe the opportunity for a new beginning. The people of Israel experienced moments of greatest despair and grief, while they were in exile and then later when they were freed. At this point, Yahweh opened out a new future to them in which he embedded his laws not on stones, but "in the hearts" of his people. Today, these laws are part of our collective conscience from which we draw strength, live and relate to others in community.

Remembering all this seems easy, but we need to remember that not everyone has the Judeo-Christian culture as their background. Can we come to a point of reconciliation if the values (religious) needed for reconciliation are not the same, culturally or religiously? Can people with very different backgrounds and values reconcile and be at peace with each other? The Old Testament does not give us sufficient proof of this. We do not find

proof in the scriptures of the Old Testament of reconciliation between Israel and other nations. Could it have been because nations surrounding Israel had different religious beliefs?

*"Fear not... do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach... you will remember no more" (Isaiah 54:4). "Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder the things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness [and] rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:18-19). "The former things shall not be remembered or come into mind... be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create" (Isaiah 65:17-18).*



We observe how the people of Israel are encouraged not to hold on to the memories of the past as eventually it will cause destruction. An active approach to forgetting the past is suggested and when this effective road of healing is taken, "You will remember no more" says Yahweh. Isaiah too points to the same direction in his text, hinting at Yahweh's promise to "do something new" where the memories of hurt, suffering and pain, will no longer haunt and destroy. But the people, the individual, the faithful, must hear and understand what Yahweh is saying, to avail of the new creations promised by Yahweh.

When Isaiah quotes Yahweh: "The former things shall not be remembered or come into mind". Here, not remembering does not mean not forgetting, but that these memories no longer come to mind to ruin us as we journey through life. These memories we are told, will always be there as they are part of the fabric of our lives, but they will no longer haunt or incapacitate us in any way. There are many people who have painful memories which disturb and destroy their peace of mind. They have no skills or the desire to let go of these memories. They will always remember and hold on to them, and this form of remembrance will not allow their minds to be at rest. It will not give them the energy needed, to "be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create". They cannot be partners in a future in which they can be co-creators with Yahweh. With the word "create" Isaiah points to the fact that God can bring order out of our chaos, and beauty out of the ashes of our suffering.

It seems as if the healing of our memories will be instant and easy. That Yahweh will wave his hand, and that it will be done. But that is not the way it works. Although the Bible does not say so, we know that there has to be a lot of letting go, acceptance, forgiving and rearranging of our emotions to be done in the process.

According to the Bible, Jesus, the Christ, through his incarnation, life, death and resurrection reconciled humanity and the whole creation with God. The Gospels however do not speak of reconciliation very often. They instead concentrate on Jesus' healing ministry. Jesus very often points the healed person to the fact that his/ her faith has helped to heal them. What is it that finally brought healing? Faith in him, Jesus, or is it the faith of the people of Israel, who know and look forward to the Messiah that is coming to restore injustice and oppression and will build the rule of the reign of peace (shalom)? It is in this context, that Jesus in fact re-members the outcasts, the ones who had - due to their sufferings - no chance of being considered a valuable

part of society. Healing here implies restoration; a re-membering to the realm of justice and wholeness.

It is Paul in his letters who develops a theological understanding of the issue of reconciliation and addresses it at different levels: individual, community and cosmic<sup>8</sup>. What we identify now as social and political dimensions are not so clearly addressed. It however needs to be stated, that in his involvement with the question of healing through reconciliation, he points to the fact that reconciliation of enemies can (only?) happen by being drawn to Christ (Col. 1:24). This implies that the reconciling parties are Christian. Where does this leave inter-religious reconciliation? Is reconciliation preceded by conversion? Can we in today's pluralistic society, adhere to such a perspective only? Can we, or should we not find ways where the love of Christ expresses itself in the process of reconciliation through ourselves? Where being reconciled with ourselves in love, means that we become capable of moving towards the other, who is totally different in faith. Does not reconciling with the enemy recognise all of us as creations of the Creator, and therefore as human beings who have deep inside themselves a common base? Is this search, the search in the process of deep-memorizing? (Müller-Fahrenheit)

What does it mean not to see the face of Christ in the atrocities and the wounds inflicted on others? Is there an end to reconciliation, when we cannot, as often presumed listen neutrally to all sides, to become tools of reconciliation? Where the conflict situation raises above the individual level, where atrocities happen by one party subduing, oppressing, exploiting and violating the other, there is no neutrality possible. It is the moment,

*Dear Child of God, if we are truly to understand that God loves all of us, we must recognize that he loves our enemies, too. God does not share our hatred, no matter what the offence we have endured. We try to claim God for ourselves and for our cause, but God's love is too great to be confined to any one side of a conflict or to any one religion. And our prejudices regardless of whether they are based on religion, race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, or anything else, are absolutely and utterly ridiculous in God's eyes.*

*(Desmond Tutu, A vision of Hope for our Times, 44)*

where the knowledge of God's preferential option for the poor, reminds us of taking sides and end the policy of consensus. Albert Nolan says: "Christians are not supposed to try to reconcile good and evil, justice and injustice; we are supposed to do away with evil, injustice and sin" continuing by pointing out that trying to go the middle path, nourishes the false assumption" that tension and conflict are worse evils than injustice and oppression. This again is a false supposition based upon a lack of compassion for those who suffer under oppression. Those who are afraid of conflict or confrontation, even when it is non-violent, are usually those who are not convinced of the need for change. Their caution hides an un-Christian pessimism about the future, a lack of hope"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Schreiter summarizes the central teachings of Paul's on reconciliation in five points:  
Reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ.  
Reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy.

The experience of reconciliation makes both the victim and the wrongdoer a new creation.

The process of reconciliation that creates the new humanity is to be found in the story of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The process of reconciliation will be fulfilled only with the complete consummation of the world by God in Christ. Cf. SCHREITER, Robert, The ministry of reconciliation, New, York, Orbis 1998, p. 14-19.

<sup>9</sup> A. Nolan, Taking Sides, London Catholic Truth Society pp. 1f.

## LET'S THINK AND DISCUSS



Why do you think Yahweh tells his people, " You will remember the past no more," and yet asks his people to remember the times of oppression and deliverance in the form of the Passover? What is to be forgotten and what is to be remembered?

As a church or any other community, can you identify and share instances of rupture and pain that has not been healed?

What has holding on to this pain achieved or not achieved?

Are there steps you can take towards reconciling the past and coming into a new future?

## LOOKING INWARDS- RELATING TO GOD

*Lord, you teach us to be forgiving*

*Teach us to remember the pain of our enemy*

*You ask us to love our neighbours*

*Teach us to be reconciling*

*You have told us to go the second mile*

*Give us the energy to do so*

*Let us listen to the cries and agony of the victims*

*Let us hold the perpetrators responsible for  
the violation done to human dignity and creation*

*Open our eyes towards our own past,*

*Let us recognise, where we have been perpetrators*

*Teach us to ask for forgiveness*

*Let us victim and victimizer together cross the borders of enmity and*

*heal our memories, reconcile in community*

*Amen*



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# TELLING OUR STORIES

*is a political act*

*Without stories there is no articulation  
of experience...*

*Without stories we don't learn the value  
of our struggles*

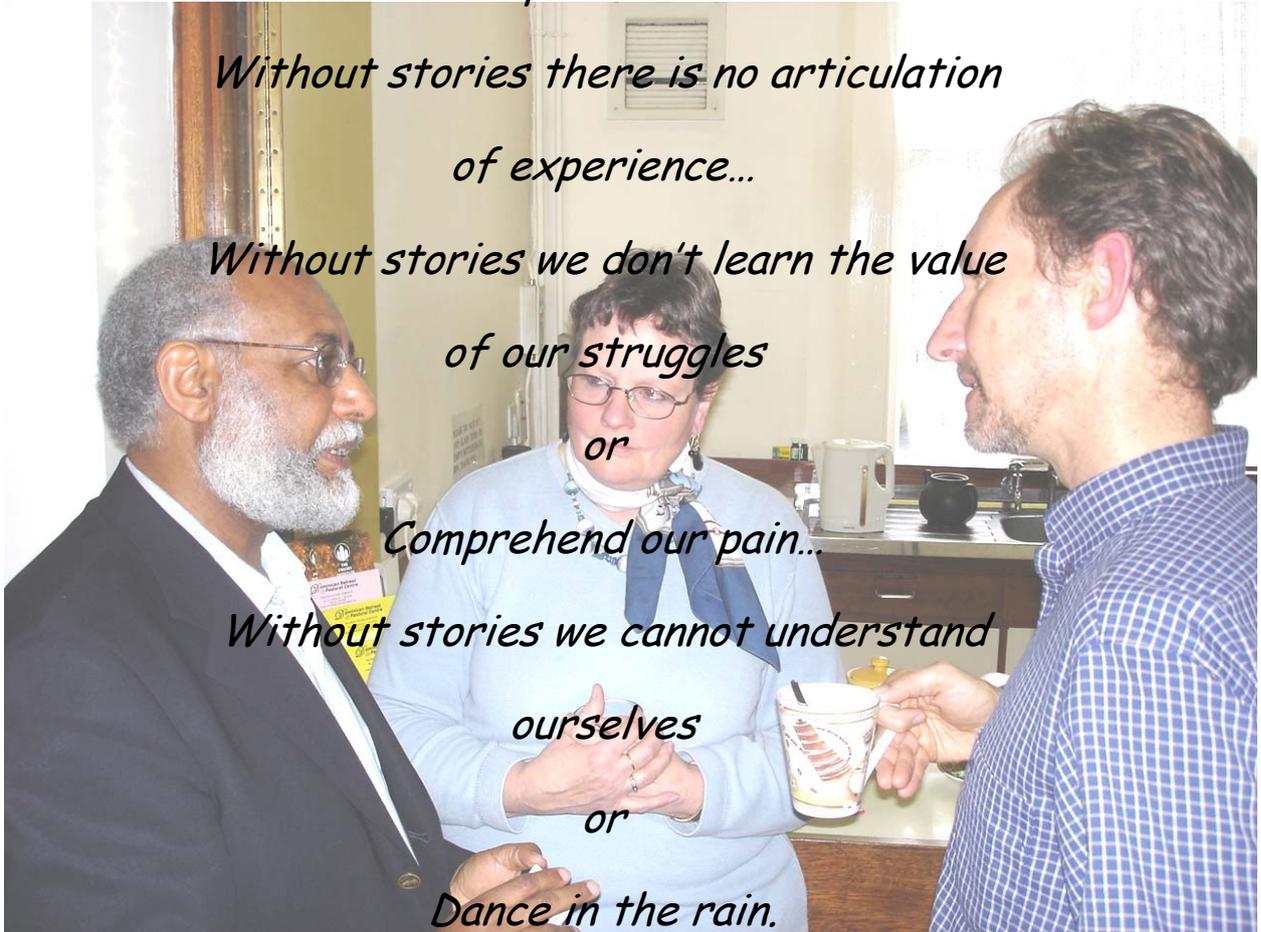
*or*

*Comprehend our pain...*

*Without stories we cannot understand  
ourselves*

*or*

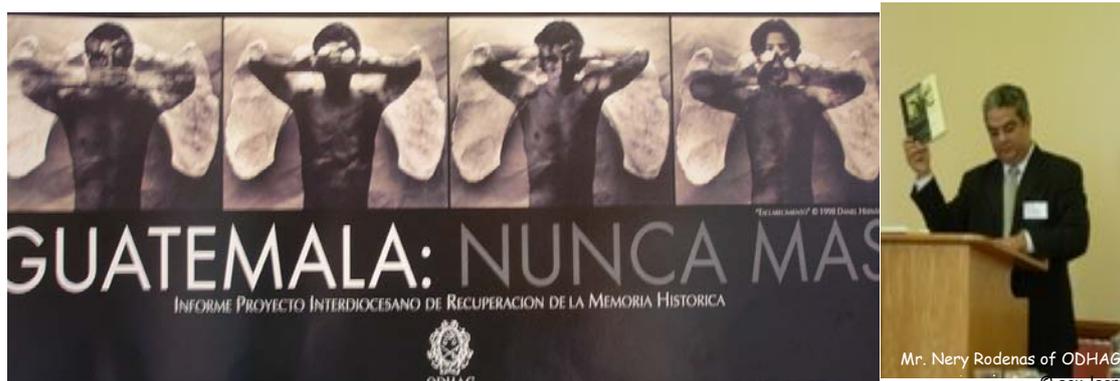
*Dance in the rain.*



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*We are closed in the silence.*

(Carol Christ)



From 1492 under colonial rule, for the majority of its inhabitants, the indigenous Maya people were subjected to various ideological forms of subjection, exclusion and racism. The country gained its independence in 1821 and became a nation state with one people, one language, one religion and one legal system.<sup>11</sup>

However in reality, this did not happen as the political situation became more acute and armed internal conflict, which the Commission for Historical Clarification characterized as a fratricidal war in its 4,500 page and 12 volume report 'Guatemala, memory of silence'. The report contained testimonies from 7,338 victims of violence during the year 1999 alone.

Guatemala is a society marked by conflict; the result of ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political exclusion policies; the causes and circumstances of which form the basis of the present nation state. The conflict takes the form of struggle between those who wish to overcome these structural historical causes and those who wish to maintain the status quo.



Poverty has been a constant feature in Guatemalan society, arising both from the unequal distribution of wealth, particularly land, and from the very limited access to education. Economic marginalization, and the policy of political exclusion has affected wide sectors of the rural and urban population. The high concentration of resources in a small number of major economic units, agricultural and non-agricultural, has resulted in a profoundly unequal model of distribution of the benefits of

economic growth and has limited the social and economic opportunities for large sectors of the population.

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The following report was presented by Rev. Vitalino Simolix & Mr Nery Rodenas from the Interdiocesan Project on Historical Memory of the Roman Catholic Church in Guatemala

<sup>11</sup> Guatemala: causas y orígenes del Enfrentamiento Armado Interno (Guatemala: causes and origins of the internal armed confrontation), second edition. CEG, F&G publishers, Guatemala, 2006, 28.

All attempts at modernization and structural change have been superficial and defeated or undermined by the ruling classes, as is illustrated by historical events such as: the Liberal Reform of 1871, the Democratic Revolution from 1944 to 1954, the armed revolutionary struggle from 1960 to 1966, including the negotiations leading to the signing of the 1996 Peace Agreements.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the peace accords of 1996, and the wide-ranging legislative reforms of 1997, there continued to be sectors of Guatemalan society irrevocably opposed to progress toward peace, human rights and social justice. For more than five hundred years Guatemala has experienced a culture of violence

Participants to the Healing Memories Consultation in Dublin, from Guatemala, reported with emotion the efforts done by Bishop Gerardi in connection with the Recovery of Historical Memory Project aiming to Heal Memories in the population of Guatemala after so much of civil war<sup>13</sup>. Monseñor Juan Gerardi presented the Report of the Recovery of Historical Memory in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Guatemala City, April 24, 1998. According to REMHI, 150,000 civilians were killed and another 50,000 "disappeared" during the internal armed conflict. More than 400 villages were erased from the landscape as homes were burned, crops destroyed and the inhabitants cruelly massacred. The victims, for the most part, were Mayan peasant farmers from poor and isolated villages throughout the western highlands. And 90% of the time the perpetrators, REMHI confirmed, were members of the Armed Forces or the army-commissioned Civil Defense Patrols. Two days later, he was assassinated.



Bishop Gerardi's assassination on Sunday, April 26, 1998, is grimly reminiscent of thousands of other killings that he himself investigated, as Coordinator of the Human Rights Office for the Archdiocese of Guatemala. Gerardi also directed the Interdiocesan Historical Memory Recovery Project (REMHI in Spanish) and its landmark study of human rights abuses during the 36-year civil war. On the afternoon of Friday, April 24, at a special Mass in the capital city, Bishop Gerardi released REMHI's final report, a scathing indictment entitled "**Guatemala: Nunca Mas**" { Never again}

His assassination is as significant to Guatemala as Monsenor Oscar Romero's murder was to El Salvador. It is the highest level murder in the history of the Guatemalan Church. The REMHI

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<sup>12</sup> La conflictividad guatemalteca y su abordaje constructivo, (The Guatemalan conflict and a constructive approach to it) Sarti Carlos A., and Aguilar U., Isalbe. Propaz, Guatemala, 2006, 17.

<sup>13</sup> A full version of the report HEALING OF MEMORIES OF COMMUNITIES IN PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT AND EXPERIENCE OF THE ECUMENICAL FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, GUATEMALA Revd Dr Vitalino Similox Salazar can be obtained from the WCC Desk on Health and Healing

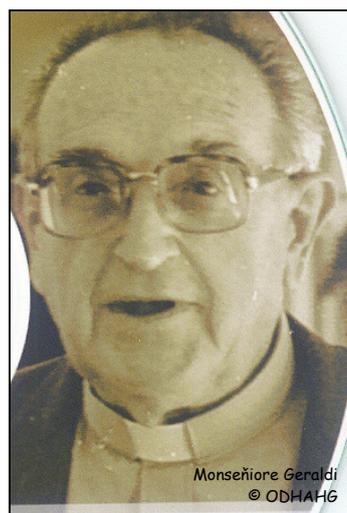
project has been an effort within the Human Rights Ministry which is part of the Social Ministry of the Church. It is a mission of service to people and to society.

This is the sermon preached by Monsenor Gerardi during the presentation of the report:

*"When confronted with political or economic issues, many people react by saying "Why does the Church get involved in this?" They would like us to dedicate ourselves strictly to spiritual ministries. But the Church has a mission to accomplish in terms of bringing order to society, and that includes ethical, moral and evangelical values. What do the commandments tell us? They say, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And it is precisely to that neighbor that the Church has to direct its mission.*

*Speaking to lay people, Pope John Paul II said, "An essential task of the Church is to rediscover the dignity of the human person." This was also the evangelizing labor of Jesus. The Lord put the dignity of human beings at the center of the Gospel.*

*Within the pastoral work of the Church, the REMHI project is a legitimate and painful denunciation that we must listen to with profound respect and a spirit of solidarity. But it is also an "announcing." It is an alternative aimed at finding new ways for human beings to live with one another. When we began this project, we were interested in discovering the truth in order to share it. We were interested in reconstructing the history of pain and death, seeing the reasons for it, understanding the why and how. We wanted to show the human drama and to share with others the sorrow and the anguish of the thousands of dead, disappeared and tortured. We wanted to look at the roots of injustice and the absence of values.*



*This is a pastoral way of doing things. It is working with the light of Faith to discover the face of God, the presence of the Lord. In all of these happenings, it is God who is speaking to us. We are called to reconcile. Christ's mission is a reconciling one. His presence calls us to be reconcilers in this broken society and to try to place the victims and perpetrators within the framework of justice. There are people who have died for their beliefs. There are executioners who were often used as instruments. Conversion is necessary and it's up to us to open spaces to bring about that conversion. It's not enough to just accept the facts. It is necessary to reflect on them and to recuperate the values lost.*

*We are gathering the memories of the people because we want to contribute to the construction of a different country. This path was and continues to be full of risks, but the building of the Kingdom of God has risks and only those that have the strength to confront those risks can be the builders.*

*On June 23, 1994 the parties that negotiated the Peace Accords expressed their conviction that, "all of the people of Guatemala [have] the right to know the full truth" about the events that occurred during the armed conflict, and that "this clarification will help to ensure that the sad and painful pages of history will not be repeated and that the process of democratization in the country will be strengthened." They emphasized that [knowing the truth] is an indispensable condition for achieving peace. This is part of the preamble of the Accord which created the Commission for Historical Clarification whose important work is also is the process of being concluded.*

*The Church resonated with this desire and committed itself to the search to "know the truth," convinced as Pope John Paul II said that "truth is the strength behind peace." (World Day of Peace, 1980). As a Church, we collectively and responsibly assumed this task of breaking the si-*

lence that thousands of war victims have kept for years. We opened up the possibility for them to talk and to have their say, to tell their stories of suffering and pain, so they might feel liberated from the burden that has been weighing down on them for so many years.

