# *Touchstone*

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## Reconciliation

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## EDITORIAL

The image on the cover is of the apse of the former St. Michael's Cathedral, destroyed in the Coventry Blitz of 1940. The walls of the medieval cathedral are all that remained salvageable after German bombing, and they have been left standing open to the sky as a memorial to the loss and suffering of war. On the stone altar is a replica of a cross of charred timbers made immediately after the destruction by a member of the cathedral staff. Next to these symbols of destruction stands the dramatically modern cathedral consecrated in 1962.

Another symbol from the ruins, and now fixed to the centre of the altar cross of the present cathedral, is a cross of nails. The cross is made from three huge nails pulled from the wreckage of a medieval roof truss after the bombing. As part of its call to a ministry of reconciliation, Coventry Cathedral presented a replica of this cross to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, a church destroyed by Allied bombing, the ruins of which are also kept as a memorial alongside a new Kaiser Wilhelm Church. Replicas of the cross of nails also have been given to Cross of Nails Centres located around the world, linking each one to the Ministry of Reconciliation of Coventry Cathedral, a ministry begun in 1940 out of a determination not to respond to the bombing of Coventry by seeking vengeance. Coventry Cathedral endures as a symbol of the call to seek reconciliation.

Scriptural Christianity holds that reconciliation is the goal and great result of God's work in Jesus Christ. We have peace with God through the ministry and self-offering of Jesus as the alienation born of human rebellion and sin is overcome through a wholly divine initiative. "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). Moreover, this reconciliation with God has power to bring about reconciliation among humankind. Dividing walls between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female can come tumbling down (Gal: 3:28). Indeed, the failure to live from God's reconciling love and to pass it on would reveal a bankruptcy of faith. The logic is simple: "Beloved, since God has loved us so much, we also ought to love one another" (1 Jn. 4:11).

Not everything that happens among the beloved, of course, is as it should be, and it can prove difficult to love all sisters and brothers. How difficult to forgive when terribly hurtful things happen, when an individual or a people is deliberately humiliated or unfairly discriminated against, attacked or abused, cheated or betrayed—whether within the fellowship of the church or outside it. We hear the word of Jesus to banish hatred from our hearts and insulting speech from our lips (Matt. 5:22), and even to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44). The standard of faithful discipleship is raised even higher when we take into account that, in praying as Jesus gave us example, we ask to be forgiven on just the

basis that we forgive others. And forgiveness can be hard.

As I write this, a seven-year old girl has been shot in the back and paralyzed in Aleppo—just before a cease-fire was to come into effect. In the civil war in Syria, in the heartless executions of ISIS and other terrorist acts, in the use of rape as a military tactic in Congo, how is reconciliation possible? How do people forgive if within there is only the anguish and rage of loss? It is both amazing and inspiring that there are people who rise above the natural lust for vengeance, and who thus signal the possibility of ending cycles of violence and suffering. One such person is Palestinian doctor Izzeldin Abuelaish whose daughters were killed in an Israeli incursion into Gaza in 2009. In *I Shall not Hate* he expresses the hope that his daughters will be "the last sacrifice on the road to peace between Palestinians and Israelis." But how long and hard is the road! As those who work with victims have observed, it may be others than those of the families of victims who will be able to minister to perpetrators of violence who accept responsibility for their actions and who seek forgiveness.

It is not surprising that reconciliation should be the theme of a theological journal. But it is heartening that it is also a vital and timely theme in the world at large. The existence of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, first in South Africa, and then here in Canada, show that reconciliation can have riveting and politically charged relevance for an entire nation. The order of the two mandates in the work of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) is crucial: without the telling of truth about the injustices that have been perpetrated, there can be no reconciliation, no moving forward, and no future shared on a fairer basis.

In this number of *Touchstone,* Russell Daye reports on the South African experience with its TRC and the Canadian experience with its TRC. He asks difficult questions of Canadian churches, and ponders the degree to which we have acknowledged the truth of unloving and even hateful actions, sometimes carried out in the name of Jesus. He asks what it will take to achieve reconciliation between Canadian society as a whole and the indigenous people of Canada, and presents a five-act drama of the actions that he believes will be required to achieve “political forgiveness.” Daye also brings the acts of his drama into dialogue with recent experiences at a present-day Christian camp meeting and at a centre for Vedic spirituality.

*Touchstone* is honoured to have the current moderator of the United Church, the Rt. Rev. Jordan Cantwell, also addressing the theme of reconciliation, and particularly our Canadian challenge of building

right relationship with first peoples. In our "From the Heart" article, she tells of her early experience in South Africa, and of the surprise of being challenged by her hosts to think about injustice at home. Underscoring a strong link between the Christian's experience of reconciliation with God in Christ and the call to become ambassadors of reconciliation, Cantwell insightfully and gently challenges us to leave behind destructive patterns of an old life and to imagine our need for resurrection.

