



## Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

*The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World*

### **RECONCILIATION AS THE MISSION OF GOD: Faithful Christian Witness in a World of Destructive Conflicts and Divisions**

**Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 51**

**Produced by the Issue Group on this topic at the  
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hosted by the  
Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization**

**In Pattaya, Thailand, September 29 to October 5, 2004**

***“A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call”***

In encouraging the publication and study of the Occasional Papers, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization does not necessarily endorse every viewpoint expressed in these papers.

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## The context for the production of the Lausanne Occasional Papers

The Lausanne Movement is an international movement committed to energising  
**“the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.”**

With roots going back to the historical conferences in Edinburgh (1910) and Berlin (1966), the Lausanne Movement was born out of the First International Congress on World Evangelization called by evangelist Billy Graham held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974. The landmark outcome of this Congress was the **Lausanne Covenant** supported by the 2,430 participants from 150 nations. The covenant proclaims the substance of the Christian faith as historically declared in the creeds and adds a clear missional dimension to our faith. Many activities have emerged from the Lausanne Congress and from the second congress held in Manila in 1989. The Covenant (in a number of languages), and details about the many regional events and specialised conferences which have been undertaken in the name of Lausanne, may be examined online at [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org).

The Lausanne International Committee believed it was led by the Holy Spirit to hold another conference which would bring together Christian leaders from around the world. This time the Committee planned to have younger emerging leaders involved and sought funds to enable it to bring a significant contingent from those parts of the world where the church is rapidly growing today. It decided to call the conference a **Forum**. As a Forum its structure would allow people to come and participate if they had something to contribute to one of 31 issues (around which were formed Issue Groups). These issues were chosen through a global research programme seeking to identify the most significant issues in the world today which are of concern in our task to take the *good news* to the world.

This Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) is the report that has emerged from one of these Issue Groups. LOPs have been produced for each of the Issue Groups and information on these and other publications may be obtained online at [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org).

The theme of the Forum for World Evangelization held in 2004 was **“A new vision, a new heart, a renewed call.”** This Forum was held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29 to October 5, 2004. 1,530 participants came from 130 countries to work in one of the 31 Issue Groups.

The Affirmations at the conclusion of the Forum stated:

“There has been a spirit of working together in serious dialogue and prayerful reflection. Representatives from a wide spectrum of cultures and virtually all parts of the world have come together to learn from one another and to seek new direction from the Holy Spirit for world evangelization. They committed themselves to joint action under divine guidance.

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west makes it imperative that the church seek God’s direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges.

In the 31 Issue Groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families, political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.

Great progress was made in these groups as they grappled for solutions to the key challenges of world evangelization. As these groups focused on making specific recommendations, larger strategic themes came to the forefront.

There was affirmation that major efforts of the church must be directed toward those who have no access to the gospel. The commitment to help establish self sustaining churches within 6,000 remaining unreached people groups remains a central priority.

Secondly, the words of our Lord call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this we have failed greatly. We renew our commitment to reach out in love and compassion to those who are marginalised because of disabilities or who have different lifestyles and spiritual perspectives. We commit to reach out to children and young people who constitute a majority of the world's population, many of whom are being abused, forced into slavery, armies and child labour.

A third stream of a strategic nature acknowledges that the growth of the church is now accelerating outside of the western world. Through the participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, we recognise the dynamic nature and rapid growth of the church in the *South*. Church leaders from the *South* are increasingly providing exemplary leadership in world evangelization.

Fourthly, we acknowledge the reality that much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. A large proportion of the world's populations are either unable to or unwilling to absorb information through written communications. Therefore, a need exists to share the "Good News" and to disciple new Christians in story form and parables.

Fifthly, we call on the church to use media to effectively engage the culture in ways that draw non-believers toward spiritual truth and to proclaim Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways.

Finally, we affirm the priesthood of all believers and call on the church to equip, encourage and empower women, men and youth to fulfil their calling as witnesses and co-labourers in the world wide task of evangelization.

Transformation was a theme which emerged from the working groups. We acknowledge our own need to be continually transformed, to continue to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges of God's word and to grow in Christ together with fellow Christians in ways that result in social and economic transformation. We acknowledge that the scope of the gospel and building the Kingdom of God involves, body, mind, soul and spirit. Therefore we call for increasing integration of service to society and proclamation of the gospel.

We pray for those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith and for those who live in constant fear of their lives. We uphold our brothers and sisters who are suffering. We recognize that the reality of the persecuted church needs to be increasingly on the agenda of the whole Body of Christ. At the same time, we also acknowledge the importance of loving and doing good to our enemies while we fight for the right of freedom of conscience everywhere.

We are deeply moved by the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the greatest human emergency in history. The Lausanne movement calls all churches everywhere to prayer and holistic response to this plague.

"9/11," the war in Iraq, the war on terror and its reprisals compel us to state that we must not allow the gospel or the Christian faith to be captive to any one geo-political entity. We affirm that the Christian faith is above all political entities.

We are concerned and mourn the death and destruction caused by all conflicts, terrorism and war. We call for Christians to pray for peace, to be proactively involved in reconciliation and avoid all attempts to turn any conflict into a religious war. Christian mission in this context lies in becoming peacemakers.

We pray for peace and reconciliation and God's guidance in how to bring about peace through our work of evangelization. We pray for God to work in the affairs of nations to open doors of opportunity for the gospel. We call on the church to mobilize every believer to focus specific consistent prayer for the evangelization of their communities and the world.

In this Forum we have experienced the partnership of men and women working together. We call on the church around the world to work towards full partnership of men and women in the work of world evangelism by maximising the gifts of all.

We also recognize the need for greater intentionality in developing future leaders. We call on the church to find creative ways to release emerging leaders to serve effectively.”

Numerous practical recommendations for local churches to consider were offered. These will be available on the Lausanne website and in the Lausanne Occasional Papers. It is our prayer that these many case studies and action plans will be used of God to mobilise the church to share a clear and relevant message using a variety of methods to reach the most neglected or resistant groups so that everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel message and be able to respond to this good news in faith.

We express our gratitude to the Thai Church which has hosted us and to their welcoming presentation to the Forum. We are profoundly grateful to God for the privilege of being able to gather here from the four corners of the earth. We have developed new partnerships, made new friends and encouraged one another in our various ministries. Notwithstanding the resistance to the gospel in many places and the richness of an inherited religious and cultural tradition we here at the Forum have accepted afresh the renewed call to be obedient to the mandate of Christ. We commit ourselves to making His saving love known so that the whole world may have opportunity to accept God’s gift of salvation through Christ.”

These affirmations indicate the response of the participants to the Forum outcomes and their longing that the whole church may be motivated by the outcomes of the Forum to strengthen its determination to be obedient to God’s calling.

May the case studies and the practical suggestions in this and the other LOPs be of great help to you and your church as you seek to find new ways and a renewed call to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ

*David Claydon*

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# INTRODUCTION

by Chris Rice, Issue Group 22 Convenor

This Lausanne Occasional Paper on “Reconciliation” is itself the product of a hopeful journey of Christian unity, shaped by a group with deep divides in our very midst. The Paper is the outcome of intense work over 2003-2005 by 47 Christian leaders from six continents and 21 countries — practitioners, pastors, theologians, missiologists and scholars from some of the world’s most conflict-ridden places.

Our group included Protestant evangelicals, Pentecostals and denominational leaders, two Catholic priests and one Orthodox priest. We worked as Group 22, one of 31 Issue Groups who gathered at the September 2004 Forum on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, organized by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Group 22’s early work together was profoundly shaped by a visit of our leadership team to Rwanda in July 2004, ten years after the genocide in which many Christian leaders and congregations were implicated. In Thailand, our entire group’s gathering was a rich experience of sharing our stories of pain and hope, building community, and debating and discerning what it means to be faithful Christian witnesses in a divided world. Our final presentation in Thailand was a public act of worship, a dramatic foot washing before the entire 2004 Forum between Rwandan Hutu and Tutsi; Israeli and Palestinian; male and female; white, black, and Asian; and Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox clergy.

We believe this sign of the church on her knees, washing feet across the boundaries of our divided world, is the vision of the kingdom desperately needed in our time.

The argument of this Paper is that in a deeply broken world, faithful Christian evangelism can only be envisioned and embodied in direct relationship with the vision and practice of biblical Christian peacemaking. This must include a deep analysis of and engagement with the historical and social ground of brokenness on which Christians find themselves bearing witness for Christ — including coming to grips with our own brokenness within that landscape. The Paper consists of three chapters: a theological and contextual analysis and vision; short vignettes from places of deep brokenness; and in-depth case studies.

## ***“Reconciliation as the Mission of God”***

After intense discussions in Thailand, this first and most important chapter of our Paper was revised and endorsed unanimously by all 47 Issue Group members in January 2005. The chapter presents a theological vision for reconciliation as God’s mission in a broken world. While pointing to signs of hope, the paper analyzes how the Christian community is being caught up in many destructive conflicts and divisions across the world today, including by promoting a defective gospel. The chapter presents a challenge for placing biblically holistic reconciliation at the heart of Christian mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its urgent call is to both personal conversion and social transformation, beginning in a critical re-examination of the very meaning of mission, discipleship, evangelism, justice, and even church in relation to God’s reconciling mission.

## ***“Roots and Realities” Vignettes***

In chapter one, we contend that “The transmission of the gospel and the ministry of the church do not run in a pure, separate historical stream, but are carried on inside of and tainted by the world’s poisoned, muddy histories. All the agents of brokenness must be discerned and confronted.” Too often we in the Christian community rush to action and “solutions” without lamenting, without truthfully coming to grips with the depth and pain of brokenness — personal, social, and spiritual — in which the church is called to bear witness to Christ.

Chapter two consists of six vignettes, each written by a different Issue Group member, describing local places of deep brokenness in the world. These stories include: Dalit “untouchables” in India; the struggle for prayer amidst violence in Sierra Leone; “sectarian”

divisions in Northern Ireland; and post-apartheid church fragmentation in South Africa. Here we want to point to the importance of closely attending to the stories, histories and complex conditions of our local contexts, seeking to expose the deep and particular brokenness and pain where the church's mission is engaged.

These vignettes should be engaged from the theological vision of chapter one. Only in the larger story of God's action and reconciliation in Christ can we see such places not only as the deeply broken places they are, but as sites where God's "new creation" has come to interrupt our stories of division, violence, and fragmentation, making conversion and new history possible.

### ***Case Studies of Brokenness and Hope***

Chapter three consists of seven in-depth case studies written by different members of our Issue Group including: a parachurch worker in Burundi; a Palestinian refugee in the Middle East; an advocate among Aborigines in Australia; a pastor on the spiritual dimension of peacemaking in the Congo; and reconciliation challenges in the United States and Kosovo. These stories of people actively pursuing their vision of faithful Christian witness range from the power of forgiveness in one person's life, to working on a broad national level, from bringing divided women together, to shaping a multi-ethnic Christian college campus, and situations where the inability to separate one's religious identity from one's ethnic identity becomes one of the most serious theological problems facing the church.

The case studies are diverse, not only geographically but also because they sometimes offer differing perspectives on Christian mission and witness in the context of division and destructive conflict. We recommend these case studies for study and critical engagement by Christians everywhere. Readers are encouraged to reflect upon the case studies in direct conversation with the analysis and theological convictions laid out in chapter one, and to discern signs of hope and promising practices.

### ***Emerging Network for Reconciliation***

At the end of our remarkable journey at the Thailand Forum, Group 22 adopted a Pattaya Covenant (included in this Paper) during our closing worship service. We pledged to join in on-going mission by forming a global Christian network for reconciliation, and to invite others to join us. For information about that emerging network, see [www.reconciliationnetwork.com](http://www.reconciliationnetwork.com).

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# **PATTAYA COVENANT**

Adopted by the members of Group 22: Reconciliation  
at the 2004 World Evangelization Forum in Pattaya Thailand  
October 4, 2004

*“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:27-28<sup>1</sup>*

## **Who We Are**

We came to the 2004 Lausanne Forum in Pattaya, Thailand from six continents across God’s earth, sharing a vision for reconciliation. Although we arrived mostly as strangers, we leave as committed companions in a strong Christian bond. We gathered across historic and continuing divisions and many places of conflict: as black, Asian, Latin American, and white; different tribal and ethnic groups; Israeli and Palestinian; North and South; privileged and marginalized; women and men; as Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. We heard each others’ stories of pain and hope. We confessed that we in the Christian community are often part of the division and conflict. We listened, debated, prayed, sang and danced, and shared laughter and tears. We began to see common convictions arise among us. We witnessed breakthroughs of unity which caused us to rejoice. And we find ourselves hoping for an on-going community of relationship and partnership.

## **Our Common Call**

We believe that reconciliation is God’s initiative. The Church is called to be a living sign of the one body of Christ. Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel and the church’s life and mission, and is integral to evangelism and justice. Reconciliation is a deep and costly process, and requires humility, forgiveness, courage and patience. We are committed to pursuing God’s reconciling mission in a world of broken relationships and destructive conflicts.

## **Our Commitments**

We pledge to continue and extend the community birthed in Pattaya, and to help each other be faithful ambassadors of reconciliation. Therefore, we shall:

- Pray for one another and for the Church;
- Practice confession and forgiveness in our personal lives, seeking healing;
- Stay in touch and gather to tell our stories, discern, help each other, learn about and lament destructive divisions and conflicts, and seek and celebrate signs of hope;
- Establish a network to forward relationship and partnership, and invite Christians across the world to join us;
- Advocate and speak prophetically for justice and reconciliation, including engaging church, civic, and political leaders, without compromising our biblical convictions;
- Contribute and share resources;
- Research, publish, communicate, and disseminate;

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations in the paper are from *Today’s New International Version*

- Work humbly together as servants to seek the church's renewal and to help mobilize the global Christian community to be partners in God's reconciling mission.

### **Our Prayer**

We covenant before God and one another to live into these commitments. May God give us grace to do so:

*"And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" 2 Corinthians 5:19-20.*

# 1. RECONCILIATION AS THE MISSION OF GOD

*“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [the Son], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Colossians 1:19-20)*

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: The old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a)*

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20a)*

*“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:44-45)*

*“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:27-28)*

## The Vision of Reconciliation

The mission of God in our fallen, broken world is reconciliation. Sacred Scripture witnesses that God’s mission of reconciliation is holistic, including relationships with God, self, others, and creation. This mission has never changed from the Fall to the new creation in Christ, to its fulfilment in the coming of Jesus in the *eschaton*. God’s reconciling mission involves the very in-breaking of the Kingdom of God, as realized through Jesus’ incarnation, His life and ministry and preaching, and through His death and resurrection.

God’s initiative of reconciliation through Christ transforms believers into God’s new creation. With all of creation, we await our final and perfect transformation in the end of time. At that time, when Jesus returns, God’s mission will be complete. People of every nation, tribe, and language, gathered as one, will worship the Lamb, the tree of life and its leaves shall be for the healing of the nations, and the new heavens and earth shall make the reign of God a reality with all things reconciled to God (Romans 8:18-39, Revelation 7:9-17; 21-22:5).

In response to all this, the believer is called to participate in God’s mission of reconciliation. This includes obeying Jesus’ command to humbly make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20), teaching them to follow the example of Jesus who suffered for a suffering world. The church is called to be a living sign of the one body of Christ, an agent of hope and holistic reconciliation in our broken and fragmented world.

Reconciliation is God’s initiative, restoring a broken world to God’s intentions by reconciling “to himself all things” through Christ (Colossians 1:19) including the relationship between people and God, between people and with God’s created earth. Christians participate with God’s mission by being transformed into ambassadors of reconciliation.

A serious impediment to God’s mission of reconciliation in our time is not only the reality of destructive divisions and conflicts around the world, but quite often the church being caught

up in these conflicts — places where the blood of ethnicity, tribe, racialism, sexism, caste, social class, or nationalism seems to flow stronger than the waters of baptism and our confession of Christ.

While the church's suffering faith is evident in many conflicts, the guilt of Christians in intensifying the world's brokenness is seriously damaging our witness to the gospel. The church's captivity is both direct and indirect, whether

In too many places, the blood of ethnicity, tribe, racialism, sexism, social class, or nationalism flows stronger than the waters of baptism and our confession of Christ.

actively furthering destruction and division, remaining silent or neutral in the face of it, or promoting a defective gospel. This is true of recent and current contexts including legalized apartheid (South Africa), "ethnic cleansing" (the Balkans), genocide (Rwanda), histories of racism and ethnocentrism (USA), terror and killing of civilian populations and bitter, unresolved social divisions (ranging from "sectarianism" in Northern Ireland, to Dalit "untouchables" and caste in India, to the plight of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, to the Korean peninsula, to Palestinians and Israelis). Christians are often bitterly divided on both sides.

This troubled situation calls for prayer, discernment, and repentance, and a critical re-examination of the very meaning of mission, evangelism, discipleship and even church in relation to God's reconciling mission. This is particularly urgent given cases where vast areas of revivals and church planting have become vast killing fields (such as Rwanda 1994), with Christians slaughtering neighbours and even other Christians.

Yet even in the worst conflicts, signs of the quest for reconciliation can be detected in the church. Christians have shaped many of the world's most hopeful breakthroughs for reconciliation. In becoming agents of biblically holistic reconciliation, we must learn to name and confess the sins of the past and present and encourage others to do the same, be willing to forgive, and live in new ways of repentance and costly peacemaking. Above all, Christians must be people of hope; hope in God's victory in Christ and that, over time, reconciliation can break in, because this is God's mission.