This has been the essential objective that has motivated the REMHI project during its three years of work: to know the truth that will make us all free (John 8:32).

In the Historical Clarification Accord, we, as people of faith, discovered a call from God to our mission as Church that truth should be the vocation of all of humanity. Coming from the Word of God, we can not hide or cover-up reality. We cannot distort history, nor should we silence the truth.

Twenty centuries ago, Saint Paul made a statement that our recent history has confirmed unequivocally that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth with injustices." (Rom 1:18). The truth in our country has been twisted and silenced.

God is inflexibly opposed to evil in any form. The root of the downfall and the disgrace of humanity comes from the deliberate opposition to truth that is the radical reality of God and of human beings. It is this reality that has been intentionally deformed in our country throughout 36 years of war against the people.

That's why in our Bishop's pastoral letter entitled "True Peace is Urgent!!", we stated that historical clarification was "not just necessary, but crucial to ensuring that the past, with all of its serious consequences, would not be repeated. As long as the truth is not known, the wounds of the past continue to be open and do not begin to heal."

As a Church, we do not have any doubt that the work we have carried out in these past few years has been part of a story of grace and salvation, a real step towards peace as a result of justice. It has been a soft scattering of the seeds of life and dignity throughout the country -- and the advocates and participants in the work have been the suffering people themselves. It has been a beautiful service of veneration for the martyrs and a dignification of the victims that were the targets of the plans for destruction and death.

To open ourselves to the truth and to bring ourselves face to face with our personal and collective reality is not an option that can be accepted or rejected. It is an undeniable requirement of all people and all societies that seek to humanize themselves and to be free. It makes us face our most radical condition as humans; that we are sons and daughters of God, called to participate in our Father's freedom.

*But the building of the Kingdom of God has risks and only those that have the strength to confront those risks can be the builders.*

Years of terror and death have displaced and reduced the majority of Guatemala to fear and silence. Truth is the primary word, the serious and mature action that makes it possible for us to break this cycle of death and violence and to open ourselves to a future of hope and light for all.

REHMI's work has been an astonishing endeavor of discovery, exploration and appropriation of our personal and collective history. It has been an open door for people to be able to breath and speak in freedom and for the creation of communities with hope. Peace is possible -- a peace that is born from the truth that comes from each one of us and from all of us. It is a painful truth, full of memories of the deep and bloody wounds of the country. It is a liberating and humanizing truth that makes it possible for all men and women to come to terms with themselves and their life stories. It is a truth that challenges each one of us to recognize our individual and collective responsibility and commit ourselves to action so that those abominable acts never happen again.

*This project has made a commitment to the people that gave their testimonies, to gather their experiences in this report and to support all of the demands of the victims. But our commitment is also to return the collected memory to the people. The search for truth does not end here. It must return from where it was born and it must support the role of memory as an instrument for social reconstruction through the creation of materials, ceremonies, monuments etc.*

*Pope John Paul II tell us, "It is necessary to keep alive the memory of what has happened. It is a specific duty. We've been better able to comprehend what World War II has meant for Europeans and for the world during these 50 years thanks to the acquisition of new information that has allowed us a better understanding of the suffering caused." (50th Anniversary of the end of World War II) This is what the REMHI project has done in Guatemala. Discovering the truth is painful, but it is without a doubt, a healthy and liberating action. The thousands of testimonies of the victims and the recounting of the horrific crimes are the current day manifestations of the figure of the "suffering servant of Yahweh," who is incarnated in the people of Guatemala. "Behold my servant," says Isaiah, "...many were afraid of him. He was so disfigured he was beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of sons of man. He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. (Isaiah 52:13 - 53:4)*

*Bringing the memory of these painful events into the present leads us to confront some of the first words of our faith, "Cain, where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know", he answered. "Am I my brother's keeper?"*

*Yahweh replied, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." (Gen 4: 9-10)*



There are victims of oppressive regimes and arbitral killings all over South America, and all over people are demanding to know the truth, like here the Frauen at the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires.

## Reflecting

The pain and agony of those who have suffered is best told in the form of music, poetry and literature. **The Voices from the Land of Tress, by Abigail Zammit**, tells the story of Guatemala's thirty-six years of civil war. It is a familiar tale of exploitation, poverty and repression in pursuit of 'US interests'. But the 'Silent Holocaust' of Guatemala was extraordinarily brutal even by the standards of Central America, involving CIA-trained death-squads, the widespread use of torture and rape, the deliberate targeting of churches and the genocide of 200,000 Indians.

*Voices from the Land of Trees* is a work of bold historical imagination and sympathy, a contribution to the process of recovering these terrible events from official silence and collective amnesia. It is a book about suffering and liberation, about the mysteries of Mayan culture and the beauty of the small country known as the 'Land of Trees'. These poems are spoken by many different voices - mothers, missionaries, children, soldiers, guerrillas, Indians, students and journalists - each struggling to be heard above the sound of gunfire and weeping, each trying to break the silence.

Hear too the story of a child soldier Enrico, was listed into the Guatemalan army when he was fourteen. " The army was a nightmare. We suffered greatly. From the cruel treatment we received. We were constantly beaten; mostly for no reason at all, just to keep us in a state of terror. ....I still have a scar on my lip and sharp pains in my stomach from being brutally kicked by the older soldiers. The food was scarce, and they made us walk with heavy loads, much too heavy for our small and malnourished bodies. They forced me to learn how to fight and kill in a war I didn't understand why it was being fought. " source: Peace Pledge Union}

What is the cause of Man's inhumanity to Man? There are poems, which try to graphically analyze this. Marjorie Agosin (Chile) writes:

" The most unbelievable part  
they were people like us  
good manners  
well educated and refined.'

Yet it is these very people who went crazy when crisis erupted and the mobs took over."

Again, she describes

"...they went crazy  
delighted in burning  
children and books  
played at decorating cemeteries  
bought furniture made of broken bones  
dined on tender ears and testicles."

This is not at all excessive, sensational or far fetched. Survivors from several countries have narrated similar things. Brutality is cross-cultural.

## Let's think and discuss

In many places, the Church and the state are separate entities, each with their own borders of jurisdictions. Should the church get involved in the politics of the nation?



If the Church were to get involved in the politics of injustice, marginalization, poverty and structural violence in your country what do you think would happen?

Bishop Gerardi puts his life on the line to speak up for the violations his country men and women had experienced. In what ways can we as individuals speak up and protest against gross human rights violations? Do we see this as our role as Christians?

In their presentation, the representatives from Guatemala pointed to the fact that "understanding the truth and giving it priority helps us above all to be reconciled with ourselves, which makes the past and the future more manageable... Arriving at knowledge of the truth opens up the possibility of a new beginning when it has seemed that the end had been reached and everything brought to a close".<sup>14</sup> Do you have an experience of such truth?

## Looking inwards – turning to God

When will you give justice to the oppressed?

When support for those who cry out in pain?

When will your Spirit come  
and strengthen them in their agony?

I have heard the cry of my people

You told the prophets

We are amazed when we realize that there are  
Sisters and brothers in Christ taking up your word,  
listen to the cries of your people, taking sides and  
are willing to pay the price.

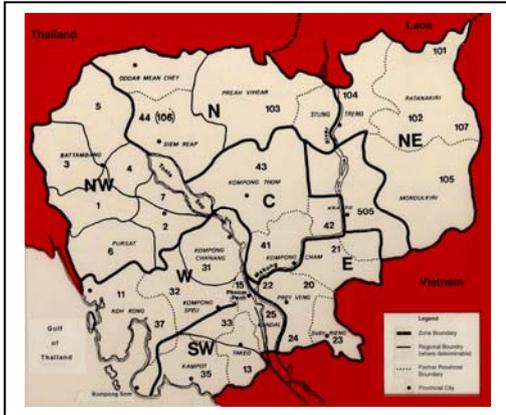
We pray for those martyrs of our times,  
for the people, for whom they had compassion and empathy  
we ask you to make us also listen to their cries,  
give us the strength to take up our burden and cross of commitment,  
when needed to stand against atrocities and exploitation  
committed by human beings on human beings.



<sup>14</sup> See for a fuller discussion the section on p. 25

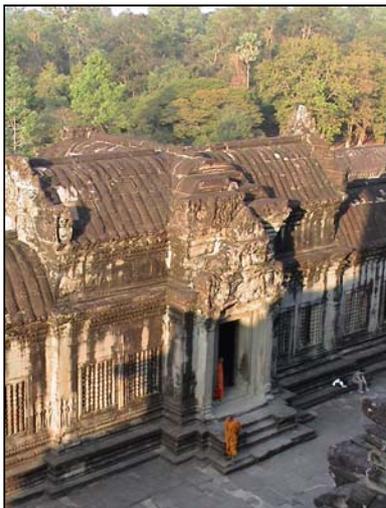
## CAMBODIA-

### THE DIFFICULTY OF COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST<sup>15</sup>



Half a millennium of intermittent civil conflict, foreign invasions, and even genocide not only devastated Cambodia, but also prevented the Khmer people from evaluating their experiences in historical perspective. Hindu, Buddhist, royalist, republican, colonial and communist regimes came and went. Five relocations of the Khmer capital in as many centuries preceded the three foreign occupations and seven regime changes of the past sixty years alone. Time and again, officials abandoned archives. Rulers erased rivals from the records. International leaders denied Cambodia's history and blocked its documentation. Yet recent events offer hope at least of an accounting for the Khmer Rouge genocide of 1975-1979.

A substantial corpus of inscriptions and archaeological sites, like the twelfth-century Hindu temple of Angkor Wat, testify to Cambodia's medieval glory. Around 1432, the Khmer court moved downriver, founding a new capital, Lovek. In 1594, a Thai army sacked Lovek. Within two years, Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadores* from Manila raided and razed its successor, Srei Santhor. Civil wars also wracked the country, leaving little record. A rare inscription carved at Angkor in 1747 celebrates the Khmer king's defeat of an unnamed rebel princess. Tracking down her forces by "blocking and searching every road," the royal army "drove out, pursued and scattered" (*kchat kchay*) the rebels, showing them "the power of the monarch." "Ethnic violence followed. "The Cambodians have massacred all the Cochinchinese [Vietnamese] that they could find in the country," wrote a French missionary in 1751. This massacre lasted a



15 The following text contains elements from an article by Ben Kiernan, *Recovering History and Justice in Cambodia* which appeared as an abridged version of a longer article in *History Today* (London), September 2004, pp. 16-19. See [www.yale.edu/cgp/KiernanComparativ2004.doc](http://www.yale.edu/cgp/KiernanComparativ2004.doc)

month and a half; only about twenty women and children were spared; a few were able to escape through the forest or fled by sea." No survivors were found of the numerous Vietnamese residents in Cambodia.<sup>16</sup> Nor do other records of that pogrom survive.

Conflicts raged for a century. From the west, Thailand seized the Angkor region. Vietnam encroached from the east. Then France colonized Vietnam, and in 1863, imposed a Protectorate on Cambodia. The French moved the capital from Oudong to Phnom Penh, re-took Angkor from Thailand, and restored its archaeological sites. But the colonialists neglected Khmer education. Pagoda schools declined; literacy rates fell. Ninety years of colonial rule produced only 144 Khmer *Baccalauréats*.<sup>17</sup> While history publishing flourished in colonial Vietnam, even educated Cambodians lacked access to Khmer-language historical sources, which French and royal officials often suppressed to monopolise state legitimacy.



*Hundreds of thousands of Cambodian and foreign visitors to the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum had viewed the grisly, 12-square-meter (129 square feet) wall installation of skulls and bones. A Buddhist shrine will be erected at the site.*

After Cambodia's independence, the regime of Prince Norodom Sihanouk (1954-70) took over. In the 1960s, as U.S. forces intervened in the war in neighbouring Vietnam, Sihanouk tried to keep Cambodia neutral. His ouster in 1970 brought several contending armies, Vietnamese and American, crashing over the border. Cambodia became a theatre of the Vietnam War. "President Nixon told Henry Kissinger on the telephone on December 9, 1970. "I want a plan where every goddamn thing that can fly goes into Cambodia and hits every target that is open ... everything. I want them to use the big planes, the small planes, everything they can." By 1973, half a million tons of U.S. bombs had killed over 100,000 peasants and devastated the countryside.<sup>18</sup> Such was the background on which the Khmer Insurgent (KI [Khmer Rouge]) cadre begun an intensified campaign among ethnic Cambodian, in an effort to recruit young men and women for KI military organizations. They used the damage caused by B-52 strikes as the main theme of their propaganda, telling people that the Government of Lon Nol had requested the airstrikes and was responsible for the damage and "suffering of innocent villagers". The only way to stop "the massive destruction of the country" is to remove Lon Nol and return Prince Sihanouk to power.

16 A. Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Cochinchine 1658-1823*, II, Paris, 1924, pp. 366-70.

17 See B. Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: A History of Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975* (London 1985, pp. xii-xiv), second edition, Yale University Press, 2004, Introduction. Dr. Kiernan is the founder of the Cambodian Genocide Studz Programm

18 B. Kiernan, *The American Bombardment of Kampuchea, 1969-1973*, in: *Vietnam Generation*, 1:1 (Winter 1989): 4-41.

The U.S. bombing thus helped the guerrillas of Pol Pot's Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK, or Khmer Rouge) to recruit vengeful survivors, whom they misled, claiming that "The killing birds came from Phnom Penh." The Khmer Rouge army expanded, and shelled the capital, diverting history against innocent urban dwellers.

The Khmer Rouge won the war in April 1975. They emptied Cambodia's cities into the countryside, persecuting and murdering the deported towns people, who tended to be more educated than the peasantry. Pol Pot's new communist regime, called Democratic Kampuchea (DK), also committed genocide against the Khmer Buddhist monkhood, the traditional bearers of cultural literacy. Democratic Kampuchea expelled 150,000 Vietnamese residents from Cambodia, killed all 10,000 who stayed, and carried out larger, less systematic genocide against the country's Chinese and Muslim minorities. In all, 1.7 million people died in four years. Targeting history too, the Khmer Rouge scattered libraries, burned books, closed schools, and murdered schoolteachers. Three-quarters of Cambodia's 20,000 teachers perished, or fled abroad.<sup>19</sup>

Washington, Beijing, and Bangkok all supported the existence of the Khmer Rouge regime for geopolitical reasons. When the Vietnamese communist army overthrew the Khmer Rouge in January 1979, the new People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) re-opened the cities and schools, but



Ancient Angkor Watt War relief

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faced an international embargo led by China, the USA, and Thailand. With Vietnamese aid the PRK re-opened the Teachers' College, and printed forty school textbooks by 1980. But for a decade, Cambodian schools offered no history subjects; only classes on "Political Morality" and Folk Tales. DK destruction of books was not the sole reason for the curriculum gap. Vietnamese advisors at the new Education Ministry planned a new, revolutionary history syllabus, but the PRK dragged its feet.<sup>20</sup> One official explained that

the country's history had yet to be written! Yet from 1985 to

None of Cambodia's pre-1975 professors or lecturers who had remained in the country survived the Khmer Rouge genocide. But from 1979 the PRK trained a hundred new tertiary educators.

Classes addressed some symbolic issues. For instance, the fifth-grade text tried to assess Vietnam's nineteenth century interventions in Cambodia. In that era, the Vietnamese court at Hue had vied with Thailand for dominance over the Cambodian court at Oudong. The textbook informed pupils that, to escape Bangkok's control, "our Khmer kings ran to rely on the feudalists in

19 D. Ayres, *Anatomy of a Crisis: Education, Development and the State in Cambodia, 1953–1998*, Honolulu 2000, pp. 126, 217 n.16.

20 Ayres, *Anatomy of a Crisis* (n. 13), pp. 134, 219.

the east, that is, the Vietnamese kingdom." Hue's intervention "became steadily more active," especially in the court of King Ang Chan II (1794-1834). Thailand, too, "used force to pressure King Ang Chan II and to encourage him to accept absolute Thai sovereignty. Worried by such pressure, King Ang Chan II requested help from the Hue court." Vietnamese troops invaded, defeating the Thai.

The vacuum fostered an uneasy relationship with Cambodia's past, and its neighbours. In January 2003, a Thai TV star reportedly asserted that Angkor belonged to Thailand. Khmer protestors sacked the Thai embassy in Phnom Penh. Gangs torched a Thai airline office, hotels, and restaurants. Yet Cambodian schoolteachers still have to skirt the Khmer Rouge genocide. In 2001 the Education Ministry published new history texts, which finally included sections on DK, but recalled them in 2003 after a semester of use.

International actors also fostered a lack of accountability. Behind the scenes, the ousted Khmer Rouge received U.S. support from the Carter, Reagan and first Bush administrations. In 1982 the U.S. and China encouraged Sihanouk to join a DK coalition-in-exile. The US refused to support a proposed international genocide tribunal. In 1989 the US even urged that the Khmer Rouge be included in the Cambodian government. When Japan proposed a commission of inquiry into Khmer



Rouge crimes, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon opposed the idea, stating on 18 March, 1991, that it was "likely to introduce confusion in international peace efforts."<sup>21</sup>

Twenty years of UN silence on the Khmer Rouge genocide further encouraged Cambodians to ignore the past. After a 1988 meeting of the Southeast Asian countries, the Indonesian chairman noted a consensus

opposing any return to "the genocidal policies and practices of the Pol Pot regime." Yet in 1989, the UN General Assembly and the Security Council's five permanent members deplored only unspecified, unauthored, undated "policies and practices of the past." During the 1991-93 UN operation in Cambodia, Pol Pot would enjoy "the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities to participate in the electoral process" as others.<sup>22</sup>

In 1991 the UN Human Rights Sub-commission urged "the international community to prevent the recurrence of genocide in Cambodia" and "to take all necessary preventive measures." Washing-

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21 H. Yamada, Japan's Peace Plan Proposes to Disarm Factions, Daily Yomiuri, 5 May 1991. See also B. Kiernan (ed.), *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia: The Khmer Rouge, the United Nations, and the International Community*, New Haven, Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies/Schell Center for International Human Rights, Yale Law School, 1993, pp. 207, 255 n.78, 260 n. 137. For consistent statements also made by Solomon at the time, see pp. 203-4. For details on Japan's diplomacy, see *Indochina Digest*, 10 May 1991. The Summary and timetable of this document is from the presentation of Mr. Lao, Mong Hayof the Asian Human Rights Commission.

22 See Kiernan, "The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the Cambodian Peace Process: Causes and Consequences," in *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia*.

ton now pledged cooperation in bringing the Khmer Rouge to justice. But the next year the director of the UN's Human Rights Component in Cambodia deplored its "complete inability to work in one of the zones," a feeble criticism of Khmer Rouge obstruction, and he silently assimilated the 1975-79 genocide into what he called "decades of conflict, upheaval and confrontation." This obfuscation made it harder to blame Cambodians for failing to face their history.

