

A TIME TO HEAL

Perspectives on Reconciliation

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Perspectives on Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

Since its beginning in 1983 the Faith and Politics Group has been concerned about the meaning of reconciliation in a Northern Ireland context. It has sought to envisage what a politics of reconciliation might mean. This search has been carried out in a spirit of sober realism because the work of the political scientist Frank Wright - briefly a member of the Group - has told us that by and large national communities that co-exist on the same soil develop in rivalry with and antagonism to each other. We have been aware that national conflicts do not normally end up with reconciliation of the antagonists. More commonly they are concluded by final victories or forced separations. Thus we were and are under no illusion about what might happen if a politics of reconciliation were not attempted or were to conclusively fail. Nevertheless, we dared to hope that things might be different.

Conflicts within States

Frank Wright taught us that Northern Ireland conflict was not unique. One of the things happening in our world is that conflicts between states are being overtaken in frequency and perhaps in importance by conflicts within states. The force of globalisation and homogenisation which threaten a sense of community on the one hand and the (re) assertion of identities - cultural, national, ethnic, religious, social - on the other hand, bring about situations of tension and conflict between communities. In such contested 'spaces' there are certain key areas of critical importance: the different communities' relations to the State and, in particular, to the law and justice systems; issues of symbolic expression, e.g. how events are publicly remembered and celebrated, flags and emblems; recognition of cultural diversity; issues of power relations and, in particular, how power is shared within a democratic order; issues of equity between communities; and how communities are to belong together. In contested spaces we are always trespassing against each other. We live with the 'other' in a mutual fear-threat relationship. We easily become caught in a cycle of conflict in which the actions and behaviours of one set of participants reinforce the actions and behaviours of the others, and the conflict keeps going. The result is a deep-rooted insecurity, antagonism and enmity and identities shaped by conflict and violence. Communities are caught in destructive patterns of relating together.

The diplomatic procedures inherited from the 19th Century which were designed to effect reconciliation - or at least political settlements - between States are ill-adapted to deal with the issues of reconciliation within and

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between communities. Here reconciliation becomes much less abstract and more face-to-face. People who have been deeply hurt, whose loved ones have been killed and devastated by injury, actually have to come to terms with the presence on their streets of individuals who did these things to them. It is not surprising that in this context issues like prisoner release and the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons cause significant difficulty. We need to learn about the possibilities and dynamics of reconciliation because of the increasing incidence of conflicts within states. In several of our documents we gave extensive consideration to how a Peace Process might develop (see Appendix One).

Overcoming the Past

Examination of the example of Northern Ireland suggests that reconciliation is not easy. We have a precarious political agreement. Much of the elements of that Agreement were foreshadowed in our documents - not that we can claim that our influence was significant. A political agreement is vital but it only provides a starting point for moving forward. We are all too aware of the continuing intractabilities of sectarian hatred; the undertow of hurt, pain and resentment; the competitive victimhood; many people's sense of loss; the way the conflict mutates into new forms; and the increasing segregation. This is not a society yet at ease with itself. Reconciliation remains elusive. All of this points to the need for social and spiritual transformation which will change people's views of each other and how they relate to each other.

Societies in course of transition have to struggle over how much to acknowledge, how to deal with perpetrators, victims and bystanders and how to recover. The American writer Martha Minow says:

A common formulation posits the two dangers of wallowing in the past and forgetting it. Too much memory or not enough; too much enshrinement of victimhood or insufficient memorializing of victims and survivors; too much past or too little acknowledgement of the past's staging of the present; these joined dangers accompany not just societies emerging from mass violence, but also individuals recovering from trauma.

There are a whole series of potential goals for societies responding to collective violence (see Appendix Two). What is important to note is that there are tensions between them. Much of this document is taken up with discussing some of the issues involved.

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The traumas of the past century have led societies to approach their past in different ways: by repression (Japan, Ireland after the civil war and until recently France); by confession (Germany, South Africa); and by ritualisation (Israel). In this they parallel the approach taken by individuals.

It is also important to note that the transition from inter-community conflicts to sustainable peace requires a minimum of 10 to 15 years, or longer. Societies coming out of long and violent internal conflict experience problems every bit as serious as those experienced at the height of the conflict. Transitions precede transformations. Thus, people need to be sustained by hope: hope that situations can and will be transformed and renewed, that life can and will be changed, and that newness can and will come.

The Meaning of Reconciliation

'Reconciliation' has a particular resonance in situations which have undergone extensive conflict where we need to make good again, eg in South Africa with its Truth and Reconciliation Commission, while in Northern Ireland the logic of reconciliation is intrinsic to the Good Friday Agreement. It remains hard, however, to give the word meaning and practical content. Perhaps that can only be done in particular situations.

It also has to be admitted that reconciliation as a word has been shamelessly misused, to slide away from issues of injustice and rightful disturbance. It has been used to quieten people down and lead them away from the reality of their situation. There are also forms of 'reconciliation' which are about making people fit into predetermined 'solutions'. There is also a tendency in discussion about 'reconciliation' to downgrade differences. Not all differences are reconcilable. In our understanding of reconciliation we have sought to talk about "living together in difference" which both emphasises difference and living together and links them. We also understand reconciliation in terms of the inter-related dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth and justice. Another helpful way to understand reconciliation is to see it as a place - a space - where the different conflicting parties meet and face together the claims and tensions between truth and mercy and justice and peace (see Appendix Three).

Living Together in Difference

Living together in difference and diversity - racial, cultural, social, religious - is an increasingly challenging issue facing today's world. It raises profound

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issues about community, identity, recognition and how we meet the other. Often there is dis-ease in the presence of difference and differences have been dealt with by belittling, dehumanising and demonising; overlooking; avoidance (polite or otherwise); and by making people fit in (sometimes through overt pressure). The possibility of people having real meetings where there is honest conversation, respect and mutual regard is narrowed in such situations and they become hostage to wider communal fears. For instance, there is evidence that Bosnia's earlier tradition of tolerance was based only on conventions of politeness.

All group identity is created by encountering what is different. Such encounter involves a recognition of the 'other'. A recognition of the 'other' can be positive but it can often be based on fear and mistrust and/or a sense of superiority which lead to attempts at separation and domination. The identities engendered in such situations are often negative identities, based on opposition to the 'other'. Asserting such identities also serves to increase an awareness of difference and separateness. An identity politics of antagonised division often emerges. Positive change requires a new recognition of the 'other' and ourselves, new ways of relating, and ways of honouring both particularity and belonging together.

Negative identity involves a need to abuse the 'other', often emerging out of one's own experience of abuse, fear, loss or powerlessness. If the rule of positive identity is "love your neighbour [the 'other'] as you love yourself" (Lev 10:18) then the rule of negative identity is "do unto others what they have done unto you, or do it unto them first". One of the deepest resistances to peace and reconciliation in many situations is the stubborn commitment on all sides to the negative identities formed over and against each other. We need our enemy because of the identity they give us. We may desperately seek to continue the conflict because we cannot envision ourselves in a future which would include positive relations with the 'other'. Periods of transition are particularly difficult for identities formed in opposition. For transitions to go in a good direction there needs to be a movement away from constructing identities over and against others to developing identities that through positive relationships respect others and leave room for difference. Thus re-defining identity is a fundamental step towards reconciliation and people need to have the confidence to engage in a journey which explores who they are and what they might become.

People have a fundamental need for security. In societies governed by fearthreat relationships wisdom suggests that security comes from deterrence or getting your retaliation in first or from living among your 'own'. We all know about the threat from the 'other'; much harder to acknowledge is the threat

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we pose to the 'other'. Conflict situations generate endless justifications, blame and self-righteousness. There may, however, come a time when significant sections of different communities are ready to find a way out - they can be helped by key parties to the conflict stepping back and cooperating together to facilitate positive movement. The international community may also have a part to play.

These *kairos* moments have to be seized and confidence-building steps entered into. The realisation may dawn that there cannot be security for one without security for the 'other'; that security comes from transformation and new relationships. We have to take the 'other' into account and meet their needs as well as our own. For all of this to happen we have to 'see' the other - and ourselves - in a different way. There has to be new recognitions.

A Christian Vision of Reconciliation

'Reconciliation' is a word on many people's lips today, including politicians. This must be significant. However, Christian theology has used this word with primary reference to the atoning work of God in Christ - "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5: 19). How does the classical Christian understanding of reconciliation connect with the concerns of a conflictual humanity?