## **The Context of Reconciliation**

### ***The Social and Historical Context of Conflict***

God created humanity in God's image, for natural union and wholeness of life with God, one another, and God's material creation. The Fall shattered this union, resulting in the estrangement seen in Cain's murder of Abel. While destructive conflict is rooted in this rupture, it cannot be explained solely in terms of wicked human hearts. Powerful historical and social forces, unjust systems, and "spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12) are also part of the world's brokenness. The transmission of the gospel and the ministry of the church do not run in a pure, separate historical stream, but are carried on inside of and tainted by the world's poisoned, muddy histories. All the agents of brokenness must be discerned and confronted—personal, social, and spiritual.

In our shrinking and increasingly pluralistic and globalized world, manifestations of social division are intensifying. Destructive conflicts crying out for reconciliation include both open conflict and "quieter" conditions of persistent injustice, division, and separation. Four interrelated dimensions of historical social conflicts must be engaged: the past and its trauma; how that past is named and remembered; how the present is described and engaged; and how the future is imagined.

In terms of the past and its trauma, destructive social conflicts and realities do not drop like meteors from the sky. Behind each trauma are infective histories, particular social,

economic, spiritual, institutional and political factors and powers, and the reality that the oppressed of yesterday often become the new oppressors, repeating cycles of destruction.<sup>2</sup>

Reconciliation is not forgetting the past. Yet naming and remembering the past well is difficult. Sharing a history in every social division are offenders and offended, passive bystanders and active peacemakers, with lines between them rarely agreed upon and alienated groups and the Christians within them holding tightly to conflicting versions of truth. In response to God's love and justice, however, Christians are called to fearlessly seek and name the truth of what has happened, guided by repentance and forgiveness. This must involve seeking shared truth across divided lines. Deformed ways of remembering the past include denial, social amnesia, a spirit of unforgiveness and uncritical affirmation of one's own group and its history.

In the present where we live, haunted memories, the unresolved past, and continuing trauma have a cumulative effect. These forces can so pervade a culture, a people, that they are passed on from generation to generation — perpetuating distrust, fear, bitterness, exclusion, retribution, and the politics and economics which often exploits these realities. Persistent unjust balances of societal power are also a consequence of the unresolved past and present. In the face of all this, divided groups easily resign themselves to separate and alienated communities, jostling for power. If militarism enters as an option of providing some with personal security while neglecting human security for all, conflicts rise to devastating levels.

Against these forces of the past and present, alienated groups cannot even imagine a future of friendship, solidarity or common life. Instead, they accept and live with permanent categories of another group as aliens, strangers or enemies: "black" and "white;" Hutu and Tutsi; clean and "untouchable;" South and North Korean; and "terrorist" and "terrorized." Fragmentation becomes normal, acceptable and even inevitable.

### ***The Church & Mission Context***

When Christians are passive bystanders and refuse to become constructive agents of reconciliation amidst such divisions and destructive conflicts, we are guilty of withholding love to a neighbour, the love of God is not manifested in our lives, and we give life to a defective gospel.

Numerous ideologies of escape steer Christians away from reconciliation and must be named and rejected by the church. These include:

- ***Dualistic theologies*** which are silent about social problems, name enemies as solely non-human evil spirits, preach the sufficiency of individual salvation without social transformation, or the sufficiency of social involvement without personal conversion in Christ;
- ***Ethnocentrism, racialism, sexism or nationalism*** that promote the fallacy of any ethnic, cultural, gender or national group's self-sufficiency, and promote loyalty to and the self-interest of one's group as an end in itself. Ultimate loyalty is intended for Jesus alone, who calls us to love our neighbour as well as our enemies, and not only "our own";

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<sup>2</sup> The following examples are factors that can be found in past trauma which shapes the present and should be taken into account: genocide, civil war or cycles of violence and retribution; entire peoples dispossessed of and forcibly removed from their land; slavery; colonial dominance; economic oppression and injustice, and legalized or culturally-embedded segregation and marginalization; long-standing animosities and the politics of dehumanization and demonization; neutrality and silence in the face of atrocities and social evils; the quiet persistence of structures and practices (economic, social, political) that privilege some groups and marginalize others; bitter church schisms; theories of racial and genetic superiority; lust for power and domination; and trusting in military might more than costly peacemaking and redemptive suffering.

- **A false belief in God's creation of essentially different people groups**, justifying permanent boundaries between them. This includes the Hamitic ideology, that teaches that God has cursed the descendents of Ham, Noah's son, creating separate orders of peoples—some inferior and some superior. This is a heresy. Rooted in this ideology was racial segregation in the USA, apartheid in South Africa and genocide in Rwanda, which many Christians supported, along with believing in their underlying ideology;
- **A spirit of individualism** seen in Christian disunity, competitiveness, or deplorable schisms and splits which infect many denominations, churches, Christian institutions and ministries. This disunity and egoism blinds our ability to discern the world's need for reconciliation and seriously harms the church's ministry;
- **Adopting numbers of conversions or church plants as a primary measure of Christianity's growth**, allowing churches or ministries to grow with superficial discipleship, homogeneously, or in ways that perpetuate histories and systems of separation and alienation. This tacit approval of permanent boundaries and segregated lives limited to "people like us" falsely blesses the chasm between alienated groups and disables our ability to be self-critical;<sup>3</sup>
- **An underlying message of cheap grace** that encourages shallow resolutions, a superficial discipleship powerless to engage social pain, and reconciliation without repentance. A biblical theology of the cross and suffering is needed to renew the church's thinking and life.

Against these ideologies of escape, the church must formulate theological alternatives that encourage authentic reconciliation.

Regarding other situations, when sweeping revivals and rapid church growth occur, Christians must restrain from triumphalism. In too many cases, Christians have been implicated in destructive conflict which has overtaken vast areas of revival and church planting. The church has failed to be self-critical or discerning enough, or to adequately answer "How did this happen, and where did Christians fail?"

In addition, Christians cannot be neutral in a time of social crisis. Too often we are silent about destructive conditions occurring around us, or in our world. Any dichotomy between the evangelistic and the prophetic is false. Along with leading believers into personal holiness, the church is charged to have a prophetic social presence. The church must learn to speak the truth to powers. This calls us to "discern the will of God" concerning societal powers and governing authorities that have immense influence over the lives of Christians, over our non-Christian neighbours and over destructive conflicts and societal realities.

The capacity to be a prophetic church is being seriously eroded by three stances. A religious *pluralist stance* promotes social transformation without personal conversion, losing the uniqueness and lordship of Christ. A *quietist stance* ignores social evil, is silent when people suffer persecution, and preaches the sufficiency of individual salvation without social transformation, losing public social witness. An *assimilationist stance* misuses the Bible to support the status quo of social or political exclusion, or weds Christian interests with particular governing authorities, losing all prophetic distance.

In addition, the church often shares in the sin of comfortable neutrality, the complacency of those who find themselves on the side of social privilege and fail to work vigorously to transform the status quo. This is at least true of those who tend to preside over the levers of

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<sup>3</sup> In South Africa, for example, the "homogeneous unit principle" was popular among those who supported apartheid. In India, church growth has often tacitly accepted caste divisions, while the same has happened in the U.S.A. regarding racial and ethnic divisions.

theological power and influence. Thus the theology of the church is often in support of the status quo, or asks very few critical questions, losing all prophetic voice and domesticating the gospel.

Yet God's forgiveness in Christ makes possible the church's faithful confrontation of past and present trauma and injustices. As communities of Christians learn to model confession, forgiveness and costly peacemaking in lives marked by joy, we proclaim a new future and offer a vision of hope to a broken world.

## The Hope for Reconciliation

### ***Biblical and Theological Foundations of Reconciliation***

Amidst the world's profound brokenness, God's peace in the risen Christ is now powerfully at work, seeking to reconcile humanity to God's intended purposes for union with God, one another, and the material creation, resulting in the flourishing of all. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture witnesses to God's total mission "*to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven*" (Colossians 1:15-20). The fullness of reconciliation is friendship with God in Jesus Christ, witnessed to in Christ's two-fold command to love God and neighbour (Matthew 22:37-40). Christ has prepared the way for reconciliation by abolishing the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, making of the two one new humanity, establishing peace (Ephesians 2:11-18). Reconciliation is a sign of God's presence in the world, of the kingdom of God drawing near.

The wholeness that God seeks to bring to all areas of brokenness is captured by the rich Scriptural notion of *shalom*. This is *shalom* as rooted within the full biblical story and not in any nationalistic or politically partisan sense. From the original wholeness of God's creation, broken by the Fall, to God's response to initiate restoration through covenant, to Christ tearing down the Jew-Gentile barrier, *shalom* proclaims peace as God's peace in distinction to the world's: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you*" (John 14:27). *Shalom* as God's peace envisions the wholeness, well-being and flourishing of all people and the rest of creation both individually and corporately in their interrelatedness with God and with each other. *Shalom* as God's peace encompasses all dimensions of human life, including the spiritual, physical, cognitive, emotional, social, societal and economic. *Shalom* pursues mercy, truth, justice and peacefulness through both personal conversion in Christ and social transformation.<sup>4</sup>

Because God created all persons in God's image, reconciliation also proclaims God's love for every human being. One crucial implication is that Christians must stand against any destructive or dehumanizing barriers built up by one person or group of people against another, whether they are Christian or not.

One theological implication of the above three paragraphs is this: God's mission of holistic reconciliation is the overall context for evangelism and making disciples. Reconciliation with God is essential and Christians must be agents of that restoration. However, to stress evangelism without also being agents of holistic reconciliation betrays the full truth of the gospel and the mission of God.

In view of all this, Christians are called to faithfully embody God's total reconciling mission. Through new life given in Christ, the Holy Spirit's power, the church's faithful teaching, and on-going Christian practices, people can be deeply transformed toward loving God,

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<sup>4</sup> For examples of the biblical understanding of *shalom*, see: Leviticus 26:4-6; Psalms 34:14; Isaiah 1:16-17, 32, 11:6-9a, 16-17; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Ezekiel 34:25-31; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 4:2-4. The New Testament carries this vision forward in the Greek concept of *eirene* ("peace"): Mark 4:37-29; Luke 4:16-21; Ephesians 2:12-14; Revelation 7:9, 21:1-4.

neighbour and enemies. Only in this radical journey of conversion can Christians develop the skills to resist destructive conflicts and live out a way of being which, over time, can heal and reconcile.

The church's ministry of reconciliation flows from a call to *being* a reconciled community. Christ prayed for the visible unity of the church, and intimately connected Christian unity to Christ being known as the One sent from God: "*I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me*" (John 17:20-23).

The church's ministry should also be profoundly shaped by the truth that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Christian discipleship is led by the crucified Christ to fully engage the painful historical conditions of separation, animosity, and destruction in the earthly realm, refusing "cheap grace" and shallow resolutions. Christian discipleship is also led by the risen Christ to live in ways which explode old walls and barriers and build hopeful new forms of Christian community and just society between divided peoples.

We are led by Christ crucified to fully engage painful historical conditions and by the risen Christ to explode walls and barriers and build new forms of common life.

Christian discipleship is led by the crucified Christ to fully engage the painful historical conditions of separation, animosity, and destruction in the earthly realm, refusing "cheap grace" and shallow resolutions. Christian discipleship is also led by the risen Christ to live in ways which explode old walls and barriers and build

Reconciliation and the quest for justice go hand in hand. There cannot be reconciliation if sin is not named, judged publicly and condemned. In the face of oppression, to reject vengeance is a double injustice — to the afflicted and to God's wrath against evil. What is crucial is how we appropriate vengeance: "*Do not take revenge...but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay,' says the Lord*" (Romans 12:19). In Jesus' death, God judged all sins, abuses and atrocities. God's forgiveness in Christ "while we were yet sinners" guides our pursuit of justice toward healing. One mark of holistic reconciliation is a commitment to pursuing justice that is primarily restorative rather than retributive, keeping open the hope for future common life between enemies and alienated peoples.

At the same time, we must heed Scripture's exhortation that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood." It is crucial to recognize an unseen, heavenly dimension to the quest for reconciliation in the world, a struggle against certain destructive forces and their ideologies, against "rulers," "powers of this dark world," "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:10-18). This calls for a deep life of prayer and discernment "in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18) at the centre of Christian ministry amidst destructive conflict and proclaims that reconciliation is ultimately a matter of God's power and victory.

Difference itself, or differences, are not necessarily the problem calling for reconciliation. In many ways, diversity of peoples and cultures is a gift, such as another language opening up a new world to us, or another culture as a gift to enrich us. Often the problem is how the will to dominate exploits the differences. While God's mission of reconciliation does not obliterate human diversity, it does seek to bring friendship with God and neighbour in a way which transforms human cultures. We must carefully and locally discern where the gospel affirms culture, where it opposes, and where it encourages transformation. Christians are called to lives of hospitality, to open themselves to the stranger, the alien, the outcast, and the enemy. Such openness radically changes one's relationship to one's culture, and how one engages cultures in transforming ways. The pursuit of reconciliation is an ongoing struggle. This quest should not be expected to end conflict in this world, but rather to transform it. True reconciliation and shalom is only in the *eschaton*, when all things are reconciled in Christ. While full reconciliation does not happen in this life, there is hope of substantial healing.

### ***The Scope of Reconciliation***

Every act seeking reconciliation, no matter how small, matters greatly to God. The scope of reconciliation runs from healing in one person's life, to two individuals overcoming animosities, to nations and long-divided peoples seeking to do so.



This work of becoming peacemakers between divided peoples is not secondary or optional, but is central to Christian mission along with planting churches and making disciples. Indeed, this costly work and the persecution it may bring bears witness to some who are otherwise unable to hear the gospel, and is at the core of making disciples who “*obey everything I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28:20).

This peacemaking work must be theologically grounded. In our emerging world, some are seeking a common ground of universality to provide meaning for “one world.” Scripture testifies that God in Jesus Christ alone is the centre of hope for the world’s peace, and also that all of humanity is created in God’s image. Following Jesus’ definition of our neighbour (Luke 10:25-37), Christians are called to seek truthful engagement, peacefulness and just community with all people — especially strangers, enemies, the poor and those considered outcasts both ethnically and religiously.

At the same time, there is a qualitative difference between how reconciliation can be pursued outside versus inside community with Christ. The Lordship of Christ claims the whole lives of persons and alienated groups, something no other authority including the state can demand. Christ offers forgiveness and healing which no legal effort or human attempt can effect and calls His disciples to a repentance and joy which is radical. Christ calls for far more than admitting guilt, but deep contrition, and a costliness and depth to healing broken relationships that goes far beyond tolerance or peaceful coexistence.

This witness begins at home. For the church to make peace, she herself must embody God’s peace as a living sign of God’s reconciled community. Baptism identifies believers as one church family, the body of Christ. Within their families, local churches, and the larger Christian family and our tragic divisions, Christians are called to a special witness of fidelity, sacrificial love, boundary crossing, and common prayer, seeking to heal conflicts following our Lord’s words in Matthew 18:15-20. Wherever Christian leaders will not pray together and seek reconciliation, the church’s mission is seriously harmed.

Biblical reconciliation also leads Christians beyond church circles to vigorously analyze, engage and influence our local communities, nations and world as witnesses for reconciliation and just community. Without sacrificing our Christian convictions, we should seek to partner creatively with people of good will to promote peace, including with people of other faiths. At the heart of the church’s public engagement is a prophetic responsibility to call political authorities to account. Governing authorities are subject to the sovereign Lord for their conduct in ensuring just order and peaceful relations.

Certain legal, governmental and national efforts can bring a cessation of hostilities and public pursuit of truth and just practices that the church alone cannot bring and for which the church should advocate. Christian partnership with such efforts can even elevate their outcomes in profound ways (as with South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 1990s). Yet involvement with governmental efforts should not become the primary end or determinative sphere of the church’s reconciling mission. They must be approached carefully, critically, and provisionally. The church must never compromise its identity or prophetic voice.

### ***The Process of Reconciliation***

Reconciliation is a long and costly process. Reconciliation is not a one-time event, or a linear journey of progress, but addresses multiple causes and relations that intermingle. Christians are called to be intentional and energetic in pursuing reconciliation, to go out of their way to love their neighbour who is difficult to love.

Reconciliation is a long and costly process in which all groups are transformed. This journey requires hope, nurtured in listening to God.
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This costly journey requires hope, nurtured in practices where we listen to God in worship, Scripture reading, and prayer. As we open to the pain of a broken world, we hear

God's word that ultimately, in the *eschaton*, all things will be reconciled in Christ. In the meantime, we do our part. It is this hope that keeps the process moving forward.

In biblical understanding, no one party in a historic conflict — whether majority or minority, powerful or powerless, aggressor or afflicted — has the greater burden to take the first step toward reconciliation. The initiative for reconciliation begins wherever people find the courage to “lose themselves” and take ownership of pain: to no longer deny the conditions of trauma, to embrace the predicament of division, and to join the struggle for transformation by discovering the human face of the “other.”

Too often, we ask forgiveness of God without asking forgiveness of people. Following the example of Jesus' love for enemies and forgiveness for undeserving sinners, Christians are unconditionally called to seek within themselves for and to actively offer both heartfelt confession and genuine forgiveness. We do this without promise that our action will be received or reciprocated, or that justice will occur. Establishing a social atmosphere of relative safety and security is crucial for such actions to become widely possible, especially for those who have been marginalized.