Yet they had no choice. From jungle bases, the Khmer Rouge boycotted the UN-organized 1993 elections, and kept killing Cambodian troops and civilians. Bringing them to justice became U.S. law under President Clinton in 1994. Two years later, Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Program uncovered 100,000 pages of secret DK documents revealing the role of top Khmer Rouge leaders in the 1975-79 mass killings, and began posting their contents at [www.yale.edu/cgp](http://www.yale.edu/cgp). In 1997, Cambodia's rival Prime Ministers, Hun Sen and Sihanouk's son Norodom Ranariddh, jointly requested UN aid to prosecute DK leaders for their past crimes. The UN Secretary-General appointed a "Group of Experts" to examine the case.



"Mr Mong Hay Lao of Asia Human Rights Forum explains the History of the plight of the Cambodian people.

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In early 1999, the UN Experts recommended charging the surviving DK leaders "for crimes against humanity and genocide" perpetrated in 1975-1979. As well as committing "war crimes" against Vietnam and Thailand, DK had "subjected the people of Cambodia to almost all of the acts" listed in the 1948 UN Genocide Convention.

Finally pursuing accountability, the UN began negotiations with Hun Sen's government for a mixed national/international trial of senior Khmer Rouge leaders. Cambodia's National Assembly passed a "Law on the Establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea." On June 6, 2003, Cambodia and the UN signed their cooperation Agreement. After a year of delays by Cambodian opposition parties, the Agreement was

ratified in the National Assembly in October 2004.

American leaders still ignore the earlier U.S. contribution to Cambodia's tragedy. But in 2004, eighteen members of Congress co-sponsored a resolution in support of the Khmer Rouge tribunal.<sup>23</sup>

### Summing up

- There was no complete defeat of the Khmer Rouge regime. This regime or its remnants continued to fight on until their exhaustion and surrender in 1998. The surrender of these remnants was a government deal with them which included allowing them to control their own areas and amnesty.

- Any look at the past will affect some people in power due to their association with the Khmer Rouge.
- There is no leadership for the search for truth, justice and reconciliation. The society is very much polarized. People follow or support different political groupings or political parties. There are no credible, neutral and independent groups, accepted by various political parties, especially the dominant ruling party, the former communist Cambodian People's Party. This party is composed of pro-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge or opportunist elements of the Khmer Rouge.
- "Either you're with me or you're against me" is one aspect of Cambodian political culture.
- Buddhist clergy is under government control. The Supreme Buddhist Patriarch is a die-hard supporter of the ruling Cambodian People's Party.
- There were peace marches lead by a leading Buddhist monk, Mohakosananda, in the early 1990s. But the government was not keen to see those marches. The Khmer Rouge did not allow them to enter their zones.
- There has been no formal healing and reconciliation programme. Nor has there been any comprehensive report on the massacres. There is one organization called Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DCCAM) which has been collecting Khmer Rouge archives. It is publishing a *Truth* review which reproduces those archives. Recently it has published a book on the history of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge rule.
- There have been public forums with participation of Khmer Rouge cadres, but these forums are not meant to be face-to-face meetings between perpetrators and their victims and to look for ways of avoiding the repeat of the past.
- There has been no admission of responsibility, even of a moral nature, for the 1.7 million deaths, except Duch who has reportedly made confessions to the crimes committed at the Tuol Sleng Torture Centre, as director of that centre. Duch is known to have converted to Christianity.
- Some of cadres have, at a public forum in 1999 and separate interviews, blamed Pol Pot, Brother no.1 and Khmer Rouge leader, for everything that had happened under his rule, when Pol Tot had died already.
- Nuon Chea, Brother no. 2 and President of the Khmer Rouge National Assembly, has claimed his innocence after his recent arrest by the KRT.
- Former King Sihanouk, President of the Khmer Rouge regime until 1976, has claimed to be "prisoner" of the Khmer Rouge.
- Many of the current leaders had associated with the Khmer Rouge, yet they have not said that had any moral responsibility for the massacres, suffering and destruction of Cambodian society under the Khmer Rouge rule.
- In Cambodian political culture, it is unknown that rulers have admitted their wrong-doings and expressed any remorse for them. Furthermore, for them, reconciliation means rather surrender to the powerful, not reconciliation among equals.



Former "Comrad Duch" Director PPrison and Torture Camp

Photograph ©2000 Stuart Isett/Corbis

## Table of the events



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## REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE



When we talk about "healing of memories" it helps to recall the literal meaning of the English verb "to remember". The word remember speaks of the act of putting together those "members" that have been dis-membered from the mind. "Healing" has to do with overcoming the damaging effects of "dismemberment". In the case studies above, this is of central importance. Of equal importance is, to

recognise the partiality and selectivity of "dis-membered" memories. A person, a group or a nation will only select those aspects of their past that fit their present self-image. In many cases, this implies that only memories of injustices suffered will be actively recalled, while memories of injustices committed will be denied. Selective remembering and massive denial go hand in hand.

Therefore it is great importance to enable victor groups and peoples to consider their own perceptions of past events through the eyes of the Other, i.e. through the eyes of victims, their enemies. What can happen in this process is an acknowledgement of one's own guilt, together with an empathic understanding of the suffering of the Other. "Deep remembering" can also enable victims to get a feeling and understanding of what has gone on in the perpetrators' minds and hearts. In this way deep remembering leads to reconciliation.

Guatemala, Cambodia and Rwanda {to name a few countries} have experienced Gross Human Rights Violations of such an extent that is hard for outsiders to comprehend. But, it is not only the numbers of victims and the horrors committed which make them abhorrent, but the fact that one human being is capable of doing this to another human being and have no guilt about it whatsoever. Like the warden in the central camp for intellectuals in Cambodia, who took photographs of the prisoner on arrival and again another one on the day of execution, as proof to the rulers that the victim had been tortured. The same man organized the killings in the camp meticulously: Friday the women and children, Monday the men, Wednesday the handicapped. What makes human beings act in such an inhumane way? Why is it that the international community does not interfere more vociferously? Why Oh why do the churches not cry out against such inhumanity together in one voice? Is the fact that they are still divided in various dogma with motives of their own, a reason for not joining together and facing the need to breaking the domination of violence?

One way to understand the cycle of violence and protracted conflict is to visualise them as a broken narrative of a people's story. A people's story is marginalized, or, at worst, destroyed by the dominant culture, and by this act meaning, identity and a place in history are lost. This is the

deeper challenge of peace building: how to reconstitute, or re-build the broken narrative and thereby restore the people's place in history...<sup>24</sup>

When deep narrative is broken, the journey towards the past that lies before us is marginalized and truncated. We lose more than just the thoughts of a few old people. We lose our bearings. We lose the capacity to find our place in this world. And we lose the capacity to find our way back to humanity. (Jean Paul Lederach)

People need to be given the opportunity to visualize the narrative that has been broken. They need help like the early process of learning the alphabet to relearn how to reconstitute the narrative brick by brick. If we do not rebuild, we may not be able to heal. Pope John Paul II taught that the healing of memories and ruptured identities must go deep into the soul and spirit to find the place of loss and broken meaning.

Colonel Romeo Dallaire, humanitarian, author and retired general served as Force Commander of UNAMIR, the ill-fated United Nations peacekeeping force for Rwanda between 1993 and 1994. Looking back on that terrible period, Dallaire speaks of forgiveness and the need for pardon and his own personal need to make a pilgrimage back through the land of humble memories, to face his ghosts to retrieve his lost soul. "It has been almost nine years since I left Rwanda, but as I write this, the sounds smells and colours come flooding back in digital clarity... For many of these years I have wanted to return to Rwanda and disappear into the blue-green hills with my ghosts. A simple pilgrim seeking forgiveness and pardon. But as I slowly begin to piece my life together, I know the time has come for me to make a more difficult pilgrimage: to travel back through all the terrible memories and retrieve my soul (a reminder of the vastness and depth of memory's landscape).<sup>25</sup>

Cambodian author Chanrithy Him, records her story in "When Broken Glass Floats." Imagine being lost in the dark. Not only are you lost, but you are tied up so you are unable to move, unable to control what happens around you. You are starving and your family is dying one by one without you near. Your ears are filled with the screams of the suffering around you and your body is filled with the screams of your own flesh wanting, needing nourishment. There is death, disease, pain, and hunger all around you and you can't do anything but try and survive. This is the tale that is told in Chanrithy Him's *When Broken Glass Floats*. This is not only one woman's tale of a torturous life experience, but also a history lesson and epitaph to her family and the people of Cambodia. Her purpose for writing this book is made very clear in the preface. She writes to remember, to speak for those without voice, and to bring what justice she can to the people of Cambodia.

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<sup>24</sup> This and the following is taken from Dr. Geraldine Smyth's address at the Healing Memories Consultation.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Shake Hands with the Devil: The failure of Humanity in Rwanda, Random House, Canada, 2003 pp 4-5

Epigrams are used to ground Him's personal account with historical news reports of the political events surrounding her family's life in Cambodia. Although most of the epigrams are news reports, Him uses one excerpt from the *New Internationalist* to describe a concept called "Year Zero":

Year Zero was the dawn of an age in which, in extremis, there would be no families, no sentiment, no expression of love or grief, no medicines, no hospitals, no schools, no books, no learning, no holidays, no music: only work and death. (Him 226)

*When Broken Glass Floats* opens with a poem the author created to express her need to compose this memoir. This poem shows how powerfully Him feels about her story and the reasons why she composed it.

When broken glass floats, a nation drowns,  
Descending to the abyss.  
From mass graves in the once-gentle land,  
Their blood seeps into mother earth.  
Their suffering spirits whisper to her,  
"Why has this happened?"  
Their voice resounds in the spirit world,  
Shouts though the souls of survivors,  
Determined to connect, begging the world:  
Please remember us.  
Please speak for us.  
Please bring us justice.

In her poem she reveals her loyalty to those who did not live to see the day that the broken glass would sink and the healing would begin. The powerful image she creates in this poem is expanded and repeated throughout her memoir. Her soul is shouting for a nation between the covers of this book. She is a true survivor and her tale has the ability to move, remind, and educate us all.

Finally, as we reflect, there is an important factor to consider. Many of the Gross Human Rights Violations have cultural and / or religious elements, which, to complicate matters, might well be inter-cultural and inter-religious. Conflict resolution in these cases becomes very difficult; deep-remembering might be almost impossible as the cultural roots are so diverse. As long as the Buddhist five principles were practiced, most believed that that was enough. But it was not as millions were killed. The Buddhist clergy themselves with their strong notions of peace and understanding also came under the control of vicious rulers. How do those who are involved in peace building understand, relate and get past such issues to bring about real reconciliation and healing of memories?

## Let's think and discuss



Think of your own country's history and share what aspects of that history you are proud of .

Now imagine having no history, not knowing anything at all about your past. What would that do your identity as a citizen of that country? How important is your identity?

You must have heard of ' the killing fields. " Why was the Church silent at a time like this? Do we have a responsibility for countries that are not Christian? What could the Church have done for a non Christian country like Cambodia?

## Looking inwards turning to God

*Lord, so much pain, so much agony  
I can not cope with it  
But what about the people who are the victims?  
You know that I want to avoid to look at the agony  
You know that I prefer to move around in gardens  
and not in bomb shelters, mine fields, torture chambers  
faced with death squadrons.*

*Lord my name is not*

*Gerardi or  
Romero,  
nor Mother Theresa*

*I would rather sit in the pews and sing hymns than  
Denounce the perpetrators of your law of love  
Lord so much pain, agony and vulnerability  
Makes me silent, incapable to pray!  
Lord make me speak out aloud in your name*

*Amen*



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## South Africa -

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission A process that "initiated more than it closed"...

*A Brief comment on on its strength and weaknesses<sup>26</sup>*

In his presentation on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, Wilhelm Verwoerd concentrated on the structural and performance aspect of this process, aiming at Healing Memories of many years of oppression of one race by another and of a complex mingling of victims becoming victimizers and vice versa. This approach was chosen, for the wide range of interest this commission raised, and as the basic facts were familiar to the majority of the consultation.

The aim of the Commission's Human Rights Subcommittee was to hold public hearings of representative cases and take statements. The first hearing was on 16 April, 1996, and at closure 21297 statements were taken and about 1800 people had public hearings ; The statements highlight 38000 violations and 10000 killings. In a ratio of 54:52 these statements came from women to men, which meant that there was an almost equal distribution of reports among the genders. Unequal representation could be found when observing that 86,9% of statements came from black Africans and only1,1% from white South Africans. One of the points raised later was, that the high rank white perpetrators never came forward. There were submissions from political parties, and institutions such as media, medical profession, etc., however judges refuse to come forward; Special hearings were also held, for example, a children's hearing and a women's hearing. The results had in most cases to be dealt with in the Reparations & Rehabilitation Subcommittee.



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This one based its work on the findings of the Amnesty and the Human Rights Subcommittee, the Reparations & Rehabilitation Subcommittee was mandated to design a policy of how best to assist those found to be victims. The policy could recommend any reparation measures in the form of compensation, ex gratia payment, restitution, rehabilitation or recognition. The President and Parliament then had to decide how, or whether, the policy will be implemented

<sup>26</sup> Verwoerd based his talk on the PowerPoint presentation of Dr. Brandon Hamber "Evaluating the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission. INCORE, University of Ulster, to whom we are grateful for allowing to quote from his presentation.

In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report of Oct'1998 the TRC recommends symbolic reparations, legal and administrative interventions, community rehabilitation programmes and a range of institutional reform measures designed to prevent the recurrence of human rights abuses are made. On the financial front, it was recommended that each person get R17,000 to R24,00 per year for six years.

### **The successes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

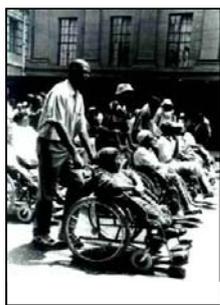
The new political system developed stable and works democratically. Political parties and groups seem to have reached a level of reconciliation between them; Attitudes between the races are improving, although there is still somewhat of an ongoing racism and suspicion.

A consultation process is in place to develop the process and aiming at establishing the broad truth

As the Commissions sessions were all televised, one can speak of the success of 'faces on TV'. In this the TRC created a 'windows of opportunity' which means it delivered some truths (in about 10% of cases with a Carrots and Sticks methodology to the Little and Big Fish).

It was considered a success for some, that there was an element of restorative justice for some victims, which included for most, the right to be heard and acknowledged, with respect and empathy. This created a legitimate space for healing through. victim support groups like Khulumani.

It further more contributed to the opening of a debate on the 'grey areas' of victimization and perpetration. As much as it showed to the broader audience that truth can lead to reconciliation (Gibson) as by means of the findings there is a possibility of labelling the responsible, and make recommendations for political reform



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### **The Weaknesses of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

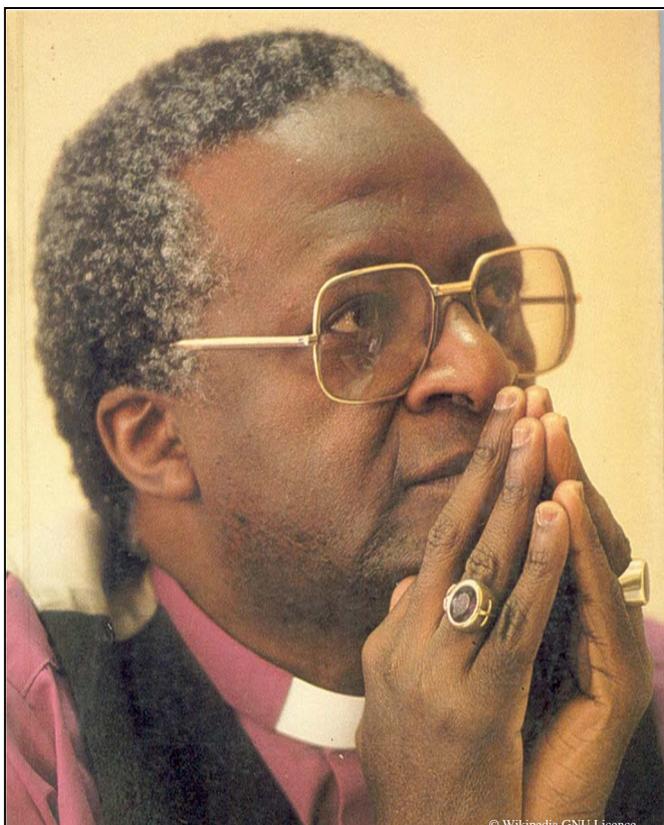
Many have commented that the ideas on restorative justice, were more in spirit than in practice. Perhaps that had to do with the fact, that there seems to have been a failure to connect the Committees and issues to the present day concerns. For example, 31% of all South Africans feel the police has the right to use force to extract information from criminal suspects (CASE, 1998). And over 90% of all South Africans support the death

penalty!

Furthermore people experienced administrative problems regarding the support of victims. Truth, it was discovered, is not automatically healing or leading to reconciliation rather it can increase calls for justice. It was a failure that there were only few long-term structures for reconciliation or prosecution for those who did not come forward. In addition the reparations programme is slow and insufficient.

There needs to be a link of the work of the TRC with other Truth-seeking processes, e.g. De Kok trial & Goldstone Commission. And what seems to be vital and has not been achieved is that one needs to deal with the "uninvolved" having a process of its own for them.

A Truth commission may be a necessary first step toward individual psychological healing but is, in itself insufficient to meet all the psychological needs of people. It can be said that the TRC, "initiated more than it closed". In many cases it needs be stated that there was a lack of genuine appreciation of the complexity of victimisation, traumas. Revealing is not simply healing rather one needs to notice the complexity of story-telling, particularly as well regarding the different cultural approaches of gender. Has the Truth commission build a new nationalism and legitimacy of the state? or has its Amnesty procedures confused human rights with compromise?



Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika  
Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,  
Yizwa imithandazo yethu,  
Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,  
O fedise dintwa la matshwenyeho,  
O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa  
heso,  
Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika.

Uit die blou van onse hemel  
Uit die diepte van ons see  
Oor ons ewige gebergtes  
Waar die kranse antwoord gee,

Sounds the call to come together  
And united we shall stand  
Let us live and strive for freedom  
In South Africa our land

Finally the TRC might have found about the individual truth, the social truth? But has it dealt with the past. Dealing with past means a much wider process e.g. museums, education, memorials, Usually one might observe that Commissions are not good in dealing with horizontal violence and social fabric problems. In any case the TRC would have had much more to go into the political sector. A truth commission, or a government's emphasis on reconciliation, may open some social space to create intervention. Sometimes it seems to be a much better step towards Healing, to accept "narrow permissible lies" then to find out the truth ((Ignatieff) and thus proved a frame for addressing the issues.

# The Truth and Reconciliation Commission - An Outside reaction

by Guillermo Kerber<sup>27</sup>

" Where do I speak from? From outside South Africa, from inside reconciliation processes after violent conflict situations, particularly following TRCs in Sierra Leone and Peru.



Dr. Guillermo Kerber during the panel session© ecu.learn

South Africa's TRC is the key to understanding the shift between *Truth Commissions* in the 80s, mainly in South America and the third generation of TRCs in the twenty first century - Sierra Leone, Peru, Timor, Leste being good examples of this. In these three cases, "Reconciliation" was added to the title and this could not have been possible without the case of the South African TRC.

First I would like to highlight some of the positive aspects of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

The South African TRC brought **Restorative Justice**<sup>28</sup> to a new level. Until this period restorative justice had been used mainly to address family and juvenile justice issues. Now, the TRC, used the theory of Restorative Justice and used it at the national level.

There were three key aspects to Restorative Justice procedures:

1. A **victims centered approach**, responding to the crime-perpetrator focus of criminal justice;
2. The importance of **dialogue** between victim and perpetrator, which was one of the most powerful aspects of the South African TRC;
3. The involvement of the **community** in the process, going beyond the victim-perpetrator confrontation, recognizing and stressing that both victims and perpetrators belong to a community, therefore the community should assume a role in the reconciliation process.