In our first document *Breaking Down the Enmity* we emphasised the enmity generated in conflict situations and the circle of violence and counter-violence. The New Testament shows a God who wishes to overcome breakdowns in relationships. There is a deep solidarity of God with suffering humanity. The enmity between God and human beings is overcome through Christ's loving embrace of us on the Cross - "He is our Peace who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14). There is a mending of brokenness and we are brought to a new place ("there is a new creation" 2 Cor 5:17) where we are able to make space for the 'other' because Christ has made space for us. While we are made one in Christ particular identities are not abolished but they are relativised and subordinated. This new identity in Christ leaves no room for individual or collective claims of superiority or self-righteousness. Reconciliation in Christ is about being freed from anxiety about identity. We do not have to shore up our own selfhood or self-esteem. We are to trust in the goodness and grace of a faithful God.

God's loving forgiveness opens the *way* to repentance (for example the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1-10). Issues of justice and truth are not ignored.

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Thus love operates within a moral order which involves truth and justice.

All of this has social implications. Christians are the visible fruits of God's reconciliation in Christ. They are called to make this reconciliation visible - visible in terms of a quality of relationships, visible in terms of openness and hospitality. This visibility should serve the same purpose as Christ's visibility, namely to reveal God and His reconciling love. This is true holiness and is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19). Similarly, the Church is a community of reconciliation and is called to make this visible to the world.

The innocent victim Jesus protests against a world in which violence is met by violence and the message of the Resurrection is that the destructive powers of the world will not prevail. Such a vision of reconciliation speaks of something given us, of remade humanity, of the cost of love, of suffering vulnerability. It makes us increasingly sensitive to victims. It is a world which politics cannot bring into being. However, faith in a renewed world gives us courage to be persons of persistence and creativity in the midst of politics, for we recognise that the world of politics is a place of encounter between humanity and God.

Violence demands its victims - its sacrifices. Peace and reconciliation may also demand 'sacrifice' though of a different sort: that involved in a commitment to a loving and non-violent God and by a commitment to stop the scapegoating and blaming that exists in a devious and violent world. It is a way of "living sacrifice" (Rom 12: 1), led by the memory of Jesus.

Churches and Reconciliation

As Christians we were aware that Christian faith challenges all exclusive claims of tribe, tradition and political commitment. The Gospel invites us into the space created by Christ and to find there those who were previously our enemies. It therefore seeks to break down the enmity between us: enmity caused by different traditions, and national, political and religious loyalties. The Gospel opens up for us a view of wholeness, justice and living in right relations which sees the whole world as potential brothers and sisters; a nourishing and fulfilment of the human. This is a vision of a new humanity reconciled in Christ and living together in a new community.

At the same time we knew that churches are part of communities and nations; they cannot be other. They are chaplains, reflectors, consciences, restrainers, discerners, givers of wisdom, custodians of memory and places of community belonging. Churches bring 'their' community before God. They

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are places where the 'specialness' and stories of communities and nations can be celebrated. Much of this is necessary and good, but there is another side. 'Specialness' can lead to exclusivity and a sense of superiority. Churches can be places where we are told - implicitly and explicitly - who does not belong to our community: by who is prayed for and who is not, by the contents of sermons, and by the symbols displayed or not displayed.

The Church is a home for the community or the nation. And at the same time it lives by a story of a Jesus who died outside the camp (Heb 13:13) and who, while completely a Jew, did not belong to his world (John 17:14) and was driven out of it by those who did not want to be disturbed by another way. All our 'homes' - personal, communal, national - are radically decentered by Jesus: "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (Heb 13:14). And the Church is a community where Jew and Greek, bond and free, belong (1 Cor 12:13).

The Church lives in a tension: in the world, but not of it (cf John 18:36). The danger is that in situations of communal conflict the tension collapses and as the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf says "...Churches often find themselves accomplices in war rather than agents of peace. We find it difficult to distance ourselves from our own culture so we echo its reigning opinions and mimic its practices."

This was our experience in Northern Ireland. Religion and politics had become so tangled up that politics had taken on some of the dimensions of a religious crusade; political positions had been absolutised and exclusive commitments had been demanded of people. Political loyalties and exclusive traditions had been put above the God who will have no other god before him. Idolatry had led to conflict and violence. Christian faith had been compromised; two communities had called upon their religious traditions to sanctify political and cultural traditions to a greater or lesser extent. Faith had been deformed in the process. Theologies of enmity, superiority and distorted recognition of others had gained pre-eminence. Northern Ireland, in our opinion, was a place under judgement and judgement begins in the household of God (I Peter 4:17). We were also all too aware that churches who were unable to achieve reconciliation among themselves were not well placed to preach reconciliation to politicians and others. We lived in a world of painful contradiction between a faith vision and reality.

In many of our documents we spoke about tasks for the churches. In particular, we have been concerned that: churches free themselves from over-identification with particular political-cultural formations; while not glossing over theological differences they meet and co-operate with other

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churches in work for the common good of society, and they become agents together of peace and promoters of truth, justice and love. We have also been concerned that churches face and acknowledge their particular responsibility for the conflict.

The Metaphor of Healing

Healing is a way of understanding reconciliation and there is a rich tradition in Christian tradition of using the metaphors of sickness and healing, particularly in Eastern theology. Jesus can be seen as the "wounded healer" who uses his own wounds to heal the wounded hearts of others - suffering vulnerability becomes redemptive.

The metaphor of healing is often applied to post-violence situations. The healing paradigm casts the consequence of collective violence in terms of trauma, sickness, brokenness, hurt and pain. A society has been gravely wounded and the goal is recovery and the restoration of relationships. Further an analogy is being drawn between the psychological and physical needs: the therapeutic responses appropriate to individuals and issues involving entire groups of people and even societies.

Some of the limitations of this metaphor need to be understood. To talk about the needs of particular victims is fully appropriate but, for instance, healing is an absurd notion for those who have died. Not all the wounds inflicted can be healed. To talk about an entire society recovering from the consequences of violence has its appropriateness but we need to appreciate that we are moving in a way of analogy. And we have to ask the question: what do we mean by 'therapeutic' processes for collectivities?

The Importance and Limitations of Politics

We are always clear about the importance of politics and the limitations of politics. Political arrangements are of importance; positively because of the possibilities they give for human flourishing, for enabling people to live together and for the mediation of conflict; and, negatively, for the protection they give against violence and injustice. However, politics cannot establish the Kingdom of God and a relative peace, justice and reconciliation is all that is obtainable in a disordered world - the world of the 'penultimate' in the words of the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, where politics belongs.

The Christian tradition has always been clear about the need for the order of

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the State and that this order depends on violence (Romans 13, St Augustine, etc). It has also been clear about the potential for diabolic violence lying in the State (Revelation 13). The State always uses violence to drive out violence. This 'legitimate' violence must be governed by the rule of law and assent to law, and seeks a monopoly for itself within the territory of the State. We cannot do without the order of the State or its 'necessary' violence - this is the darkness at the heart of order.

At the same time there is a biblical concern for justice (understood as living in right relationships) both in the New and Old Testaments. This concern refers to securing and guaranteeing the livelihood, well-being, freedom and dignity of every person in the community. Thus the upholding of social order must be challenged and constrained by a concern for justice. Rulers are answerable to God and are to be called to account. Power must be exercised within limits.

All of this suggests that it is important to understand reconciliation in an eschatological perspective; it always in its fulfilment lies beyond us. And there is the hope and dream of a world "on the far side of revenge" (Seamus Heaney). We live in the tension between our hope and dreams and what can realistically be expected in this fragile and fractured world.

The Faith and Politics Group

The Faith and Politics Group began when a motion was passed at the 1983 Greenhills Ecumenical Conference calling for the setting up of a Christian Centre for Political Development to analyse the relationship of churches to politics in Ireland. A steering group was set up and a number of people coopted in an individual capacity. It quickly became clear that a Centre was not a realistic goal and the best role for the group was as an unofficial think-tank. Around 30 people have been involved for varying lengths of time since 1983. Here is what we were and what we experienced:

- all sorts of mixes: clerical/lay; male/female; North/South; Protestant/Roman Catholic. Some were parish clergy, some worked for ecumenical organisations, some were academics, some were members of communities of reconciliation, some were involved in practical peace work, some were theologians
- a mixed group of Christians focussing on real faith/life issues
- there was a discipline in meeting together
- we left the tendency of always speaking from and to 'our own' side, but we had tentacles into different communities; we were not without roots.