While confession or forgiveness can come from one direction, reconciliation between divided peoples requires a risky, mutual journey of intentional relationship-building in which all groups are transformed and called to costly sacrifices. Reconcilers may be seen as traitors by their own people, and often become a bridge painfully walked on by both sides.

Both perpetrators of destructive conflict and bystanders who remain safely silent and privileged are called to accept responsibility for the condition of those wounded and afflicted. Their confession and sorrow opens a conversation about the conflict and its genuineness is often tested in a willingness to take actions of reparation to counter the consequences of harm.

One further barrier to reconciliation is the residue of unresolved bitterness toward people and groups who have offended us. There is a need to face the residue and pain inflicted upon us as first steps toward reconciliation. Such courage cannot be forced. Yet many of history's most powerful reconciliation movements have been birthed among Christians of the historically marginalized and afflicted who proclaim Christ's triumph over evil, speak truth without demonizing the other side, pray for and engage their persecutors, seek forgiveness and work for a future of just community and common life across the lines of division.

### ***Indications of Reconciliation***

Only God knows what true reconciliation looks like, and the fullness when a countless multitude from every people and language will worship before the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-10). Since

The church itself ought to be a key indication of hope, a living alternative, infusing and challenging the social sphere with a more radical vision of God's reconciliation.

reconciliation is an ongoing quest, the challenge is to point out where we are and to mark signs of hope. As reconciliation efforts move forward, conflict and resistance may often increase. Yet indications of reconciliation can become the very signs of God's kingdom breaking into this world. Christians should eagerly seek these indications of hope, from the church living the alternative,

to practices of faithfulness, to changes in society.

The church itself ought to be a key indication of hope, a living alternative, infusing and challenging the social sphere with a more radical vision of God's reconciliation. Examples of the church visibly living the alternative include: across long-divided lines, Christians form holy friendships, offer hospitality, share meals, pray and read Scripture together, celebrate holy communion, mutually confess and forgive, and forge common mission; unlearn habits of superiority, inferiority and separation; celebrate together, and praise and worship God while engaging the world's pain and working towards *shalom*; free Christian institutions of discrimination and unjust use of resources; show remarkable joy amidst difficult work; marry across ethnic boundaries and divided lines, with blended families becoming a sign of a new

community. At the heart of the church's alternative witness is the birth and perseverance of blended congregations where historically separated peoples share deep, common life.

Christians understand faithfulness as shaped by the cross, as a costly discipleship that re-defines effectiveness. Faithful practices of social engagement, even if they seem to result in no visible change, are also profound indications of hope amidst destructive conflicts. Examples are when Christians forgive persecutors; prophetically challenge unjust situations; aid afflicted neighbours; absorb evil without passing it on; witness to Christ amidst hostilities; offer hospitality across divides; continue seeking peace even when called traitors; suffer, or even die, rather than participate in destruction.

The church should also eagerly work for indications of reconciliation in society. These include: enemy leaders enter dialogue, violence stops, persecution is reduced, or hostilities cease; crimes and destruction by all sides are brought to light in a context of restorative justice; loved ones and the larger society learn the fate of victims; deeper truth around a painful shared history is appropriately and communally remembered; a state of tolerance is achieved where estranged groups agree to live peaceably; more just societal structures and practices emerge; children of hostile groups begin to go to school and play together; inter-marriage increases across historic lines of separation; neighbourhoods become blended communities of shared, peaceful life.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### ***Placing Reconciliation at the Heart of Christian Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

The alienation of divided peoples and the suffering of the afflicted cries out from our world's brokenness, from both open, destructive conflicts and the more hidden conflicts. These conditions call the church to listen to the pain and to God, to lament the divisions, to repent and forgive where necessary, and to be transformed as agents of healing, Christian witness and positive change. Thus we invite Christians everywhere to carefully consider the following recommendations:

1. ***To embrace biblically holistic reconciliation at the heart of the gospel and Christian life and mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and as integral to evangelism and justice.*** This involves intentionally embedding this vision into the mission of our churches and institutions, and understanding reconciliation as a long and costly process, requiring hope from God.
2. ***To humbly examine ourselves in the Christian community, seeking to identify and dismantle the escapist ideologies and practices which steer us away from reconciliation.*** This is grounded in the hard work of biblical study, social and theological analysis, corporate discernment, conversation with communities we have been divided from, and prayer.
3. ***To cross the difficult divisions, barriers, and borders to talk face to face with and listen to those we are separated from.*** This must involve seeking to talk and pray with Christians on the other side, listening to God and each other and praying for the unity Jesus prayed for (John 17:20-21). Christian pastors and leaders should be at the forefront of these boundary-crossing efforts.
4. ***To preach and teach radical discipleship with Christ and costly peacemaking as normative of Christian faith.*** This involves presenting

discipleship as a journey with God and people which, over time, transforms our desires and opens up radical new ways of loving God, neighbour, and enemies.

5. ***To refuse neutrality or silence in relationship to destructive conditions.*** We urge the church to be vigilant to discern conditions of escalating dehumanization and injustice (such as those the church worldwide failed to name in Rwanda leading to the 1994 genocide) and to engage church, civic and political leaders as advocates without compromising our biblical convictions. It is a powerful form of protection for national voices of truth and justice when the church outside knows of them and speaks against threats to them, especially from countries of great international power.
6. ***To intentionally shape pastors and congregations able to live the alternative and work toward shalom.*** These Christian leaders and communities will need to learn the practices of naming the conflicts and root causes for what they are; to serve, listen and bear witness across divisions and barriers; to comfort and bind up the afflicted; to seek and celebrate signs of hope through both small and large gestures and measures; to support peacemaking efforts in the larger community; and to bring former strangers and alienated peoples into common worship, friendship and mission under the lordship of Christ.
7. ***To joyfully and publicly proclaim in our Christian preaching and life God's victory and God's future of reconciling "all things" in Christ.*** Amidst profound brokenness and pain, we must learn what it means to be bearers of hope, who faithfully bear witness to what is not seen, to the God who raised Jesus from the dead, defeating sin, evil, and the dark powers of this world.

## Definitions

Five key concepts in the paper are understood as follows:

**Reconciliation:** Reconciliation is God's initiative, seeking "to reconcile to himself all things" through Christ (Colossians 1:19). Reconciliation is grounded in God restoring the world to God's intentions, the process of restoring the brokenness between people and God, within people, between people and with God's created earth. Reconciliation between people is a mutual journey, requiring reciprocal participation. It includes a willingness to acknowledge wrongs done, extend forgiveness, and make restorative changes that help build trust so that truth and mercy, justice and peace dwell together.

**God's mission:** The Christian faith embraces reconciliation as the mission of God in our fallen and broken world, accomplished in the work of Jesus Christ and entrusted to the church through people who participate by being transformed into ambassadors of reconciliation in a broken world.

**Destructive Conflict:** Conflict is a condition of our broken world after the Fall and can become either constructive or destructive. Conflict is a disagreement between two or more parties — whether persons, institutions, people groups and communities, or nations — that is rooted in incompatible goals, positions, views, needs or behaviours. Through either open destruction or quiet persistence of practices and structures, conflict becomes destructive by seriously damaging or dividing people and communities, thus prohibiting them from being

neighbours who love one another. Destructive conflict thus becomes a condition of severely broken relationships between people, which becomes embodied and perpetuated historically, personally and institutionally and employs instruments such as actions, words, ideologies, policies, systems, or weapons to cause physical, psychological, or social damage or division which furthers the world's brokenness. The consequences of destructive conflict range from severely damaged emotions and memories, to socially alienated people groups, to the inability of groups to flourish physically, socially, economically and spiritually, to death of people and destruction of societies and of God's material creation.

**Shalom:** *Shalom* is a theological concept rooted in Scripture. The biblical witness speaks of *shalom* as a state of wholeness, well being, peacefulness and flourishing of all that God has created in all of its dimensions and all of its relationships. *Shalom* includes right relationships of human beings with God, within themselves, with one another and with the created world. *Shalom* is always rooted in justice and holiness.

**Restorative Justice:** Restorative justice is used in this paper as defined by Desmond Tutu in *No Future Without Forgiveness*, "the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victims and the perpetrators, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offence."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 55.

## 2. “ROOTS AND REALITIES” VIGNETTES

### **The Dalit Oppressed People of India by Ken Gnanakan**

The Dalits or “oppressed people” of India, numbering over 200 million as roughly estimated today, have lived in a cycle of discrimination and despair for over 3000 years. The Hindu caste system specifies four major caste hierarchical levels but the Dalits are outside of the system and that is why called “outcastes” previously.

Deep-rooted divisions within the Indian society have resulted in rejection, humiliation, poverty and suffering for the downtrodden Dalits. The caste system denies them adequate education, safe drinking water, and the right to own land or a home in rural India.

Although laws against caste discrimination have been passed and many Dalits have been educated and lifted out of their plight, widespread intolerance continues towards many. Large numbers of Dalits and low-caste Hindu have been turning to Christians for help, although similar numbers are also going to the Muslims, Buddhists and other minority groups. About 70% of Indian Christians are stated to be from Dalit backgrounds.

In a major conversion event some years ago, millions of Dalits were expected to convert to Christianity. Discerning Christians were asking some pertinent questions. Is the church able to handle this sudden growth? Will the church be able to accept these people and show Christ-like compassion? The reason for such questions is clear. The church itself is torn apart with all kinds of caste groups, schisms, factions and divisive conflicts. Superficial conversions in the past allowed for casteism to continue albeit in a sophisticated way and lower caste converts have faced discrimination.

While the Dalits really need to be lifted out of their pitiable plight and brought into the Christian fold, we must first seek reconciliation of such influences within the church itself. Then, Christians must strive for reconciliation of Dalits into the mainstream of the Indian society. The Christian message of barriers being broken down and oneness restored in humanity (Ephesians 3.6) still waits to be actualized in the Indian church.

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### **Sectarianism & the Church in Northern Ireland by David Porter**

Ireland was never a part of the Roman Empire and the 5<sup>th</sup> century church planted by Patrick was free of the Romanization that assisted the spread of Christianity. It was the missionary scholar monks of Ireland who were at the heart of the re-evangelisation of Europe after the empire collapsed. Their reward was the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to bring the church under the control of Rome and the land under the control of an English King.

History therefore does not allow us to view the religious conflict in Ireland in two dimensional terms, Roman Catholic native and Protestant colonist. Both, in their own time, were the religion of the outside power. Both carry responsibility for the brew of land, culture, politics, tribe and religion that has brought division and conflict.

Evangelicalism is no less complicit. In 1859 Evangelical revival provided a unifying experience for diverse Protestant traditions. This spiritual rapprochement facilitated common

political cause in the fight to maintain the union with Britain. It is from this period that the current conflict takes its religious shape.

Sectarian violence marked the formation of Northern Ireland in 1921. This period also saw a second Evangelical revival. In the minds of many this reinforced the link between God and Ulster. To this day Dr. Ian Paisley looks both to Lord Carson, the political leader of the time, and to the revivalist W.P. Nicholson, to legitimate his own brand of religious fundamentalism and politics in defence of Northern Ireland.

The partition of Ireland left the North with an unstable population mix. One third found themselves a Catholic minority on the wrong side of the Irish national border. The rest, while now a Protestant majority in a British province, still experienced themselves as a minority on the island as a whole. Siege and insecurity left little room for magnanimity in relationships with neighbours. With the outbreak of civil unrest in 1968 these sectarian fault lines came to the fore.

During thirty years of terrorist violence, the church maintained its pastoral presence to the respective communities. There were also significant prophetic acts and statements by religious leaders from both sides, including, from 1987, the Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland (ECONI). The peace process that led to the negotiating of the ceasefires in 1994 was initiated by priests from the Redemptorist order, with the support of a range of ecumenical and evangelical clergy and reconciliation groups. Despite attempts to marginalize the contribution of the church and the reality of the church's historic complicity in the conflict, faith based and inspired initiative has been at the heart of the search for peace.

Since the Belfast Agreement of 1998 the focus has been on how we deal with the past and come to terms with the hurt visited on each other. Neither side wants to concede legitimacy to the other. While most paramilitary combatants regret that their actions in the "troubles" were necessary, they do not apologise for what they did. Many of those not directly involved in the paramilitaries continue to deny the endemic nature of sectarianism in society and by inference, their responsibility for creating the conditions of enmity in which the violence was nurtured. Many Evangelicals continue to oppose the peace process as a concession to their historic enemies. Reconciliation remains a distant prospect, a period of political stability and communal tolerance our best hope.

*David Porter is co-founder and director of ECONI, the Evangelical Contribution On Northern Ireland. He is specifically responsible for ECONI's work in dialogue with both Irish Republican and British Loyalist paramilitary groups in their moves towards peace, building relationships across the political divide and enabling a credible evangelical contribution to the British and Irish governments on the peace process in Ireland. He is a member of the UK Board of the Evangelical Alliance.*

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## **Politics, Trauma and Prayer in Sierra Leone by Samuel G. Menyongar**

Sierra Leone was the first country in West Africa to receive the gospel in 1605. After more than 200 years of the existence of the gospel, there are only 11.72% Christians in Sierra Leone . . . 568,934 people within a total 4.5 million population. The annual growth of Christianity in this country is +2.9%. There are 2,000 churches and 9,000 mosques. Sierra Leone was a colony of Great Britain and gained her independence on April 27, 1960. The government that took over from the British misruled the country for 27 years. Under the All People's Congress and President Siaka Steven there was rampant corruption, nepotism, tribalism and ritualistic killings for power. The country deteriorated under this regime and this led to a brutal civil war which lasted for 10 years.

Under the leadership of Foday Sankoh, the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) was established and entered Sierra Leone from Liberia in 1991. They raped, maimed, amputated, kidnapped, conscripted child soldiers, destroyed homes and government infrastructures. There was total anarchy. This also divided the church on tribal lines. By the grace of God the church came together for prayers and this was on a rotational basis from church to church. Through the International Missionary Centre of which I work and the International Prayer Council headed by Brother John Robb, a prayer summit was held from May 2-4, 2000 where more than 1,500 pastors and intercessors were brought together to pray for the healing, reconciliation and forgiveness of the nation. Each region was prayed for by a person from that region, sins of forefathers were confessed and repented. Forgiveness was asked and pastors from other regions hugged each other and cried. At the end of the summit, the leader of the RUF was arrested and the RUF was disbanded. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council headed by Johnny Paul Koroma was also present at this meeting. He prayed for reconciliation and healing for the nation and his group was also disbanded.

There were influences from the west and from the West Africa sub-region. However, through the decision for the church leaders to come together, God brought peace and healing. Today different denominations are coming together to discuss the way forward for the spiritual condition of the country.

*Samuel Menyongar is a pastor with Bethel World Outreach Ministries International, and directs the International Missionary Centre based in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He conducts training for leaders, mission trips, interdenominational unity and reconciliation workshops, and prayer networks.*

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## **Religion, Race, and Identity in the Sudanese Conflict** by Julia Duany

Independent Sudan's conflict between the Arab/Islamic North and the African/Christian South has brought disorder, deprivation and death to southern Sudan. Many nations have offered help, but the net result of intervention has been to prolong the conflict. The war has taken a toll on human life, especially in the South. The majority of Sudanese suffer, since productive resources are diverted into means of coercion and defence.

Long-standing policies of Arabization and Islamization are the North's attempt to correct decades of Western influence in the South. Southerners see their interests and institutions subordinated to Arab and Islamic agendas and have consistently demanded their right to self-determination. In this context, religion, race, identity and language are the instruments of social control and change. Christianity has come to embody political and social rejection of Islam. This symbolism has intensified during the past twenty years, uniting those in opposition to Islamist control. Consequently, the Christian witness is used to rally people to get behind a political bandwagon and people are not hearing the true message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The lack of knowledge continues because war, displacement and social disruption have limited the opportunities available for theological training and education.

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## **The Church and Post-Apartheid Tensions between Coloured, Black and White In South Africa's Western Cape by Esme Bowers**

The realities of post-apartheid South Africa have created a fertile environment for change and high expectations for those at the grassroots, especially from the previously disadvantaged peoples.

There has always been a division between the White, Coloured, Indian and Black on the statute books of the previous regime. Many of the Coloured and Indian people identified themselves as Black and actively participated in the liberation of South Africa. They expected the same restorative justice as the Black community, but the reality is that preferential treatment is being given to programs that enhance the development of Black people. The Coloured community feel that during apartheid they were not "White enough to enjoy the privileges of the White community," and now 10 years into the new democracy they are not "Black enough to enjoy the privileges given to the Black community."

This has also impacted not only society but also the church and caused church division in the city of Cape Town. The church is not able to be a prophetic voice to those in government because we are fragmented, nor are we able to engage in transformative activities if only one sector of the population is active. We need Black, Indian, White and coloured people working together as the church. Society judges the church because of its division, not only denominationally but also racially and the government is not taking the voice of the church seriously. The question is often asked, "who do you represent" and if not the whole church, credibility is lost.

Cape Town has a population of 60% Coloured people (the Western Cape has the country's highest percentage). The expectation of "their time has come" has not been realized and this has led to the church in Cape Town being polarized on racial grounds. In other parts of South Africa most leadership positions have been given to Black people. There is a certain expectation, due to affirmative action, that leadership in the church should be Black, yet in the Western Cape this is not so. The Coloured people in this province are descendants from a mixture of Khoi San (the indigenous people of the Cape), black African tribes, European (The French, Dutch, British and German) and the Indian Island peoples (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Indonesia, Malaysia).