The South African TRC highlighted the **spiritual dimension** of reconciliation after violent conflict



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28 Cf. e.g. KERBER, Guillermo, "Overcoming violence and pursuing justice. An introduction to restorative justice procedures", The Ecumenical Review, April 2003, p. 151 - 157

situations. The leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu was crucial in this regard. In many situations churches have been sceptical about their involvement in these processes as they were seen as mainly political or judicial. Together with the process in Guatemala, the strong involvement of the churches and church leaders in these countries' processes placed the TRC in another dimension

The South African TRC succeeded in bringing a non judicial approach to **victims' rights**. Victims' rights, expressed for instance in 1997, in what are known as the Joined Principles, reaffirmed in 2005, in the Orentlicher report, express the victims' right to truth, justice and reparation<sup>29</sup>. The TRC managed to address these rights in the procedures and report of the Commission

But, as in any other process there were some shortcomings in the South African TRC.

Some South African scholars (cf. e.g. Rashied Omar, from the University of Notre Dame or Nahla Valji, from the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in SA) say the reconciliation achieved in South Africa is a weak one because it did not deal with the structural causes of injustice. The granting of **amnesty** by the TRC has been strongly criticized because it con-



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fuses the legal aspect with the social and cultural process. Interestingly enough, this aspect of the TRC has not been taken by other TRCs even recognizing the positive outcomes of the SA one. **Amnesty** is not the same as **forgiveness**. Forgiving is not forgetting<sup>30</sup>. Robert Schreiter, stresses the difference between amnesty, pardon and forgiveness. "Technically speaking, societies cannot forgive wrongdoers, since forgiveness is a moral act. Societies can grant amnesty or pardon, or they can decide to punish. But they cannot forgive"<sup>31</sup>

1. The fact that reconciliation was equated to **forgiveness** in the South African TRC made B victims feel that they were compelled to forgive and somehow re-victimize and hurt the victims in

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<sup>29</sup> The following are the two reports presented at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights: "Question of the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations (civil and political)" – Revised final report prepared by M. Louis Joinet (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/20/Rev.1). "Report of the independent expert to update the Set of Principles to combat impunity, Diane Orentlicher" (E/CN.4/2005/102).

<sup>30</sup> As John Paul Lederach would put it, instead of "forget and forgive" let's say "remember and change", cf. LEDERACH, John Paul, Five qualities of practice in support of reconciliation processes, in HELMICK, R. and PETERSEN, R. (eds.) *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, Philadelphia, Templeton 2001.

<sup>31</sup> SCHREITER, op.cit., p. 124. Amnesty, he continues, is the legal "forgetting" that the deed ever occurred. Pardon, legally, means there will be no punishment, leaving the door open for the possibility of hearings, or a trial and a verdict. Pardons may be hard to accept, but at least then there has been an admission of guilt. Amnesties in general complicate the possibility of reaching reconciliation, but show social reconciliation processes will always have to deal with compromise (p. 125-126).

the process. It is relevant to recall what a recent book, *Forgiveness in International Politics*<sup>32</sup>, says in relationship to conflict resolution and peace building in relationship to forgiveness. In this book, forgiveness is there presented as a process, a set of interrelated conditions and components towards reconciliation. While stressing the importance of forgiveness, the authors pay special attention to other aspects of reconciliation such as truth telling, justice, the healing of memories, victims' rights. The conclusion highlights lessons learned through the different chapters of the book. These include:

- the importance of a serious effort to establish historical truth and to disseminate it widely in society;
- the relevance of memory, especially in ethnic and other clashes of group identity;
- the difference between political forgiveness and general amnesty;
- the freedom of victims to forgive;
- the affirmation that forgiveness may include punishment for the sake of the society but rejects a notion of justice as reduced simply to punishment;
- the caution against an instantaneous forgiveness which may be too quick or superficial;
- the role of third-party facilitators;
- the conditions for atmospheres or cultures of forgiveness at the societal and interpersonal levels;
- the constructive role religious communities can play even when they are co-opted and corrupted.

It is also important to note that as a victim of its own success after the SA TRC, to have a TRC has become "fashionable" to the international community, without taking into account the context, history of each conflict, other ways of dealing with reconciliation.

In summary, SA TRC has become a turning point in "dealing with the past", addressing gross human rights violations after conflict situations. The introduction of the reconciliation dimension in the process has opened to a different and I would say deeper and more holistic approach to these kind of processes. TRCs have become "a trade mark" and lessons learned have been taken into account, for instance while establishing both the TRC and the Special Court in Sierra Leona or the International Criminal Court with a special consideration to Victims' rights both at the Prosecutor and the Registrar's office. Shortcomings should also be taken into account to prevent to romanticize the SA TRC and respond to challenges that have been raised.

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32 BOLE, W., CHRISTIANSEN, D., HENNEMEYER, R., *Forgiveness in international politics*, Washington, US Conference of Catholic Bishops 2004.

## REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE



That cultural context is, of course, apartheid, formalized in South Africa in 1948 and deposed in 1990. The history of South African colonialism includes a Calvinist theology wherein God's sovereignty was interpreted racially: the divine judgment demands the division of persons into racial groups, with whites supreme and blacks subordinate. The heritage of the European Enlightenment, too, gave primacy to this the thinking, self-determining

subject, which in turn gave ideological

grounding to the separation of persons into dominant and oppressed.

Against this background Tutu brings a theology that "seeks to restore the oppressor's humanity by releasing and enabling the oppressed to see their oppressors as peers under God." This is his ubuntu theology, so named after an African idea of community. Tutu shows that human beings are defined not by their race but by their createdness in God's image, which brings value and dignity to all people. That *imago Dei* thus breaks down racial barriers. Tutu declares "we can be human only in ... community, in *koinonia*, in peace."

Ubuntu theology sees community rather than self-determination as the essential aspect of personhood. People are distinctive beings, able to recognize and acknowledge one another through mutual encounter and cultural integration. African assertions about God's transcendence and immanence emphasize both God's creativeness (and separateness from creation) and God's encounter with human beings in the divine *kenosis*.

Anglican, Eastern Orthodox and liberation spirituality come together in Tutu's theology, a theology grounded in both prayer and social action. The result is what Battle calls "an African spirituality of passionate concern," which leads to a political involvement that does not compromise Christian values. Tutu's is a deeply liberating theology (more inclusive, according to Battle, than Western black theologies) because it is generous, embracing and conciliatory to people of all races and systems of belief and at the same time prophetic in the struggle against racism.

Battle's book is a helpful source of reflection, showing a deeply spiritual concept of Christian embracing. The community can be at once uncompromising, prophetic, open-hearted and embracing. The bibliography and notes provide a lengthy and helpful guide to Tutu's writings.

South Africa is also a pointer of hope to the rest of the world. Mayihlome Tshwete was born in South Africa in 1982. He never had the opportunity to be a child because of the racial problems in the country and his parents' involvement in trying to change the system. Mayihlome had to

learn at a young age to be mature and to find a way to deal with all the pressures of the apartheid system. Mayihlome wrote poems in honor of his father, a freedom fighter and government minister, Steve "Thangana" Tshwete. Steve Tshwete was imprisoned with Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners on Robbin Island before the end of apartheid. These poems are published in a book of his poetry **Road from Now**.

### **Leaders Great**

Recollecting images of resting soldiers,  
As I look at faded pictures  
Of those missing,  
Those who stood against the greatest opposition.  
Driven only by vision.

My memory dwells on the moments of their lives  
When their actions gave the masses hope.  
I think of them, the dying breed  
Forever grateful they were never silent.

Their voices were heard while in exile  
And from that cold, distant island.

Now we hear their voices as leaders of a great land,  
Though, sadly, some have lost their breath  
By hands of time or cruel, violent death.

All for the sake of the cause.  
To open opportunities' doors  
To people who knew nothing but racial wars.

Today, because of them,  
We can proudly say:  
"That's the way it was"

My appreciation goes to the dying breed.

South Africa, although a country that represents great diversity and hope, has many problems that must still be overcome. The apartheid system was ended in 1994 and Nelson Mandela was elected as the first black president of South Africa. Although forgiveness has brought both whites and blacks together as never before, the remaining problems of poverty, HIV/AIDS, and increasing crime leaves much to be done. Racism is slow to change and other issues still haunt the country, however, South Africa has become, to many, the country in Africa that represents hope. Despite all the problems, Mayihlome particularly mirrors the idea of hope for a brighter tomorrow.

## **A Country for All**

Blurry visions of a perfect tomorrow get clearer by the day,  
There is hope in what tomorrow will display.  
Visions based on fallen soldiers' words  
their dreams build hope

South Africa, breathe on this patriotic commitment,  
Motivate my vision,  
My consciousness:  
Make me a catalyst.

Unity sutures the battered body of this nation  
But only in action:  
Unity needs you and I to join hands  
Let's heal yesterday's wounds together,  
Give purpose to empty, needy palms.

Let's all be orphans to apartheid and seek a solution  
Let's all be children of revolution.  
A country for all:  
Together we stand, divided we fall.  
A country for all.

If I could plant my words as seeds  
In tomorrow's soil  
I would water them with hope and ambition  
And grow wide crops of my vision  
To feed my people's minds.

My words would be eaten  
By those who hunger for more than just existence.

My words would be nutrients  
Serving as growth's blueprints.

My words to the soul  
Would be like sunrise to one's eyes  
A promise of sunlight

Seeds rise to feed the soul  
Forget not your purpose:

Erase misery's bonds  
Overflow into cups of pleasant times  
Feed my nation on fruits of thought:  
The taste of endless possibilities.

Although many might have wished that the TRC would have gone further and achieved more "justice for all," it became an example for peace processes in many countries, which have been aiming at coming to an end with year long conflicts. The example also brought hope.

## Let's think and discuss



- Jesus said that, "The truth shall set you free." Truth while liberating us, can also destabilize. It can unite and it can divide. You experience of this?
- Many people say that truth is not always the best way to reconciliation. Is this a correct way of looking at the healing process?
- How important is truth in order to start a process of Healing Memories, to reconcile? Can we always face the truth? Can we deal with the truth without it leaving a scar on us?
- What do you think is so special about the South African model compared to other conflict resolution processes?
- Is hope brought by truth, an important feeling that makes change happen, or does it just let people down in the long run?

## Looking inwards - turning to God

*We offer our thanks to thee  
For sending your only Son to die for us all  
In a world divided by colour bars.  
How sweet a thing it is to know  
That in you, we all belong to one family.*

*There are times when we,  
unprivileged people,  
weep tears that are not loud, but deep,  
when we think of suffering we experience.*

*We come to you, our only hope and refuge.  
Help us, O God, to refuse to be embittered  
against those who handle us with harshness.*

*We are grateful to you  
for the gift of laughter at all times.  
Save us from hatred of those who oppress us.  
May we follow the Spirit of your Son Jesus Christ  
Amen*



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*(Bantu)*

## *The case study: Germany*

### *A half- truth is a full lie<sup>33</sup>*

*Healing through information dissemination -  
reconciling with a past of distrust and oppression –*



Unified Germany made great efforts in enlightening and informing about the second German dictatorship. There is no doubt about the lesson learned from the time after the Second World War, when Germans needed more than twenty years before they confronted themselves with the Nazi-past.

In the beginning of the unified Germany, members of the Civil Rights Movement and associations of victims demanded the German Parliament and the Government to act. Several laws were enacted in order to indemnify victims of persecution and prosecution and to give them the chance of rehabilitation.<sup>34</sup> The Bundestag (the German Parliament)

brought into action two Enquete-Commissions to make investigations and surveys about political, economical, social and cultural subjects. On recommendation of the German Bundestag, a Foundation called "Stiftung für die Aufarbeitung

der SED-Diktatur" (Foundation for working up the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany ) started its work in 1998. The Foundation stands for an active and pluralistic discussion of the SED-dictatorship and its effects on the re-united Germany. It acts as a mediator and as an intersection between research, politics, media, the public and the reappraisal of the SED-dictatorship.

But the biggest and most spectacular institution of reappraisal is the "Commissioner for the Stasi-Files". By origin and design the Stasi was a secret police organization. By terrorising, suppressing and surveying its own population, it secured the dictatorship of the SED - the leading communist party in the GDR. Its main task was to fight against real and supposed opponents of the GDR or the SED-Party. The Stasi could arrest people and keep them imprisoned in its own interrogation facilities until they were brought to trial.



[Peter Fechter](#) lies dying after being shot by [East German border guards](#). This photo achieved international notoriety, 1962. © under GNU licence Wikipedia.

<sup>33</sup> presented by Mr. Andreas Schultze, Press Officer of the Buerkler Behoerde, which adminsters the files of the Secret service (STASI) of the former German Democratic Republic..

<sup>34</sup> The picture on this page are under GNU Free documentation licence, Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Berlinermauer.jpg>

Additionally, it strove to *bring the whole society under its control* and did so by spreading fear.

The Stasi was not only an institution directed to oppress the people of the German Democratic Republic. It was also very active in the so-called area of operations, meaning mainly West Germany but other western states, too. The most important aims were to break down enemies, to influence political leaders and political developments, to obtain information about the western economy and to procure embargo goods.

The Stasi was a very effective secret police that required a huge staff - it had 92, 000 employees. Besides this, in 1989, the number



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of unofficial informer agents and agents for the foreign espionage was about 174,000. Over the

decades the Stasi apparatus grew into a large-scale bureaucracy with numerous additional tasks: it provided body-guards, placed passport inspectors at border crossings and monitored the flow of traffic between East- and West Germany, and was involved in weapons and technology trade.

### **Development of the office of the Federal Commissioner**

In 1989 - in the time of the Autumn Revolution - the citizens of the GDR *above all* wanted to get rid of the dictatorial *rule(s)* of the German Communist Party. The main instrument through which it retained its power was the Ministry of State Security. Trying to change the political system peacefully, one faced severe challenges: how powerful was the Stasi? And how smart? Did its members prepare a silent metamorphosis in order to survive under a new name? Or were they even conspiring to influence social change?

*Die Gedanken sind frei,  
my thoughts freely flower  
Die Gedanken sind frei,  
my thoughts give me power  
No scholar can map them,  
no hunter can trap them  
No one can deny,  
die Gedanken sind frei*

*I think as I please  
and this gives me pleasure  
My conscience degrades,  
this right I must treasure  
My thoughts will not cater to  
duke or dictator  
No one can deny,  
Die Gedanken sind frei*

*And should tyrants take me &  
throw me in prison  
My thoughts will burst free  
like blossoms in season  
Foundations will crumble  
And structures will tumble  
And free folk will cry  
Die Gedanken sind frei*

*Old German folksong originating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century  
it became central during the 19<sup>th</sup> century democracy  
movement in the German feudal territories (March  
Revolution)*

In the winter of 1989/90 - after the revolution and the Fall of the Berlin Wall - *it became known* that the Stasi was destroying and burning files and - even more important - taking them away. Driven by the fear that they would destroy evidence, people occupied the local and regional

Stasi offices one by one, beginning in Erfurt on December 4<sup>th</sup> and *finally* by storming the headquarters in Berlin on January 15<sup>th</sup>.



The past 17 years have convincingly shown that the work of the Office of the Federal Commissioner is an important part of the political and social transformation from a dictatorship into a democratic state and at the same time, it *also provides the opportunity* to acquire a great amount of information about the central role of the Stasi for the communist rule.

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One of the most important intentions of the law is to give every (*individual*) citizen the right to (*have*) access to their files, if they were *spied on*, manipulated or persecuted. *Since 1991, about 2,4 million citizens asked for their files.* People also have the right to be informed about the identity of the informers who had spied on them and have given the information to the Stasi. There is an unchanging demand for the opportunity to look into ones files.

When the Record Act was discussed in the German Bundestag, many politicians feared that the right to have insight into the files would cause revenge and a social climate of anger, hate and aggression. But, surprisingly, none of these things happened. People who faced the pain of learning about the betrayals and treachery of colleagues, close friends and even relatives remained sober-minded.

### **Research/Education**

It is one of our tasks to promote the historical and political knowledge of the second dictatorship in Germany. But we do not have information about the Stasi in our archives only. They also contain a number of reports about every day life and most notable about opposition and resistance in the GDR. The Stasi-files not only tell of shame or treachery, but also of moral courage and self-respect. Without these reports and stories, partly from the 40ies and 50ies, these times would be forgotten. This is really of great value, first, because people, who opposed against the communists and were often kept imprisoned for many years, *should not be forgotten.* And second: We ourselves need these stories, because they serve us as models for bravery and decency.

### **Providing files to research and the media**

To have social acceptance, it is always important to make clear, that dealing with the past has a lot to do with credibility and justice, and nothing to do with revenge.

The open files - partly - made individual justice. The open files brought many *answers on* historical questions. They made a huge impact on historical justice.

Sometimes people ask us, why we spend *so much money* - the office of the Federal Commissioner has a budget of 100 million Euro per year - and so much time on dealing with the past. In fact, the Federal Republic of Germany and the federal states provide funds to a considerable extent not only for the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi-Files, but also for other institutions dealing with the past and for memorial places.

It is not enough to remember only the bright side of the past. We need to remember the dark side too. *There's a German saying: "A half-truth is a full lie". In that respect,* the dealing with the Stasi files has a special value. Living with history and trying to come to terms with the past is of enormous importance on the way to a free, democratic and self-confident society.

#### REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE



One of the hardest aspects of life under the Stasi was the way in which society was organized and

encouraged to spy on one another. Poet, Pitika Ntuli, though not from East Germany, conveys the feelings that many East Germans felt in his poem,

**In My Country.**

*In my country they jail you  
for what they think you think.*

*My uncle once said to me:  
they'll implant a microchip  
in our minds*

*to flash our thoughts and dreams  
on to a screen at John Vorster square*

*I was scared:  
by day I guard my tongue  
by night my dreams.*

**It is difficult to imagine** living in a divided country. Actually there is today only Papua New Guinea and North Korea. There was no obvious Human Rights Violation for the people in the West, although they could find out, that quite a number was observed by the huge Stasi-Machine.

Once one joined each other, respectively the East the West, the main goal was to achieve economic equality.

The voices of those who warned to be cautious and give it a time, to reflect the past envisage the future and, come together with the Germans in the West to a commonly charted road to reconciliation, those voices were not heard. The paradise of the West was too tempting.

Reconciliation is a difficult process, when there is a past (II. World War) which also has not been sufficiently been dealt with. It seems now, that the East-Germans with their past and the

dubious reports on them, which entered Stasi files, are a scapegoat for rather punitive than restorative justice. More and more people are questioned because they were members of the official administration of the German Democratic Republic (teachers, police, lawyers). Even if there is nothing particular against them, they may or will undergo a new set of suspicion. New movies turn out, which "romanticise" the life style of the GDR compared to the Western form of "I am what I can shop and if I can not shop I am not."

It is such a context, where Healing of Memories not only implies looking up, was seemed to be the Truth. But Truth is personal, is experience, never can be merely objective. So it is very important to discover the self in this process and during those times gone by. That is not only a task for the population, which formerly lived in the East, but also a challenge to the West. Is, what is practiced, a Solidarity tax for the rebuilding of the society in the East, a contribution to reconciliation. Can it be that there growth rather an attitude of righteousness on both sides? Can thus the gap be bridged, reconciliation happen? It is not enough to remember only the bright side of the past. We need to remember the dark side too. *There's a German saying. "A half-truth is a full lie". In that respect, the dealing with the Stasi files has a special value. Living with history and trying to come to terms with the past is of enormous importance on the way to a free, independent, democratic and self-confident human being and society.*

## LET'S THINK AND DISCUSS



- The Stasi played with people's relationships and used fear as their weapon. Why does fear make us do terrible things, when we have the words of the Lord, "Fear Not For I am with you," to accompany us?
- The loss of trust and the pain of betrayal was another weapon they used. How does one learn to trust again in a society where there is little trust?