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- we told each other about our experiences and worked on their meaning
- there was no holding back - it was honest and engaged
- differences in the Group were tolerated and even valued
- agree, disagree and live with, that's what we wrestled with
- an important sounding board at a time of crisis
- we sought to discern 'the signs of the times' in events and politics
- the 'other' was present in the writing of our documents
- we were influenced by a lot of different people from both inside and outside Northern Ireland. We learnt a lot from the work of the political scientist Frank Wright and the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf.

We were, in a small way, a laboratory of reconciliation. The Group has always contextualised its theological thinking in the particularity of the Northern Ireland conflict. This present document is not such a contextualisation but arises from a context. It uses the Group's thinking and reflection over 20 years to offer some perspectives on the meaning of reconciliation. In particular, it uses material from two documents: *Doing Unto Others* (1997) and *Remembrance and Forgetting* (1998). It is a 'thought-experiment'. an exploration, a journey, offered in the hope that others may find it of value in their situation. It is particularly offered as a contribution to the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence.

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BELONGING, MEETING AND EMBRACE : A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Encountering the Other

God has made human beings in His own image (Gen 1: 26); all humankind share equal dignity and are owed equal respect. However, in the biblical vision there is no humanity without relatedness. The image of God in human beings is bound up with mutual inter-relationship and inter-dependence (Gen 1:27). In this picture we are not individuals on our own but persons in community who collaborate with God. This community of persons extends to social and political units. The creation stories in Genesis do not end with the creation of humanity in Chapters One and Two but with the creation of the tribes and nations in Chapter Ten. God is the author of our common humanity and of our diversity.

The first two chapters of Genesis affirm the goodness of creation. However, what follows is the story of the Fall and, leading from it, the beginnings of human conflict and violence. At the heart of this account (in Gen 3:5) there is a primal moment of human misrecognition: the false and envious perception that God is someone to be rivalled with. This rivalry means that human identity - rather than being given - establishes itself over and against God (and our fellow human beings). Such an identity always has something of violence in it.

The story of the Fall does not conclude with the story of the exclusion of Adam and Eve from the Garden; instead it concludes in Genesis Eleven with the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel and the scattering of the nations, as the nations too rival with God.

Fundamental in the Genesis story is how alienation from God brings a deep insecurity into human affairs. Fear of the neighbour, rather than trust in God, becomes a governing factor in human relations. We live in cultures estranged from God. In this insecurity we do two things: we create our own substitute 'gods' or idols, which belong exclusively to us and seem to offer the security we need. And we use our differences from others to give ourselves esteem and identity as individuals or a group. Our group is purer and inherently superior: we are what we are because the 'others' are not what we are - and therefore not so good as us. At the same time they excite our envy, our fascination and our fear. By their presence they question and limit us. These attitudes involve self-deception, misrecognition of others, self-hatred, hatred of others, rivalry, exclusion and victimisation. Inevitably our victims, when they can, victimise us in return.

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So we live defensive lives, dominated by the 'realism' of fear. This realism says that we must always retaliate when offended, that we must always look for revenge, that we must always be ready for war, that we must dominate or be dominated. If we cannot dominate or eliminate the threat, we may accept the 'peace' of mutual deterrence, or we may separate ourselves from the 'other'. The weight of our threat or the distance between us and the other become the measure of our security. Such 'solutions' lessen the possibility of violence. Nevertheless they are ways of life based on fear of the neighbour. Stories of what the other has done to us, or will do if we don't defend ourselves, become our controlling narratives. Stories of trust or co-operation are forgotten or not believed.

What does Christian faith have to say to this? The Gospel offers us an alternative reality to fearful frozen and defensive living. It invites us to imagine ourselves and our world differently. Reconciliation in Christ takes us to a new place - the house of Christ - where we think, speak and act in his way where fear becomes trust and hurt permits healing. Christ breaks down the middle wall of partition and invites us all into a space created by him to find people who were previously our enemies. New conversations are opened up with liberating possibilities. The present becomes a place for risk-taking and for participation in the transformation that God is working on the earth.

All identity is created in the encounter with the 'other'. Therefore, how we meet the 'other' - give them recognition, respect them, give them a place, find ourselves in them - is a central challenge of all human existence. The Jewish theologian Marc Gobin suggests that the stranger - the 'other' - is the essential metaphor of Biblical experience and the key to its ethical stance. The Hebrew Scriptures say that the vulnerable 'other' - including the resident alien and strangers - shall be protected (eg Deut 10:18-19; Lev 25). For, in a fundamental sense, "You [ie the children of Israel] are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev 25:23). This is taken up by Jesus in the parable of the sheep and the goats when he says that how the vulnerable 'others' - the hungry and thirsty, strangers, the destitute, the sick, those in prison are treated becomes a test of our real attitude to him (Matt 25:31-46). Thus we are 'decentered' from self and our 'normal' home to the world of others. The ethical implication of all of this is that the positive acceptance of coexistence is a necessary virtue in a world where not everyone is like us. Coexistence makes possible the sharing of a space in a way that offers everyone the possibility of having their identities and traditions acknowledged and given a place.

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A Vision of Embrace

We need distance and we need belonging. Group identities offer us homes in which we can belong; a sense of pride, a space where we are among our own, a place of nourishment and security. And at the same time they can become "*fortresses into which, we retreat, surrounding ourselves by impenetrable walls dividing 'us' from 'them'. In situations of conflict they serve as encampments from which to undertake raids into enemy territory.*" (Miroslav Volf). Thus group identities are profoundly ambivalent: "*havens of belonging as well as repositories of aggression, suffocating enclosures as well as bases of liberating power*" (ibid.).

Cultural and group differences cannot and should not be removed. We cannot live without differences and boundaries - even if we know that differences and boundaries can be dangerous. We can, however, open ourselves to be enriched by our differences. And, at the same time, different traditions, cultures and languages are cultivated. There is respect for boundaries. But boundaries must be porous; the 'other' is to be welcomed in and embraced. There is respect for difference and diversity, but not sectarianism and exclusion.

Jesus, while remaining completely a Jew, cut across the boundary markers between Jews and Gentiles. He set aside food taboos. He went into Gentile houses and healed (eg the story of the healing of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30); he went into the country of the Gentile Decapolis and healed the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8:26-39)); and he engaged in a profound dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4).

Paul persecuted the early Christians because he felt the sacred boundaries, which made the Jews special, to be threatened. Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed his whole life. Without wishing to destroy Jewishness he turns away from an attitude that emphasises sacred boundaries to find a new identity in Christ that excludes none. He sees the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile as being broken down through the cross (Eph 2: 13-16) so that the other can be welcomed in.

Volf describes his vision of what should be through the metaphor of 'embrace':

In an embrace I open my arms to create space in myself for the other. Open arms are a sign that I do not want to be by myself only, an invitation for the other to come in and feel at home with me. In an embrace I also close my arms around the other. Closed arms are a sign

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that I want the other to become a part of me, the other enriches me. In a mutual embrace none remains the same because each enriches the other, yet both remain true to their genuine selves.

Embrace, I believe, is what takes place between the three persons of the Trinity, which is a divine model of human community. The Johannine Jesus says: 'The Father is in me and I am in the Father' (John 10:38). The one divine person is not that person only, but includes the other divine persons in itself; it is what it is only through the indwelling of the other. The Son is the Son because the Father and the Spirit indwell him: without their interiority of the Father and the Spirit there would be no Son. Every divine person is the other person but he is the other person in his own particular way.

But it is a genuine embrace based on justice and respect for truth. Not everything that everybody does is to be accepted uncritically.

Such a vision respects borders and boundaries but welcomes the stranger in. It allows for difference but provides for positive and life giving relationship. The vision of embrace is an aspect of the love of the neighbour. There is a close link between the vision of embrace and an understanding of reconciliation.

A vision of embrace seeks to break out of the vicious circle of seeing the 'other' side as always to blame, and ourselves as always the righteous, the innocent and the good ones. We have to learn that the 'others' are human like ourselves, with a good and a bad side, and people to be lived with, even if we have significant disagreements with them. We need to learn about the threat we pose to and the fear we induce in the 'other'; that our fears and insecurities help to create and maintain our enemies: "The judgement we give is the judgement we get" (Matt 7:1); that the problem is ourselves (the beam is in our eye) as well as our 'enemy'. The others, although different, are human like us and worthy of respect (respect is the social analogue of love). They, too, have their fears, interests and desires and want to pursue them and, therefore, we should treat them as they would want to be treated by us (Matt 7:12). We do not want to be victims, therefore we must not victimise others. The 'other' is our neighbour with whom we must learn to live.