Coloured church leaders are flexing their muscles and organizing separate mass church gatherings excluding other races deliberately. May I suggest that this comes from both fear and prejudice carried over from the past. The fears are:

1. If Whites take over they will continue to oppress those of colour. Many have had 40 years of this kind of leadership and are not prepared to even give Whites any leadership positions or responsibilities.
2. Why should Blacks be included in the leadership? Coloureds are the majority population in the area and are they not able to lead their "own people?"
3. It is said that "Black people have an advantage and are taking over many areas of influence in other parts of SA," "we should lead our own people," "it is our right," "this is our land" and "the Western Cape belongs to the mixed peoples."

The critical issue is for the whole Church to engage in discussion, truly listen to each other, develop relationships and find constructive ways to resolve these issues.

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## **The Sources of the So-called Chinese Problem in Indonesia by Paulus S. Widjaja**

Indonesia has been haunted by conflict between the Chinese and the indigenous<sup>6</sup> for centuries. Many times in history the conflict erupted into violent conflict that took the lives of tens of thousands of people. Although the conflict looks like an ethnic conflict between the Chinese and the indigenous, a closer look at the conflict will reveal the fact that it is more likely to be rooted in the policies of the ruling regime than in pure inter-ethnic sentiment.<sup>7</sup> It is not because the two different ethnic groups essentially hate each other, but because the two ethnic groups have been made to hate each other in the name of ethnic differences by the ruling regime. There is thus a social set-up that makes these two groups of people to have prejudice against each other and to be ready to inflict harm on each other.

Such a social set-up can be traced back to the time of Dutch colonialism when the Dutch colonials were practicing the politics of *divide et impera*. Armed with these politics, the Dutch colonials kept breaking off the relations between kingdoms, between rulers and between social groups in Indonesia so that they were in continuous wars with each other, becoming weak and easy to be defeated. The purpose of the strategy was to enable the powerful to take control over the nation easily at the expense of peace and harmony, even people's lives. Ethnic differences are thus seen more as a curse to this multiethnic nation than a blessing.

Simply pointing our fingers to the government policies, however, is not sufficient. The material and spiritual worlds are never completely separated. True, the social set-up should be blamed for the creation of inter-ethnic conflict in Indonesia. Yet that social set-up has also nurtured hatred and prejudice in the hearts, minds and souls of both the Chinese and the indigenous against each other. These perverted hearts, minds and souls, in turn, encourage the sustenance and expansion of the unjust social set-up because the evil power that has permeated and controlled the unjust social set-up is also permeating and controlling the hearts, minds and souls of the people within that structure. In other words, there is reciprocity between the social structure and the character of the people who live in that structure. In a normal situation, a Javanese may not hate a Chinese just because the latter is a Chinese, or a Chinese hate a Sundanese just because the latter is a Sundanese. However, due to the racist social set-up, a Javanese may eventually hate a Chinese precisely because the latter is a Chinese and a Chinese hates a Sundanese precisely because the latter is a Sundanese.

The so-called Chinese problem is thus rooted not in ethnic differences between the Chinese and the indigenous, but in the hatred and prejudice between them and in the unjust social set-up that is established to segregate them for the interests of the ruling regime. The two, the social set-up and the character, cannot be separated. The problem of hatred and prejudice cannot stand alone, because the hatred and prejudice are supported by the social structure. The problem of social structure also cannot stand alone, because the social structure is designed and expanded on the basis of hatred and prejudice. So we have to approach the Chinese problem comprehensively. We have to give attention to both the interiority and the exteriority of human beings.

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<sup>6</sup> The use of the term "indigenous" does not reflect acceptance of the idea that there is such thing as pure "indigenous" people in Indonesia. All the ancestors of the present day Indonesian people came from elsewhere. The term is used simply because it has been commonly used by the people of Indonesia to distinguish between the local people from those considered foreigners, especially the Chinese.

<sup>7</sup> Ignas Kleden, "Stratifikasi Etnis dan Diskriminasi" in *Pri-NonPri: Mencari Format Baru Pembauran*. (Indigenous-Non-indigenous: In Search of a New Format of Assimilation) ed. Moch Sa'dun M. (Jakarta: PT Pustaka Cidesindo and Yayasan Adikarya Ikapi and the Ford Foundation, 1999), 155.

Unfortunately, the Indonesian churches have been threatened by two kinds of evil so that they can give witness to Christ amidst the so-called Chinese problem, namely, a dualistic theology and an uncritical attitude toward the powers.

First, a dualistic theology. In this theology, many Indonesian churches see the enemies of the church as non-human evil spirits in the air. The church then prefers to preach “good news about heaven,” to take care of spiritual matters only, while keeping silent about concrete problems in society. The church intentionally distances itself from human social problems.<sup>8</sup>

The second threat is an uncritical attitude toward the powers. Eka Darmaputera points out that, in relation to the three social forces in Indonesia: the bureaucrats (of both government and military), the Muslims and the masses, the Indonesian churches are closer to the bureaucrats than to the other groups, partly because they are afraid to stand in solidarity with the masses in order to avoid the risk of being in confrontation with the bureaucrats; partly because they perceive the Muslims as the greatest threat and therefore they like to collaborate with the bureaucrats in order to counter this threat.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the Indonesian churches are “tamed” and domesticated by the government to the extent that they lose their prophetic voice and have become a mere rubber stamp for the ruling regime.<sup>10</sup> The central theme in the relationship between the church and society has become the matter of how the church can maintain a good relationship with the government.<sup>11</sup> Instead of advocating and defending the oppressed, the Indonesian churches are busy seeking blessing from the government.<sup>12</sup> Instead of submitting themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they have become subject only to their own interest for safety and comfort. No wonder that it is the government who has finally become the “lord” of the churches, rather than Jesus Christ. The churches are afraid to speak the truth according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The churches have successfully been convinced that their existence depends on the blessing from the public officers, not from Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Board of Directors of Yakoma, Foreword to Victor Silaen, ed. Gereja dan Reformasi: Pembaruan Gereja Menuju Indonesia Baru (The Church and Reformation: Church Renewal Toward New Indonesia), (Jakarta: Yakoma PGI, 1999) viii; Victor Silaen, ed. Introduction to Gereja dan Reformasi, xii-xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Eka Darmaputera, Kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia (Sebuah Analisis dan Penilaian) (Christian Presence in Indonesia - An Analysis and Evaluation), unpublished paper, photocopied (Jakarta, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Id., “Mengevaluasi Kehadiran Gereja di Tengah-tengah Tuntutan Reformasi—Anno 1999” (Evaluating the Presence of the Church Amid the Demands of Reformation), in Victor Silaen ed. Gereja dan Reformasi, 11-13; Victor Silaen, Introduction, xiii; Nababan, “Gereja Ikut Bersalah Atas Keadaan Negara Ini” (The Church Is Also Guilty of the Situation of This Country), in Victor Silaen, ed. Gereja dan Reformasi, 215-217.

<sup>11</sup> Darmaputera, “Mengevaluasi,” 13.

<sup>12</sup> The Board of Directors of Yakoma, Foreword, viii.

<sup>13</sup> A.A. Yewangoe, “Gereja di Era Reformasi,” (The Church in the Reformation Era), in Victor Silaen, ed. Gereja dan Reformasi, 28-29; “Partisipasi Kristen Dalam Era Baru” (Christian Participation in the New Era), *ibid.*, 163-164.

### 3. CASE STUDIES OF BROKENNESS AND HOPE

#### Case Study #1

#### Christian Witness and Reconciliation Initiatives in Burundi

Prepared by Andre Butoyi

##### **Burundi Conflict Context**

Burundi is a small, mountainous, landlocked country in the Great Lakes Region of East Central Africa. The country has one of the highest density populations in Africa (over 6.5 million). For more than 40 years of independence, Burundi has been known to the world for its lack of peace. High intensity inter-ethnic killings have occurred in 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988 and 1993-2003. The political-ethnic conflict that exploded in 1993 was nothing but a manifestation of existing tensions between two dominant ethnic groups (the Hutu and the Tutsi). For historical reasons, the Tutsi (14% of the population) have been ruling the country for many years, before and during the colonial times and through the post-independence period. The struggles of the Hutus (85% population) to gain control and of the Tutsis to keep it have always led to fierce fighting and mass ethnic killings. For the Tutsis, to remain in control of the power machinery is their sense of security. Dominating the military system (where they have the majority) has been the key stumbling block for long time. In the midst of the fierce rivalry between Hutus and Tutsis, the third largest ethnic minority group, the Batwa (1%), has been drastically marginalized in all areas.

Estimates indicate that some 250,000-300,000 people were killed during the inter-ethnic fighting that occurred between 1993-2003. Nearly 1 million people went to either internally displaced people camps (mainly Tutsi) or into exile (essentially Hutus). Political peace agreements and many cease-fires signed between various Tutsis and Hutus parties/armed factions are currently being implemented. But the people of Burundi live with the consequences of their history and are kept under persistent fear.

There have been many attempts to describe the roots causes of Burundi conflict. Most of them touch on historical facts, behavioural attitudes, systems and structures design<sup>14</sup> (as dividers). Nevertheless Burundians share many things in common (Connectors).

<b>DIVIDERS</b> Major factors of conflict	<b>CONNECTORS</b> Major factors of peace:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Manipulated/distorted/marred history leading to frustrations, distrust and fear</li><li>2. Impunity (Corruption, injustice, crimes)</li><li>3. Unequal access to resources (exclusion)</li><li>4. Bad governance (Institutions, Structures, Systems and Dynamics)</li><li>5. Struggle for access to and control of power</li><li>6. Regional and international interferences in the conflict</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Traditional values (humanity, cooperation, mutual help)</li><li>2. Language, easy communication</li><li>3. Prayer, worship, religion</li><li>4. Freedom of associations, increasing civil society initiatives</li><li>5. "Heroes" who protected other ethnic members from death</li><li>6. People wishing for the end of war</li></ol>

<sup>14</sup> The ranking above seemed to gather consensus in a recent (July 5-8 2004) forum of NGO's and international funding agencies that were analyzing Burundi conflict and strategizing on peace building scenarios. Details on each point exist.

Within this setting, churches and their leadership have shined by their absence in the area of influencing positively the trend of events.<sup>15</sup> Rather, witness to Jesus Christ has been tarnished by:

- Churches/Christian organizations' involvement in divisions, at times being used as arms for political superstructure propaganda rather than neutral peace steering entities.
- Lack of credibility within national church leadership, damaged by strikes, rivalry, competition, rampant promotion of self-interests.
- Lack of sound biblical teachings on Christian social/political involvement and responsibility, and intra/interdenominational syncretism.
- The so-called and hypocritical "separation from the world," combined with the paradox of church leaders taking church matters "*before the ungodly for judgment rather than before the saints*" (1Corinthians 6:1).

All over the country, great expectations are still for the future; as people struggle to talk honestly about the past. The hearts of the people of Burundi remain burdened and wounds have not been healed. Instead, the tendency is to forget the wounds in a kind of "*reconciliation as hasty peace*."<sup>16</sup>

### **World Vision Burundi Peace and Reconciliation Initiative**

Since 1995, World Vision Burundi has developed major areas of engagement including:

- a. Food security
- b. Establishment of grain banks
- c. Health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS work
- d. Support of education,
- e. Housing
- f. School feeding and emergency response
- g. Child soldier demobilization
- h. Capacity building, etc.

The most cross-cutting program has been the Peace Building initiative, designed to promote healing, reconciliation and Christian witness. This program was rooted in World Vision Burundi's vision statement: "*To see Burundians transformed and reconciled with God, with themselves, with other people around them, and with the environment.*"

Since 2002, a World Vision US-funded peace and reconciliation project was especially built in collaboration with church leaders in the capital city Bujumbura. The project's aim was "*To effect a radical heart-felt change in the lives of Burundi's citizens - at the national church & secular leadership levels and at the grassroots level that will begin to move the country towards peace*". Two of the three stated objectives were:

- To decrease the fear and distrust among at least 40 respected leaders (20 from Hutu, 20 from Tutsi ethnic group) on a national level, based on biblical teaching and the gospel message of grace and forgiveness.
- To bring together all interfaith leaders to design a strategy to promote a unified involvement in peace and reconciliation activities in the country.

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<sup>15</sup> During further discussions in the peace forum above mentioned, religion and churches as a factor has been relocated somewhere between Dividers and Connectors as something having high potential for shifting from one side to another.

<sup>16</sup> "By forgetting the suffering, the victim is forgotten and the causes of suffering are never uncovered and confronted ... Suffering is likely to continue; the wheel of violence keeps turning..." Robert J. Schreiter in *Reconciliation: Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, Orbis Books & Boston Theological Institute, Feb. 1996.

Activities were defined as follows:

- a. Identification of key influential church leaders and other emerging influential leaders.
- b. Select an internationally-recognized inter-faith leader to lead seminars.
- c. Conduct at least three peace and reconciliation retreats with the targeted participants.
- d. In collaboration with church leaders, undertake retreats for political leaders, business people, and celebrity groups from different ethnic groups to promote reconciliation.
- e. Facilitate and help interfaith church leaders to prepare and implement a shared strategy addressing their role in peace and reconciliation.
- f. Establish on-going monthly support meetings for participants to continue to promote reconciliation and implement their strategy.
- g. Establish a design tool for monitoring and evaluating effect of the strategy within the interfaith community.

***Outcomes from the Initiative: Hope Arose from Ashes during First Meetings in late 2002***

Even though some leaders were checking on who had been invited before confirming attendance, the first conference gathered 65 prominent church leaders representing 44 denominations and Christian organizations. It was facilitated by Antoine Rutayisire, director of African Evangelistic Enterprise, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide and a prominent figure in the area of reconciliation in the region, as well as the Vice-President for the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda. The conference aimed to discuss *“The role of the church and Christian leadership in a peace seeking process within a conflict context.”* The conference sessions addressed issues including the *Kind of Leader, the Kind of Church, the Kind of Message* and *the Kind of Project* that can be expected from Christians in a conflict setting. One of the conclusions was that the church needs to have *a prophetic, pastoral and advocacy role before, during and after conflict.*

The 65 leaders ended up by (a) forming a committee of 6 members representing Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic church, as well as para-church organizations, to do a follow-up plan and (b) deciding to have a further listening conference, without a foreign facilitator, to *“to dialogue, listen to each other, reconcile, repent, pray and intercede, so that leaders have same mind and spirit and support the temporary committee working on the draft of Joint Plan of Action.”* This time, moderators were chosen from among the leaders committee and facilitators from among the remaining leaders (who had a consensual credibility). Thus, 44 highly respected church representatives came back for that second conference.

The conferees began by reflecting on Philippians 2:1-4: *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of the love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

Rev. David Niyonzima, Friends Church Leader, led a reflection during the second discussion based on Matthew 18:19: *“Again I say to you if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”* After the reflection, he led the group in the following lesson:

## ***Obstacles to Healing, Peace and Reconciliation: Application to the Context and to the Church of Burundi***

1. *Ignorance, wrong information, lack of understanding that the peace of my neighbour is my peace.*  
*Example:* The power of rumours in the Burundi culture is overwhelming! Oh, how people believe them! And how quickly they act accordingly!
2. *Looking for selfish interests and personal gains rather than community welfare, while at the same time affirming the pursuit of peace.*  
*Example:* The speeches that show anger on what one lost and the jealousy of what the other one has in the political arena, even church leadership. What are the interests one should pursue in peace building rather than peace itself?
3. *Misunderstanding of one's role in the maintenance of peace.*  
*Example:* Some political leaders do not understand the contribution that the population can bring to peace building. They think that all decisions can be made independently as long as one is in control. Does everyone need to contribute militarily in peace building?
4. *The biased concept of justice.*  
*Example:* The understanding that justice is a tool/weapon to get your way or to use for the welfare of your own people. Do you study justice to get hold of power and be able to control? Why do people study law? To judge or to reinforce justice?
5. *Confusion among Christians on the concept of peace and war in the Bible.*  
*Example:* Using the Bible to justify wars. Not enough teaching is given on the subject of non-violence. Is there enough understanding of the biblical principles among Christians in Burundi so that one makes a decision to enrol or not to enrol in the army/rebels? Is going to the army/rebels getting a job or is it patriotism?
6. *Confusion between what is political and what is Christian.*  
*Example:* A concept that politics have no place in the Christian life, thus Christians being indifferent to political injustice. Should Christians say nothing to a divisive political speech?
7. *A reluctance to change mentality on changing situations*  
*Example:* Power sharing: the advantages and disadvantages. What do people think of the army/rebels? Protectors or destroyers? It depends on who is judging.
8. *Lack of social aspect in the gospel presentation (gospel interpretation, domestication and preaching)*  
*Example:* Preaching has emphasized more the vertical relationship (love God) and less on the horizontal aspect (love your neighbour). How do we understand penetration into the world and being salt to people? Can light be the light when it is not brought into the darkness?

At the conference closing ceremony, one bishop stood and said, "This is just the beginning of healing and revival. God is going to do tremendous thing in the church of Burundi and in the country. From what we have done, Christians in our churches will soon see the fruit."