What steps are needed to learn to trust?

- What kind of a role should the church and local Christian communities play in re establishing trust among people?
- What are the four basic values that a community is built on? And how do we as Christians build these values in a situation where these are lost?

## LOOKING INWARDS TURNING TO GOD

*It is difficult Lord*

*To understand the ways of the brother and sister*

*It is difficult not to be judgemental*

*It is joyful Lord*

*When one can come together  
after long periods of separation*

*It is joyful*

*when the times of mistrust and control have gone*

*You have been involved in this history Lord*

*We praise you for your mighty arm*

*We praise you for your courageous servants*

*Stimulating a movement for freedom from separation and control*

*We praise you Lord*

*That you can break down the walls that separate us*

*And unite us in one spirit*

*We know Lord*

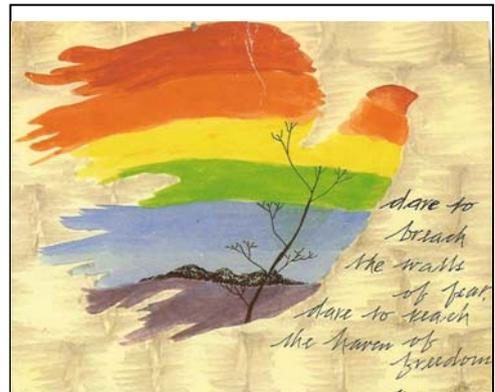
*That you will accompany us*

*On the road ahead to reconciliation and*

*A honest process of healing our memories  
respectively*

*Because we know Lord, you are on our side*

*We can turn to you*



# Crossing Borders in Northern Ireland

## HEALING THROUGH REMEMBERING

Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland

The Corrymeela House Perspective<sup>35</sup>

How people remember profoundly affects how they behave in the present and significantly affect their politics; thus in Northern Ireland the politics of historic grievance and the politics of siege. Our accumulated history "the debris we carry with us, each, of hurt and counter hurt" is part of today's reality. It pushes people back to standing by their 'own' and against



Πιγνητ το λεφτ: Δρ. Δ. Στεπενς, Μσ. Χατε Τυρνε ρ, Δρ. Γεραλδινε Σμζτη δυρνινγ της Νορτηερν Ιρ ελανδ Ηεαρινγ

to

their enemies. Unhealed memories can enslave and condemn us to a seemingly endless living out of the past. In the words of the Scots poet Edwin Muir: "...loves and hates are thrust upon me by the acrimonious dead". Grasped by the ghosts of the past we are unable to imagine a different future. It is therefore important to understand how memory operates.

People often construct their past using a particular interpretative 'key'. This is a way of reading

*How people remember profoundly affects how they behave in the present and significantly affect their politics*

history, enabling people to understand themselves, but also how their enemies fit into the story. One example are the Serbs: In 1389 they fought against the emergent Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Kosovo Polje and lost. Remembering this battle came to be

the interpretative 'key' for how the Serb people understood themselves. The Serbs became perennial mourners. They had fought to defend the values of Christian Europe. However, Christian Europe, and particularly their Catholic neighbours, never appreciated the sacrifice and the Serbs came to see themselves as heroic victims.

Looking back into the history of the Protestants, the Ulster Community in Ireland, we will find that their story is a saga of conquest, *endurance*, sacrifice, deliverance, fear of betrayal and the endless need for vigilance. Memory is a form of resistance - The story is endless.

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35 Unfortunately Rev. Dr. David Stevens was not able to make his contribution available in writing. We therefore took his contribution in :B. Brandes (ed) Healing of Memories in Europe, Cluj-Napoca 2007, 115 – 143 and stitched it into a contribution for this book. We strongly recommend that the reader goes back to the full article for the valuable contributions, we could not place her. (The authors)

The Irish Catholic side experienced defeat, victimisation, betrayal, dispossession of the land, injustice and oppression. The eternal cycle of sacrificial martyrdom and rebirth / redemption (1916) So some of this is linked to sacrificial themes of Irish Catholicism (Calvary) and stories of endurance in the faith during times of persecution. Memory is also a form of resistance in the catholic tradition and there are rituals that sustain the resistance.

Sacrifice and victimisation are important interpretative keys in the way that the past is understood in both traditions. The heroic sacrifices of the past require continuing honour, respect and loyalty.

Victory gives the victor the right to render the 'official' story. They can tell a story of triumphalism and superiority, of manifest destiny, of a mission to civilise, depending on the chosen interpretive 'key'. The 'nasty' bits-often a reality of massacre and murder - can be forgotten.

The vanquished retain their memories - what one has suffered one never forgets - and out of them narrate their own version of what happened. The story becomes a story of resistance, a resentment of that defeat, and a hope for a decisive transformation of the situation.



The vanquished often have to fight the version of events, the story, as told by the dominant people or colonial power. David James and Jillian Wychel illustrate this from the experience of the Maoris in Aotearoa / New Zealand where the power to name is also part of the struggle between rival stories.

"For the Maori story it has been difficult even to be heard, let alone accepted, by the majority. The Pakeha (majority)community and the monocultural state in Aotearoa / New Zealand have until recently held an almost complete grip on the education system and the media and therefore on easily accessible information.

One of the peripheral but strongly held themes of the Pakeha story is of the assimilation of the Maori to the new national order introduced by the Crown. One of the central themes of the Maori story is of resistance to assimilation despite all attempts by the Crown and the dominant culture and of continual demands for local self-determination and for a voice in national matters.

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36 Cited in Stevens Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland. The Corrymeela House Perspective, in: B. Brandes (ed) Healing of Memories in Europe, Cluj-Napoca 2007, p. 119

Memory tells us who our enemies are today and what they have done to us in the past, or what they have been stopped from doing in the past. History is gradually shaped into an "us" and "them". Antagonist tell parallel stories. "The identity of each community has been shaped by the actions, attitudes and declarations of other communities"<sup>37</sup> Such Parallel stories develop. David Jones and Jillian Wychel have illustrated this from their experience of visiting the Tower Museum in Londonderry: " The concept of parallel stories arising out of a contested space was dramatically illustrated in one part of the Tower Museum in L'Derry. A corridor ran between windowed displays on either side. On one side was the Nationalist story of specific events told through its symbols and artefacts and on the other side the Unionist story of the same events. On the one side the kerbstones that linked the corridor were painted orange, white and green; on the other red, white and blue."<sup>38</sup>



Stories make sense of a community's experience. They use and express values, beliefs and commitments. They give reasons for action and they build community and self-identity.

In divided societies stories often conflict; the same events are understood from a radically different perspective. We need to tell our stories to each other and need to listen intently to what we are told - which involves reaching beyond the words - feeling the pain of the other as transmitted through the memory of their community.

As antagonism progresses, scapegoating and demonisation intensify. People normally belong to different but overlapping identities: religious, cultural, ethnic, national. In situations of conflict, these identities tend to fuse. Thus for instance, a religious threat becomes a political threat, and vice versa. As antagonism escalates, all we can remember are the threats to our community and ourselves. The 'hopeful' bits - the stories of good relationships and cooperation - drop out of

*The on-going division between Protestant and Catholic has been shaped by the presence of Britain. Both sides remember how this presence has affected them; the British do not remember - it is not important for their identity*

history because they are seen as unimportant in the light of subsequent events.

There is a dangerous power of memory to stir up hatred and desire for revenge. This is because in places like Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Ireland the past

continues to torment because it is not really past. The past 'contaminates' the present. There is no saving distance between past and present.

37 A. Falconer Remembering in Eds. Falconer and Liechty, Reconciling Memories, Columbia Press 1998, p.13

38 Quoted in David Stevens, Dealing with the Past, p.120.

Such societies are not living in serial order of time but in a simultaneous one. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz tells the following story from a visit to the Republic of Ireland in 1969.

"Somewhere south of Dublin we passed a village and the remains of what would have been a large mediaeval church caught our eye. So we stopped and walked over to the ruins. On our way back to the car, we met a peasant woman. Pointing with her thumb to the ruined church she said grimly: 'Cromwell did that to us'" <sup>39</sup>

Frank Wright<sup>40</sup> has illustrated this in his retelling of a forgotten 'moment' of co-operation between Protestant and Catholic in the Tenant League's struggle to protect the position of tenants in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Ulster. Wright has also demonstrated that the on-going division between Protestant and Catholic has been shaped by the presence of Britain. Both sides remember how this presence has affected them; the British do not remember - it is not important for their identity.

What then we remember is a socially constructed narrative, an unwritten agreement about what is publicly remembered and acknowledged. These constructed narratives drive out part of reality, the bits that do not fit into the narrative. Thus, the Pope's support for King William in 1690, and the Presbyterian United Irishmen disappear from Ulster Protestant remembrance. The many Irish Catholic Nationalists who died in the First World War did not fit into the new National myth with its authorised memories. They disappeared into an historical limbo.

A "deep remembering" (Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz) will disclose a complexity of events and a complexity of identity. If we cannot tolerate a complex image of ourselves, eg. admitting elements of shame and elements of guilt, then we distort ourselves

*What then we remember is a socially constructed narrative, an unwritten agreement about what is publicly remembered and acknowledged.*

and we distort our neighbour. Thus a Christian account suggests that there has to be a remembering of and a reckoning with the past. It will, however, seek a certain kind of remembering: remembering the past in order that we do to repeat the past's destructiveness, so that we become different people. It will also seek a certain kind of forgetting: forgetting not as amnesia but rather as a release from the full weight and burden of the past. It will also seek a reckoning, but a reckoning that will put an emphasis on creating a new moral order where people belong together in a context where injustice, antagonism and desire for revenge have been taken out of the situation.

Dealing with the past thus is likely to be a process rather than an event, and it is likely to take generations. It does not seem likely that simple forgetting is an option. For instance, issues in re-

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in Stevens, *Dealing with the Past*, 126.

<sup>40</sup> Reconciling the Histories of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, in Eds Falconer and Leichty, *Reconciling Memories*

lation to France's actions in Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s, once thought buried by 'acts of oblivion' are now creeping out into the public domain. At the same time we do not seem able to bear too much truth - because the truth can as easily destroy as liberate. We need a care-taking honesty. And timing is important: "There is a season for everything...a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking"(Ecclesiastes 3:9)



## Healing Through Remembering<sup>41</sup>

Healing Through Remembering is a an extensive cross-community project in Ireland, to work on the reconciliation among the conflicting parties so long fighting each other during the recent decades. The projects made up of a diverse range of individual members, with different political perspectives and social experiences. They come from across Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and have been meeting over the past number of years to focus on the issue of how to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

In March 2000 the All Truth is Bitter report was launched. It documented a fact finding visit of Alex Boraine to Northern Ireland in February 1999 and recommended a wide-ranging discussion to explore and debate ways of examining the past and processes of remembering so as to build a better future. A number of individuals then were invited to forum a board out of which eventually the Healing Through Remembering Project evolved.

A first step was to consult individuals, organisations and communities "How they saw, that people should remember the events connected with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland and in so doing, individually and collectively contribute to the healing of the wounds of society.

In 2002 the findings of this process were published and five recommendations made:

1. A collective storytelling and archiving process,
2. A day of reflection,
3. A network of commemoration and remembering projects,
4. A living memorial museum,
5. Acknowledgement leading to the possibility of truth recovery and a Healing Through Remembering initiative

These recommendations were put into praxis by means of subgroups. The Storytelling subgroup e.g. works on the values, definitions, core principles and impact of storytelling with the view to produce a *Good Practice Guide on Storytelling*. It furthermore reflects on the possibilities for collective storytelling.

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<sup>41</sup> The speaker, Ms. Cate Turner, was unfortunately unable to provide a copy of her speech. We therefore took bits from a flyer of her organization, , which form the core of what she presented. (The authors)

The day of reflection subgroup commissioned an audit on similar experiences elsewhere. On the base of the findings, the group prepared a discussion paper and proposals for a first day of Private Reflection 2007.



The Living Memorial Museum Sub Group similarly started with an audit of artefacts relating to the conflict which were held in existing archives and personal collections. A wide range of submissions were received and plans made how to display them and generate further ideas for this open (living) Memorial Museum process.

The commemoration project aims at finding out, what experiences have been made elsewhere and what have been the effects on societies? For this the group works in a research-like style

"There is no single treatment for the healing process", says the information flyer of the project, to continue, that "processes of remembering, reflecting, informing and educating must be sustained for another generation at least. All have a part to play in dealing with the memories of the past. This will be a painful and difficult task, however it should not paralyse us and prevent us from moving on, but encourage us to avoid further damage, seek solutions and create a better future."

### Reflecting on the passage



In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to change. We are saying here is a chance to make a new beginning. According to Jesus, we should be ready to do this not just once, not just seven times, but seventy times seven, without limit – provided, it seems Jesus says, your brother or sister who has wronged you is ready to come and confess the wrong he or she has committed yet again.

Because we are not infallible, because we will hurt especially the ones we love by some wrong, we will always need a process of forgiveness and reconciliation to deal with those unfortunate yet all too human breaches in relationship. They are an inescapable characteristic of the human condition.

Once the wrongdoer has confessed and the victim has forgiven, it does not mean that is the end of the process. Most frequently, the wrong has affected the victim in tangible, material ways. Apartheid provided the Whites with enormous benefits and privileges, leaving its victims deprived and exploited. If someone steals my pen and then asks me to forgive him / her, unless he/she returns my pen the sincerity of this contrition and confession will be considered nil. Confession, forgiveness and reparation, wherever feasible, form part of a continuum.<sup>42</sup>

But what if one cannot forget the victimization, the hurt, the injuries? What if one is in the shoes of Simon Wiesenthal who recalls in his book "The Sunflower" the terrible wounds inflicted on the Jews by the Nazis during World War II. He takes us back to one special encounter he had with a German soldier. One day a nurse asked Wiesenthal, "Are you a Jew"? He nodded in reply. She asked him to follow her into a little room where in a corner lay a wounded soldier, his face swathed in bandages, his breath loud and rasping. The soldier who was dying was an SS officer. Knowing that he was dying, and nearing his end, he had asked to see a Jew so that he could make a last confession to him. The officer, Karl, began his story. Wiesenthal did not want to listen to Karl's story and made several attempts to leave. But the dying man held on to his hand and forced him to stay and listen.

*Once the wrongdoer has confessed and the victim has forgiven, it does not mean that is the end of the process.*

In an Ukrainian town, Russian booby traps killed many of Karl's SS unit. Unable to attack the retreating Russians, and with a thirst for vengeance, Karl ordered that three hundred Jews from the nearby town be rounded up into a three storey house. They doused the house with petrol, locked all the doors and set fire to it. The soldiers then surrounded the house to shoot anyone who tried to escape. The descriptions, which followed, were horrific. "I am left here with my

<sup>42</sup> Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream, A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, Random House 2004, 56ff

guilt. In the last hours of my life you are with me. I do not know who you are. I only know that you are a Jew and that is enough. I know that what I have told you is terrible. In the long nights when I have been waiting for death, time and time again I have longed to talk about it to a Jew and beg forgiveness from him. I know what I'm asking of you is almost too much of you. But without your answer I cannot die in peace. When Karl had finished speaking, Wiesenthal just walked out of the room without a backward glance at the dying man. He found it impossible to forgive a man and a race that had wiped out his family and many of his own race.

### ***Let's think and discuss***

1. In how far do the approaches to reconciliation in both case studies differ?
  - a. Could you think that either of them is applicable in the other situation?
  - b. If yes why and if no why not?
  - c. Would you personally prefer one of the approaches and why?
2. The story of Simon Wiesenthal describes very well, how difficult forgiving is, when there seems no way to heal memories, because the events keep coming back to your memories to haunt you
  - a. Get a group of people together, either from school, from the congregations or friends and discuss with them:
    - What are their experiences of forgiving
    - Have they experienced personal wrong doings, which they have overcome in a sense, that it no longer comes to mind?
    - Would you know of Human Rights Violations in your immediate vicinity and if so which ones?
3. What Gross Human Rights Violations you know of?
  - a. Collect as many data (text, pictures, clippings) about them, from as many resources you can avail off. Use archives, the Internet, etc.
    - Interview people in your community and particularly in your church, which of the Human Rights they are familiar with (see above) and whether they know of violations of any one of them.
    - Produce from the data you collected a billboard exhibition, invite people in the congregation and community to a discussion on the topic: "What could be the role of the church in all this?"

## *Looking inwards - turning to God*

*Read* Genesis 50:1-14

*Reflect* what this passage contributes for our issue?

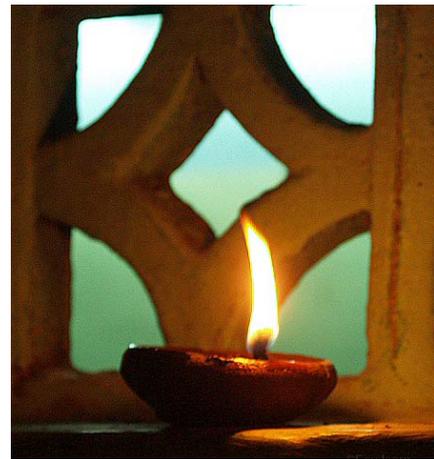
If you are in a group, share what comes to your mind

### *Prayer*

*Almighty and tender Lord Jesus Christ,  
Just as I have asked you to love my friends  
So I ask the same for my enemies...*

*Whatever you make me desire for my enemies,  
Give it to them  
And give the same back to me.  
If I ever ask for them anything*

*Which is outside your perfect rule of love,  
Whether through weakness, ignorance, or malice,  
Good Lord, do not give it to them  
And do not give it back to me.*



*You who are the true light, lighten their darkness,  
You who are the whole truth, correct their errors,  
You who are the incarnate word, give life to their souls...*

*Let them be reconciled with you,  
And through you reconciled to me.*

*Anselm of Canterbury (1003-1109) England*



***LOOKING  
AT HUMAN RIGHTS  
FROM  
DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES***

Many of the concepts used in reconciliation today are religious in origin - eg reconciliation, forgiveness, etc. Even then, it is important to be mindful of the fact that what one group calls their understanding of human rights is different for a group stemming from differing religious and /or cultural background. Therefore, we place here for study next to the universal declaration (abridged), understandings of human rights in other religions.

## **THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (abridged)**

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948

### **Article 1.**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

### **Article 2.**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

### **Article 3.**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

### **Article 4.**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

### **Article 5.**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### **Article 8.**

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

### **Article 9.**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

### **Article 12.**



No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 14.**

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

**Article 20.**

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 30.**

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

## **NON-WESTERN VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS:**

There seems to be a tendency in the West to regard human rights as peculiarly Western and that Asia has little or nothing to contribute towards a discussion on this important subject. The reasons for this (mis)perception are not far to seek. First, human rights *declarations*-like the English Bill of Rights, 1689; the Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776; the Paris Declaration of Rights of Man, 1789, etc.-are all Western philosophy originated. Second, many of these human rights declarations seem to support the liberal-democratic form of government, popular in the West. The absence of *this* form of government in Asia, gives rise to the belief that the conception of human rights is foreign to Asian philosophical thought. Third, Asian thought uses the "obligations language" and not the "rights language" which creates the impression in the West that Asia does not have a tradition of human rights and is not interested in them. The alleged universality of Human Rights has been questioned on the following grounds: (1) That there is nothing which is really human in a transcendental sense. For instance, when morality or rationality is urged as constitutive of a putative universal humanity, the question immediately arises: Whose morality? and Which rationality? (2) It has been urged further that even if in some sense universality in terms of biology (blood transfusion) or sociology (incest tabu) is established, it is really inconsequential. Cultural specificity is far more determinative of actual behavior. (3) The claim that all peoples should accept Human Rights as normative turns them into absolutes, thereby obscuring the distinction between a universal and an absolute.