Recognition that the concept and practice of reconciliation has a strong scriptural basis warrants an exposition of the Bible's testimony. Philip Ziegler, a Canadian theologian transplanted to Scotland, provides us with such in a substantial if necessarily brief account in our lead article. He observes that, while the specific language of reconciliation is rare in the New Testament, it is nonetheless vital in grasping the full significance of God's saving action in Christ. He too connects the divine gift of reconciliation with the consequent ministry of reconciliation to which Christians are called as both ambassadors and practitioners. Ziegler asserts the utter importance of the divine initiative for all human endeavour in the practice of reconciliation: "The gift of reconciliation founds, funds and directs the ministry of reconciliation; it is its essential presupposition."

Jean-Pierre Fortin is another transplanted Canadian scholar, who now teaches in Chicago, and who brings special attention to the courageous ministry and theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His article focusses on Bonhoeffer's understanding of the communal role of the church as an agent of reconciliation. Only when the church becomes a confessing community, when it confesses its own sins and failings before the world, and seeks forgiveness from God, can it show the kind of leadership the world needs. In fact, the church is called to shoulder vicariously the sin and failure of the world so as to be a priest to the world. In the light of Bonhoeffer's teaching, one wonders in what way the churches have or have not led the way in confessing guilt and seeking forgiveness with the indigenous peoples in Canada.

Once transplanted to South Korea along with his wife as mission personnel of The United Church of Canada, and now returned home, David Kim-Cragg lifts up the struggle for democracy by Korean Christians in the 1960s and 70s. In "Protest as Praise" he tells the story of a movement in which protest and worship were woven integrally together. Democracy is a part of Korean life today, and one might speak of the present situation as one of political reconciliation. However, this present flourishing democracy was not achieved without the protestors speaking truth about the reality of dictatorship. Reconciliation can come

about only after truth-telling has taken place.

Much is said and written today about the bad effects of colonialism and empire, including the destruction of cultural heritages. Lots of bad there was, to be sure: contempt, exploitation, slavery, theft of land, and killing that verged on genocide. Yet the story is not uncomplicated and sometimes full of paradox.[1] Of particular concern to the church is the way that all Christian missionary effort can be condemned as a mere function of colonialism. In "A Second Look at the Legacy of the Missionaries," Mac Watts addresses this blanket dismissal, and speaks of the way that the missionary preservation of local culture and language connects the stories of an eighteenth-century German missionary among the Tamils of south India and of a contemporary African scholar of mission now teaching at Yale. There is no doubt that truth suffers when the harm done by representatives of religion to colonized peoples is denied. Truth suffers also when the good done by such representatives is denied.

In the Profile, Barry Morris tells the story of Bob Lindsey, whose ministry as both as a pastor and as a denominational staff leader focused on overcoming divisions between the well-off and the disadvantaged. Following the usual five book reviews, this number concludes with a sermon by the late David H. C. Read, who served as minister of New York's Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church from 1956 to 1989. While it was preached in 1973, this sermon expounds the theme of reconciliation in the Letter to the Ephesians in an arresting way.

A last note concerns the obituary of a priest-clown in the Church of England found in our Insert pages. I am a reader of the weekly newspaper, *The Economist*, and usually turn to its last-page obituary first, where obituary editor Ann Wroe always presents a life that is fascinating and that provides a revealing lens on our world. This obituary of Roly Bain is a moving reminder of the way that God's call to the ministry of reconciliation escapes the bounds of domestication.

*Peter Wyatt*

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[1] For example, Niall Ferguson documents a complex story in *Empire: the Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). With regard to the present state of development in the world, he observes that there may not have been "a less bloody path to modernity" (xxvi).

**A BRIEF THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION**
**by Philip G. Ziegler**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us* (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

**Introduction**

Among the various concepts and metaphors by means of which the reality of salvation is attested in Scripture, the language of "reconciliation" is notably prominent in traditional Protestant doctrine and continues to be so today. Its close association with ideas of atonement, justification, and forgiveness, as well as its suggestive personal, ethical, and political valences combine to recommend it.[1] The specific terminology of reconciliation is relatively rare in the New Testament, restricted to but a few places in the Pauline letter collection.[2] Yet its significance for grasping the force, the form, and the fruits of God's saving action for us in Christ is prodigious.

What follows are but some few theological remarks on Paul's testimony in Romans 5:10-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. The aim is simply to consider the nature of the divine *gift* of reconciliation and the Christian *ministry* or reconciliation to which it gives rise. Christian

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[1] Karl Barth set his own extensive account of salvation under the rubric of "The Doctrine of Reconciliation" in his *Church Dogmatics* IV.1–4, the programmatic introduction of which can be read in Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (London: Continuum/T&T Clark, 2004). Cf. Jan Milič Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), John W. de Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (London: SCM, 2002), Michael Jesse Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, revised edition (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2009), and the essays collected in *The Theology of Reconciliation,* ed. Colin Gunton (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2003). For a recent searching exploration of the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation in this relation by a Canadian theologian see Jon Coutts, *A Shared Mercy: Karl Barth on Forgiveness in the Church* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016).