### ***Further Outcomes***

*"A nation is more powerful when it kneels before God  
than when it transforms all its resources into arms or guns."*

By the Honourable Reverend Joseph Bararu

The six month pilot project has been extended for almost 2 years now. Over 200 church leaders, gathering in a series of seminars, designed a plan of action that identified five areas of intervention: (a) Collaboration and networking for church leadership training, (b) Church in an advocacy role: reaching politicians and business leaders by the message of reconciliation and outreach for marginalized people/groups, (c) Use of media for the church's mission fulfilment, (d) Churches addressing peace-building, poverty alleviation & development and HIV/AIDS mitigation, and (e) Churches and Christian agencies partnering for more impact in the community.

- Nearly 40 politicians committed to regular dialogue and prayer in a kind of fellowship within Burundi Parliament. Their network actually seeks to influence policy-making for peace restoration starting within the Parliament. Their regular meetings have built on Amos 3:3 *'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?'* and on Matthew 5:13-14.
- Through youth-by/to-youth outreach approach (drama, conferences, peace education etc), over 2,000 teenagers have been exposed to the message of reconciliation and forgiveness. Transformed by God power, youth from different ethnic sides are eager to share their stories with other youth, especially the youth involved in politics.
- Over 500 prominent women leaders in coalitions went through conference/seminars on "The 'Role of Women in Peace Building'" or in intercession conferences accompanied by self-organized demonstrations.
- *"We can build political and social strategies to come out of crisis, but we will still need to pray for the nation to come back to God the Creator."*  
Honourable Laurent Kagimbi,  
also chairman of the Catholic Church Committed Laymen Groups, Burundi
- Around 150 intercessors from churches and Christian agencies (and from different ethnic sides) met twice in 2004 to build up the Burundi Intercessors Network and prayer strategy. Two international facilitators helped on this by running seminars of conflict and spiritual mapping, nationwide intercession movement enhancement, etc.

### **Obstacles and Hindrances for Reconciliation**

- The weight of past wounds and conflicting relationships between leaders of traditionally larger denominations on one side and leaders of newly-formed churches<sup>17</sup> on the other. Later on, enthusiasm of some leaders from the so called "big denominations" went down because of that.
- Even if there is no open opposition between Protestants and Catholics, a wall of mistrust between them has been a kind of "shadow" to the initiative.
- New forms of competition appeared as churches or local Christian organizations competed by breaking alliances and forming new ones to attract resources for their own reconciliation initiatives. (Reconciliation programs were seen as opportunity to promote "own" ministries/churches.)
- Lack of consistency and failure to view the work of reconciliation not as a strategy but more as a spirituality, an attitude of recognizing God *"that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:23).

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<sup>17</sup> Some leaders of newly-formed churches have withdrawn from the larger denominational churches, and the separation has not always been peaceful.



- Lack of theological foundation and teaching to back all efforts and lack of inclusive vision for national healing, reconciliation outreach for the kingdom of God.
- Some church and Christian leaders still stigmatizing their fellow brothers and sisters who are politically engaged.

### ***Analysis of Success and Failure***

The project seems to have success in the area of applying the ministry of reconciliation to explore new facets of witnessing for the Kingdom of God:

- Reconciliation ministry by/among/with women.
- Reconciliation as channel to witnessing in political arena or the highly-educated social level.
- The “*enough is enough*” generation: willingness among youth to see transformation and to reach other youth.
- Reconciliation viewed as component of healing, prayer, repentance and intercession in individual and corporate social therapy.

All these areas attract people and Christians that are/have been somehow “victims” of the existing order, structures and/or systems including the religious ones. On the other hand, groups or individuals representing the “status quo establishments” always showed hesitations to engage on the reconciliation road.

Probably this indicates that, within a destructive conflict context, it is easier to take/lead the less comfortable people (probably victims) on the *road of healing and reconciliation* than ‘pushing’ the well-established groups/individuals (let us assume they are not profiting from the context) even one step down the same road.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Lessons/Practices that Worked***

- *Delegating and keeping people accountable*: World Vision (WV) Burundi kept a small number of personnel to nurture the organization’s relationships with various groups and committees involved. Various groups took the lead in planning and implementing. This was difficult at the beginning, but rewarding later on.
- *Don’t cheat God*. We are agents of reconciliation in the hands of God *the reconciler*: At the beginning, WV Burundi laboured to convince leaders that many other people or organizations are able to bring church leaders together and thus welcomed a shared responsibility/role; the reconciler is not institutions with/without resources but God who works to “*reconcile both unto (Him) in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity...*” (Ephesians 2:16).
- Promotion of maximum coalitions/consensus at all stages.
- No distribution of resources (especially financial) to individuals or individual organizations. This was difficult at the beginning but slowly people appreciated and even abandoned the habit of expecting per diem for their participation in events.
- Rather, churches and organizations started contributing in various ways to the costs of catering.
- “For those who are reconciled, reconciliation becomes a calling.
- They ... serve in a prophetic way for the whole society.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!’ Mark 10:23

<sup>19</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, Reconciliation. Orbis Books & Boston Theological Institute, Feb. 1996.

Some years ago, I was leading a certain youth Christian fellowship. One of the Christian brothers had a demonic attack. When he became demon-possessed, the situation quickly turned helpless and unbearable both for him and the rest of brethren amidst the community of unbelievers where we were living. One Christian sister and I decided to undertake a full day retreat to fast and pray for him. We left him behind and got one pastor's office in the city to pray. We were from different ethnic groups; I am a Hutu (Burundi) and she is a Tutsi (a Rwandan refugee at that time). She was an Anglican church member and I was (and am still) a Pentecostal church member.

We praised, worshiped the Lord, shared the word of God... until we were stopped. The Lord convinced us to repent! This was very tricky, because we prepared that day of intercession by "humbling" ourselves and "getting ready" for the Lord, but His voice insisted.

Then I started telling my story prompted from the deepest of my heart: "Pray for me: every time a Hutu comes to me complaining of the 'injustice' they endure, I am weak to tell them the story of hope I have in Jesus. I need to be bold." My fellow sister opened her heart: "Pray for me! Every time I hear politicians debating whether or not the Burundi Army should be reformed,<sup>20</sup> fear invades my heart thinking that the Tutsi in Burundi can be killed by Hutus as it has been in Rwanda." After confession we alternately prayed for one another. Mark 11:24 was then brought to our minds while we were praying: "*Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*"

We believed that our friend was healed and three months later he was completely delivered. We have never forgotten the lesson! Reconciliation requires more than echoing the 'Alleluia' from the person sitting next to you during a Sunday service in church. It requires honestly facing each other and the realities of daily life and being open to work on bridging the gaps for the glory of God the reconciler.

This experience, combined with biblical reflections (e.g. Ephesians 2:11-16, 2 Corinthians 5: 14-20, 1Timothy 2:1-6, Acts 17:26-30) have shaped, nurtured and sustained my involvement in reconciliation programs in World Vision Burundi and elsewhere.

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## **Case Study #2**

### **Forgiveness in Bethlehem: A Personal Experience**

Prepared by Bishara Awad, President, Bethlehem Bible College

As a child I was wounded and suffered in many ways. I did not live my childhood years. When I was nine, my father was shot and killed in the War of 1948. He was not a fighter, but like many civilians, lost his life. The war of 1948 was very devastating for me and my six brothers and sisters. We all saw our dead father and how we had to bury him in the courtyard, since there was no way to get to a church or call a clergy person. I could still hear the sounds of the fighting and the explosions all around us in the Musrara area of Jerusalem. My oldest brother was 10 years old and my youngest sister was 4 months old. One can just imagine what went through our minds as tender children. For weeks, we could not leave the house and were caught up in cross-fire. I was not aware of all the things that were happening around me, but I

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<sup>20</sup> For many years, the army of Burundi has been predominantly made of Tutsis. Now it is in the process of being reorganised to include other ethnic groups.

could not forget how terrible things were for my mother and a few of our neighbours who were stuck like us.

In April 1948, the Jordanian Legion captured Musrara area and we were relieved to know that an Arab Army finally came to help. But to our great surprise, they took us all as prisoners and they considered us as Jews. They were treating us terribly and at one point, they lined us up against the wall, children and adults, and were about to shoot us. My mother pleaded with them and tried to convince them that we were Palestinians. The Lord spared us at the last moment when a Palestinian soldier showed up and stopped what would have been a massacre.

I was only nine years old, and at that age I decided that I would help my mother, who became a widow at age 29. At midnight one night, the Jordanian Legion army told us to run for our lives. We left everything and for hours we walked and walked until we reached the Walled City of Jerusalem. We left with nothing but the clothes on our backs — some of us only in our pyjamas.

In the Old City, we became refugees. We were put in a kerosene storage room that had no furniture. A Muslim family gave us blankets and some food. Life was very bad and extremely hard. I still remember the terrible smell of the kerosene and how many nights I went to sleep with an empty stomach. Mother refused to go to a refugee camp and decided to dedicate her life for us children. Later, Mother was able to rent a one-room apartment. We were certainly very poor and I cannot remember ever having a new pair of shoes. But we were happy and satisfied.

Mother had some nursing training before she got married and so she obtained a job as a hospital nurse earning \$25 a month. She worked and studied during the nights. We, the children, were put in boarding schools. My sisters were accepted in a Muslim school and a British lady accepted the boys in a home run-school. To me, this came as a real blow. First I lost my father and now I was away from my mother and family. We were allowed to visit home once a month, but otherwise we stayed at the boy's home for the next twelve years. Suffering continued, as we never had enough food and the treatment at the school was very harsh. I saw other kids getting beaten by the teachers, so I was always afraid and tried not to misbehave.

At the school I had a sponsor from the United States that I never was allowed to meet and I never got the gifts that were sent to me. Yet, at school I was able to attend church and became very active in Sunday school and later became a Sunday school teacher.

When I finished high school, I was so surprised to receive a scholarship to study in the United States. I ended up in Mitchell, South Dakota, in the USA

In 1967, another war took place in my country. I was so relieved that my mother and all my siblings were all right. However, the war was another catastrophe for me personally. I found out that since I was away during the war, I lost my right to return. At that time I completed my education and was ready to return to stand by my mother who had worked very hard. I was completely taken back by this new Israeli law. So, I applied for a teaching position in the USA and the school district hired me since they badly needed science teachers. The school also applied on my behalf for me to become a permanent resident. It was the hand of the Lord that directed all of this and in 1971, I became a USA Citizen. I was finally able to go home as an American citizen, which I did. The feeling was terrible, as I knew I could only come as a visitor on a three-month visa. On this visit, I met Salwa, who later became my wife. As my wife, Salwa applied to the Israeli Government for a family reunion and, again, the Lord gave favour and I became a resident of my own country.

We made our home in Beit Jala, where I was assigned a headmaster of the Mennonite School for Boys – an orphanage started by the Mennonite church. The school provided for boys who were orphans, poor, lost in the war and completely needy. Both Christians and Muslims were invited to come. Chapel hour was every day, but no one minded, not even the Muslims. While at the school, the Mennonite church wanted to phase out and I was instrumental in

creating a society called The Arab Charitable Society that took responsibility for the school and a new name was given to the school – Hope Secondary School.

At that school I recalled what it was like for me as a child at the Dar-Al-Awlad Orphanage. I gave the children everything I was denied when I was young living at the orphanage. I gave them all the food they could eat and plenty of love and care and I tried to feed them spiritually. Every day we would have morning devotion. These boys loved to sing and give praises to God. Mostly, I and a few other teachers gave a short devotional. I noticed that no one was really growing spiritually. This bothered me and I went to the Lord asking why. Then in His grace and mercy He spoke to my heart and I realized that I was the reason.

I saw these boys as I saw myself, full of hatred and anger. Each one of them was hurt by the wars and each one was scarred, probably for life. I was the same. I was angry and I had so much hatred for the Jews because of what happened to my family and me. At that moment I asked the Lord for forgiveness. I cried out to the Lord telling Him I wanted to be used by Him. My desire was to see these children walk with Jesus and be transformed. That night the Lord did a miracle in my life. He changed the hatred to love; He forgave me for the hatred and put peace in my life. The next morning as I led the devotional time, everyone noticed the difference. I was not the same man. They could see the word of God becoming “living” words. They started coming to the Lord and wanting to serve Him.

It was during this time that the Lord gave me a vision for a Bible School. I shared this vision with the local church leaders and they all agreed that we needed a Bible College. One pastor gave me \$20 and said, “Bishara, you can do it...Go ahead.” With this seed money we started a Bible College with nine students in 1979. We used the boys’ school building and had evening courses. Missionaries helped us. We operated like this for two years. In these two years the Lord blessed and provided for us many partners. Groups like World Vision, Christian Aid, Open Doors and many churches and individuals wanted to partner with us.

In 1981 we were asked to rent a place near the beautiful Church of the Nativity. The Lord, who is so good, provided so much for us. In 1990 we were given three buildings to use free of charge. These buildings were the Helen Keller School for the Blind. In 1996 we were able, with the grace of God, to buy these buildings for \$1.8 million dollars. It is amazing what God can do with \$20. Any time we are faithful to God, He is faithful to us.

All of this started because of the great transformation in my life. It took a humble spirit to acknowledge the sin of hatred. God can do miracles and the Bible College is one of those miracles. This I write for the glory and honour of God who is able to use us to behold His Kingdom!

*Bishara Awad is President of Bethlehem Bible College, a fully accredited institution which serves over 100 young men and women each year. In 1999, Bishara was the recipient of the Bob Pierce Award for Christian Service, bestowed by World Vision International. He and his wife Salwa have three children.*

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### **Case Study #3**

#### **Israel/Palestine, Reconciliation Between Women**

Prepared by Lisa Loden, Director, Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, Jerusalem

#### **Context**

In today’s Middle East, Israelis and Palestinians are engaged in a complex, lethal struggle that is directly affecting the entire population of the area. The conflict not only involves the conflicted factions, but in today’s global village, it has implications for much of the world.

The two sides of the conflict view it from quite different vantage points. On the Jewish side, certain elements maintain that the conflict dates from patriarchal times and is prefigured in

the enmity between Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ishmael. Others describe the source of the conflict as Islam's view of conquest and land. Those who hold these views see a combination of theological, historical and ethnic elements as sources of today's conflict. Others in the Jewish world describe the current conflict as yet another manifestation of anti-Semitism, while some maintain that the causes are solely political and relate primarily to issues of land and water.

On the Palestinian side there is greater consensus as to the source and causes of the current conflict. In the main, Palestinians see the situation in terms of occupation and land-based disputes. They view the conflict as recent, dating from the end of the nineteenth century as Jews in significant numbers began to immigrate to Palestine. They found an existing Arab population. Increased Jewish population and economic viability stimulated immigration to the area by Arab peoples from the neighbouring nations. With Israel's victory in 1948 War of Independence, the conflict took on new dimensions that laid the foundation for the current conflict based on land and occupation.

There is agreement between all parties that the conflict has affected the entire population. On the Palestinian side, large numbers have been displaced, land has been confiscated, families have been separated and homes have been demolished. On the Israeli side, the threat, as well as the actuality, of random acts of terrorism has traumatized the entire population. The fact of mandatory military conscription has profoundly affected generations of Israelis. There has been much loss of life and injury on both sides. Fear has played a major destructive role in the subsequent breakdown of relationships between the two populations.

The populations are severely distanced from one another. Cultural, social, economic and political differences are all factors in this distance. Palestinian Arabs are oriented towards a more rural, traditional Middle Eastern life style, whereas today's Israelis are heavily influenced by the Western urban experience. Language is another factor. Ethnically, however, Jews and Palestinians are closely related. Recent genetic testing has shown that Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are genetically closer to each other than either group is to any other ethnic group.

The overwhelming majority of Israelis are Jews who see their attachment to the historical land of Israel rooted in the patriarchal narratives of the Bible. Most Messianic Jews hold to this understanding.

Palestinian Christians claim their spiritual heritage from the time of the early church, but history shows that Islam swept the Middle East in the 8<sup>th</sup> century causing most Christians in the Middle East to become Muslims. Today there are viable congregations of Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews who live in the midst of the majority Muslim and Jewish populations. These groups are numerically small. In total, Arab Christians of all kinds constitute about 3% of the population of Israel/Palestine. Messianic Jews constitute approximately 0.1% of the Jewish population of Israel.

Historically, Christian mission has focused on one group to the exclusion of the other. The effect of this singular focus has not been helpful to the parties in conflict. In the Israeli/Palestinian spiritual arena, theology has played a major role. Regarding the place of Israel, supersessionism has been the dominant theology of the Palestinian church and Liberation Theology is strong in some sectors. In the Israeli sector, most Messianic Jews identify with dispensationalism and affiliate with the Christian Zionist agenda.

In contrast to the Messianic Jewish community which is entirely evangelical, Palestinian Christians are denominationally quite diverse. Anglicans, Lutherans, Latin Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and other traditional Eastern Orthodox denominations make up a large portion of the Palestinian Christian community. These groups tend to relate to international denominational and ecumenical bodies. In so doing they frequently adopt a liberal agenda that focuses on issues of human rights at the expense of an evangelistic mandate for

all. For them, the most prominent issue is justice. Reconciliation between the communities of faith on both sides of the conflict is not a priority.

The Messianic community sees concerns for truth (meaning their own understanding of biblical teaching regarding the place of Israel) as primary. This focus often precludes any motivation for reconciliation with Palestinian Christians who interpret scriptures about Israel differently.