## A Buddhist perspective:

In recent times, Buddhism has had to face a range of human rights problems in different parts of the world, notably in Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Burma. In common with most Asian traditions, however, Buddhism has never formulated an explicit doctrine of human rights. The concept of human rights is Western in nature and has its intellectual origins in the Enlightenment, and it is unclear to what extent the concept is compatible with traditional Buddhist teachings. Some Buddhists feel that a strong emphasis on individual rights runs counter to the doctrine of no self (anātman), and that rather than mimic the West, Buddhism should evolve a distinctive approach grounded in compassion (karuṇā) and interrelatedness (see pratītya-samutpāda) rather than in a belief in the inviolable status of the individual. Others, such as the present Dalai Lama, seem to feel that the discourse of human rights is in harmony with the moral values of traditional Buddhism and provides a useful vocabulary for expressing Buddhist views on contemporary political and social issues.



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## A Hindu perspective:

When Julian Huxley, former Director-General, UNESCO, requested Mahatma Gandhi's views on human rights, Gandhi replied: "I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done." From this one fundamental statement, perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of Man and Woman and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be a usurpation hardly worth fighting for."



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Gandhi's views summarize the Hindu conception of human rights. It is interesting that Sanskrit language does not even have an equivalent word for the English 'right.'

*"I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done."*

Ghāndī

Hindu thought is dominated by dharmas or obligations. Instead of the "rights talk," Hindu thought has developed the "obligations talk," because it was felt that acceptance of obligations is a precondition for the fulfillment of rights. Obligations (dharmas) are logically prior

to rights. For example, the primary reason why a monarch respects the citizens' rights is

because it is his raja dharma (the obligation of the king), and not because the citizens have rights against him which force him to do so. The world of obligations (dharma) is also wider than the world of rights. Hindu thought has emphasized our obligations to sub-human beings, nature and environment, though they do not have corresponding rights on us. In Hindu thought, human obligations (dharma) are capacity oriented. The kshatriya-dharma or the duties of the warrior are different from the dharma of the Brahmana or the priest because their capacities are different. Some of the modern problems with human rights, like the economic and welfare rights, arise because they do not take into consideration the abilities or capacities of other individuals and nations. Much attention has been devoted in Hindu thought to the consideration of the nature of the relationship between the universal and the particular, the specific and the general and the universal and the absolute. This presentation will examine what light Hindu thought might shed on these issues as they surface in Human Rights discourse.

## An Islamic perspective:

Fifteen centuries ago, Islam declared the sanctity of human rights in its widest significance - political, economic and social, and with its full binding guarantees. The literal translation of the saying of the Caliph Umar Ibn Al Khattab, May Allah bless him : "Why would you make into slaves people born free to their mothers ?"

*Islam guarantees the physical and emotional protection of the person, to prevent social disintegration and moral aberration.*

Islam guarantees the physical and emotional protection of the person, to prevent social disintegration and moral aberration. Therefore, human rights in Islam are Allah's rights and should be observed and exercised in the best manner possible, in order to achieve purity of worship, total subjugation and obedience to the Almighty, and full compliance with His Teachings. The Islamic concept of human rights thus ascends to the sublime status of an act of worship, these rights being in Islamic Sharia no lesser than religious duties. This degree of obligation to obey the law (taklif) lays a heavy responsibility on the human being vis-à-vis Allah, himself, the community and humanity as a whole.

This concept affirms the conviction that human rights in Islam are the cornerstone that upholds Muslim society. They are not constitutional or political rights only, they are not the intellectual result of a phase in the development of the human mind, nor are they natural rights as stipulated in organic laws. They are, in fact, duties of the faith, entrusted to the individual and the society ; each within their domain and depending on their degree of responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

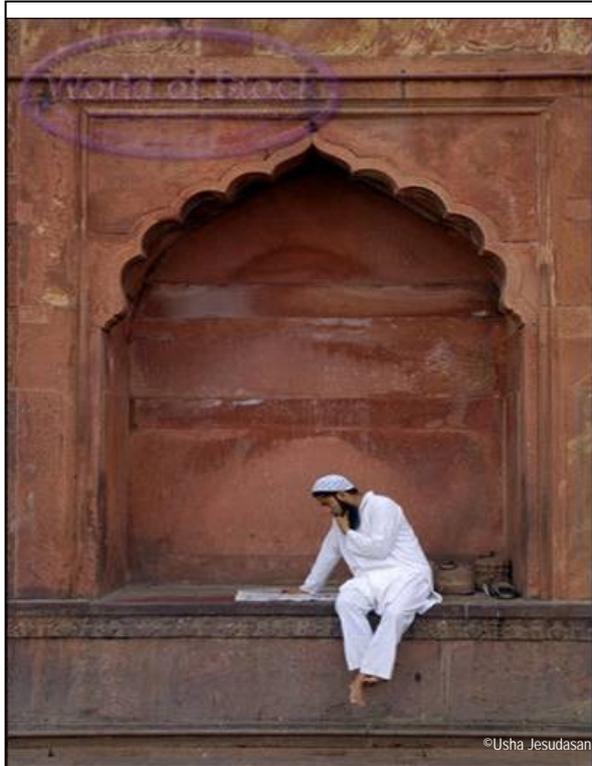
Islam also protected the rights of non-Muslims living in Muslim societies, including their freedom of worship and performance of their religious teachings. It also called for observing justice in dealing with them, preserving their lives, belongings and honor and treating them in as civil and generous way as all citizens of a society are treated with the blessing of Allah and under the wing of His Messenger.

In his book "The Fiqh of Sunnah", published before 1948, Cheikh Sayyed Sabiq listed human rights in detail and explained the main components and bases of these rights, at the same time as the Universal declaration on Human Rights. In a highly praiseworthy and unprecedented step, he enumerated the human rights in Islam as being :

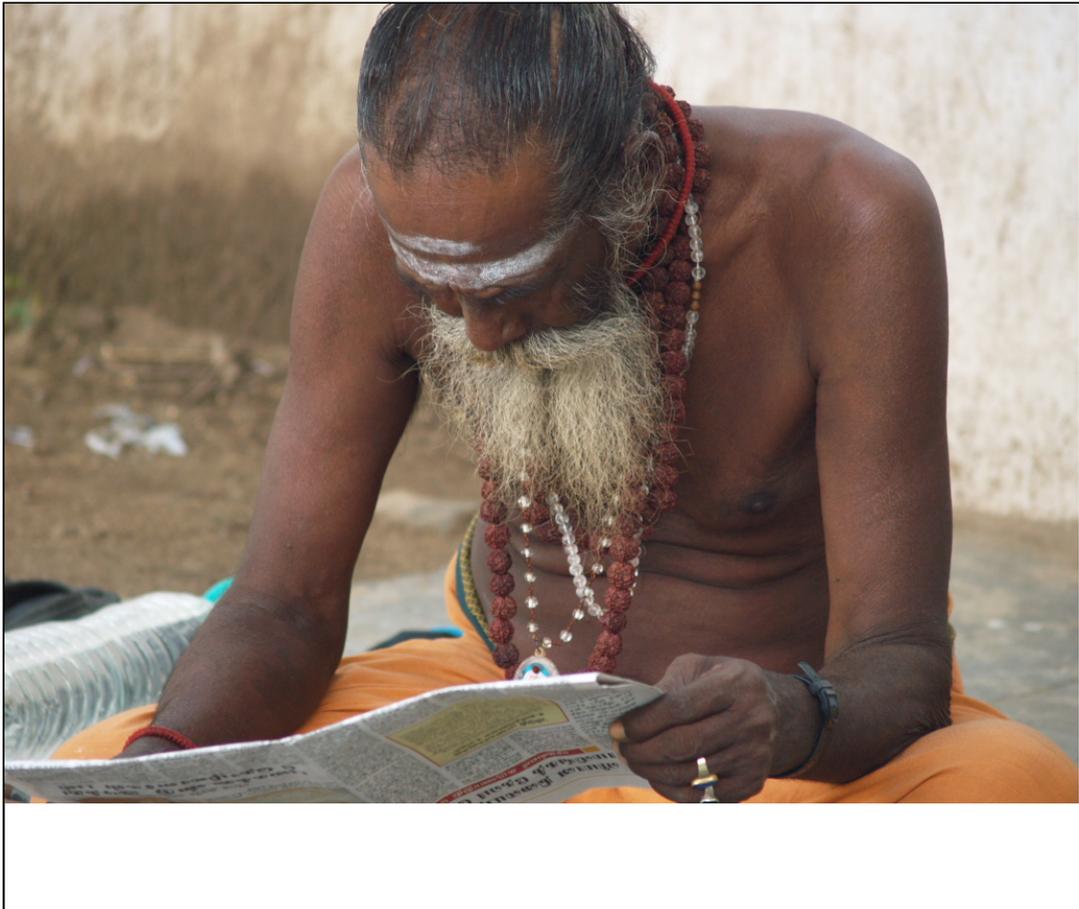
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43 Book of Meanings, P 94, Ali Ben Muhammad Ac-Charif Al-Jarjani, Maktabat Lubnan, Beirut, 1990

- *Right to life:* every person has the right to protection of his life. No harm should befall him unless he takes a person's life in vain or wreaks havoc to an extent warranting his own killing.
- *Right to protection of property:* The same sanctity of life applies to one's property or belongings. A person's property cannot be expropriated without legally valid reasons.
- *Right to protection of honour:* No person has the right to violate the honour of another person, even by a slanderous word.
- *Right to freedom:* Islam not only advocates the protection of lives, honour and property, but also the freedom of worship, thought, choice of a livelihood, and the right to benefit from the services provided by state institutions. In fact, Islam puts the state in charge of protecting all these rights and others such as :
  - *Right to asylum:* every person has the right to seek shelter in any given place, to set up house and move from one place to another without constraints or obstacles. No person can be exiled or imprisoned unless he encroaches on the rights of others and is sentenced by the state to exile or prison. Crimes warranting such sentences could be the aggression of a fellow citizen, destabilising peace or terrorising the innocent(24).



# REFLECTING



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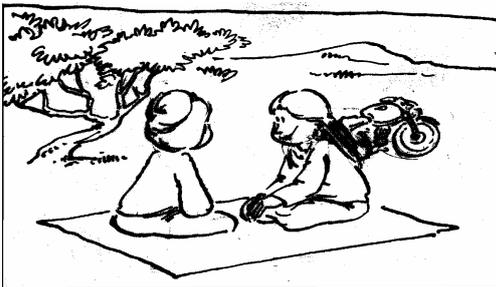
# THE MEANING OF CONCEPTS

There are a number of other concepts that converge with the terminology for the healing of memories, such as Justice, Mercy, Pardon and Forgiveness. Here we look at some of the legal definitions and we ask you to also think about the Biblical definitions.

## Oppression

Oppression is defined as an excessive exercise of authoritative power over people using injustice or cruelty whether in the economic, political, physical or emotional domain. There is both external and internal oppression. External oppression is the unjust exercise of authority and power by one group over another. It includes imposing one group's belief system, values and life ways over another group. External oppression becomes internalized oppression when we come to believe and act as if the oppressor's beliefs system, values, and life way is the only reality.

### REFLECTING ON OPPRESSION



Those who hoped that oppressed people would remain docile and would kowtow were in for a rude shock. They contended that what invested people with worth was something extrinsic, really a biological irrelevance, one's skin colour or ethnicity. By definition it could not be a universal phenomenon, but something possessed

by some who belonged to the thus privileged elite.

The Bible exploded that myth because the Bible proclaimed that our worth as human beings was intrinsic, it belonged in the definition of what constituted a human being. It was possessed by all without exception, and it was that each one of us was created in the image of God. And so we would say to our people, "When they despise you and treat you as a nonentity, hold your head high because you are God's representative, you are God's viceroy. You are a God-carrier or as St. Paul declared, 'We are each a sanctuary, a temple, of the Holy Spirit'." That knowledge would eventually be paid to the ghastly machinations of apartheid.

Today, Burmese military recruiters target children in order to meet unrelenting demands for new recruits due to continued army expansion, high desertion rates and a lack of willing volunteers. Non-state armed groups, including ethnic-based insurgent groups, also recruit and use child soldiers, though in far smaller numbers. "The brutality of Burma's military government goes beyond its violent crackdown on peaceful protestors "Military recruiters

are literally buying and selling children to fill the ranks of the Burmese armed forces."

Military recruiters and civilian brokers receive cash payments and other incentives for each new recruit, even if the recruit clearly violates minimum age or health standards.

One boy told Human Rights Watch that he was forcibly recruited at age 11, despite being only 1.3 meters tall (4'3") and weighing less than 31 kilograms (70 pounds). Officers at recruitment centers routinely falsify enlistment records to list children as 18, the minimum legal age for recruitment. Recruiters target children at train and bus stations, markets and other public places, and often threaten them with arrest if they refuse to join the army. Some children are beaten until they agree to "volunteer." For children this was and still is oppression at its worst. Children are also oppressed emotionally by violence, and many have to live with it for the rest of their lives. This is another kind of oppression.

Naresh was a little Tamil boy who lived with his parents near a river in Sri Lanka. When he woke up one day, the river was red, flowing blood. He saw arms and legs floating towards him and the body of his best friend washed along the banks. He ran indoors screaming for his grandmother and found her slaughtered on the kitchen floor. He ran into the bushes in the garden and waited for someone he knew. Months later, Naresh was sent to India to a refugee camp. He is now in his twenties, but still cries in his sleep and asks for his mother. He cannot hold a proper conversation with anyone. He lives in fear. The colour red makes him weep. It is very obvious to us his friends that his memories need healing. A battery of psychologists have worked with him, but still his memories remain raw and wounded. For children like Naresh who have witnessed pain, suffering and bloodshed so early in their life, memories haunt them day and night. Where do they find healing?

The words of the song, "Oppression" by Ben Harper shows how insidious oppression really is.

Oppression

you pray on us when we sleep

oppression

you chase after the tired, the poor, the weak

oppression

you know you mean only harm

oppression

you reach out with your long arm.....

oppression

I don't see how you sleep

oppression

for your bleeding conscience I weep

oppression

you may have the dollar on your side

but oppression

from the gospel truth you cannot hide.....

## Justice<sup>44</sup>

Truth and justice are widely acknowledged as the key to reconciliation processes. What becomes important is recognizing the various dimensions of truth and justice as they play into processes of reconciliation

Since the experience of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it has become widely recognized that there are four dimensions of truth that at one point or another are salient in the reconciliation process:

Similarly, there are different dimensions of justice that figure into reconciliation:

- *Punitive justice* metes out punishment to wrongdoers. It must be exercised by the legitimate judicial authority of the state; otherwise it may become "victors' justice" or revenge. Punishment can be seen as a vindication for victims; it may be seen as a deterrent to those who might try to commit such crimes again; it may send a message that such behavior will not be tolerated or condoned in the new social order. There is a good deal of debate how effective punitive justice is in establishing a new society.
- *Restorative justice* seeks to restore the dignity of victims. It is thus victim-oriented, rather than society-oriented in its character. This is an area of justice with which the churches need especially to be concerned. It sometimes accompanies the process of rebuilding personal truth because of its concentration on "why" questions.
- *Distributive or structural justice* addresses the structural and social inequities that foment and sustain conflict. From a distributive perspective, land reform is often key in agrarian societies. Structural justice may be concerned with protecting minorities' rights, forms of discrimination, and general allocation of resources across the spectrum of society.
- *Forensic or objective truth* seeks to establish just what happened: it answers the "what" question. Truth commissions and other forms of inquiry (the REMHI project in Guatemala, the enquete-commissions in Germany are examples of this).

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<sup>44</sup> The following definition of terms stem from the Discussion in Working Group 1 of the Healing Memories Consultation they are in addition excerpts from the Evaluation Paper produced by Dr. Manoj Kurian and Prof. Robert Schreiter (above)

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#### REFLECTING ON JUSTICE



Restorative justice prevents revenge. While meting out restorative justice, we need to balance the crime against the punishment. This is not an easy process as often we cannot get both in a balance, and ignore one at the cost of the other. In the case of Human Rights Violations, people have the felt need for punitive justice, which, for the sake of reconciling communities, needs to balance with restorative justice.

There is a major problem with achieving justice. Justice for the person who has been wronged against, is a very personal matter. So, the injured prefer to demand punitive justice. So how can we restore relationships between the victim and the perpetrator in such a way that they become right again. This is difficult enough on a personal level, such as conflicts within the family, the school and the church. However, it becomes much more difficult on a national and global level, when different cultures and social upbringings prevent just relationships.

Restorative justice is an important link in the chain towards national reconciliation. In the first place, justice, and as such it cannot trifle with the truth. Knowledge of what has happened, with the greatest clarity and objectivity, is essential. As such it aims at reconciliation, on personal or social level. Perhaps the concept can be understood by the following story.

An old man had two horses - one was a good mare and the other was a thin old nag. One day a group of horse thieves came through the town and stole several horses. When they were caught, the old man went up to the judge and said, "they killed my good horse. Now I have only the old

nag. What can I do?" The judge noticed that the young horse thief had a beautiful grey horse, that was well groomed and in perfect health. He asked the thief to give his horse to the old man, as a punishment for having killed the stolen one. Justice was restored .

## Truth

Three concepts on truth emerged from discussions at the Healing of Memories Consultation held in Dublin 2007.

- *Personal truth* is the integration of the experience of the traumatic events into my own narrative: it answers the "why" question. Traumatic events shatter personal and community narratives. The quest for personal truth aims at rebuilding those narratives.
- *Dialogical truth* expands the community narrative to include (revised) versions of the narratives of the two conflicted parties. It recognizes the experience of victims and perpetrators and the ambivalences of both of these roles (perpetrators may have been victims at some earlier stage, and victims can become perpetrators). Attaining dialogical truth is often not possible, especially when the line between victims and perpetrators is clear and deep, and when "peace" is merely a ceasing of overt conflict but not a fundamental change in structures and relationships in society.
- *Social or moral truth* contains the lessons learned from the conflict that are in turn given a central place in the new narrative of the community and the changed structures of society. The "*nunca mas*" that has accompanied efforts at truth-telling in Latin American societies is an example of such a moral truth.

### REFLECTING TRUTH



Most religious traditions have a body of doctrine that devotees of that religion view as truth. This may take the form of a creed or catechism, it may refer to a book such as the Bible or the Koran, or it may be an unwritten code shared by believers. Unlike scientific truth or observed truth, religious truth often makes the claim of being either revealed or inspired by God.

When there is a clash between religious truth and scientific truth, various methods have been used to reconcile the two. During the Middle Ages, for example, there was a conflict between Roman Catholic dogma on the one hand and an emerging body of scientific knowledge on the other. Sometimes the established church sought to suppress scientific truth, as in the case of Galileo, but often the two truths were allowed to coexist, which led to the doctrine of the two truths. According to this compromise, there is a lesser

truth, scientific truth, which holds that the earth orbits the sun, and a greater truth, religious truth, which holds that the earth is the fixed center of the universe. According to the doctrine of the two truths, these two truths were both true in their own sphere. In the 20th Century, there were similar attempts to explain apparent conflicts between religious truth and scientific truth, especially where the age of the earth, the historicity of a universal flood, and the evolution of species were concerned. The conflict between religious truth and scientific truth continues.