[2] Rom. 5:10-11, 11:15; 1 Cor. 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20, 22. For discussion see Ernst Käsemann, "Some Thoughts on the Theme of 'The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the New Testament,"' in *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. J.M. Robinson, trans. C.E. Carlston and R.P. Scharlemann (London: SCM Press, 1971), 49-64.

thinking about reconciliation rapidly—and rightly—spirals outward into ecclesial, ethical and political questions and affairs; in this it reflects the real dynamic of divine reconciliation itself, the movement and direction of which is certainly centrifugal. Yet perhaps for just this reason there is a particular value in concentrating for a moment upon the very heart of the matter, namely the gospel word that "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10).

**The Divine Gift of Reconciliation**

*But the free gift is not like the trespass . . .* (Rom. 5:15)

The divine gift of reconciliation seeks and finds us in a situation of enmity and estrangement, which is to say, in a situation of hostility and opposition to God, both open and obscured. This situation bespeaks our captivity to the false lordships of Sin and Death, as well as our active and passive complicity in the disintegration of our own humanity under their sway. Reconciliation breaks in upon the disobedient, the faithless, those whose lives are *incurvatus in se* and so are loveless parables of contempt for God and neighbour. In short, "while yet sinners," God's reconciling love finds us (Rom. 5:8). The motive and rationale for reconciliation lie solely and absolutely in God's own sovereign loving will: the need is wholly ours; the reconciling initiative and power is wholly God's. For reconciliation *is* an act of grace, a divine gift utterly incongruous with anything that might be owed, merited, or befitting, and so just the opposite of us "getting what we deserve."[3]

God too is the unique *agent* of reconciliation. We are its recipients, those upon whom God acts. God reconciles; we are reconciled. The form of God's reconciling act, as Paul stresses time and again, is the self-giving of the Son unto death on the cross: we are reconciled to God *by* the cross (Col. 1:22, Rom. 5:10, 2 Cor. 5:14, 19, 21). How does this event reconcile estranged humans to their God? Paul's talk of reconciliation keeps close company with talk of Christ's vicarious representation, of God's forgiveness or non-imputation of sin, of divine

[3] "The concept of revelation . . . emphasizes that God's saving power is essentially the power of his love"—so Victor Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 336. On the Pauline logic of "gift" and its radical account of the "incongruity of grace" see now exhaustively John M.G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

justification, and of purification. Speaking as he is about "the unspeakable" eschatological reality of salvation, Paul's witness is rightly "metaphorical and indirect" as well as pluriform.[4] Reconciliation is the work of a divine justice that makes for human peace and the work of a divine peace that delivers human justice. But for all the proper mystery of this reality, Paul's testimony to it is not obscure: it is clear that God reconciles us by rectifying the old situation of estrangement and hostility by the advent of a new situation "in Christ," which at once supplants it objectively, and liberates us from our subjective entanglements in it. In the world now set to rights with God by God, the inhumanity and absurdity of our enmity is made patent precisely as that which God graciously nullifies for us. This is the work of the cross, a work whose wealth demands a manifold metaphorical witness.

God reconciles us *with God's own self.* It is the relationship between God and the human creature which is the primary object of this act of divine grace. As Calvin explains, the resolution of the "quarrel between God and us" is ever the "main purpose of the Gospel."[5] Yet not only "we" but also "the world," and indeed "all things," are caught up in God's reconciling action: reconciliation is a gift at once personal and global in scope and significance (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:20). One of the wider aims of divine reconciliation is undoubtedly to end the mutual enmity among peoples, of which the division between Gentile and Jew is exemplary (Eph. 2:14-19). Yet, the rectification of all things has its origin and paradigm in the restoration of a right relation between God and human beings, that is, in a divine work of sheer goodness and mercy so disproportionate with the hostility and opposition that confronts it, so as to be its antithesis. God's reconciling love does not work itself out within or according to existing "schemes"; rather, it breaks up and opens all such existing schemes, contradicting, overthrowing, and displacing them (Gal. 3:28, 6:14; Eph. 2:14-16). This act of grace is so unconstrained and total, so unprecedented and powerful, that Paul is driven to speak of it as another act of divine creation (2 Cor. 5: 17).

Our reconciliation with God—like the "great turn of the ages" in the death and resurrection of Christ which accomplishes it—is "*the fact*"

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[4] See Charles B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 84-5.

[5] John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, and the Epistles of Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, ed. D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance, trans. T.A. Smail (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1964), 77.

from which all else follows.[6] Expressed negatively, the gift of reconciliation brings our alienation from God to an end and releases us from its distorting effects; said positively, it establishes a new amity and humanizing peace with God. This peace is as secure as the grace that affords it is sovereign. And in it there is genuine rest and joyful assurance. Yet this peace is not idle. For reconciliation arises when God graciously repudiates the world that sin and enmity have made, displacing it and all its schemes with another world, i.e., the world of the Kingdom, that new creation in Christ. To be reconciled to God is to be set and to dwell in this new world, to orient ourselves to it, and to live in accord with the grain of its reality. Peace with God is *life* and so characterizes the manner of our active vocation. This new human life actively at peace with God is simply the "ministry of reconciliation."