### **Activities**

The reconciliation activities addressed in this case study take place between Palestinian and Jewish women who are believers in Jesus. The reconciliation activities described here take place between the Palestinian evangelical community and the Messianic Jewish community. Although both groups are minorities within their peoples, these two faith communities stand firmly within their ethnic groups and identify with their respective struggles.

Organized meetings between Palestinian Christian and Messianic Jewish women began in the mid 1990s. These meetings have continued on an annual basis since that time. As an outcome of the annual conferences, during the past two years, small groups of women have been meeting several times throughout the year.

The initiative came from Musalaha, a ministry of reconciliation that was founded in 1990. Women met together to tell their stories, listen to one another, learn about each other's lives and communities, pray and worship together. These activities were chosen to enable the women to begin to get to know each other and to build bridges of understanding and trust. All of the participants, both speakers and those attending, were from within the two communities.

From the beginning of these meetings, the basis was clearly defined as meeting together "in Christ/Messiah." The primary spiritual identity was always stressed and the commonality of faith was emphasized. Women told their stories, speaking from a personal perspective as wives, mothers and daughters each struggling to live a life of faith in the midst of conflict and tension. Biblical passages focusing on the unity of the Body of the Messiah were highlighted as foundational for reconciliation as were the scriptural exhortations to love one another. Listening to the personal narratives of one another in the light of sharing a common faith was crucial to the encounters. Speaking from the heart rather than from an intellectual perspective was a characteristic of these gatherings. Corporate prayer for common concerns has been a significant unifying factor. Singing together in one another's languages was another important unifying element.

In the early years, women shared about their cultural traditions in the context of their life of faith. One positive aspect of the women's meetings has been the participation of only local women. In the diverse cultural/religious milieu of Israel/Palestine, this has been particularly enriching.

Musalaha has provided financial subsidies to enable these meetings to take place. Both communities struggle economically, and women would be unable to attend such overnight meetings if there were no financial aid given. The administrative staff of Musalaha handled administrative matters, but the conference/meetings were planned and organized by a committee of women on a volunteer basis. All of the participants came voluntarily.

Frequently, these meetings take place during times of active conflict between the two communities. This means that local military authorities have to be petitioned for permission to allow Palestinian women to leave their areas and travel to the other side where the meetings are held. The context of violence contributes to the urgency and importance of the meetings. One such meeting was held on the eve of national elections in the Israeli sector and it was at this meeting that united prayer for common concerns was particularly poignant.

### **Outcomes**

The purpose of the women's meetings was to begin a relationally-based process of reconciliation. There are both short-term and long-term outcomes of the reconciliation meetings between women.

In the short term, the feedback from women attending the meetings has been almost entirely positive. They relate that they have been personally enriched and challenged by the faith of other women living in vastly different circumstances. In the context of the meetings, stereotypes have given way to seeing one another as sisters and distance has given way to mutual embrace. Worshipping together has been described as "a taste of heaven." Comments like "why did I wait so long to come to these meetings," express the short term impact of these gatherings. Feedback from the women repeatedly contains a desire for more frequent gatherings.

In the longer term, as a result of these meetings, relationships have begun that have endured through times of accelerated conflict and violence. One of the outcomes is a number of ongoing relationships, first between the women themselves, then between families and in some cases between two congregations. This is evidenced by the level of contact between the two groups. There are frequent telephone contacts, particularly during times of violence, as the women call one another to encourage and support each other during times of crisis. Families visit one another and attend congregational meetings together. As an outcome of the recent smaller meetings, a monthly email prayer fellowship was formed. This functioned well for several months but has not maintained the level of continuity that was hoped for.

The witness of the united community of faith that includes Jews and Arabs has had a positive effect on those hosting the meetings. These meetings have at times been held in commercial venues and staff and other guests have expressed amazement at seeing "enemies" embracing each other. In their respective communities, the existence of loving relationships "across the lines" is challenging and is a witness to the power of Jesus to break down walls.

Some criticism has been levelled against Musalaha's reconciliation activities among women by Palestinian Christians who are not a part of the evangelical community. The focus on common faith rather than on issues of justice and liberation is perceived as naïve and an avoidance of the "real" issues. Another criticism is that rather than empowering women to stand for justice, these activities lull them with a false sense of harmony between opposing sides in the conflict.

In the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, it is clear that there is a strong connection between reconciliation and evangelism. The reconciliation spoken of here is within the community of faith where Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians are beginning to express that they are one in Messiah. Women seem to be initially more constitutionally suited to exploring relational issues than men. They naturally identify in solidarity with other women, regardless of other superficial differences. These women strongly connect with one another on an emotional basis. The fact of friendship across the lines powerfully witnesses to the only One who has the power to unite and reconcile such diverse people into one family.

### ***Analysis***

The context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has ongoing implications for reconciliation activities. Palestinian women have a much more difficult time getting out of their communities than do the Israeli women. In earlier years, it was legally possible for Israeli women to go into the Palestinian territories while Palestinian women have always needed to have permission from the military authorities to cross over into Israeli territory. Few Israeli women have been willing to confront the military presence and cross the border to the Palestinian territories. It is much more difficult today than when the reconciliation activities were initiated. Not all Palestinian women are willing to illegally cross over into Israeli territory.

The positive short term outcomes that were described in the previous section occurred because of a basic willingness to meet with one another on the ground of commonality rather than difference. Although differences were recognized, they were not the focus of the meetings. The meetings were intentionally structured so as to encourage the participants to see beyond the differences of culture, ethnicity, theology and language. The clear focus was always the unifying fact of the commonality of salvation in Jesus held by both communities.

The dominant party in the conflict is the Israeli presence. In the reconciliation activities, however, Arab participation has always proportionally outnumbered the Jewish participation. As the years have passed, this balance is slowly changing as more Jewish women are willing to be involved in the activities. This is in large measure due to the positive short term impact of the annual women's meetings. Messianic Jews feel themselves a part of the dominant group and as such do not feel the same vulnerability or need to interact with the other side. In reconciliation activities, the inequality of the parties comes quickly to the fore and this threatens the self-perception of the Jewish participants.

In order to facilitate the meetings, venues had to be chosen that were both accessible and non-threatening to both sides. At times this meant that some of the Palestinian women were unable to obtain permissions to attend the meetings. As these circumstances are beyond the control of the organizers, there is no way that such problems can be avoided. They are, however, a significant factor in reconciliation activities in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

As women meet together on the basis of faith, with the aim of building trust, this leads to deeper relationship and commitment. This has proved to be an effective method of reconciliation. Particularly communal worship and prayer for common concerns of the gospel, family and society are important elements that have proved to be valuable tools in the ongoing process of reconciliation between the two communities.

While there are similarities between reconciliation activities in many parts of the world, reconciliation in the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is in some ways unique. In the area of women's work, the model described in this case study can be applied in other contexts of conflict. There remains, however, one issue that is unique to this conflict and to the context of reconciliation within the larger community of faith. This is the issue of the place of Israel in the plan of God. Israel cannot be dismissed by adopting a supersessionist theology of the people of God, however well reasoned it may be. The "one new man" continues to be made up of two reconciled parties, Jews and non-Jews. Ultimately all reconciliation initiatives and activities in the Israeli/Palestinian context must somehow deal with this thorny issue.

Reconciliation is finally about family. Restoring the family of God; healing it from the effects of sin and brokenness that have damaged relationships, both human and divine, is the heart of the gospel. Relationship building within the family of God is but the first step to seeing the healing of the world's brokenness.

*Lisa Loden is Managing Director of the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, Jerusalem. She is on the advisory board for Musalaha, a ministry of reconciliation between Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians, and leads Musalaha's women's work. Lisa and her husband founded Beit Asaph, a Messianic congregation in Netanya, Israel. In 1999 Lisa co-edited the book The Bible and the Land: An Encounter, Messianic Jewish, Palestinian Christian and Gentile Christian Views.*

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#### **Case Study #4**

### **The Treatment of Australian Aborigines and the Church's Role in Reconciliation**

Prepared by Tom Mayne, World Vision Australia Advocacy Network

***The Context of Conflict: The "Discovery" of Australia, Early Christian Contact, Colonisation, Altruism and Exploitation***



What became known as Australia was the last major inhabited continent to be discovered by Europeans. Jan Carstenz in 1606 was probably the first explorer to record that Aborigines inhabited parts of the vast island continent. They had lived there for perhaps tens of thousands of years.

Aborigines fit neither the construct of Rousseau's "noble savage" nor the Eurocentric category of "barbarian." They retold in their dreamtime stories the work of their "sky hero" creator who fashioned them and the landscape around them. They had a complex system of lore and culture that sustained them through millennia. What place did they have in God's overarching providence? Where did they fit in God's sovereignty?<sup>21</sup>

In 1770, Captain James Cook sailed up the east coast of Australia and took possession of the eastern half of the continent. He carried instructions with him from the British Admiralty that read in part, "You are with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations... or if you find the country uninhabited, take possession for his majesty."<sup>22</sup> Cook and botanist Sir Joseph Banks were almost certainly aware that the territory was inhabited, since they were familiar with the records of earlier European visitors who had commented on the Aborigines.

The first settlement in 1788 was a convict colony. The Christianity the convicts were to experience, and that which Aborigines were to observe, thus had a heavy overlay of authority and harsh discipline. Aborigines wept when they saw convicts being flogged. A military drum roll announced the first Christian service where the convicts were ordered to attend, with the warning, "No Man to be Absent On Any Account Whatever." The sermon, based on Psalm 116, verse 12, "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?*" must have caused the convicts to wonder just what their benefits were. Perhaps it was the benefit of transportation, rather than the alternative, which was hanging.

Whether they were Spanish or English explorers proclaiming territories in the name of their respective Sovereigns and bringing the benefits of their enlightened civilisations to the "heathen," there were always other motives. Running parallel to such espoused altruism was a race between the Europeans to discover and proclaim sovereignty over lands believed, according to de Quiros, to contain, "As much gold and silver as you can carry and such a quantity of pearls that you shall measure them by hatfuls."

Added to this was the often-blurred distinction between "civilizing" and "Christianising" the natives. Early attempts by missionaries to reach Aborigines with the gospel proved to be failures because of lack of support from churches and governments. Most missionaries lived sacrificially, in poverty, not far removed from the now-dispossessed Aborigines. Most early missions in New South Wales were abandoned by the mid 1800s through curtailing of funding by the Colonial government, opposition from settlers who branded missionaries as "nigger lovers" and from pastoralists who saw the missionaries taking up valuable grazing land. The contrast between dedicated missionaries and an unsupportive, racially-biased church is nowhere better illustrated than in a 1913 Presbyterian report which contained a submission proclaiming that, "It would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so, but he is by no means so inferior as to be able to rise above the level of a working animal."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> J. Harris. One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity-a story of Hope. Albatross Books, Sutherland NSW, 1990. p.541.

<sup>22</sup> D. Carne. Land Rights: A Christian Perspective. Australian Council of Churches, 1980, p.69..

<sup>23</sup> J.R.B. Love. The Aborigines: Their Present Condition As Seen in Northern South Australia, the Northern Territory, North West Australia and Western Queensland. 1915 Report to the Presbyterian Church of Australia, quoted in H. Wearne, ed. A Clash of Cultures. (Uniting Church, 1980) 13.

Aboriginal numbers continued to decline because of massacres, introduced disease and frontier decadency, well into the 20th Century.<sup>24</sup> Aboriginal dispossession of land, language, children, culture and identity continued up to the 1970's. While mainstream churches for the most part remained aloof, dedicated independent missionaries continued to reach out to Aborigines with the gospel. Questions of social justice, however, such as land rights and the "Stolen Generations" were not addressed.

### **Activities: From Neglect to Reconciliation**

In the 1980s, I was galvanised into the realisation that the Anglican Church, of which I was a member, had sadly neglected justice for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal ministry in particular.<sup>25</sup> My wife and I had worked with the Church's Flying Medical Service in Ceduna, South Australia in the mid 1960s, where we frequently came in contact with Aboriginal people. Yet we returned to Sydney with the same level of ignorance and prejudice that pervaded society generally.

This changed dramatically in 1980 when newspapers were reporting on a Royal Commission being conducted into the effects of Atomic Bomb tests on Australian and British servicemen carried out in the 1950s at Maralinga, South Australia. *The question screamed at us: Why, when we were in Ceduna, did no one ever mention what effects the tests may have had on the Aborigines?* For various reasons Aborigines had earlier been removed from the nearby Ooldea Mission, so Maralinga became an ideal site to accommodate the tests.<sup>26</sup> Aborigines, it seems, were expendable when it came to testing weapons and the Church remained silent. If ever there was a time in my life when I felt God speaking, it was now. *DO SOMETHING!*

### **Educating Myself and Others**

For four years I set about educating myself by meeting with Aboriginal people and reading everything I could lay my hands on – history, especially mission history. One book that proved invaluable was *One Blood*, by the Christian scholar Dr John Harris.<sup>27</sup> John had done extensive research into mission history and this stimulated me into looking further into the Sydney Anglican Church's dealing with Aboriginal people.

I spent many hours in the diocesan archives where my concerns about the Church's neglect were only reinforced. The minutes of the Church Society's<sup>28</sup> annual meetings from 1856 to 1862 made dismal reading. An 1862 extract read, "*While expressing their regret that hitherto nothing has been done towards carrying out this [mission to Aborigines] object...your committee entertains the confident hope that before the next annual meeting they will have something satisfactory to report.*"<sup>29</sup>

Another further example of how Aborigines were invisible or regarded as part of the flora and fauna is provided by reference to the Sydney Diocesan Report for 1850. Explaining why

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<sup>24</sup> John Harris. *One Blood*. (Sutherland: Albatross Books, 1990). 58.

<sup>25</sup> The Church Missionary Society had been working in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and the Australian Board of Missions in Cape York Peninsula since the turn of the 19C, but little or nothing had been done in city and urban areas where the majority of Aborigines lived.

<sup>26</sup> Controversy surrounds the removal of the Aborigines since Ooldea was experiencing problems with its water supply and this may have been a factor in the removal decision. However, the possibility of the removed Aborigines being able to return to their (now radioactive) traditional land was not a consideration.

<sup>27</sup> John Harris. *One Blood*. (Sutherland: Albatross Books, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> The Church Society was the organization responsible for placing chaplains in schools and hospitals and generally having the financial oversight of the diocese.

<sup>29</sup> *Church Society Fifth Annual Report*. 1862, p.19, Diocesan Archives.

dioceses had not been established in the districts of Port Phillip (Victoria) and South Australia until 1847, the report noted that, “hitherto they were previously uninhabited.”<sup>30</sup> Having researched the history of what could only be described as neglect, and realising that our diocese alone had around 45,000 Aboriginal people within its borders with no policy on justice or ministry, it was time to move forward and try and do something.

### ***Prayer, Passion, and the Empowerment of Aboriginal Pastors***

The first thing was to work out a strategy. Together with my colleague, Rev John McIntyre, we realised we needed to bring on board those willing to pray and support a synod motion calling for radical change. That change would include a request for \$1.2 million to be set aside for a fund to appoint and train Aboriginal ministers. We faxed all senior Church officials, bishops, archdeacons and other high profile members asking them to indicate their support for the motion. When the returns came in there was a 95% favourable response. Letters were then sent out to all 750 Synod representatives showing the result of the returns and advising them of the pitiful state of Aboriginal society and Aboriginal ministry.

Most Aboriginal pastors relied on income from “work for the dole,” worked as seasonal workers picking fruit or cotton, or in an office or elsewhere in order to survive. Most Aborigines had friends or relatives in prison. Most would have been affected by child removal policies.<sup>31</sup> Domestic violence was widespread. Alcoholism and youth suicide were major problems. With the help of World Vision, we produced a low budget 8-minute video in which five Aboriginal people — pastors, a church worker and a member of the Stolen Generation — told their stories. After years of preparation, the scene was now set to present the motion to the Synod.

### ***Outcomes***

Despite the positive response from the faxes, there was serious opposition to the proposed motion. We had arranged for a number of churches to preview the video where we explained the reason for the action being proposed. The response was anything but overwhelming! Most of the objections came from the number crunchers who said they couldn't support it on financial grounds. However, not to be discouraged, we felt compelled to press ahead.

When the day came for us to address the Synod, everything seemed bleak. The budget had just been debated and everyone was pleading for more money to resource their particular ministries. When the time came, we screened the video, I addressed the Synod and my colleague seconded the motion. To our amazement, there was virtually no debate. Those who previously said they would oppose it, remained silent. When it came to the vote, it was miraculous - 640 to nil in favour!

With the establishment of the \$1.2 million Trust Fund, the money was invested and with the disbursements (and help from interested churches), we have been able to appoint two full-time Aboriginal ministers. At Tregear, western Sydney, we have, following negotiations with the diocese, acquired a church building and rectory for the minister and his family. Regular (culturally appropriate) worship services are held together with Kids Club, men's and women's groups, Sunday School, Bible studies and prayer times. The church also runs a group home for seriously disadvantaged children. The minister has since been ordained “deacon” and we hope to see him “priested” so that he can have a voice on Synod. The other ministry at Minto, south-western Sydney, conducts similar holistic ministries. Children who previously were turning up hungry are now being given breakfast. In both these ministries, the gospel is presented in ways that are relevant to Aboriginal people. Sermons in mainstream churches (where few Aborigines

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<sup>30</sup> Diocesan Annual Report for 1850, Moore College Library archives.