The presentation from Guatemala showed that truth was essential in the process of healing memories and reconciliation. 'Truth is the sword for those who seek to be honest in their day-to-day living.'<sup>45</sup>

Truth is a basic condition for peaceful community life and national reconciliation. It is a human right, the right to know, to have knowledge of facts and their causes. Truth entails responsibility, for to seek the truth about facts, to reach a judgment on them and punish them involves accepting responsibility for our own actions, as individuals, groups, a community and a nation. Truth in this sense is a moral demand that requires of us all sincerity, honesty and genuineness.

In the search for truth, in finding out the facts, frankness or transparency is required, so that, acting responsibly, we can lay the foundations for a new situation. It is a demand to make our actions and commitments consistent. Truth is a value that is urgently needed today in Guatemala, since the meeting of truth with justice involves a new basis for social harmony based on values favouring transparency in public life.

Understanding the truth and giving it priority helps us above all to be reconciled with ourselves, which makes the past and the future more manageable... Arriving at knowledge of the truth opens up the possibility of a new beginning when it has seemed that the end had been reached and everything brought to a close.

Truth is such a profound and important value that Jesus Christ declared that only the truth would set us free. It is not necessary to enter into the historical discussion of theologians and philosophers on what truth is, but we need to realize that it is necessary to reject falsehood and lies.

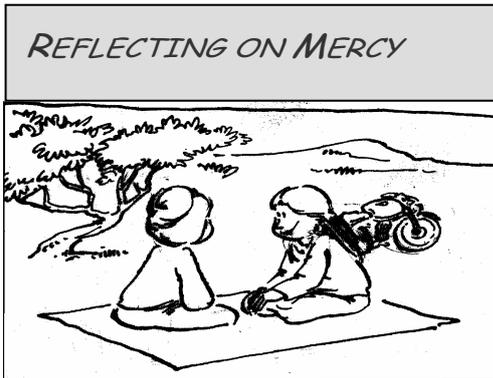
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45 FEPAZ, programme of values, Guatemala, 2005:26

Gandhi dedicated his life to the wider purpose of discovering truth, or Satya. He tried to achieve this by learning from his own mistakes and conducting experiments on himself. He called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Gandhi stated that the most important battle to fight was overcoming his own demons, fears, and insecurities. Gandhi summarized his beliefs first when he said "God is Truth". He would later change this statement to "Truth is God". Thus, Truth in Gandhi's philosophy is God.

## Mercy

Mercy is an old fashioned word in today's world of big players. Today "mercy" usually



means that we cease to deliver a punishment that is justly deserved; or it means refraining from dishing out pain and punishment generally, usually out of pity. Yet, Mercy has two meanings in reconciliation discourse. In its modern, juridical sense, it means shortening or foregoing the right to punish altogether. The older (and biblical) sense is one of unbounded love, a love

that does not hold accounts. This generosity that such mercy conveys can be an important step in enlarging the social space in which efforts at reconciliation are undertaken. The concept of Mercy can also be understood in the story of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, when the policeman Javert is offered Mercy instead of justice.

A Yogi, (a renowned seeker of spirituality) was having a bath on the edge of a swollen river which had flooded. It so happened that because of the flood, a scorpion happened to float by. On seeing the plight of the scorpion, that it might drown and die, the Yogi picked it up in his hand, but had to fling it away immediately as the scorpion gave him a piercing, poisonous bite.

Unmindful of the bite, the Yogi picked up the scorpion again, and tried to place him on dry land. Once more, the scorpion bit his hand. This happened thrice. A passer-by who was aware of the spiritual accomplishments of the Yogi could not contain himself and asked the Yogi why he was trying to help the scorpion. The Yogi had replied, "When this poor scorpion (a much lower level of species on the plane of evolution) is not able to let go of his habit of biting one... how could I { the Yogi} let go of my habit of helping one? What a great practitioner of compassion and forgiveness this Indian Yogi was. In spite of being bitten thrice... he was able to practice forgiveness owing to the feeling of compassion within. This is how forgiveness can be truly defined. A true practitioner of forgiveness never thinks of the results of the acts by the other but remains concentrated on the end goal of his life... always and ever! This helps one develop the power of forgiveness... true compassion to be practiced in daily life

- Important question: what are the conditions for forgiveness?
- How to negotiate the process of forgiveness?
- Forgiveness brings Our capacity to forgive comes from god.
- Are apologies the necessary act of the perpetrator to achieve forgiveness?
- Are apologies thus the other main issue for a process of reconciliation?
- Does forgiveness requires symbols / symbolic acts, which one you could think of?

To be at somebody's mercy, means actually to be dependent on how that person will act towards me. This particularly refers to kindness or forgiveness shown when punishment is possible or justified.

When thus Christians speak about mercy they look often to their relationship with God, on whose Mercy and Grace they depend. Knowing that the human being is constantly in danger to fail, which Theologians like Paul and Prophets like Isaiah identified as worth "death and eternal separation from God" (Rom. 6:23; Isaiah 59:2), Mercy relates to Gods provision of atonement for sin and through it shows us mercy. The merciful God is a God, that enables us to move on, even if our deeds have been abdominal to other people. The merciful God as the one who made the first step towards reconciliation and restoring community, enables us to restore communities with others, by making the first step.

- Where have you experienced Mercy?
- Have there been situations where Mercy was asked from you?
- Have there been moments, when you thought that someone did not deserve mercy and if so why?

You might want to discuss questions like this with members in your church group or with friends, to find out, how strong and real your understanding of such an issue is.



## Forgiveness, Pardon and Amnesty

According to traditional Christian teachings, the forgiveness of others is amongst the spiritual duties of the Christian believer. God is generally considered to be the original source of all forgiveness, which is made possible through the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, and is freely available to the repentant believer. As a response to God's forgiveness, the Christian believer is in turn expected to learn how to forgive others; some would teach that the forgiveness of others is a necessary part of receiving forgiveness ourselves, and vice versa. In fact, at the end of Jesus teaching his disciples the Lord's Prayer, He says to ask forgiveness from God and that it will be given to us by the same measure that we give it out to others.

Prayer, He says to ask forgiveness from God and that it will be given to us by the same measure that we give it out to others.

The person who is forgiven is not necessarily released from any societal or legal obligation to make material or financial amends or legal punishments. The power in forgiveness is to replace what has been lost or stolen and remove the fear of being injured again, to liberate from the slavery of resentment, bitterness, hatred, malice, fear, and a consumed life of distrust. (Galatians 5:1, 13-17)

Social forgiveness, is a contested concept. While it is generally assumed to require an expression of remorse on the part of the wrongdoer, so often such remorse is not forthcoming. When this happens, forgiveness is a sign of great generosity on the part of the victim. Forgiveness can never be required or be forced upon victims.

### REFLECTING FORGIVENESS



For the process of healing memories, the step of forgiving is very important, perhaps more important than the legal categories mentioned already such as amnesty and pardon, which are part of the political process, and can only be provided by head of states or governments. Amnesty and pardon are legal categories and do not have to do with the relationship between

perpetrators and victims. Forgiveness, this is to note, does not mean automatically, that no punishment happens.

But forgiveness is a relational term, either in the religious sense that we ask God for forgiveness of our sins or that it is part of the relationship between perpetrator and victim, which means the quest for restoration of broken relationships. Therefore forgiveness is a main issue of the reconciliation, even more important than the legal categories.

Only a person with extreme humbleness imbibed within and a feeling of compassion for his compatriot is able to practice forgiveness! To be able to forgive requires that the forgiver forgoes all the sufferings of the past that may have been inflicted upon him by the gruesome acts of the indulgent. A tough task indeed but not something that cannot be practised!

In most circumstances one may not have committed any sin, still practising forgiveness brings within us a feeling of extreme calm and compassion for the mankind in general. Practice of forgiveness normally cannot be practiced by the common man for it requires practising patience to its extreme.

If we are to achieve our goal of life... we just cannot manage to cling on to events of the past... happenings which cannot be reversed by us using any means. We cannot travel back

in time to undo the events of the past. Why not practice forgiveness and forgive those ignorant denizens of the society who practiced ill will and caused harm to the society.

## The bread

The following story is told by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, a Russian poet<sup>46</sup>

" In '41 Mama took me back to Moscow. There I saw our enemies for the first time. If my memory is right, nearly 20,000 German war prisoners were to be marched in a single column through the streets of Moscow.

The pavements swarmed with onlooker, cordoned off by soldiers and police. The crowd were mostly women - Russian women with hands roughened by hard work, lips untouched by lipstick and thin hunched shoulders which had borne half the burden of the war. Every one of them must have had a father or a husband, a brother or a son killed by the Germans.

They gazed with hatred in the direction from which the column was to appear.

At last we saw it.

The generals marched at the head, massive chins stuck out, lips folded disdainfully, their whole demeanour meant to show superiority over their plebeian victors. "They smell of eau-de-cologne, the bastards," someone in the crowd said with hatred. The women were clenching their fists. The soldiers and policemen did all they could do to hold them back. All at once something happened to them. They saw German soldiers, thin, unshaven, wearing dirty, blood-stained bandages, hobbling on crutches or leaning on the shoulders of their comrades; the soldiers walked with their heads down. The street became dead silent - the only sound was the shuffling of boots and the thumping of crutches. Then I saw an elderly woman in broken-down boots, push herself forward and touch a policeman's shoulder, saying: Let me through." There must have been something about her that made him step aside.

She went up to the column, took from inside her coat something, wrapped in a coloured handkerchief and unfolded it. It was a crust of black bread. She pushed it awkwardly into the pocket of a soldier, so exhausted that he was tottering on his feet. And now suddenly from every side women were running towards the soldiers, pushing into their hands bread, cigarettes, whatever they had. The soldiers were no longer enemies. They were people."



## Pardon

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46 Yevgeny Yevtushenko, A Precocious Autobiography, translated by Andrew R. MacAndrew, Collins Harill, 1963, p.24

A pardon is the forgiveness of a crime and the penalty associated with it. It is granted by a sovereign power, such as a monarch or chief of state or a competent church authority. Clemency is an associated term, meaning the lessening of the penalty of the crime without forgiving the crime itself. The act of clemency is a reprieve. Today, pardons and reprieves are granted in many countries when individuals have demonstrated that they have fulfilled their debt to society, or are otherwise deserving (in the opinion of the pardoning official) of a pardon or reprieve. Pardons are sometimes offered to persons who, it is claimed, have been wrongfully convicted.

## Amnesty

Amnesty comes from the Greek word *amnēstia*, oblivion. It is an act of justice by which the supreme power in a state restores those who may have been guilty of any offence against it to the position of innocent persons. It includes more than [pardon](#), inasmuch as it obliterates all legal remembrance of the offence.

## Reconciliation

The word "reconciliation" is used in many different ways. It both describes a process of building peace and overcoming the past, and denotes the final state of that peace. People often confuse the process and the end product. One can detect different meanings of reconciliation used in processes of building peace. They might best be understood as moments in a process:

- Reconciliation sometimes means being able to make space for difference without resorting to armed conflict. The division of the three communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina is an example of this kind of "reconciliation." While hardly satisfactory, it is better than armed conflict with all its consequences.
- Reconciliation may mean expanding the space or changing the climate within which conflicted parties live. This involves changing the terms of the discussion, and introducing new elements that help gain perspective. Thus, carrying on the dispute between conflicted parties in Northern Ireland beyond the terms of religious affiliation and history might create such a space.
- Reconciliation may mean historical realignment. The coming together of the two Germanys after 1989, or of Germany and France after 1945 is an example of this. In the case of the two Germanys it may appear as a return to a *status quo ante*; however, there is never a genuine going back to before a traumatic event.
- Reconciliation may mean creating a new common narrative together. This involves retelling history to include all the parties involved. Attempts at racial reconciliation in the United

States or Australia (still long from being completed) are an example of this. Such reconciliation involves creating a new sense of nationhood and of citizenship.

- Reconciliation may mean creating a new set of social conditions such that the traumatic events of the past may not be repeated. This was the Chilean definition of reconciliation after its truth commission hearings.
- Reconciliation may mean that the past has ceased to be problematic for any of the parties involved in the conflict, and new directions have been taken by the society. This is a much sought-after form of reconciliation that is rarely, if ever, achieved.

These various understandings of reconciliation in social settings serve as a reminder that social reconciliation is not simply the sum of all individual reconciliations in society. The healing of individuals is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for social reconciliation. Social reconciliation involves other things as well, some of which are indicated in the various definitions of reconciliation above.

## The bridge

Once, two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labour and goods as needed without a hitch.

Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding, grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few days work," he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there. Could I help you?"

"Yes," said John, "I



do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbour. In fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber curing by the

barn? I want you to build me a fence -- an 8-foot fence -- so I won't need to see his place anymore. That should cool him down, anyhow."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

Now John, the older brother, had to go to town for supplies, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day.

The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job.

The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge—a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work, handrails and all.

John looked up and the neighbour, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched.

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done."

The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder.

"No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said John.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build."

## REFLECTING



Reconciliation, Mercy, Forgiveness, Justice as forms of mission is best expressed in Ephesians 2:12-19, where the text speaks of breaking down the walls which divide us, putting an end to hostility and our becoming citizens in the divine household. The reconciliatory process is not just about picking up the pieces after violent conflict or the depredations of globalization. It is about the moral reconstruction of society so that the deeds of the past cannot happen again in the future. To achieve that, the truth must be

sought out from the tangle of untruths and outright lies that accompany violence and oppression. Then justice must be pursued, especially to restructure those dimensions of society which fostered and supported wrongdoing.

The healing of wounds inflicted upon individuals and upon the body of society is the goal of reconciliation. Here again, the message of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the forms of action which follow upon it, give eloquent testimony to what Christian faith can bring to a divided and fractured world. Reconciliation as a paradigm for mission speaks very much to our current time, and will likely continue to be needed in the coming decades of the twenty-first century.

These, then, are values and ideas from other discussions which will continue to be of importance for our missionary obligation in the years immediately ahead of us.

*Despite their deep Christian commitment or most likely because of it the Guatemalan participants shared the following with us from their own struggle showing us, how difficult in a situation of violence it is to come to terms with the "terms"*

**Reconciliation** is possible only by the victim offering forgiveness. Forgiveness is not forgetting or denying that the offence has taken place. On the contrary, remembering the offence and the harm that it has caused is a condition of forgiveness.<sup>47</sup> Remembering is an essential condition for forgiveness. If something is forgotten it cannot be forgiven. It is simply forgotten. And what is forgotten can in fact be repressed memories. Forgiveness involves remembering, which is usually painful, and it is only achieved if it is a step on the way to freedom by a process of applying justice, and justice that is not only a justice of punishment, hate and resentment.

Victims cannot be compelled to forgive. It is a free choice. The only person who can forgive is the victim. It cannot be done by proxy. There is a personal dimension to it, but it is not a private act as it can have public repercussions in the community. Forgiveness reaches its full effectiveness when victimizers truly repent, sincerely accept the wrongness of what has been done, are sorry for what has been done, make a firm sincere promise to change their behaviour, are prepared to make reparations, pay compensation, heal all the ethnic, cultural, political, economic, moral, psychological and physical wounds, and are prepared to make expiation and undergo punishment.

Forgiveness and repentance are highly personal acts. They cannot be imposed, nor can their authenticity be verified. Forgiveness has a human dimension. Basil Fernandes of the Asian Human Rights Commission says, "I had to leave Sri Lanka as I was on a wanted list - I was a lawyer, - I just had to disappear to remain alive. I cannot forgive those who planned the disappearances of 30,000 people. To forgive is a betrayal of those lives. I can only forgive when such a situation is rectified so that this will never happen again." Social forgiveness has to acknowledge the ills of the past and then should go on to create a just society, so that such evils will never happen again.

. Basil Fernandes of the Asian Human Rights Commission says, "I had to leave Sri Lanka as I was on a wanted list - I was a lawyer, - I just had to disappear to remain alive. I cannot forgive those who planned the disappearances of 30,000 people. To forgive is a betrayal of those lives.

If people receive an offence or are harmed, they spontaneously feel a desire for revenge, which tends to be regarded as the need for an act of justice that will satisfy their deep desire. Hence

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47 Ibid, 2001:93.

*the thirst for revenge seems insatiable, and, when it is achieved, it does not bring peace of mind, but tends to produce a vicious circle of revenge that is hugely destructive for society. Fostering and building conditions for a future with optimism and overcoming fatalism as a way towards national reconciliation.*

*Our present task is to overcome the fatalism, fear and paralysis that was produced in our land during the political and military violence, especially among the poorest and most marginalized people. Fatalism is not a phenomenon that finds expression only in particular aspects of the life of an individual or of society. On the contrary, as such it is a matter of attitude which can be seen in different areas of people's lives, a clear result of ideological conditioning.*

***Fatalism is to be seen at three levels of human activity***

***a) In beliefs***

*The life of each individual, and even of social groups, is already predetermined and nothing can be done to change the destined course of events. That is, no essential change can be made to it and only God or some external superior power can decide what will happen.*

*As a result of life's constant adversities, people come to the conviction that that is a natural state of affairs that cannot be changed. After generations have lived in poverty and exploitation, with no positive change in their lives, it is logical to come to the belief that such a situation is natural and not the result of an unjust social system. If one has always lived in poverty, the future cannot be different. That is how it is and it cannot be changed. One's destiny is determined in advance. Nothing can be done - however many agreements for a firm and lasting peace may have been signed.*

*Given this type of belief, it is not by chance that we observe how there has been a growth in the presence and influence of fundamentalist churches, not only in rural areas of Guatemala but also in urban areas. Of all Latin American countries, Guatemala is the one that has seen the strongest advance of the evangelical movement. One third of the population are members of one of the many churches belonging to evangelical denominations in the country.*

*Fatalistic ideas about the course of one's life encourage the teaching that the practice of religion can be limited to your own personal life, which draws people away from a commitment to political, civic and social action with other members of the community. At the end of the day, it is God who holds life in God's hands, and it is God who decides and determines your destiny.*

***b) In feelings***

*If one endures a life of constant suffering and poverty, one develops an attitude of resignation and accepts suffering as a natural result. That results in a dulling of feeling and lack of energy to take action, and an introverted personality. One finds it difficult to express one's feelings,*

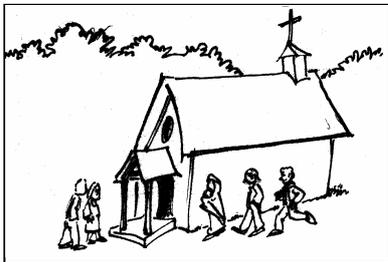
*which are repressed and concealed. That is a situation that is channelled into charismatic and Pentecostal religious activities, and hence the numerical growth of such groups.*

*c) In behaviour patterns*

*Fatalism is similarly expressed in a restricted range of behaviour, living in the present, without thought for the future, because the future is uncertain. In the course of time a pattern of behaviour emerges that rejects or avoids the need for wider social involvement, and the conclusion is drawn that nothing is worthwhile - there is no point in regretting the past, nor in planning for the future, if the only useful thing to do is to respond to one's immediate needs here and now.*

## HOW DO WE MOVE ON FROM HERE?

### *For congregations*



Many of the Christian Congregations are involved or suffering from Gross Human Rights violations, such as the ones described here. Many of their members become victimized, killed or are deprived of members of their family, property and the like. Gross Human Rights Violations in which Christians like Bishop Gerardi, like Bishops Romero and the many unmentioned people are speaking and acting out and are killed, create a new history of martyrdom a new sign of a church, which stand with the oppressed and vulnerable. Yet congregations suffering under oppression and violence are not alone in the ecumenical family, they are part of the universal church and they are a challenge to the universal church in as far as their vulnerability requests for compassion ("Memoria passionis"), empathy and active solidarity of the global church.