**The Human Vocation of Reconciliation**

*For Christ's love lays claim to us . . .* (2 Cor. 5:14)

The gift of reconciliation in Christ gives rise to the church's ministry of reconciliation because, as the Barmen Theological Declaration has it, through Christ "befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures."[7] And so grace makes us its free and joyful advocates and ambassadors: to be reconciled to God in Christ is to be conscripted to the cause of that very same reconciling power. Bonhoeffer observes in a similar vein that the relation of the Christian congregation to the world "is completely determined by God's relation to the world" and thus has as its "task and essence . . . to proclaim precisely to this world its reconciliation with God, and to disclose to it the reality of the love of God."[8] The gift of reconciliation founds, funds, and directs the ministry of reconciliation; it is its essential presupposition. And it does so without being merely occasional or

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[6] J. Louis Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages," in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 93.

[7] *https://www.ekd.de/english/barmen_theological_declaration.html*. Glossing Paul's claim cited in the epigraph here, Furnish suggests that the force of the remark in 2 Cor. 5:14 is the same as Paul's claim elsewhere that the Christian life is one lived "under the dominion of grace" (Rom. 6:14)—Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 325.

[8] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. C.J. Green, trans. I. Tödt *et al.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 66.

instrumental to it: even as it calls out and claims our active service, the gift of salvation is always also and fundamentally its own proper end.

The ministry envisaged encompasses both the effective proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation and the courageous practice of Christian lives whose very shape and substance attest the reality of that gospel.

First, it is the vocation of Christians to be *ambassadors* of the "word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19), which is to say, to be witnesses to the gospel word that is the "power for salvation" (Rom. 1:16). The announcement of such a word is not merely talk *about* reconciliation; it is *the very offer of* reconciliation by way of the gospel. In their efforts to recover and reform the preaching office, Protestant theologians of the sixteenth century stressed that it was the particular duty of ordered ministers "to apply to us the fruit of Christ's death" through their preaching.[9] Without derogation of that office, it can and must certainly be said that this apostolic responsibility properly belongs to the entire Christian community.[10] Christian witness in all its varied forms and *fora* will be ambitious for one thing, namely, to make the gift of friendship with God in Christ known to all those to whom it has been given.

Second, it is the vocation of Christians to be *practitioners* of reconciliation. We may and must now live as friends of God; it is time—and there is time—for that. A full account of this life of friendship with God would be best developed in terms of the original vocabulary of the Christian life in the New Testament: faith, hope, love, freedom, obedience, humility, gratitude, joy, self-giving. Its contours might also be traced in relief from those features of the life of enmity with God opposed and annulled by the gift of reconciliation: a truly human existence now lived free from mistrust, suspicion, despair and hate; free from captivities of all kinds; free from thanklessness, self-obsessed pride, and self-belittling resentment; and free from our lording over others and suffering the illegitimate lordship of others.

Actually to live a life of friendship with God is the hope and prayer of individual Christians; it is also the hope and prayer of Christian communities. And it is the hope and prayer of Christians for the world—

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[9] Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 79.

[10] See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 336. On the constitutive nature of proclamation to Paul's own apostolic work, and by extension to the apostolic constitution of the church as such, see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 63.

faith rightly longs for all our familial, social, economic, and political relations to be drawn out of their continued futile, absurd, and unknowing enmity with God, and so also to become spheres where the practice of reconciliation—the performance of genuine human freedom before God and with one another—is found, welcomed, and celebrated. Crucially, in the context of Christian faith, such hope and prayer are not proxies for present action but rather themselves genuine acts—acts of invocation—which necessarily enjoin and enkindle all manner of other human action. Christians assume responsibility for those things for which they hope and pray, and so "act in accordance with their prayer."[11] The mainsprings of all Christian social and political witness, service, and struggle lie here.

Two final observations in this regard—first, a full account of the proclamation and practice of our friendship with God would need to be set firmly in a pneumatological register. For both effective Christian witness and authentic Christian liberty are fruits of the Spirit and must be welcomed and acknowledged as such. Second, concern for the proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation and concern for the practice of reconciliation cannot in any way be played off against each other. For the word of reconciliation is the power at work in all such practice, even as the practice of reconciliation is eloquent testimony to the gospel message itself. It is with both words and deeds that Christians exercise their ministry of reconciliation to "call the world to the very different accounting which is only possible in Jesus Christ."[12]

## Conclusion

*Be ye reconciled to God!* (2 Cor. 5:20)

In pursuit of their ministry of reconciliation in the world, Christians must continually recall its centre and source in the astonishing work of God's grace in Christ. For faith's final interest does not rest in reconciliation as such, but in the Reconciler, of whose love and righteousness and mercy all enactments of creaturely reconciliation are but so many parables.[13] In our thinking and speaking about reconciliation it is right and necessary that the theological register encompass and illumine both the personal