<sup>31</sup> “Halfcast” children could be forcibly removed (sometimes without a court order) up until the late 1960s.

attend anyway) can be unhelpful where the emphasis may be on some finer point of doctrine or the English Reformation!

A positive aspect of these two ministries is that they are community oriented. A problem with many independent (and financially unsupported) indigenous churches is that they tend to be isolationist. These two Anglican indigenous churches foster strong relationships with the surrounding community. The Tregear Church recently held a cross-cultural night where around 300 people (mainly non Anglo-Celtic) attended. The Minto Church in collaboration with a secular Aboriginal-run corporation has been given permission to take religious instruction in its school. Overall there are many examples of these churches being able to interact with the surrounding community.

### **Analysis**

Why did this come about? Firstly, because we believed the actions taken were clearly in accordance with the will of God. Two scriptures became dominant in our thinking. One from Jeremiah 21:11-12 and the other from Matthew 5:23-24. One speaks of justice and the other of reconciliation. Historically, the Church with few (and some notable) exceptions, had turned its back on the injustices of the past. While some of our earliest and most beautiful cathedrals and churches were being erected, Aborigines were still being shot, poisoned, forced off their lands and reduced to pauperism. Unlike in other former British colonies, no treaty has ever been negotiated with Australia's first nations people.

The second reason is that Aboriginal Christians were taking the lead in pursuing reconciliation. It was almost as if the mainstream Church was shamed into responding, but respond it did, because reconciliation is rooted in scripture and a strong scripturally-based argument was presented. In political terms, reconciliation had become (and is increasingly becoming) meaningless — a cliché thrown around by politicians trying to appease their consciences, so the Church had to respond.

Were there negative effects? Yes, a few. Some, to use the popular jargon, thought that "it's no use throwing money at Aborigines." Some thought that just because societies like the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Australian Board of Mission (ABM) were doing great things in the Northern Territory and the Cape, that all was well.<sup>32</sup> Many issues still need to be dealt with. No federal government has so far apologised to the Stolen Generations, though many churches have.

While we are indeed grateful to God for what has been achieved, we must not become complacent. There is an enormous backlog of neglect to be addressed. Reconciliation comes with a price. Just as Christ paid the ultimate price on the cross, true reconciliation for us will not be cheap. It will cost us our pride, our prejudices, our racism and our indifference.

*Tom Mayne first encountered remote Aboriginal communities in the 1960's, working with the Flying Medical Service in Australia. In 1996 he was instrumental in having the Anglican Church in Sydney set aside \$1.2 million for indigenous ministry.*

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## **Case Study #5**

### **Intercession and Conflict Transformation in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

Prepared by Lazare R. Sebitereko, Eben-Ezer Ministry

### **Contextual Analysis**

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<sup>32</sup> Arnhem Land where the Church Missionary Society (CMS) is working has an indigenous population of about 5,000. Sydney diocese on the latest census figures has around 50,000. The Anglican Board of Mission's (ABM) work is mainly confined to remote settlements in Cape York Peninsula.

In early March 1991, two clans of the Abanyabyinshi and the Abasita from the Banyamulenge tribe, living in Milimba locality, Fizi Territory, South Kivu Province in Democratic Republic of Congo, broke into the most complicated conflict that the tribe experienced for many years.

The locality is in a remote area with no roads or telephones. The village of the Abasita called Mucimisange had about 600 people, with a Methodist church in the heart of the village, while the Abanyabyinshi village, called Imurerwangombe, had more than 1,000 people with a Swedish Pentecostal church in the village. This conflict lasted four years and it had a spiritual dimension, which was completely overlooked even though the conflict had drawn in many other clans to sympathize. The police and local administration were also involved in the conflict though their involvement varied depending on how much money each side would give to buy "its reason and justice." Regular fighting in villages and pastures left many people wounded, one person killed and thousands of acres of crops destroyed by people from both clans using machetes and axes. Children from the Abasita clan had to drop out of school because it was in the Abanyabyinshi village. Christian fellowship was interrupted, houses were destroyed and cows in the fields also became a target.

The cause of the conflict, as perceived by the communities, was over land rights. Culturally, the Banyamulenge are semi-nomadic and would move with their cattle in search of green pastures. Many times they would move with their families and settle in mountains and open places. So, members of these two clans moved from Minembwe to Milimba, all settled in one locality and built two villages in the same area with about 3 km in between. The Abanyabyinshi arrived first in the area and this time, they made a "project"<sup>33</sup> for their cattle grazing. When the Abasita arrived, they used the same open place for grazing. The Abanyabyinshi felt unhappy and prevented their neighbours from using the pasture land. The Abasita resisted and the conflict started. However, the real unseen cause was idolatry (spiritual forces) which involved witchcraft, adultery and wealth. This was could not be seen nor be interpreted in normal ways. It needed spiritual interpretation, namely intercession.

According to the Abanyabyinshi, a local chief from the Babembe tribe who controlled the area, had attributed the concession to them. The documents were not enough according to the Abasita. The police, who were approached to settle the matter, tended to side with whomever brought a big sum of money to buy his case against the other. Then one day, the Abasita brought police to arrest their adversaries. The Abanyabyinshi resisted and used force against police. In turn the police used force and killed one person among the Abanyabyinshi clan. The situation became worse.

At the same time, some members of these clans played fanatics from a distance, which in one way or the other fuelled the conflict.

In the late 1950s, the Banyamulenge converted to Christianity and every Banyamulenge village had a church. However, as the days went by, this became a mere habit and not a real commitment to Christian principles. The church structure in the villages did not help. There was also another doctrinal issue, which had affected most of the churches in the Territory of Minembwe from a prophetess called Mariam, who preached divisions and said that God was not in some churches and locations! Pastors from the Swedish Pentecostal church led by Rev. Bacoba went to Milimba and tried to solve the problem, but they only went to one village where there was their church and could not fellowship with them due to those differences, although they were members of the same church. This position of the visiting delegation upset the host and it could not help solve the crisis. The other issue is idolatry. People had forgotten Christian obligations of unity, love and prayer. They practiced idolatry in form of wealth, backsliding,

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<sup>33</sup> The term is used in a local context as a concession of a group of people used temporarily with agreement of local authorities.

adultery and witchcraft. Only when the group of intercessors from Minembwe Territory got involved was the crisis solved and peace restored in the area.

### ***Intercession as the Solution***

The conflict was serious and worrying for the whole Banyamulenge tribe. Elders from different clans, led by Musafiri Mushambaro and Protais Muzero, met in Uvira and called the warring clans to stop fighting and be helped by the tribe. They accepted, but the Abanyabyinshi were not satisfied since the case went against them. The conflict was far from a peaceful solution! Early in 1994, a group of 30 intercessors from different churches in Minembwe (80 km from Milimba), led by Pastor Tite Gatako (current member of Executive Committee of Eben-Ezer Ministry) and Rev. Mathias Sibomana (current Coordinator of the Department of Reconciliation and Evangelism in Eben-Ezer Ministry) met to pray specifically for this conflict. Church leaders, elders from different clans, local authorities and the police had done their best. The only remaining option was to explore the “prayer that changes things.” They met for three days on a mountain for prayer and fasting. This initiative had no connection with local authorities, although it had support from church leaders and tribal elders. The initiative took about three months.

While praying, there came a revelation on the conflict. It revealed the spiritual dimension of the conflict between the two clans. Some elements were noted such as idolatry in form of wealth, witchcraft and adultery. The team decided to pray and plan prayers in Milimba and in the villages of Imurerangombe and Mucimisange. The journey from Minembwe to Milimba took them two days to walk. The team organized three trips to Milimba. This was not easy going. During the first trip, they went and stayed for four days in the villages, but nothing happened. On Trip Two, nothing happened.

On Trip Three, the team of 30 people went and divided themselves in three groups. One group of 12 led by Rev Gatako, camped in Imurerangombe. The second group of 12, led by Rev Sibomana, went to Mucimisange. The main message came from the book of Joshua to “sanctify yourselves.” Among these teams, there were preachers and counsellors to help people come to accept their responsibilities. The third group led by Pastor Rusomoka went to the mountain to pray. After two days, a team of 16 elders from the Abanyabyinshi came along with the group one to the Abasita village. They organized a church service and after preaching, people from both clans started confessing their sins and their responsibilities in the conflict. This took more than *six hours*, according to Kibubuta, one of the intercessory team. The following morning, all teams, 16 elders and the whole village of Abasita (men, women and children) moved to the Abanyabyinshi village for a church service. The same exercise was repeated. The Spirit of the Lord had started moving; people in tears confessed their sins, people forgave one another and reconciled together and peace reigned!

Indeed, the teaching of the book of Joshua with the main theme of “sanctification” was a real encouragement and a challenge to the behaviour of these communities, which had left their Christian obligations. Intercession was the secret to pulling down the strongholds of the devil in the area. Intercessors were not paid for that nor were they doing it for any lucrative gain. They were on a special mission. This initiative was once experienced in Nganja location in 1960’s in a conflict between the Banyamulenge and Babembe tribes, during the civil war led by Kabila in 1964 in Eastern Congo. At that time, my father Sebitereko was one of the local church leaders who led communities in intercession as a means of conflict transformation and protection of families from hostilities. This was the period in which I was born. I also witnessed the same experience during another conflict of three clans in Itombwe not far from my home area. After everything had failed, prayers worked.

### ***Outcome of the Initiative***

When the Spirit of the Lord started moving, recalls Rev. Sibomana, men and women from the two clans confessed and forgave one another. During the conflict period, children could not go to the same schools. The primary and secondary school were in Imurerangombe, thus children from Mucimisange could not go there. The young ones had to drop out of school and others were relocated to schools 15 km away from their home. After this breakthrough, children went back to the same schools, cows grazed in same fields, church fellowship and intermarriage resumed. A spirit of revival swept over the area and beyond! The church as God's presence in communities came alive once again. Mr. Musinga Ruhutumure, a man from the Abasita clan who was one of the main actors in the conflict, was changed and transformed completely and today is a Methodist pastor. When the clans were asked what the real problem was, one said, "It was only ignorance, because land was enough for all of us." Another one said, "We had backslidden and the devil ruled over us."

One Methodist pastor who supported intercession as the answer to the conflict said, "Spiritual warfare can only be revealed to those who are still spiritually awake. People of these communities were spiritually dead." Taking this case study and many others that I am aware of, reconciliation and evangelism are two divine ministries (2Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 4: 11), but in one mission. They are the proclamation of God's presence among us. "The unity of the team from different local churches, clans, men and women, adults and youths, was a real testimony to the conflicting parties. The team was made of prayerful people and not sympathizers in the conflict," said Mr. Kibubuta, one of the intercessory team.

**Conclusion: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6)**

God is always pleased with sincere and broken hearts! The conflict between the Abanyabyinshi and the Abasita is among many experiences that people are living across the globe. Christians must stay awake because many times the spiritual dimension is often not taken into consideration as a major hindrance to peace and stability. As much as we can prepare good projects, if they are not supported by intercession, professionalism cannot solve a spiritual problem. When people from both clans realized their responsibilities in the mess, brokenness of their hardened spirit started and solutions came naturally. No one was forced to say or to do a particular thing. The Spirit of God convinced them of their sins (John 16:8). At this time, people did not accuse each other but everyone saw his sins. Those involved were neutral in the conflict, were patient with the people in crisis and were obedient to God's message. They took their time and the pain of a long distance walk. Peace between the two clans ten years later is still a reality.

There are some realities which cannot go unnoticed as I analyse this conflict:

1. *Tribal leadership*: Conflict in general is part of human nature. Culturally, among the Banyamulenge, internal disagreement and conflict were always treated and solved by a council of elders composed of representatives from different clans. Each locality had its own local council. They were not supposed to make any appeal to another force. However, if not satisfied, the parties in conflict would often appeal to another council of elders in another location. With the coming of colonialism and a police force, the Banyamulenge often then started making appeals to them. This started weakening the role of tribal council — external influence in internal conflict management. As in many cases with post-independence regimes, corruption also found its way in.
2. *Religious influence*: The Banyamulenge had their religion in which they worshipped *Imana* (God), the creator through his agent *Ryangombe*. However, with the coming of Christianity, there came a proliferation of Christian denominations and doctrinal issues. Somehow, these issues became a source of tension and conflict, even though Christian values are the best source of conflict transformation. The issue is

how are they presented? Church leadership among the Banyamulenge is very young and often has been in the hands of those who did not get an opportunity to acquire formal education. Lack of proper teaching has brought a sharp division in the church within the tribe. This challenge is not only among the Banyamulenge, but in many other tribes too. As a result, religion was far from solving such conflict.

3. *Biblical principles*: Proper teaching of the word of God and intercession are two fundamental elements in transforming the tribe, which can be applied to any given context. In this particular case, different initiatives were undertaken to solve the problem but did not work because the conflict is not only mechanical, but also spiritual. The intercessory team knew about the delicacy of the problem. Their strategy was to let all parties understand their responsibilities and convince them of their weaknesses through the word of God. They took time to share the word, to pray and to listen. They were aware of the devil's scheme. For instance, during their first trip, the people in conflict did not want to welcome them in their villages. However they were patient and kept praying and learning more about the villages' realities. After all parties were convicted, there came a spiritual breakthrough.

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## **Case Study #6**

### **Nyack College, USA: Building a Multi-Ethnic Campus**

Prepared by David E. Schroeder, President, Nyack College, New York

#### ***The Context of Conflict***

In the winter of 1993 the racial atmosphere on the Nyack College (New York) campus was a tinderbox, ready to explode. For nearly a decade the college had been making steady, intentional progress in diversifying its student body. Statistics showed that over 40% of the students were from ethnic groups other than Caucasian, a jump from 19% four years earlier. Most administrators and many faculty members were very supportive of the move toward multiculturalism. A higher education association with which the college was associated was already recognizing Nyack College as a model site for diversity. In fact, a Commission on Diversity was a major encourager of the efforts, and one of Nyack's faculty members was an active member on the Commission.

One of the efforts of the Commission was conducting a survey on campus of attitudes toward race and the movement toward diversity. The faculty member was eager for Nyack to participate, so at the end of a chapel service, he required the students to stay longer to fill out the form. This was not met with a great deal of appreciation and some of the responses may have been a reflection of this inconvenience. Shortly before the Board of Trustees met in February, the school newspaper was printed and distributed. *The Forum* was always eager to stir controversy, as college newspapers seem destined to do. In that issue several letters to the editor were printed that expressed very negative opinions about the diversity on campus. Allegations were made by Caucasian students that the college was corrupting the academic integrity of its program and compromising its reputation by admitting under-prepared students.



This was a rather unveiled reference to our Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), a highly successful New York State supported entitlement program that enrolls mostly minority students who would not qualify for regular admission.

Fuelling the controversy was the polarization of the Nyack College faculty on the identity and mission of the college. The president had established a faculty governance committee, which was led by the same (African-American) faculty member who headed up HEOP and the Commission on Diversity. Some of the faculty members were convinced that the college was leaving its denominational moorings by taking on more students from other persuasions, many of them being minority students from Pentecostal churches. They wanted the power to remain in the hands of administration under the authority of the trustees. Other faculty members were advocating a greater role of governance for the faculty so they could sculpt the mission of the school toward a more urban agenda.

These tensions reached a head when during a meeting of the board of trustees at which the academic dean (who advocated greater faculty governance) urged the president (who advocated administrative governance) to allow a few students to bring invitations to the trustees to attend a banquet being sponsored by the Hispanic Heritage Association. The two students came into the board meeting, but used their opportunity to verbally attack the leaders of the school for perpetuating a racist agenda. Clearly things were out of control.

### **Activities**

Quite obviously the board of trustees needed to intervene in this explosive situation. Fortunately, the board was united. On the one hand the board wanted the leadership to stay in the hands of the administration; on the other hand, the board was positive about the emerging mission of ministering to a broader constituency of students, including those often marginalized in the world of higher education.

Other factors outside the scope of these studies were already at work in motivating the board to replace some of the existing leaders, so when these events surfaced, the board took action to dismiss the president. Then they asked the denominational director of higher education, who sat on the board, to meet with the students to explain their action and to begin to seek ways of bringing healing and reconciliation to the campus community. They also formed a search committee for the next president, and put on that committee two faculty members, the head of the faculty governance committee and the head of the Bible department, who was a bit more "old school."

The upshot of the search was that out of three candidates interviewed by the search committee, the board chose the Director of Higher Education to become the president. That enabled a smooth transition in activities that worked toward reconciliation. The new president took the following initiatives:

- Dismissed the academic dean for insubordination to the previous president.
- Affirmed to the college students and personnel that multiculturalism was very much at the heart of our founder's vision and part of our early history.
- Dismantled the Commission on Diversity and set up a President's Advisory Panel on Cultural Enrichment, a group of faculty and students who met with the president every few weeks to discuss racial and cultural attitudes and programs.
- Addressed the topics of racial harmony and cultural diversity from a biblical perspective in chapel sermons every week.
- Hired qualified minority leaders for key positions in admissions and student development.
- Met with groups of students giving them opportunity to air their grievances, including the various ethnic clubs.

- Disbanded the faculty governance committee, telling the faculty he would not interfere with their work if they would allow him to give administrative leadership to the college.
- Published for the community the data that showed that a higher percentage of HEOP students graduated and with a higher GPA than the traditional students.
- Established a multicultural celebration week.
- Advocated for transformational diversity, not just additive diversity, evidenced in chapel worship styles, food service menus, hiring practices, curriculum revision, et al.