Embrace is a risk. I open my arms, make a movement towards the 'other' and I do not know whether I will be misunderstood, despised, even attacked, or whether my action will be appreciated, supported or reciprocated. But it also opens the way to surprising encounters, enriching conversation and transformation.

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SOCIAL RECONCILIATION

Social reconciliation means people finding a way of living together in difference. It means the restoration of broken relationships. It means wanting the 'other' to be with us and not wanting to destroy, dominate or separate from them. It means being able to take others into account and sharing power, responsibility and resources. It means going beyond the 'right' and 'wrong' of the conflict - the vicious circle of action and reaction - to create new, creative and just relationships "on the far side of revenge" (Seamus Heaney). It is the painful forging of a shared world. Reconciliation in this world is not some finished state. It does not abolish conflict or the friction of living together. It may be and often is partial and incomplete; and it does not remove the intransigent presence of evil.

Reconciliation is not just about an accommodation of various interests and aspirations (a political settlement). It is about the social reconstruction of a society and thus it is also about the rebuilding of the moral order. It is about social transformation: it deals with the hurts, resentments and enmities that exist (the task of repair and healing) and seeks the transformation of relationships with all that implies at the spiritual, psychological, social, economic and political levels. An understanding of reconciliation is necessarily built on the interlocking dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth and justice. It both deals with the past and looks to the future. Reconciliation takes people to a new place.

The German philosopher Hannah Arendt was clear that there were two primary requirements for people to live together: (1) the willingness of people to be bound together by promises and agreements, and to keep them, ie they create a moral order together; and (2) the willingness to set aside the past - its enmities and the vicious circle of action and reaction - and start anew; this is where the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation arises.

The willingness of people to be bound together by promises and agreements, and to keep them, is necessary for order and trust in human life. But the imperfection and sinfulness of people mean that we frequently fail to keep promises and agreements. Therefore, we have to find some way of setting aside the past with its failures and enmities in order to keep human life going in a satisfactory way. Our very imperfection and sinfulness make this hard to do - particularly in our communal life.

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Dealing with the Past

Important in all of this is how people remember and how they deal with past. How people remember profoundly affects how they behave in the present and significantly affects their politics; thus in Northern Ireland the politics of historic grievance and the politics of siege. Our accumulated history - "the debris we carry with us, each, of hurt and counter hurt" (the American poet Amy Clampitt) - is part of today's reality. It pushes people back to standing by their 'own' and against their enemies. Unhealed memories can enslave and condemn us to a seemingly endless living out of the past. In the words of the Scots poet Edwin Muir: "... loves and hates are thrust upon me by the acrimonious dead". Grasped by the ghosts of the past we are unable to imagine a different future.

Because the past can so possess us it is important that we find ways of letting go what has happened. The following are some of the ways this can take place.

Grieving

We may need to lament and grieve for what has been lost and done, and acknowledge anger, bitterness, pain, resentment, loss of identity and uncertainty. For this we need a language; our feelings need to be released into words. The resources available in the biblical language of lament and the ritual actions of the faith community could be of help in this.

An important biblical theme is that of moving through grief to newness. There is no conflict, especially deadly conflict, that does not involve pain, emptiness and loss. But endings can also be beginnings and we may be able to move through grief to newness. In that movement we may find ourselves reviewing the story we tell about ourselves and imagining ourselves and our world differently. However, in a conflict, our story is not the only story. ..

Telling our Stories

Stories make sense of a community's experience. They use and express values, beliefs and commitments. They give reasons for action and they build community and self-identity. In divided societies stories often conflict; the same events are understood from a radically different perspective. We need to tell our stories to each other and listen intently to what we are told - which involves reaching beyond the words - feeling the pain of the 'other' as

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transmitted through the 'memory' of their community. This is 'felt' history. Thus, we begin to see from the perspective of the 'other'. We practice what the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf describes as "double vision", seeing both "from here" and "from there".

The German theologian Geiko Mueller-Fahrenholz describes an exchange of stories between the former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, during Brezhnev's visit to Bonn in March 1973:

On one evening there was a meeting in the residence of Willy Brandt, who was then chancellor. The atmosphere was cordial until Brezhnev began to recall in great detail some of the atrocities committed by Nazi troops in Russia. Everyone was listening with a mixture of respect and dread, because it was obvious that the Soviet leader had to free himself of these oppressive memories. His words had to be understood as an indication of what it had cost the Russians to come to the capital of Germany - the heart of what had been their most bitter enemy.

Brezhnev spoke for some twenty minutes. Then Schmidt, who was minister of defence at the time, responded by telling his own story, for he had been one of the German soldiers stationed in Russia. He spoke of the schizophrenic situation of German soldiers who did not adhere to the Nazi ideology but had been educated to be patriots and thus felt bound to defend their country. In recalling this encounter nearly 15 years later, Schmidt comes to a revealing conclusion; he writes that this 'exchange of bitter memories greatly contributed to the mutual respect' that existed between him and Brezhnev despite the fact that the two found themselves in opposite camps from that evening up to the end of their terms of office.

Dealing with the past may mean walking through our history together, particular visiting together those points that continue to have a painful sting, as Schmidt and Brezhnev did. It may help us recover what we have forgotten, denied, covered up and silenced.

It may mean looking at our symbols - anthems, rituals, songs, festivals, special occasions - and the stories and memories in these symbols. What do they say about the 'other' side? What do they say about us? Is this what we want to say now?

Honest discourse about the past - particularly in the presence of the 'other' -

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may provide resources for a more hopeful future. The danger is that we refuse to do this and instead we search for people and institutions to blame for what has happened. We make ourselves "whited sepulchres" (Matt 23: 11) who hide our guilt, responsibility and hypocrisy in proclaiming that we are radically different from the people we blame.

Dealing with the Wounds

People and communities must be given a way of dealing with their suffering, wounds and grief. There is a need for opportunities for the past to be addressed symbolically, ritually and liturgically, and for spaces to be *"provided for people to express to and with each other the pain and injustices experienced. Acknowledgement and mutual recognition of the legitimacy of their experience is decisive in the reconciliation dynamic"* (the US Mennonite conflict expert, John Paul Lederach). If hurt, pain, anger, guilt, and loss are not dealt with effectively they will be driven underground, sure to surface in unexpected and harmful ways.

Forgiveness and acknowledgement of wrongs (including apology) are interrelated ways of dealing with what has happened, which may be deeply transformative and necessary at key points in a reconciliation process.

Forgiveness in Situations of Conflict

Those who have been directly affected by wrong or by violence may be able to forgive. That they have been able to forgive is a sign of grace. They, however, cannot be burdened with the demand that they forgive. Nor can anyone forgive on behalf of those who have suffered. We cannot impose forgiveness on people but conditions can be created whereby forgiveness becomes at least a possibility.

Victims have their particular needs: for justice, for the seriousness of the harm to be acknowledged, for apology and repentance from those who have done them wrong, for their stories to be heard, for compensation, for practical support. They have a claim upon our respect, to be remembered and allowed to remember. The past cannot be put right, but we can seek to ensure that it is not repeated. This is one form of memorial to the victims of violence.

What is also required is that the larger community - battered, hurt and damaged by what has happened - be prepared to enter into a more general

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process of being able to set aside the past - with all its enmities and demands for revenge - and start anew, accepting the existence of the other. This is something in the nature of forgiveness. As the former Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda, said, forgiveness is not so much an isolated act but *"a constant willingness to live in a new day without looking back and ransacking the memory for occasions of bitterness and resentment"*.

Such a process of communal forgiveness takes what happened seriously; thus, truth seeking and telling are important. It does not trivialise or condone violence and injustice. Guilt and responsibility remain. What such a process does do is seek to bring peace to the past for the sake of the present and the future. The goal is healing and a move forward into new relationships. It is about rebuilding what has been torn to pieces, creating trustworthy and sustainable structures and providing secure social spaces for people. Such forgiveness is made easier when there is evidence of people acting in new ways, eg decisively moving away from violence or being prepared to negotiate new and just political arrangements, or when regret or apology is expressed for what has happened.