[11] Karl Barth, *The Christian Life*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 205.
[12] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 77.
[13] Cf. Colin Gunton, "Towards a Theology of Reconciliation," in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, 174.

and the political. For the doctrine of reconciliation is a signal instance of what Johann Baptist Metz has called "dogma as a dangerous memory"—dangerous precisely as its eschatological content "threatens the present and calls it into question because it remembers a future that is still outstanding."[14] That future is one in which the ministry of reconciliation is finally made redundant by the triumph of a creaturely peace that arises from, bespeaks, and rejoices in the lordship of Christ, the sovereign reign of the gracious God of the gospel. In hope during time that remains, the ministry of reconciliation is "our daily bread," as Taizé's Brother Roger once remarked.[15] So it is that the grateful witness and service of the *ecclesia militans* continues since, as Calvin observes, "the work of the Gospel ambassadors is perpetual for the Gospel must be proclaimed ceaselessly in the Church to the end of the world and it cannot be preached without a promise of the forgiveness of sins."[16]

[14] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, trans. D. Smith (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 200.

[15] At the opening of the Taizé Church of Reconciliation in 1962; see *http://www.taize.fr/en_article14240.html*.

[16] Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 80.

# THE CHURCH AS CONFESSING COMMUNITY: DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S THEOLOGY OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

**by Jean-Pierre Fortin**

> We believe in a Jesus who came to bring life in fullness, and we believe in a living God who gives life to human beings and wills that they actually live. These radical truths of faith really become truths, and radical truths, when the church genuinely enters into the life and death of its people. Then the church will be faced with the same option as confronts every human being: either we believe in a God of life, or we serve the idols of death.[1]

These words pronounced by Archbishop Oscar Romero convey his conviction that the church, as community of faith, ought to embody the gospel in the present where too significant a portion of humankind is subjected to unacceptable living conditions and exploitation. The same conviction undergirded the life and theology of German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[2] In *Sanctorum Communio,* published in 1930, Bonhoeffer foresaw the importance for Christians of responsibly acknowledging and assuming their individual and communal guilt toward and before other human beings and God. By the grace of Christ crucified and risen, human beings are invited to find in him the primary revelation of, and necessary mediation to, their true selves and God. Confronted by the Truth in person, they are moulded by the Holy Spirit in conformity to Christ's being and existence, which enables and prepares them for a life of dedication to others in service, as members of his unique body, the church.

In his works, *Discipleship* and *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer fleshes out the theological, moral and spiritual implications of this basic conviction for his own Christian life and ministry. Engaging pastoral ministry, seeking and obtaining ordination in the Lutheran Church as the Nazis are rising to power, he leaves the University of Berlin to devote himself to training

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[1] Oscar A. Romero, "Louvain Address," cited in Jon Sobrino, *Archbishop Romero: Memories and Reflections*, trans. Robert R. Barr, J. Matthew Ashley, and Margaret Wilde (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 125.

[2] For a comparative study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's and Archbishop Romero's prophetic voices and witnesses, see Geffrey B. Kelly, "Bonhoeffer and Romero: Prophets of Justice for the Oppressed," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 46 (1992), 85-105.

seminarians in Finkenwalde, where Bonhoeffer enlightened his pupils about the lifelong work of conversion. The followers of Christ are summoned to journey from egotistic isolation to being and existence for others, regaining their humanity and dignity in authentic relationships mediated by, and ordained to, Christ. The life of prayer and service, accomplished with and for others, forges humanity into a unique community of faith, which itself becomes a privileged medium for the embodiment and action of Christ in and for the world. In what follows, I will demonstrate that for Dietrich Bonhoeffer the church ought to be understood first and foremost as community of confession, where forgiveness and reconciliation are provided by Christ himself, who leads his disciples to acknowledge their common need of spiritual transformation, and empowers them to act as vicarious representatives ministering to one another and those in the world most in need. Confession leads to, and ultimately becomes, a paradigmatic form of discipleship. The present article intends to complement recent comparative studies,[3] historical analyses[4] and social-political transpositions[5] by proposing an intrinsic exploration of Bonhoeffer's

[3] See *Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought,* ed. Willis Jenkins and Jennifer McBride (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); A. James Reimer, "Jesus Christ, the Man for Others: The Suffering God in the Thought of Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 62, no. 3 (2006), 499-509, and Charles T. Mathewes, "A Tale of Two Judgments: Bonhoeffer and Arendt on Evil, Understanding, and Limits, and the Limits of Understanding Evil," *Journal of Religion* 80, no. 3 (2000), 375-404.

[4] See Lori B. Hale, "From Loving Enemies to Acting Responsibly: Forgiveness in the Life and Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Word & World* 27, no. 1 (2007), 79-87; Christine C. Schliesser, "Accepting Guilt for the Sake of Germany: An Analysis of Bonhoeffer's Concept of Accepting Guilt and Its Implications for Bonhoeffer's Political Resistance," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 60 (2006), 56-68, and Klemens von Klemperer, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Confession and Resistance," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53 (1999), 47-59.