The chapel messages focused on ideas like:

- God's eternal family described in Revelation 7 as a people from every nation, tribe, people and language group.
- Jesus gave the Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations.
- Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles.
- Paul admonished the Corinthians of diverse backgrounds to be in unity.
- In Christ the dividing wall between ethnic groups has been destroyed.

Worship became a unifying element on the campus and each year a non-Caucasian spiritual emphasis week speaker ministered on campus, emphasizing how the deeper Christian life intersects with reconciliation.

Faculty who could not adapt to the movement toward biblical multiculturalism were confronted lovingly and encouraged to change their perspective or try to find another place to teach. The president built a team of officers who were in agreement about the mission of the school embracing minority students and those often marginalized by higher education.

### **Outcomes**

The enrolment of the college began growing rapidly, with the minority percentage staying near the 40% mark. When faculty and students realized that the new administration was not urging diversity to meet the expectations and win the accolades of others, but because it is a biblical value and a fulfilment of the school's historical mission and identity, attitudes on campus began to change. Marketing for admissions began to send out a consistent, unified message that welcomed a multicultural student body. Denominational student enrolment climbed, but not as fast as other student enrolment. The administration announced to the trustees and denominational leaders that in keeping with our founder's perspective, the college did not exist to serve the denomination, but existed as part of the denomination to serve others.

This set a climate for expanding the urban focus and the administration initiated a branch campus in New York City in 1995. That campus now has more than 1,000 Christian students.

Enrolment growth tripled during the next decade and racial and ethnic strife is very rare. The college has made good progress in hiring minority faculty members and administrators. The trustee board has become more diversified. The college has been recognized each of the past five years for being one of the most diverse higher educational institutions in the United States.

The success of the HEOP program inspired the administration to begin a similar program entirely funded by the college. It is called NIA, for Nyack's Introduction to Academia (also Swahili for "purpose"). This has caused the college to expand its department of academic development for remediation, especially for students who have had inadequate secondary school preparation.

Undoubtedly, some people, including alumni, who liked the old mono-cultural Nyack have stopped supporting the college and students who might have come to Nyack have opted

for other schools. A few statements and letters have expressed a negative outlook when they see or hear of interracial dating of Nyack students. Some faculty members have thought the administration has tried too hard to hire minority professors. By and large, however, Nyack College has been a peaceful and unified campus. A large number of faculty from the Nyack campus have gone to the Manhattan campus to teach courses and some students have taken courses on both campuses.

Perhaps the greatest advantage the college has experienced from the ethnically diverse community is the ongoing sense of spiritual renewal. The vitality of worship in chapel is fuelled by minority students. The number of student groups that minister weekly in the city has grown from four to fourteen. A wonderful surprise has been the fact that quite often the student leaders are non-Caucasians.

In many ways, this multicultural phenomenon has been a great encouragement to many churches. Pastors that bring their young people to campus see the harmony and begin to think that they could work toward greater diversity in their congregations. People from the Village of Nyack are impressed that a conservative Christian college would have such a diverse student body. So, achieving reconciliation on the campus has had huge dividends.

### ***Analysis***

Healing the rift between groups on the college campus began by the trustees seeing that the issue was very serious and steps needed to be taken, which the administration was not willing to do. The trustees took the painful and expensive step of changing the administration to one that would take decisive action that would continue the movement toward ethnic diversification while maintaining the historic mission of the college.

The new president espoused a conservative theological position and a socially progressive agenda. The administrators he chose were on board with this mission and gradually the faculty also reflected this identity.

Gaining ethnic harmony on the Nyack campus emboldened the administration to reach into New York City to start a branch campus. Many churches of the city support Nyack by sending students to the Manhattan campus. The impact of a racially integrated, ethnically friendly college is felt throughout the greater New York area.

As good as the situation is, Nyack College is not Camelot. The administration is still dominated by Caucasian males, the curriculum has not advanced adequately toward an urban focus, the college has not been able to attract funding to support its programs and the denomination has not done a good job of placing the minority graduates in ministry. While finding minority faculty members for the city campus has not been difficult, the Nyack campus is still too Caucasian in its faculty makeup. The college has had a few minority faculty casualties that have set the program back. In one case a competent African-American social work professor tried to split the faculty and undermine his Ghanian-African department head. He also evidenced a complaining experience. Fortunately, after one year he chose to move on to another college where he would receive greater financial compensation.

A few faculty members are still rather elitist in their attitudes. This shows up in subtle criticism of the HEOP program and the substantial academic support department the college funds. These critical faculty members, however, are not respected as good teachers so their impact is minimal.

While overt racial strife does not seem to exist, there are still times and places where ethnic students "keep to their own." The dining commons is an example of this. Some years there seems to be an African-American section and a Korean section of the cafeteria. Fortunately, in most sections, the groups are very diverse and the students seem to enjoy interacting during meal times.

Because the college admits only students who have made a profession of Christian faith and has a faculty which holds to the authority of Scripture, it has been possible to foster a climate of reconciliation based on biblical values as the pattern for the college community. Because the college's historic purpose was to prepare missionaries to be sent to the nations of the world, the administration has been able to leverage this idea to show how hypocritical it is to value ethnic people who live in other nations but not accept them in our own community.

Pursuing this multicultural agenda without the biblical and spiritual base the Nyack College community affords would be very difficult. It would be much more difficult to enact without a sympathetic, proactive board and administration.

Other communities of faith would do well to use scripture as the base for enacting multicultural activity. A college may be a more fertile context than others because younger people are not set in their ways and are open to attitude adjustments if they trust those in leadership. In Nyack's case, it was certainly beneficial to be in a part of the country where the general population is quite diverse. Regardless of one's context, seeking first the kingdom of God means welcoming and working for reconciliation.

*David Schroeder is president of Nyack College, a Christian and Missionary Alliance, multicultural, Christian liberal arts college with an urban focus.*

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## **Case Study #7**

### **Kosovo, Witness, and the Orthodox Church**

Prepared by Fr. Luke A. Veronis, Tirana, Albania

#### **Context**

The history of the Kosovo region over the past 500 years is quite complex. One indisputable fact, however, is that hundreds of monasteries and churches, most of which are centuries old, cover the land. Their presence attests to the long history of Christianity in the region. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many ethnic Albanians abandoned their Christian identity and succumbed to the great social, economic and religious pressures of the Ottoman Empire by converting to Islam. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a strong emphasis on ethnic identity arose in the Balkans, which led to the formation of ethnic states. The Church itself led this struggle for freedom and independence from the Ottoman Empire, often identifying herself fully with the new ethnic states.

With the divisions and formations of new states during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Kosovo saw itself as a part of Serbia. Interestingly though, a majority of its inhabitants at that time were ethnic Albanians. In 1946, Kosovo became an autonomous province of the communist Yugoslav federation. Ethnic and religious tensions between Orthodox Serbians and the mostly Muslim Albanians were suppressed by the communist government with anti-religious and atheistic propaganda. This propaganda led to a very secular and atheistic mentality among both Serbians and Albanians.

In 1989, a rise of Serbian nationalism, led by Milosevic, led to the rejection of the autonomous status of Kosovo. Ethnic Albanian leaders declared independence from Serbia a year later. Both sides' emphases on nationalism often tried to use their differences in religion as a factor in the impending conflict. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) received significant aid from Islamic countries. Serbian militia often used the sign of the Cross as a distinction between the Serbians with Albanians.

Milosevic's campaign of ethnic cleansing against Albanians eventually led to the March 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia, when more than 900,000 Kosovo Albanians fled into Albania and FYROM. Following the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, revenge killings forced

180,000 Serbs and Roma to flee Kosovo, leaving only a few, heavily guarded enclaves of Serbs still in the Kosovo region.

Patriarch Pavel of the Serbian Orthodox Church issued statements at different times condemning the policies of Milosevic and ethnic cleansing, trying to preach a message of tolerance and goodwill. Many local and national leaders on both sides, however, with their atheistic mindset, tried to use their different religious cultural identities as impetuses for the conflict. The Church was often used as a puppet in the hands of atheistic political leaders. Also, some clergy and leaders within the Church itself too readily preached a nationalistic agenda instead of the good news of forgiveness and love.

One serious historical criticism of the Serbian Orthodox Church in this region over these centuries is the total absence of any effort to bring the Good News of Christ to the Muslim Albanians in their own language and within their own culture. Even though a small minority of Albanians in Kosovo are Roman Catholic, a very sizeable minority of Albanians in Albania are Orthodox Christian and despite the historical Christian identity of most Albanians, the Serbian Orthodox Church focused only on its own people and did not try to integrate this other ethnic group into their Christian family.

This ethnocentric pride, which existed in Israel in Old Testament times and even in the early Judaic Church, is a constant temptation for every Church in each generation. This bane of nationalism has tempted and overwhelmed Christianity in the Balkans. Religion and ethnicity are too often seen as one by many people in the region.

One very concrete example of this occurred recently, when I offered a presentation about the resurrection of the Orthodox Church of Albania in Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina. My hosts warned me that some of the Serbs present wouldn't be able to understand Orthodox Christianity outside of their Serbian context. Sure enough, at the end of my presentation on the hundreds of Churches and the revival of Christianity in Albania, one very sincere and polite old man raised his hand and asked, "I don't understand. How can you be talking about the Orthodox Church when you haven't mentioned anything about Serbs?"

This inability to separate one's religious identity from one's ethnic identity is one of the most serious theological problems facing the Church in these regions.

### **Activities/History**

A unique response to this tense situation has occurred over the past five years by the Orthodox Church of Albania. This response unexpectedly began in March 1999, when 400,000 Kosovo Albanian refugees flooded into Albania. Although the vast majority of the refugees were Muslim and the Orthodox Church of Albania itself was still in the process of trying to recover from her own severe communist persecution, Archbishop Anastasios, the head of the Orthodox Church in Albania, mobilized the entire Church community to respond. While others were trying to use religion as a cause or negative factor in the conflict, he preached consistently, *"The oil of religion should never be used to inflame the fires of hatred, but should be used to sooth and heal the wounds of the inflicted ...The radioactivity of hatred has spread throughout the world. We must combat this hatred with selfless, sacrificial love...The Church should never have enemies. We pray 'for those who hate us and for those who love us.' Thus we cannot have enemies. How could we? If others want to see us as enemies, it is their choice, but we do not consider others as enemies."*

The Orthodox Church in Albania called upon her Christian friends throughout the world and responded by overseeing a \$12 million emergency relief campaign. Not only did she run the longest standing refugee camp, but she also offered aid to more than 34,000 refugees.

A memorable example of Christian love was when our women's group offered the first clothes, food and aid to more than 300 newborn babies and their Kosovo Albanian mothers. One of the best examples of Christian witness, however, occurred when our faithful began

visiting various refugee camps. Through these visits, they established bonds of friendship which enlightened both the refugees and Albanians alike. The Muslim Albanians saw Orthodox Christian believers in a new and positive light, witnessing the love of God in concrete ways. Our believers, on the other hand, overcame their initial fear of how the Kosovo Muslims would react if they discovered we were Orthodox and learned an essential lesson in the midst of suffering – that *the person in front of them is first and foremost a fellow human being in need, an icon of Christ*, not a stranger with a different religion.

When two Kosovo Albanian girls attended one of our summer youth camps that year, they were initially afraid to be surrounded by people “who made their cross like the Serbians.” However, 10 days later, one of the girls confessed in front of the entire camp, “I have never experienced such love in my life. I will never forget this camp.”

Ramadan, a Muslim man who spent two months at our refugee camp, told me during one of his return trips to Tirana after the war, “I will ever be grateful for all your Church has done for me. Really, I now understand what true Christianity is. I have hope for the future. From this experience, I believe that Serbians and Albanians can still live as neighbours and brothers with one another.”

Following the war, the Orthodox Church of Albania has tried to keep contacts and develop relationships with both Kosovo Albanians and Serbians. We understand the very unique position we hold, since the Kosovo Albanians see us as their ethnic brothers, while the Serbians view us as their Orthodox Christian brothers. We hope that we can become a small bridge in helping each side develop a different perception of the other.

One way of trying to do this is by holding yearly summer “friendship camps” for Kosovo Albanian children in two Muslim villages. More than 700 children attended this past year. Twenty Orthodox Christians from Albania lead these camps, and worked side by side with a number of Kosovo Albanian teachers and youth leaders. This interaction is enlightening and challenging for both sides.

Simultaneously, our students visit different Serbian enclaves. For the first time in the history of some monasteries, the Serbians have heard the Albanian language in their Church services. Such efforts are attempts at breaking down century old prejudices and stereotypes from both sides.

During recent outbreaks of violence in March 2004, Archbishop Anastasios of Albania made another symbolic gesture by offering \$300,000 each to the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosovo Islamic Community, so that each side could rebuild a church and a mosque that had been destroyed.

The Archbishop stated, *“The burning of churches and mosques does not promote justice and peace, and certainly not progress either. On the contrary, it is a return to times and practices which led the Balkans to stagnation, divisions, and tragedies. Indeed, those who involve religion in the violence are essentially violating the spirit of religion. No matter how much one is in the right, he must respect the sanctity and the purpose of sacred places of worship. These should become centres of reconciliation and peace, and not breeding grounds for maintaining animosities. It is only with peaceful coexistence of the religious communities that genuine social progress can take place. This is the principal that we Christians and Muslims alike have adopted in Albania: to live together and to cooperate with each other in harmony. The sobriety of religious tolerance and courage of love must overcome the blind hatred that can only lead to an escalation of conflicts.”*

### **Outcomes and Analysis**

One of the most significant consequences from these initiatives has been the changed perception of the other. Despite differences in religious faith and religious culture and traditions, Kosovo Albanian Muslims in the villages where we have worked and the Orthodox of Albania

who have participated in these activities, see one another as friends. Their religious differences don't turn one another into the stereotypical monster.

It must be emphasized that in all the aid we offered and with the camps we presently run in Kosovo, none of our actions were or are overtly evangelistic in nature. The emphasis is more on breaking down stereotypes, helping to see the other in new ways and creating relationships of trust and love. The evangelism comes more from the witness of how we proclaim the good news through our lives, and how we interact with the other, than to some specific words and sayings. Also, from the friendship camps in Kosovo, some participants have come to our Church camps in Albanian, which are clearly Christian in nature and in word. Seeds are being planted.

As for our interactions on the Serbian side, the Serbs are often amazed at meeting Christian Albanians. After their initial shock, they have come to respect what our Church is doing and have invited members of our Church to different affairs in Kosovo. They are beginning to understand that one can be Albanian and also Orthodox Christian, something that was inconceivable years ago.

One of the best fruits of this overall initiative is the overwhelmingly positive experience and education for our own believers. It has made very concrete the words of our Archbishop, *"The oil of religion should never be used to inflame the fires of hatred, but should be used to sooth and heal the wounds of the inflicted."* When the Archbishop says we should have no enemies, this saying has new meaning for us as we try to offer a witness to both sides of a conflict. Our believers also have learned how difficult it is to forgive and forget the horrors of hatred and conflict. It often does not come quickly.

When one has seen death and evil all around, we Christians cannot preach a simplistic message and expect forgiveness to come immediately. Hatred, ignorance, prejudice and evil are formidable barriers, which a Christian, armed with the grace of God, needs to struggle against and hope to conquer over time – God's time, not ours.

Also, our believers are learning that evangelism is often a part of a long process of witnessing. *"Paul plants, Apollo waters, but God gives the growth."* The planter does not always see the fruit. Or he may see fruit many years later. Our purpose and goal is to be faithful in offering an authentic witness in every aspect of our ministry and life, and leave the results up to God.

As the most famous Albanian, Mother Teresa, once stated, *"God did not call me to be successful, but to be faithful."* This is what our believers are learning in this ministry of reconciliation – to faithfully offer a witness of love, and to leave the rest in God's hands.

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## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The members of Issue Group 22 highly recommend the following books to Christian pastors, churches, practitioners, and institutions for further reflection on the challenges of Christian witness in a divided world:

Cejka, Mary Ann and Thomas Bamat, eds. Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking Among Christian Communities. Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.

DeYoung, Curtiss and Michael Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Gunton, Colin E., ed. The Theology of Reconciliation. London: T & T Clark Ltd, 2003.

Habel, Norman C. Reconciliation: Searching for Australia's Soul. Sydney: HarperCollins, 1999.

Helmick, Raymond G. and Rodney L. Peterson. Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation. Templeton Foundation Press, 2001.

*Excellent compilation of authors writing on forgiveness and reconciliation from around the world.*

Jones, L. Gregory. Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Lederach, John Paul. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington, DC: United Institute for Peace, 1998.

Marshall, Christopher D. Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001. 0-8028-4797-8.

*A New Testament scholar presents what the first Christians experienced in Christ and lived out in their faith communities as an understanding of justice as a power that heals, restores and reconciles rather than hurts, punishes and kills.*

Nurenberger, Klaus and John Tooke. The Cost of Reconciliation in South Africa. Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House, 1988.

Rice, Chris. Grace Matters: A Memoir of Faith, Friendship, and Hope in the Heart of the South. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

*The story of a group of white and black Christians struggling for common life in Mississippi, US.*

Schreiter, Robert J. Reconciliation, Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order. Orbis Books & Boston Theological Institute, Feb. 1996.

Tutu, Desmond. No Future Without Forgiveness. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

Volf, Miroslav. Exclusion & Embrace. A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Yoder, Perry B. Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1987. *By an Old Testament scholar.*



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