If we fail to forgive we will hand on our bitterness to the next generation. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is an example where bitterness was handed down; not only from memories of atrocities committed during the Nazi period, but going back generations before that, even to the wars between Christian and Turk. And, if the politics of grievance is not given up, the past keeps everyone in its grip. Either we find ways to forgive or else we separate from, or seek to destroy, each other. Thus, forgiveness is a practical necessity for continuing to live together.

Acknowledgement of Wrongs and Apology

People have to live with what they have done or been involved in. It is in this context that repentance arises: stopping what we are doing; recognition, examination and acknowledgement of wrong doing; finding another way; seeking forgiveness; and seeking to repair the harm done. Repentance involves turning and changing one's ways.

Clearly we are not responsible for, or guilty of, acts we have not done, or in which we have not been directly involved. At the same time, we belong to groups, communities and nations that have done things which were wrong, in the distant or more immediate past. Our history has often imposed suffering on others and often brought benefits to ourselves. We cannot run away from this history and its consequences, for we are caught up in it, even if we are

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not personally guilty. The past affects present realities and relationships. Thus, there is a solidarity in sin, which involves the living and the dead.

Acknowledgement of wrongs done and hurts caused represents a facing of the reality of what a particular group, community or nation has done. Our acknowledgement of what has happened, our willingness to review the story we tell about ourselves, our sense of regret and our disapproval of past actions by our group or community are forms of respect for past generations and present day victims. They open up the possibility of conducting our relationships in the present in a more generous and just way.

Acknowledgement of wrongs done and hurts caused may take the form of apology. Apology is the verbalised face of repentance. It opens up the possibility of reconnection with the other. For instance, the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt in 1945 recognised the Evangelical Church in Germany's share of the responsibility for the terrible things done during the Third Reich. It paved the way for an honest approach to what had happened and for that Church's re-entry into the ecumenical community.

Apology - clearly and publicly expressed - is one *way* of saying to people that we wish to make a break with the past. Of course, apology has to be followed by, or linked to, an attempt to undo wrongs and act differently - to establish a new justice and a new relationship. And it involves risk and vulnerability.

Public rituals of atonement are important to help individuals come to terms with the painfulness of their society's past, for their healing and for reconciliation. As the Canadian political commentator Michael Ignatieff says about one example of such symbolic politics:

When President Alwyn of Chile appeared on television to apologise to the victims of Pinochet's crimes of repression, he created the public climate in which a thousand acts of private repentance and apology became possible. He also symbolically cleansed the Chilean State of its association with these crimes.

But symbolic actions - particularly actions which express human vulnerability - may be more important than any words; for instance the West German Chancellor Witty Brandt falling to his knees at a monument to those who died in the Warsaw ghetto rising. Brandt witnessed to a world beyond power and politics, and the need for atonement.

It has been shown in many situations that it is important for a public account to be rendered of what happened and who was responsible. Wrongdoing and injustice are publicly acknowledged. Thus Truth Commissions have been

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established in such countries as South Africa, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala. In Northern Ireland the Saville Inquiry has been looking into the events surrounding Bloody Sunday in Derry/Londonderry in 1972.

Rendering a public account of what has happened and who was responsible does not free us from conflicting interpretations, clashing memories, etc, about the past. Focussing on specific events may bring its own distortions and community anger (Why this event? Why not this one? etc). 'Truths' about the past may continue to be disputed. Nor does truth-telling necessarily lead to healing and reconciliation (certainly not at once). What may be hoped for is that the range of permissible 'truths' may be narrowed and that particular lies, silences, fictions, myths and denials are effectively challenged. What all of this points to is a longer term need for work to be done on the reconciling of stories and memories, so that there is a recognition of the inter-dependence of our histories and of what we have done to each other. New realities, critical and moral reflection, spiritual transformation, changed relationships and time (the German encounter with the past began only in the 1960's, for instance) may open up the possibility of some shared truth being established.

Restitution

Restitution is the restorative aspect of justice. We can never undo and make good the evil that has been done; in this sense strict restorative justice is impossible. We can seek to repair the damage that has been done, where that is possible. However, restitution should be seen more as an act of compensation that fulfils certain functions in the present: firstly, as a sign of recognition of the seriousness of what has happened; secondly, as a sign of the seriousness of repentance; thirdly, it meets some need of the victim; and fourthly, it aims at facilitating a more human future. Recognition and respect are given to the victim, or their memory.

The idea of restitution has become increasingly important in national and international politics, for instance in relation to the Holocaust, the treatment of indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. The process of negotiating restitution agreements has involved a process of dialogue - a social conversation - between victims and perpetrators about the meaning of events. It brings new recognitions about intertwined pasts, about inclusion, about injustices and the need to right wrongs - if only partially. Such a process opens up the possibility of reconciliation.

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Punishment

Punishment is the punitive aspect of justice. We cannot do without some form of punitive institutionalised response to wrongdoing, no matter how inadequate and imperfect it may be. Punishment of the perpetrator is a statement that the injured person matters. Through the criminal justice system the perpetrator is called to account and held responsible for their misdeeds. The truth of what happened is hopefully revealed and there is the possibility of the victim's story being told. The perpetrator pays for what they have done and this is reflected in the seriousness of the sentence. Punishment is one way respect is shown to the victims (and their families). And punishment helps restore the moral order of society.

Punishment necessarily individualises guilt. In the context of community conflict (former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone) the pursuit of justice through the legal system is an ambiguous and frustrating activity - for instance, difficulties can arise from selective prosecutions and this can undermine perceptions of fairness. The courtroom focus on specific individuals and specific events can distort. Important issues such as why something happened, the chains of responsibility, the hidden cultural or social triggers can be lost within the confines of the courtroom. Trials of particular war criminals can too easily close off the past with broader issues of responsibility not faced up to.

Community conflict creates a context where there are all sorts of degrees and categories of guilt: that of the ideologues who promote hate and prepare the ground for violence; that of those who plan and direct acts of violence; that of those who plant bombs and pull triggers; that of helpers and supporters; that of condoners and bystanders; and so on. There are sins of omission and sins of commission. There are the sins of people who journeyed into the far country of violence. There are the sins of the people who stayed "at home", who remained law abiding but who have been consumed by anger, resentment, self-righteousness and the refusal of generosity. There are the misdeeds of groups, eg paramilitaries, and there are the misdeeds of the state, its agencies and agents.

An aspect of all of this is the systemic - the transindividual - reality of evil - something particularly evident in conflict situations. This reality generating its own momentum and logic. Part of the dynamic is the seductiveness of violence and its endless justifications, and the fear, dread, hatred, excitement and frenzy which carry people along, "the diabolic forces of violence" in the words of the German sociologist Max Weber.

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This is not to say that we make no distinctions between actors, actions and activities - for this we must do. Clearly some have suffered far more than others. Some individuals, groups and institutions have killed and injured far more than others, and thus carry more guilt and responsibility. Horrendous actions are not automatic, or even 'understandable', responses to someone else's behaviour, or to injustice, or to history, or to the 'system'. Human beings remain moral agents. Conscious options for violence are made. What we are suggesting is a moral complexity - a tangled web - of which we are all part.

Part of the complexity is the issue of the punishment of perpetrators. On the one hand the perpetration of violence and injustice demand punishment and this is why the granting of amnesty in many countries in South America was greeted with outrage by many. Impunity means that the past and what happened are not faced up to. There is no accountability and no justice.

On the other hand political necessity and prudence may argue for amnesty, amnesia, forbearance and mercy, so that a new start may be made. Managing a peaceful transition requires deals to be made and the loose ends of history to be left dangling. For instance, De Gaulle managed the transition in postwar France by pretending that all French citizens had been outstanding patriots. The sorry history of the Vichy regime and collaboration was swept under the carpet. What happens is that the issue of blame is avoided or displaced elsewhere and instead the emphasis is put on responsibility for the future. The exigencies of politics and the balance of forces may well push the issue of how the past is to be dealt with in a particular direction.

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

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Other Dimensions of Justice

Important in the restoration of a moral order is the strengthening of the law and assent to law. Thus issues of policing and reform of the legal system are central to issues of social reconstruction. In contested societies conflict often focuses on the law and order system. In a new dispensation it has to become a common authority above all groups and citizens.

Issues of distributive justice and dealing with inequalities are also of vital importance. Justice is about having a place, being included in the community, being given what is needed to make a contribution, participating, being taken into account, and being treated as human. Talk about reconciliation is hollow unless there is real change for those who are socially and economically excluded. Authentic reconciliation involves justice.