[5] See *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, ed. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, vol. 146 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); Philip G. Ziegler, "Witness to Christ's Dominion: The Political Service of the Church," *Theology* 116, no. 5 (2013), 323-31; Jennifer McBride, "Christ Existing as Concrete Community Today," *Theology Today* 71, no. 1 (2014), 92-105, and Stephen Brown, "Bonhoeffer's Continuing Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement," *Ecumenical Review* 67, no. 2

theology of ecclesial confession from *Sanctorum Communio* to *Ethics*.

**Created in Relationship to God**

In *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer argues that the human being was created to be and act as image of God: mediation of the divine is constitutive of human personhood. Human solidarity rests on God's effective willingness to reveal Godself in and through human nature and relationships.[6] This relational understanding of the human person sets Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology securely within the Lutheran tradition. Human nature and freedom of action are gifts received from and exercised in God to build (and rebuild) community. Human beings do not live in isolation from one another. The bearings of human freedom are not restricted to the individual. The goodness and praise, evilness and guilt pertaining to human action affect and involve all. Before God, humankind stands or falls as one, every person adding her own chapter to the collective history of human responsibility. Each individual is both part and representative of the humankind that forms one "collective person."[7] Just as humankind incurs universal guilt in the free misdeeds of each individual, humankind can be redeemed by the saving action of a single person.[8] This person is none other than Jesus Christ, in whom human beings find authentic existence.

Bonhoeffer perceives in the church the risen Christ's particular mode of existence in this world. The church is the human community renewed and living in, from, and for Christ; the organized and differentiated body drawing energy from and bringing Christ's saving grace to historical manifestation.[9] Christ saves by bringing human beings into communion with God. Christ summons and empowers human beings to be involved in the construction of the ecclesial body by letting them have a share in his vicarious mode of existence and action. Renewed communion with God supposes subjection to divine judgment, that is, the ability to assume one's dire need of assistance. In their failure to flourish and please God, human beings find a sure manifestation of their

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(2015), 308-18.

[6] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, ed. Joachim von Soosten, trans. Clifford J. Green, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English [DBWE] (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 55.

[7] Ibid., 121.

[8] Ibid., 119-20.

[9] Ibid., 121.

solidarity in nature and sin. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, Christ takes shape in the church, the community being formed after him in faith for love.[10] Christ lives and is made present in charitable gestures toward others, who are worthy of love because they are irreplaceable images of God.[11]

Members of the church are thus the people called to be and act as Christ for one another.[12] Constituted in him as one organic body, individuals and communities enjoy the fullness of Christ's indivisible presence.[13] Bonhoeffer understands the formation of the church as a developmental process whose major steps are taught, enacted, and celebrated as the sacraments. In infant baptism all human beings are consecrated to, and promised, a life of fellowship in and with Christ. In the liturgy of the Word, hearers are invited to accept in freedom the transformative gift of the Gospel. In the Eucharist, participants join the body of Christ by professing their faith and receiving Christ as nourishment.[14] Paul the Apostle typifies the Christian way of living in which discipleship is fulfilled as service so disinterested that it suffers personal rejection for the salvation of others. Paul communes most intensely with God when he follows Christ on the way to the cross and acts before God as vicarious representative of the communities to whom he ministers.[15]

**Bearing Witness to Christ**

That the notion of vicarious representative action (*Stellvertretung*) assumes a pivotal function in Bonhoeffer's theology transpires clearly in the 1933 lectures on christology. Here he presents Christ as unique mediator, standing before God on behalf of all humans.[16] Christ redefines human existence by setting himself as bridge between the self as it effectively is (divided and estranged from God) and the self as it ought to be (united and in communion with God). Without the external intervention of Christ, the self remains trapped within, living only from the irreconcilable representations produced by a proud ego and a guilty

[10] *Sanctorum Communio*, 165, 202.
[11] Ibid., 170.
[12] Ibid., 191.
[13] Ibid., 225-26.
[14] Ibid., 247.
[15] Ibid., 151-52.
[16] Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (New York: HarperOne, 1978), 48.

conscience.[17] From Christ springs new hope, for in him humanity enters upon a new story—the history of salvation—in the figure of the altruistically minded disciple.[18]

Four years later, in *Discipleship*, as the Confessing Church suffers repression from the Nazi regime, Bonhoeffer further spells out the ecclesiological and pastoral implications of Christ's mediation of revelation and salvation. Communion with God in Christ estranges the human person from the world, incorporating her into a community closely identifying with Christ himself. Authentic human existence is not found outside the church, the community that witnesses to and for Christ. Vicarious suffering forms the core of Christian discipleship, God-given participation in the passion of Christ being the preparation for, and accomplishment of, human salvation.[19]