It is here that a congregation fare away from the immediate conflict and violations, is part and parcel of it, as it belongs together with the violated against to the one body of which Christ is the head and where, if one part is suffering the whole body is suffering (I. Cor. 12)

The experience congregations, Christians and non-christians as well, are making is a part of the writing of a new history of martyrdom and part of a cry to the church as a whole to reflect what concrete empathy would mean. What role does empathy have for our understanding of truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice?

If it is the ecumenical coalition of churches obligation to live out this empathy in action, while the acute violation of Human Rights is happening, it will also have to reflect on the justice- compassion- reconciliation-agenda in terms of its pastoral and prophetic ministries.



- Is the "healing of memories" work predominantly pastoral?
- Is the prophetic critique of injustice categorically confrontational?
- What does it mean that Jesus is not indulging in suffering. Rather aim his words and actions at setting the captives free.
- What would it mean to understanding prophetic ministry of the church as deeply related to compassion, both for the victims as well as the evil-doers;
- What would be a prophetic announcement that would be is a call to change and renewal?
- What is the impact of church divisions for their reconciliatory ministries?
- Isn't the fact that the churches can not overcome their own, century old divisions and making serious steps of reconciliation towards each other, abandoning positions for the sake of reconciliation, hinder their credibility when wanting to speak convincingly about reconciling communities and healing of memories?

As we share our faith in the community of all Faithful globally, the ecumenical peace agenda needs to include the bigger, the global context:

This context thrives on violence. Its notions of prosperity and material wealth create a concept of security that reinforces the militarization of the globe and lives off new wars. Secular understandings then talk about vulnerability as a threat. Superpowers are vulnerable to each other and need militarization. Economy is vulnerable to speculation and needs control, Governments feel vulnerable facing democratic criticism and use internal force to curb the protesters. In all this, they aim at overcoming vulnerability and create a "cordon sanitaire" a safety belt around their interests and life styles. What we see today is a quest for security that defines one's security, at the expense of others'. Security that is aiming at "invulnerability" is illusionary- ( See President Reagan's attempt to define the "star wars" programme as "closing the last window of invulnerability.")

But the search for security is meaningful and promising only if it is based on the common acknowledgement that all of humanity shares the same basic vulnerability.!

Standing with the OTHER, the violated against, the one that is considered a threat, the victim of such security actions, is part of Christian identity. Our growth depends on accepting the other.

But vulnerability is not simply a personal category. Many of the world's fragile cultures are severely threatened by the over-powerful global culture. There is a kind of dislocation on the cultural level. Indigenous cultures are eroding under the impacts of the global consumption civilizations, forms of human interaction have come under severe pressure. So have cultural patterns and values e.g.. regarding sexuality, fighting rules, behaviour over against the elder come under the eroding pressures of global media and video games. The slogan "I am what I shop" is reflected in "I am how I behave". I belong by what I wear and do.) These forms of alienation and dislocation are forms of violence at the structural level and effect communities to an ever increasing extend.



- Who are the vulnerable in your country, in your community?
  - Do you agree with the statement, that local cultures right up to family life are threatened by global developments?
  - What are those things which make you vulnerable?
  - What is the meaning of reconciliation in such a context?
- 
- How can we deal with our own vulnerability and become yet a healing force to others?

Perhaps the following reflection around a tree we encountered in Dublin, gives you as well some food for thought in your own work at home.

## THE WALNUT TREE



In the gardens of the Priory at Tallaght, { Dublin} where the Healing Memories Consultation was held, stood an old walnut tree. Walnut trees were introduced to Ireland in about 1760. This tree, called the Maelruan tree, with its spreading branches captivated us. We had just been listening to and talking about lives that were destroyed by violence. Often it was meaningless violence over which the victim had no control. We heard how remembering and giving voice to the violence, forgiveness, and reconciliation with the violator could lead to healing and a new beginning.

The walnut tree was a living reminder that all of Creation needs reconciliation and healing from violence. In 1797, this tree was sliced into several parts when lightning struck it during a fearful storm. Some parts of the tree appeared to wither and die for a while, but then it seemed as if the tree faced Nature, which with all its fearful violence had tried to destroy it. It refused to give into the violence and just die. The different parts of the tree made peace with the earth where they had fallen and slowly began to take root. Little twigs began to appear; then fresh new, leaves and finally the fruit. People picked the fruit and found it sweeter than before and marveled at it.

How like the walnut tree many of our lives are. We too are suddenly struck by a spectrum of violence and for a while we are unable to make sense of it, or rebuild our lives. But when we reconcile and make peace with our violator, like the walnut tree, we too get a new life and the fruits that we bear are scattered far and wide. Those who taste our fruit, which may be in the form of kindness, compassion or a commitment to work to end violence and suffering, will truly marvel at the new life that is possible.



### **For the groups**



Human Rights Violations are perhaps the most obvious, where the Vulnerability of people comes to light. To become vulnerable is an important experience. Some of the world's people are too vulnerable; for them any positive evaluation of vulnerability is an insult, as it omits the need to create a basic security. But vulnerability is not simply a personal category.

Many of the world's fragile cultures are severely threatened by the over-powerful global culture. There is a kind of dislocation on the cultural level. Indigenous cultures are eroding under the impacts of the global consumption civilizations. Cultural patterns and values eg. on sexuality, combat, competition, behaviour towards the elderly, are under such eroding pressures through eg. global media and video games. The slogan "I am what I shop" is reflected in "I am how I behave". I belong by what I wear and do. More and more local cultures thus become vulnerable to a process, where the food the young generation consumes, the Jeans they wear, are alike in Beijing, Johannesburg, Delhi, Helsinki, New York, Buenos Aires. These forms of alienation and dislocation are forms of violence at the structural level starting with the process of European expansion (colonialism) in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

What then is bad or is it? Where in the process of Globalization do you see temptation to deny Human Rights Violations? Which Human Rights get violated the most by globalization?

The Discussion on Health and Healing in the Ecumenical Movement, phrased in the 90<sup>th</sup> of the last century, the concept of "Christ as the Wounded Healer".

What does this phrase mean to you? { try to find out about the concept from the WCC brochure on Health, Healing, Wholeness}

## *Issues That Foster Healing*

Two families in the church had not spoken with each other for two generations until both of them died. The next generation did not know what the issue of separation was about, until they found a love letter from the sister of one to the other. It was then known that the brother had forbidden the sister to meet this man and also ruined his business so that he would have no chance of marrying his sister. The next generation continued the distrust and by this time there was competition between the two families. In the next generation after this, two youngsters fell in love and were told that they could not get married because of the past hostility. When the letter was found, it helped to clear up the mystery that one member had in fact behaved terribly towards the other four generations ago.



- This story happens over and over again on an inter-personal level and at community levels. As the story of Northern Ireland tells, such divisions happen also, though differently on a national level.
- What are the steps reported in this book, which need to be taken, to enter into a process of healing memories in such conflictive situations?
- How would you list them in priority order and are there some, which need to be applied in your context?

During the consultation the suffering of the people of Cambodia was told. The unimaginable number of killings, of adults male and female and children. There was the story that the powers that were did not interfere as it seemed not to be in their geopolitical interest. There has been no admission of responsibility, even of a moral nature, for the 1.7 million deaths, except for Mr Duch who confessed to the crimes committed at the Tuol Sleng Torture Centre, as director of that centre. Duch is known to have converted to Christianity later.

- Please read the passage on *Reflecting the Task ahead II*, once more in this connection, particularly its section regarding the role of religion.
- How can the Christian Faith be of help in coming to terms (Heal your own and others memories) with your past?
- You might want to ask a local minister responsible for prisons, to take you along and discuss this topic and his/her experiences with a life sentenced prisoner.

In Cambodian political culture, it is unknown that rulers have admitted their wrong-doings and expressed any remorse for them. This they have in common with many Far-Eastern cultures (Japan / Korea etc) as the ongoing demand for excuse from the Japanese Emperor

for the treatment of Korean women by Japanese soldiers during WWII shows. The unwillingness to admit wrong doing, denies these women the chance to enter into the process of healing their own memories, let alone a process which could be going on together between the two nations.

We too behave in the same way when we allow pride and egoism to stand in the way of truly reconciling, with those we have hurt.

- What inner values do we need to examine and discard to be able to sincerely come to a point where we can let go of past hurts and see to the future with hope for ourselves. For the other we need to hear their story in full to understand where their hurtful behaviour has come from and where they too have been hurt by us. To come to a point of reconciliation between the parties involved it often needs the extraordinary initiative of individuals, which might become mediators between the "worrying" parties.
- Re-reading the story of Northern Ireland and adding what else you know about the Peace Agreement, can you see the above described elements in it?
- There are examples of such initiatives around the Globe, where conflicts have destroyed the lives of thousands of people, be it in Argentina (Peres Eszquivel), Archbishop Tutu in South Africa, or in the post - German setting Paul Oestreicher, who as a Dean of Coventry Cathedral initiated the "Community of Cross of the Nail" linking Coventry (heavily bombarded by the Germans) to Dresden (totally destroyed by the British) We suggest that you surf in the Internet, to get yourself the details of these stories and try to relate them to personal experiences.

When in the 1970<sup>th</sup>, the German Chancellor Willy Brand met with Brezhnev in Bonn, in an lofty evening atmosphere, Brezhnev started to tell what crimes the Nazi Army had committed in Russia. He went on for 20 minutes, everybody in the room became very quiet and

realised at the same time, that this was the story Brezhnev had to tell, he had to tell into the face of his adversaries.



When he had finished, the then Defence Minister of Germany and later Chancellor Helmuth Schmidt spoke and told his story how he had been a soldier in Russia, what problems people like him, who did not support the Nazis had to fight this war, but that he had been brought up a patriot and that therefore he like other comrades saw no way but not to defend their country.

It was an evening, which as Schmidt later told, formed the base for a deep respect between Breshnew and him, also they remained even stronger in different camps after that evening.<sup>48</sup>

- There is that well-know story of the blind men which are supposed to describe an elephant and turned out to describe something totally different, although the where touching with their fingers the same object. Have you experienced something similar?
- You may want to make a very easy exercise
- Build a little something into the middle of the circle you form with your friends. Outside it can be a bush, some flowers inside you might like to construct something with books and other materials. Then let everyone look at it from her/his perspective for a moment and start to tell what she/he is seeing (not what she/he is imagining to see).
- What does this exercise have to do with the subject of telling the story to elaborately mentioned in this booklet?
- that for them, reconciliation means rather surrender to the powerful, not reconciliation among equals. Is this supported, when the dominant powers do not ask for an expression of failure.

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Geko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Art of Forgiveness*, WCC 1997,p 32.

## MORE OPEN QUESTIONS THEN RESOLVED...

**Aren't we just at the beginning?**

### **We feel the need to further reflect**

- Can there be Healing of Memories, which have been injured and wounded by war, if we do not enter into the issue of violence on global level as a prerequisite for the ecumenical agenda?
- The global context thrives on violence. Its notions of prosperity, material wealth, create a concept of security needed, which reinforces the militarization of the globe and lives off new wars. It produces its own interpretive keys for dealing with threats and conflicts, such as for the US (the old Pilgrim Fathers concept - Freedom) any threat is a threat to Freedom, meaning the way of living they represent. Does this mean, that there are cases, where Healing of Memories would also mean to be freed from one's material and security obsessions in order to be able to listen to the narrative of the other, which has been broken through our own action on global level?
- Isn't it that what we do at national levels is constantly undermined by the global violent factors. Isn't it, that the efforts of peace making and mediation break down under the impact of such global violence?
- In this the recognition of Vulnerability is an important component. However its interpretation needs to be done very carefully, as there is a great difference whether we talk of the vulnerability of handicapped or Human Rights Victims. Beyond this 'Vulnerability is not simply a personal category. For many of the world's vulnerable people an interpretation of vulnerability in an abstract way is an insult. Vulnerability for them is expressed in pain and suffering. They first need a basic security as part of the Healing Memories process.
- Many of the world's fragile cultures are severely threatened by the over-powerful global culture, i.e. made vulnerable to them. There is a kind of dislocation on the cultural level in a speed that is threatening global diversity. Indigenous cultures are eroding under the impacts of the global consumption civilizations and other globally spreading Western value systems such as their understanding of sexuality, rules for competition, for behaviour towards the elderly are also under the eroding pressures of global media and video games. For such cultures the slogan is "assimilate or die". These forms of alienation and dislocation are forms of violence at the structural level.
- There as the basic requirement for all kinds of human interaction a firm sense of security. But the search for security is meaningful and promising only if it is based on the common acknowledgement that all of humanity shares the same basic vulnerable. What we see today is a quest for security that defines one's security at the expense of others'. Security that is aiming at "invulnerability" is an illusion!

- Recognizing Vulnerability calls for compassion. (“Memoria passionis”) and for the reflection on the role empathy does have for our understanding of truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice?
- It calls for the recognition that present global developments produce reality, in which communities, relations between the generations, relations between secular interpretation and religious interpretation of reality are torn apart or break down respectively. What would it mean if we realize that our own growth as Faith community depends on our caring for and sharing with the Other, the ones who are made vulnerable in this process, whose Memories have no place in this development?
- It calls for our sensitivity towards the Other, in his/her suffering, vulnerability and needed solidarity in the described global context, where the dominant forces thrive on individualism and consumption (homo oeconomicus) The slogan “I am what I shop” is reflected in “I am how I behave”, „ “I belong by what I wear and do” forms the anthropology (understanding of the human being) in modernity.
- What would be the challenges the churches can develop, respectively point to, which would have a media impact on global levels?
- The Church must reflect on the justice-compassion- reconcile-ation - agenda in terms of its pastoral and prophetic ministries. Is the “healing of memories” work predominantly pastoral? Is the prophetic critique of injustice categorically confrontational or does it not challenges the captives to be freed as part of supporting their memorization of the past they come from for a restorative future? The prophetic ministry is deeply related to compassion, both for the victims as well as the evil-doers; for any serious prophetic announcement is a call to change and renewal. (Calling the evildoers to justice should be realised as a service to them).
- What is the impact of church divisions for the credibility of their reconciliation ministries? Have they not to make the extra effort, to overcome century old divisions to serve today's humankind, today's vulnerable, today's victims in a concerted effort? We heard the example of a conflict in Nigeria, where the churches initially proved to be unfit for a solution of a local conflict because of their divisions. It was only at a later stage that they managed to put their differences aside and acting together in the handling of that conflict. Their ability to arrive at cooperation had a big impact on all partners involved, including the politicians.

*The prophetic ministry is deeply related to compassion, both for the victims as well as the evil-doers; for any serious prophetic announcement is a call to change and renewal*

## **And finally: Why not go for it?**

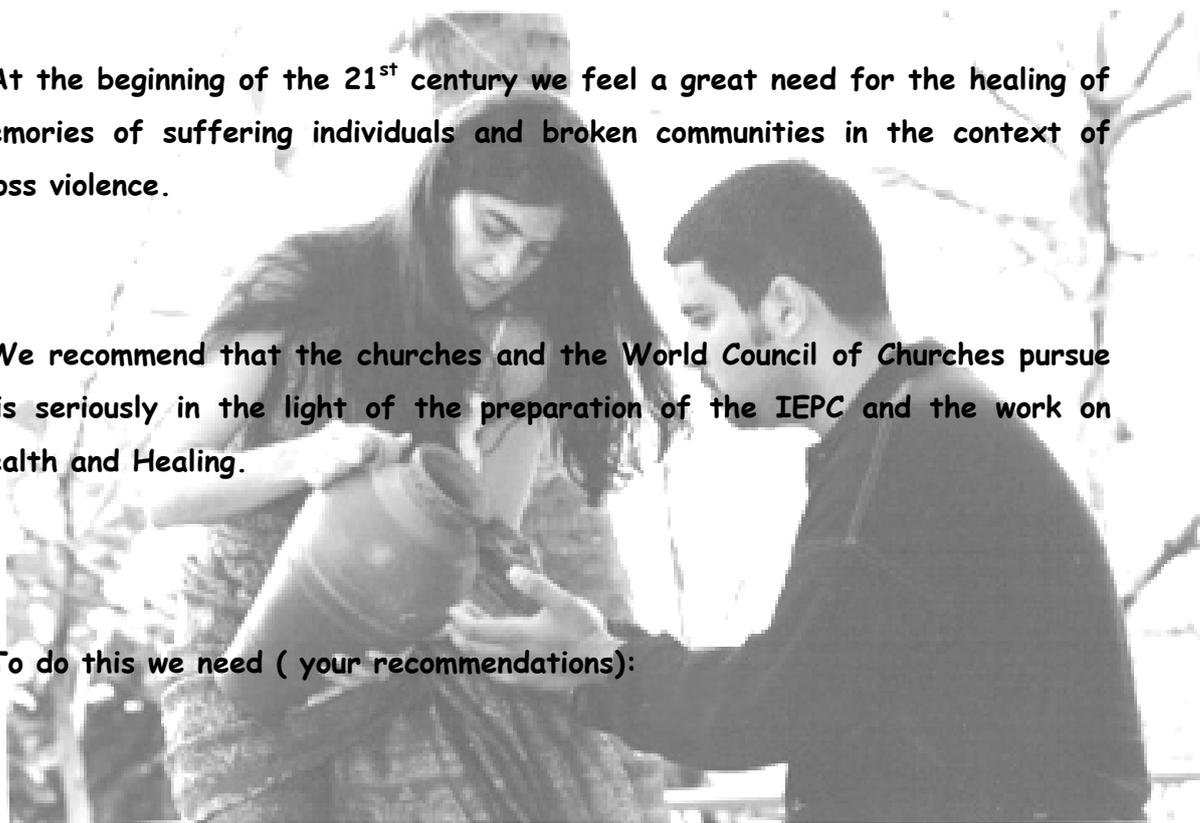
Having read this booklet with its statements, stories and study sections and having worked on its questions, why not trying to articulate your own summery in a statement regarding the task and prophetic role of the church in these questions. This off course is best done, when you get together with some friends, so that you can enrich each other with the different ideas each one has. You might want to be as concrete as possible, suggesting worship orders and prayer suggestions. Your result you might want to pass on to your church, the World Council of Churches, and other Human Rights related organisations.

It could start like this.....

### **Statement of concern and call for action**

From.....

- 1. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we feel a great need for the healing of memories of suffering individuals and broken communities in the context of cross violence.**
- 2. We recommend that the churches and the World Council of Churches pursue this seriously in the light of the preparation of the IEPC and the work on Health and Healing.**
- 3. To do this we need ( your recommendations):**



## Blessing

May God bless you  
granting you discomfort when confronted with easy answers,  
half-truth und superficial relationships,  
that you may live out of the depth of your heart.

May God bless you  
with wrath when faced with injustice, oppression  
and exploitation of people and the earth,  
that you involve yourselves in the struggle for justice, equality and peace.

May God bless you  
with tears, you shed for those who suffer,  
that you may extend your hand,  
to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

May God bless you  
with the foolish belief,  
that your actions make a real difference in the world,  
so that you may do things, of which others say that they are impossible to be done.

Amen.

*(unknown author)*