But the attempt to solve conflicts by simply establishing justice alone or by saying first justice then reconciliation will not work. One of the complexities of enduring conflicts is that the issue of justice gets blurred and deformed in the vicious circle of action and reaction. The pursuit of justice creates more injustices. Because of disagreements about the past there is no agreement about what constitutes justice and equality in the present. It also has to be recognised that groups do not simply lose their histories by the fact of structural change. Resentful histories and mistrustful relationships may simply continue unless people imagine themselves and their relationships afresh. The struggle for justice has to be placed in a context of a wish for recognition of the 'other', social conversation and even co-operation, ie a perspective of a desire for reconciliation.

Trust

There is a link between a stable normal society and trust. Some degree of trust is required to share a society together. This trust allows a give and take - a form of practical mutual forgiveness - within the limits of political consensus. Failure cannot always be met by blame and retribution.

Political institutions can only operate where there are relationships of trust. They can only function when trust is granted and where politicians and political institutions act in a fashion that generate trust. At the same time the structuring of society and its institutions deeply influences who you can trust.

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Satisfactory government depends upon a complex series of trust relationships between political leaders, political institutions and the population. Politics can only work when politicians use power forbearingly; where they sustain the fabric of the community and allow a place for opponents; and where electorates give room to their politicians to give leadership, recognise the burdens which politicians carry and the forgiveness that they require.

It is the central task of political structures and the law and order system to give security, reliability and predictability to society. Their ritual and routine gives stability and offers the possibility of social trust. Institutions acceptable to the vast majority of citizens are of vital importance because they provide the possibility of social conversation, debate and negotiation of difference taking place in all its messy conflictual reality.

The issue of trust points to a further issue, that of belonging together. In democracies legitimate government is based on the consent of a whole people who acknowledge their common bond together. Behind this consent, however, lies a deeper and often unstated acknowledgement and acceptance that despite our differences we belong together, ie there is a solidarity in which there is an inter-dependence and a common good. Inter-dependence and a common good require a shared community where we can belong together.

Trust also requires a re-establishment of connection between people, a re-weaving of the social fabric. Political agreements and institutions, while vital, are not enough in themselves. Connections between people and social institutions need to be made; connections which involve understanding, familiarity and relationships with the 'other', acceptance, empathy and co-operation. In all of this there is an important role for civil society: churches, business, trade unions, schools, voluntary and community groups, backed by a series of strategies involving government and other public bodies.

Inter-dependence requires a shared community where we can belong together and co-operate on common activities and in common institutions. In a divided society it is not enough to attend to issues of equity and diversity; issues of belonging together, of a shared community, of inter-dependence, of mutuality, must also receive consideration. They are vital to social trust and a key to reconciliation.

Reconciliation and Issues of Symbolic Expression

Nationhood is about the shared story we tell of ourselves and our forebears. It is also how we are described by a place, sometimes by a language, by

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historic events, by parades, remembrances, ceremonies, celebrations and monuments, by a flag and an anthem. In a 'normal' state these are the things that people have in common and that bind them together. In a contested 'space' the same things are often in dispute and pull people apart. What belongs to one community is often hated by the other. These symbolic expressions engage the affective part of ourselves - our emotions - and are profoundly important.

Reconciliation has to be expressed at the symbolic level as well as the institutional level. It will not be enough to create a neutral public or state space. A symbolic deficit will be created which will inhibit a sense of a shared community. Some 'transcendent' symbols and rituals are required to express inter-dependence and a shared community. Symbols and rituals 'work' when they represent something real, so they cannot simply be artificially created. We have to work at 'growing' common symbolic expression as well as developing real relationships of inter-dependence. We also have to recognise that communities require security at the symbolic level as well as at the institutional level.

Individual Reconciliation

Social reconciliation requires reconciled individuals, people who have undergone personal change and conversion. Behind every collective effort at reconciliation stands certain highly motivated persons whose conviction has been created through important personal experiences and who have become reconciled individuals. Faith communities can help produce and sustain such reconciled individuals, who may be able to play a key role as go-between people in politics and civic society.

Being a Community of Reconciliation

Faith communities can also be communities of reconciliation and as such offer a 'space' in the world for those who believe that human society can, if only in anticipation,

overcome its violent origins, its continuing resentments and mistrust and come to realise its true calling to become the beloved community envisaged in the biblical story. The Churches exist to hold open a social space in which society's structures and practices can be seen for what they are and in which human community can be articulated in a new way (Lewis Mudge).

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Some of us are members of a community of reconciliation in Northern Ireland - the Corrymeela Community. Corrymeela has learnt the importance of

- belonging together in a community of diversity;
- reconciliation being a practice and a journey, not a theory or a strategy or a technique;
- a safe space where people can come and meet each other, where there is an atmosphere of trust and acceptance and where differences can be acknowledged, explored and accepted;
- presence and accompaniment - of people who can give time and attention
- a community of faith being able to bring healing, of being a "touching place";
- encounter and relationships; it is only in encounter and relationships that words like trust, reconciliation and forgiveness become real;
- the importance of acknowledging and sharing our vulnerability;
- people telling their stories and listening to other peoples' stories. Our identities and lives are based strongly on the stories we tell about ourselves, our families, our communities, our countries. Thus we need places where stories and memories are explored and untangled;
- not writing people off as incorrigible baddies no matter what they have done - this is not to trivialise evil or say wrong does not matter;
- the avoidance of self-righteousness and an awareness of our own hypocrisy;
- surprise and the unexpected; reconciliation is something given as well as a practice;
- taking small steps;
- being sustained and nourished by hope and a vision of a different future;
- being involved for the long haul.

The practice of forgiveness and reconciliation in the faith community may radiate out into the wider society and have its influence there.

In Conclusion

Hope, forgiveness, reconciliation, acts of repair, the reweaving of the human fabric are signs of transcendence, that the world can be different and there can be a peaceable kingdom.

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APPENDIX ONE

FUNDAMENTALS IN DEVELOPING A PEACE PROCESS

(adapted from *New Pathways*)

1 LOOKING FOR SOME OTHER WAY

When we begin to suspect that conflict or the present situation cannot give us what we need or hope for or is unsustainable, then we are open to the possibility of looking for some other way.

When it becomes clear that neither force of arms nor force of numbers will get us what we want we may be open to find another way.

Politicians have a vital role in moving communities forward. They are figures who represent communities with all their concerns, hurts, fears, enmities and aspirations. At its best this can mean a politician accepting responsibility for the well-being of a community with a focus on "the future and the responsibility towards the future" (the German sociologist Max Weber in his essay 'Politics as a Vocation'). In the same essay Weber speaks of politicians requiring above all "trained relentlessness in viewing the realities of life, and the ability to face such realities and to measure up to them inwardly". This facing of reality and acceptance of responsibility for a community's future can mean reassessing where a community is and seeking to find new ways forward, leading to new political agreements.

2 FINDING A PARTNER

Looking for another way means that we need to find a solution with the people with whom we are in conflict. Fundamentally this means facing the reality of the situation and giving the other recognition, respect and acceptance. We stop making people fit into our version of peace. They have interests, fears, aspirations and need for security which have to be taken into account too.

Albie Sachs describes a process in South Africa where first there was an increasing recognition that change was needed. A second component of the change was the growing ability of people to learn "to look into each other's eyes" and acknowledge the fears and needs of the other. Sachs suggested that all were forced to recognise the common humanity that people shared, and he believed from this a growing understanding and mutual respect developed between people who had hitherto been adversaries.

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A real peace process requires a partner. As Shimon Peres said of the Palestine/Israel conflict:

1 think what is really important for a peace process is the creation of a partner, more than a plan. Because plans don't create partners, but if you have a partner then you can negotiate a plan.

Similarly, Nelson Mandela said of F W de Klerk:

To make peace with an enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy become your partner.

Thus we need the other to find peace. We have to develop a relation with those with whom we are in conflict. We have to be as inclusive as possible in the search for peace. We have also to involve all levels in different communities; peace is not just a deal between elite groups.

Developing a relationship with those with whom we are in conflict raises the issues of trust and reliability. Trust and reliability are necessary for people to be able to live together. Part of trust and reliability is the willingness of people to make promises and agreements, and to keep them.

3 TRUST

Some degree of trust is a necessary precondition for everything else: for sharing a space together, for sharing power and responsibility, for reconciliation. Without it nothing is possible.