Suffering the world with and for Christ profoundly transforms human nature and community, moulding them into his image. The work is Christ's: he forms and indwells his disciples, acting in their stead. The true identity of God in Christ shows through in the work accomplished by his disciples. The God of mercy reaches out in love, relinquishing the exercise of power to share in the predicament of humans, to carry their burdens with and for them. God in Christ becomes poor, offering Godself as a pure sacrifice, being ready to die at the hands of those he came to save. "From baptism all the way to martyrdom," claims Bonhoeffer, "it is the same suffering and the same death. It is the new creation of the image of God through the crucified one."[20] As L. Gregory Jones notes, for Bonhoeffer forgiveness is grace. Received and expressed in discipleship, it is costly. "Forgiveness acknowledges the importance of judgment, repentance, confession, and the love of enemies in the context of truthful Christian community marked by God's action in Christ."[21]

In a series of sermons on 1 Corinthians 13 in 1934, Bonhoeffer had indeed singled out the defining attributes of Christian love. *Infinite*

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[17] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together, Prayerbook of the Bible*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, DBWE 5 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 33.

[18] Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 60.

[19] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, DBWE 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 88.

[20] Ibid., 286.

[21] L. Gregory Jones, "The Cost of Forgiveness: Grace, Christian Community and the Politics of Worldly Discipleship," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 46 (1992), 157.

*patience*: relentlessly covering the distance, overcoming the resistance and suffering the violence that estranges the human person from God.[22] *Infinite forgiveness*: always perceiving in, over, and beyond the faulty and wicked enemy a person redeemed and loved by Christ.[23] *Infinite self-sacrifice*: steadfastly enduring forsakenness and risking damnation to bring others back to their true selves and God.[24]

In *Life Together*, published in 1939, Bonhoeffer further argues that Christians first express this love by bearing each other and their burden of responsibility through confession and intercessory prayer. Confession of their sins to another and confession of another's sins to them is made and heard as subjects under the judgment of God, underneath the cross of Jesus.[25] Sharing intently in one another's human condition, Christians are led to pray on behalf of one another as if they were praying over themselves.[26] The duty to confess to and pray for one another is a primordial responsibility for Christians because of the acute awareness of their own fallibility.

Bonhoeffer here puts into practice a theology of the church whose foundations he had laid as early as 1933. Preaching in Berlin six months after Hitler had seized power, Bonhoeffer then presented the church as the community of those who, after confessing Christ as God, like Simon-Peter, are quick to deny him.

> The church of Peter is the church that shares his weakness, the church that also keeps denying Christ and falling down, being disloyal, of little faith, fearful, a church that again and again looks away from its mission and toward the world and its opinions. The church of Peter is the church of all those who are ashamed of their Lord, at the very moment when they should be standing up for him.[27]

Beyond a not so veiled invitation to stand for Christ and the gospel against the totalitarian ambitions of the Nazi regime, these words

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[22] Bonhoeffer, "What Love Wants," in *Collected Sermons*, ed. Isabel Best, trans. Douglas W. Stott *et al*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 151.
[23] Bonhoeffer, "Love Our Enemies," in *Collected Sermons*, 199.
[24] Bonhoeffer, "A Church That Believes, Hopes, and Loves," in *Collected Sermons*, 165.
[25] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 114-15.
[26] Ibid., 90-91.
[27] Bonhoeffer, "Who Do You Say That I Am?" in *Collected Sermons*, 84-85.

convey profound insight into human nature. Humanity is most faithful to itself and to God when it honestly acknowledges, and repents for, its failures and shortcomings. The heartfelt awareness of sheer moral and spiritual inadequacy is the surest access human beings possess to themselves and God. Nicola J. Wilkes aptly comments: "The church community for Bonhoeffer is one that recognizes that weakness is integral to humanity. In confession of sin all concealment is gone, weakness is unveiled and embraced, and community is re-established."[28] The human being is a confessing animal.

**Confessing as Community**

Bonhoeffer will unfold the moral and ecclesiological implications of this fundamental insight in the unfinished *Ethics*. At the height of his involvement in the German resistance, Bonhoeffer there invites the church to admit its failure, during years of greatest turmoil, to embody, defend, and assist Christ in every vulnerable person. For such is the duty and vocation of the church and all Christians.

> A commission of immeasurable responsibility [is] given to all who know about the coming of Jesus Christ. The hungry needs bread, the homeless person needs shelter, the one deprived of rights needs justice, the lonely person needs community, the undisciplined one needs order, and the slave needs freedom. It would be blasphemy against God and our neighbour to leave the hungry unfed while saying that God is closest to those in deepest need . . . If the hungry do not come to faith, the guilt falls on those who denied them bread.[29]

On this act of confession the church's existence directly depends.[30] Christians have no excuse, for in Christ they have been freed from the burden of their own guilt and empowered to take on that of others.[31]

Sin also qualifies the being and actions of the community, and

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[28] Nicola J. Wilkes, "Life and Health: Bonhoeffer's Normative and Divergent Accounts of Private Confession of Sin," *Theology Today* 71, no. 1 (2014), 63.