What is required to create trust? Some of the factors required are:

- a willingness not to destroy the other (essential to this is the decision not to use violence);
- an acknowledgement of the other side's pain and suffering and a recognition of a common humanity;
- a willingness to understand the fears and sense of threat that the other community has of us and to seek to take them into account, even if they are thought to be groundless;
- a willingness to make conciliatory gestures and actions;
- a willingness to do things that will reduce fear and threat and provide reassurance;
- showing by signs, words and actions that we want the situation to change;
- a willingness to treat the other side with respect and to avoid humiliating them;
- a willingness to meet, to listen, to talk;
- a willingness to be bound by promises and agreements (implicit and

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explicit) which we will seek to keep. We have obligations towards the other community and we need to show there is reliability in the keeping of promises and agreements;

- a willingness to take the interests and identities of the other community into account;
- a willingness to provide for the security and well-being of the other community;
- some shared ground or togetherness that will enable conflict and differences to be dealt with;
- a willingness to develop a relationship with other groups, parties and individuals and to co-operate where possible (eg on economic and social issues).

Trust is often tentative and it grows only gradually. It is usually imperfect which is why groups require protection and external guarantors. Trust is a risk. Completely satisfactory guarantees can never be obtained that the other group and their leaders are trustworthy. Political agreements always involve risk and uncertainty.

Confidence-building is a precursor to the development of trust. It offers the possibility of trust growing. Thus in a conflict situation finding appropriate confidence-building measures is very important.

The issue of trust points to other fundamental issues - those of consent and belonging together. These underlie the workings of democracy and politics. They are, therefore, fundamental to a peace process.

4 CONSENT

A majority's right is relatively - but not totally - uncontroversial in a stable state, ie one where the vast majority give their consent to its political arrangements. However, a divided society cannot work without mutual consent or agreement. Thus the winning of consent and the development of cross community consensus must have a high priority. And this is a fundamental part of a peace process.

5 BELONGING TOGETHER

In democracies legitimate government is based on the consent of a whole people who acknowledge their common bond together. Behind this consent however lies a deeper and often unstated acknowledgement and acceptance that despite our differences we belong together. Thus, fundamental to a peace process is the envisaging of a mutually shared future.

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APPENDIX TWO

POTENTIAL GOALS FOR SOCIETAL RESPONSES TO COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

- 1 Overcome communal and official denial and silence about the past and gain public acknowledgement;
- 2 seek to memorialise the past and educate about it
- 3 obtain the facts in an account as full as possible in order to meet victims' need to know, to build a record for history, and to ensure minimal accountability and visibility of perpetrators;
- 4 end and prevent violence; transform human activity from violence and violent responses to violence - into words and institutional practices of equal respect and dignity;
- 5 forge the basis for a domestic democratic order that respects and enforces human rights;
- 6 supports the legitimacy and stability of a political accommodation or a new regime;
- 7 promote reconciliation across social divisions; reconstruct the moral and social systems devastated by violence;
- 8 promote psychological healing for individuals, groups, victims, bystanders, and offenders;
- 9 restore dignity to victims;
- 10 punish, exclude, shame, and diminish offenders for their offences;
- 11 express and seek to achieve the aspiration that "never again" shall such collective violence occur;
- 12 building an international order to try to prevent and also to respond to aggression, torture and atrocities;
- 13 accomplish each of these goals in ways that are compatible with the other goals.

Adapted from Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*, Beacon Press, 1998.

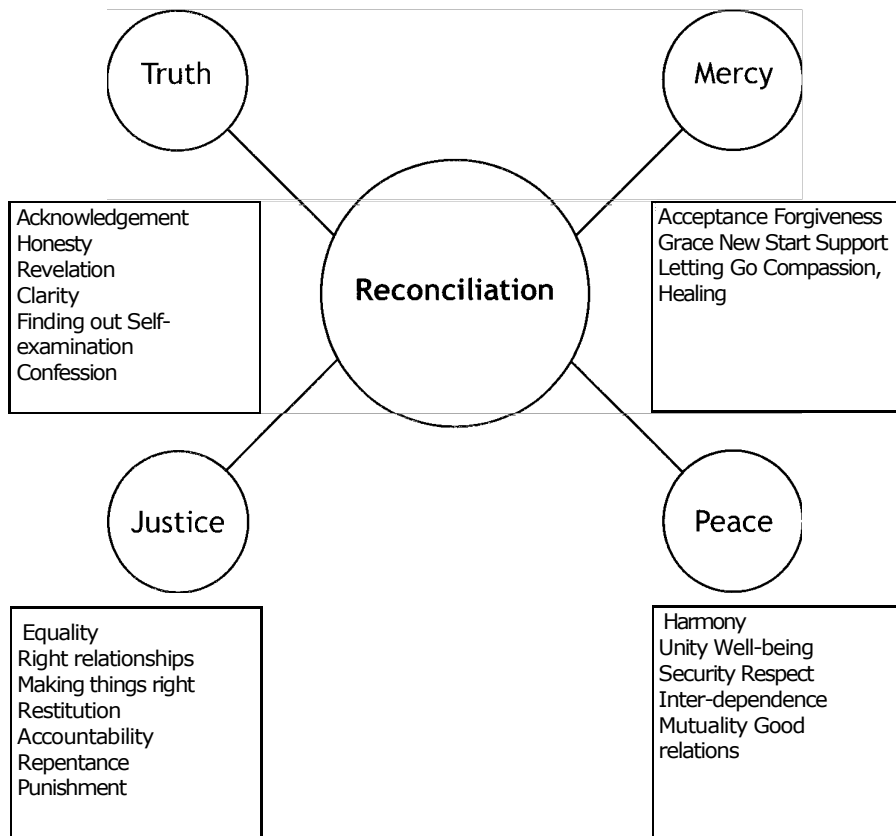
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APPENDIX THREE

THE PLACE CALLED RECONCILIATION

"Truth and mercy have met together; peace and justice have kissed" (Ps 85:10)

This text brings two paradoxes together: the claims of truth and the claims of mercy may conflict; and the claims of justice may conflict with the claims of peace. The place called reconciliation is where the different conflicting parties meet and face together the claims and tensions between truth and mercy and justice and peace.



Adapted from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in a Divided Society*, The United National University (1995).

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APPENDIX FOUR

FORGIVENESS - A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

(adapted from *Forgive Us Our Trespasses?*)

Central to the Gospel was Christ's teaching on unconditional forgiveness. Modern scholars agree that in relation to forgiveness Jesus only departed from the practice of his time in one aspect: he forgave unconditionally. The Dutch Dominican theologian Andre Lascaris says:

When Jesus started his public life, he only brought about a seemingly minimal change: he accepted people into his company who were sinners and were not able to fulfil the demands of the Torah. He forgave unconditionally. He offered communication to people without asking anything from them beforehand. He transcended the fundamental law of justice, the law of reciprocity. According to St. Luke Jesus forgave his enemies on the cross 'for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). This same power to forgive unconditionally he gave to his disciples (John 20:23).

This change is at the heart of Christianity. Jesus offered a way back into the community for people who had no way back because they could not fulfil the demands of the Law. He did this through offering unconditional forgiveness.

The phrase from the Lord's Prayer "forgive us our trespasses..." meant originally "forgive us our financial debts". In Jesus' time, as today, there was huge poverty because of debt. The remission of debt offered a way back into the community for people who were being crushed by it. The demands of the Law and the demands of debt were major oppressive realities at the time of Jesus, and Jesus was concerned about both.

Clearly a legal or a banking system cannot be run successfully if people always know that they will get off or avoid paying their debts. But if we do not allow people a way back when the legal or financial system is oppressing them, we are in essence saying that we prefer them to be destroyed.

The God revealed in Scripture wishes to offer people a way back to Him. He seeks to provide a new future and a way forward for people dominated by the past and its consequences. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the sign and promise of this. When the divine reality of forgiveness and new life is given, experienced, grasped or even glimpsed we have the possibility of forgiving others. We are able to be forgiving because we ourselves have been forgiven.

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This is why forgiveness has the priority, why there is always inclusion before exclusion, and acceptance and grace before judgement. The Lord's Prayer asks us to ask forgiveness of God only to the extent that we are willing to offer it to others.

In being injured the person is caught up both with the injury and its consequences and with the perpetrator and what they have done. Forgiveness involves coming free of the power of the past and finding ways to a different future and is usually a long and difficult journey. Forgiving the person who has done the injury lies beyond that. It does not mean ignoring or forgetting the past and giving up all claims on the perpetrator. A journey of forgiveness involves different dimensions: words (spoken and unspoken), actions (made and not made) and emotions (felt and overcome). Forgiveness is often discovered, not willed. Stories of forgiveness and repentance may help, as may the liturgical and community life of the church.

Forgiveness is not Reconciliation

There is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is our side of the process: we forgive someone who has injured us. Only we can forgive; no one can do it on our behalf. It may and often does lead to reconciliation. But not always. Why? Because the other party may not say "sorry", may not repent, or is not willing to accept our forgiveness. Forgiveness seems especially impossible when the wrongdoer does not acknowledge what they have done. In that case we may have to follow the practice of loving our enemy.

Repentance means turning and changing one's ways. The person who commits wrong has to do more than say "sorry". He or she has to turn towards the person they have wronged, acknowledge what they have done, accept responsibility, express remorse and try to make amends. That is what the Bible means by repentance. It involves a willingness to enter into new and just relationships. Repentance, like forgiveness, rarely happens at once. It is important to keep space open for little glimpses of repentance and change, for repentance involves risk and vulnerability.

Reconciliation only happens when both aspects - forgiveness and repentance - come together in a new and more just relationship. Reconciliation can be seen as the fullness of forgiveness, where both parties are set free.

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The Inter-personal and the Social

Individuals cannot be compelled to forgive or repent, even if there is a communal disposition towards forgiveness, repentance and justice and a political settlement broadly acceptable to a large majority of people. These may facilitate interpersonal forgiveness and repentance, but they do not guarantee it. Some may not repent and others may not be able to forgive. Not all the ends can be tied up.

There is a limit to what communal effort and politics can achieve. There always remains an area of transcendent activity and concern which takes us beyond the world of politics. This is particularly applicable in the case of forgiveness. The presence of forgiveness points to the transcendent concern and activity of God. It shows us the world on the "far side of revenge" (Seamus Heaney).

ANNEX

LEARNING TO FORGIVE THE UNFORGIVABLE

A story of forgiveness involving a former member of the Faith and Politics Group, Una O'Higgins O'Malley, whose father Kevin O'Higgins, the Irish Free State's Minister for Justice and External Affairs, was murdered in 1927 and her grandfather before that.

No one ever spoke to her about forgiveness, she says; it was "imprinted" in her. The men who shot her grandfather in his home for being the father of Kevin O'Higgins were almost certainly neighbours and known to her grandmother. Yet she would never identify them and insisted on forgiveness and no reprisals. Four years later, when Una was five months old, her father was shot on his way to Sunday Mass. During his five conscious hours, he too chose not to identify his killers, speaking only about forgiveness.

Sixty years later, it would be revealed that Kevin - with eight bullets in him - had managed to speak to his assailants on the roadside, telling them that he forgave them, that he understood why they had done it, but that this must be the end of the killings. There was some doubt that this occurred, but later, one of the attackers, Bill Gannon - who told this to his son - would only speak of O'Higgins as a "very misunderstood man" and would no longer carry a gun.

But what of another of the gang, Archie Doyle, who had danced on her father's grave? "I discovered about that while leafing through Uinseann McEoin's book in

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an airport bookshop in 1987 and I got seized with this awful, awful unforgiving cloud, that I hadn't ever felt as badly before. I couldn't stop it, it was like this lava pouring from a volcano . . . I had so often gone to that grave. That happened on Holy Thursday and I thought 'so much for Holy Thursday and Jesus Christ and all that'. I wanted to throw the whole thing out there and then. But on Good Friday, I made my way back to the church somehow and as I put my foot on the church porch, I had this thought - 'Have a Mass said for them all'. And that was when I felt normal again . . ." And so it happened that 60 years after the murder of Kevin O'Higgins, his daughter arranged a memorial Mass in Booterstown church for him and his killers, including Archie Doyle.

FORGIVENESS

"So there he stood upon the shore with everything in waiting. The fire was going well, fresh fish were grilling and they would bring some more (this would confirm their own importance). And at that Easter breakfast he would hear from Peter just how much he loved him. No decommissioning of the past nor rank betrayals would be mentioned simply 'Bring more fish' and 'Do you love me?'

Today as mists clear from the Agreement, hammered in Belfast last Good Friday evening, a voice speaks from far South Africa of truth and reconciliation and puts a definition on forgiveness: 'It is', the bishop says, 'a way of dealing with the past so as to plan the future'. Poor Peter's past had been disastrous but he was asked to bring along his gifts of fish and loving; nothing more was needed to complete this paschal sharing and look towards the future."

Una O'Higgins O'Malley

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BOOKS ON RECONCILIATION WE HAVE FOUND HELPFUL

- Robert Schreiter Reconciliation, Orbis, 1996
- Robert Schreiter The Ministry of Reconciliation, Orbis, 1998
- Miroslav Volf Exclusion and Embrace, Abingdon, 1996
- Also articles "A Vision of Embrace: Theological Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Conflict", Ecumenical Review, April 1995
- "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation", Interpretation, 54/2, April, 2000
- Ed Gregory Baum **The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenges to the Churches**, World Council of Churches Publications, 1997
- Ed Michael Hurley **Reconciliation in Religion and Society**, Institute of Irish Studies, 1994
- Eds Alan Falconer and Joseph Liechty **Reconciling Memories**, the Columba Press, 1998 (2nd edition)
- Publications of the Faith and Politics Group. In particular **Remembrance and Forgetting** (1998), Inter-Church Centre, 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ
- Donald Shriver **An Ethic for Enemies**, Oxford University Press, 1995
- Geiko Mueller-Fahrenholz **The Art of Forgiveness**, World Council of Churches Publications, 1997
- Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg **Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland**, the Columba Press, 2001
- John Paul Lederach **The Journey Towards Reconciliation**, Herald Press, 1999

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FOR A DISCUSSION ON RESTITUTION

Elazar Barkan **The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices**, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000

FOR THE ROLE OF TRUTH COMMISSIONS

Priscilla B Hayner **Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity**, Routledge, 2001

FOR ISSUES IN RELATION TO PUNISHMENT, TRUTH COMMISSIONS, REPARATIONS AND APOLOGY

Martha Minow **Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence**, Beacon, 1998

FOR ISSUES IN RELATION TO FORGIVENESS

Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland
Forgiveness Papers (www.econl.org/centre)

Perspectives on Reconciliation

PUBLICATIONS OF THE FAITH AND POLITICS GROUP

Breaking Down the Enmity: Faith and Politics in Northern Ireland (1985) (A reflection on the link between faith and politics in Northern Ireland)

Understanding the Signs of the Times: A Christian Response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1986)

(The above published with an introduction as **Choose Life: Christian Responses to the Northern Ireland Conflict** (1987))

A Declaration of Faith and Commitment by Christians in Northern Ireland (1986)

(The Declaration was not initiated by the Group but members were involved in its drafting)

Towards an Island that Works: Facing Division in Ireland

(1987) (Dealing primarily with the Republic of Ireland)

(All the above published as **Living the Kingdom** (1989))

Towards Peace and Stability? A Critical Assessment of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1988)

Burying Our Dead: Political Funerals in Northern Ireland (1992)

(All the above, together with a new introduction were published as **Breaking Down the Enmity: Faith and Politics in the Northern Ireland Conflict** (1993))

The Things that Make for Peace (1995)

(Post-ceasefires reflections)

Liberty to the Captives? The Early Release of Politically Motivated Prisoners (1995) **Forgive**

us our Trespasses? : Reconciliation and Political Healing in Northern Ireland (1996) **Doing Unto**

Others : Parity of Esteem in a Contested Space (1997)

New Pathways : Developing a Peace Process in Northern Ireland (1997)

Remembrance and Forgetting (1998)

Comment on the Patten Commission Report (1999)

Statement on the issue of Decommissioning of Paramilitary Weapons (1999)

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Boasting: Self-righteous Collective Superiority as a Cause of Conflict (1999)

Transitions (2001)

(Dealing with changes in Irishness and Britishness and issues of identity)

A **Time to Heal: Perspectives on Reconciliation** (2002)

KEY DATES

Anglo-Irish Agreement	1985
IRA and Loyalist Ceasefires	1994
Good Friday Agreement	1998
Patten Commission Report on Policing	1999
IRA decommissions some of its weapons	2001
New Policing Board established	2001

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