[29] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott, DBWE 6 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 163.

[30] Ibid., 135.

[31] Ibid., 137.

corporate sinning demands corporate confession. The church must confess its communal failings. Mindful of the German church during the Nazi era, Bonhoeffer writes, in late 1941 or early 1942:

> The church confesses that it has not professed openly and clearly enough its message of the one God, revealed for all times in Jesus Christ and tolerating no other gods besides. The church confesses its timidity, its deviations, its dangerous concessions. It has often disavowed its duties as sentinel and comforter. Through this it has often withheld the compassion that it owes to the despised and rejected. The church was mute when it should have cried out, because the blood of the innocent cried out to heaven . . . The church confesses that it has witnessed the arbitrary use of brutal force, the suffering in body and soul of countless innocent people, that it has witnessed oppression, hatred, and murder without raising its voice for the victims and without finding ways of rushing to help them. It has become guilty of the lives of the weakest and most defenseless brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ . . . The church confesses itself guilty of violating all of the Ten Commandments. It confesses thereby its apostasy from Christ.[32]

Like all genuine confessions of sins, this one supposes and leads to a renewed profession of faith in the God of Jesus Christ. True apostasy is apostasy unable to reveal and denounce itself as such before Christ. As John de Gruchy explains,

> The confession of guilt is ultimately and most profoundly a confession of Jesus Christ as vicarious redeemer. And that is a truly Christian confession of guilt—it points beyond the guilty person to the cross of Christ and his forgiving grace. In this way the confession of guilt becomes not an end in itself, but an essential step towards forgiveness and transformation.[33]

Bonhoeffer invites the church to recover its true identity as witness and

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[32] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 138-40.

[33] John de Gruchy, "Confessing Guilt in South Africa Today in Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 67 (1989), 43.

sacrament of the gospel in and for the world by means of radical self-examination and heartfelt confession. Human responsibility before God finds both definition and accomplishment in the assumption of one's own share of guilt. Before, with, and in Christ, humanity is transformed into one community of confession.[34]

Bonhoeffer boldly claims that the life and future of the church hang on the latter's ability to lead by example and induce its members and the world to confess their sins by publicly confessing its own. Eva Harasta rightfully points out that "by confessing its guilt, the church calls all humanity into a community of confession and proclaims the reconciled reality in Christ."[35]

The church must, however, go much further and undergo conversion to renew the world by vicariously assuming its sins. John de Gruchy insightfully argues that Christian confession of guilt "means freely taking upon oneself the guilt of others, especially those who are unwilling to admit their fault. To do so is to act from a knowledge of the redemptive power of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on behalf of the world."[36] The church ought to minister as a community willing and able to bear the cross of its own and the world's failings before itself, the world, and God, for in this particular form of discipleship resides the most powerful manifestation of the saving presence and power of the crucified and risen Christ.[37]

The church, argues Bonhoeffer, should first and foremost be and act as confessing community, because only in this way will Christ take form again and anew in and for the world.[38] A church understanding itself as vicarious bearer of the world's guilt does not pontificate, for it lives and ministers in the world as its most sinful portion. Jennifer McBride makes the point clear:

> Because Jesus redeems the world in the form of a sinner, the church participates in God's healing transformation of this

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[34] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 142.

[35] Eva Harasta, "One Body: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the Church's Existence as Sinner and Saint at Once," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 62 (2010), 33.

[36] De Gruchy, 43.

[37] Bonhoeffer, "Letter of 5 December 1943 to Eberhard Bethge," in *Letters & Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller *et al*. (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 159.

[38] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 92, 102.

> world in the same way—by being present in public life not as standard-bearers of morality but as repenting sinners seeking to accept responsibility for social sin and injustice.[39]

For Bonhoeffer, the church must therefore assume the office of "priest of the world" for, as Tom Greggs justly infers, "standing in the place of the people (indeed, the world as such) and mediating on the world's behalf is precisely the position of the priest with his people."[40]

Human beings must help God help them, and discover in the process that from the beginning they have been sharing in the transformative power of Christ's passion. God in Christ is indeed dying; God is dying for us that our living death may turn out to be our redemption. Bonhoeffer invites us to find in the desecrated world the expression of the infinite forbearance of God, undergoing death to provide life. On Golgotha, the seeds of a new humanity have been sown. Christians are called to help it grow to maturity under the care and guidance of God's boundless mercy. In July 1944, from his prison cell, he was thus inspired to write:

> Men go to God when he is sore bestead,
> Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,
> Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead;
> Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.
> God goes to every man when sore bestead,
> Feeds body and spirit with his bread;
> For Christians, pagans alike he hangs dead,
> And both alike forgiving.[41]

These last considerations naturally bring us back to Archbishop Romero's words, quoted in the opening paragraph, inviting each and every human being to take a stance for or against God, for or against life. For Archbishop Romero, it *was* a life-and-death matter; a month after having pronounced these words, he was lethally shot while preaching in

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[39] Jennifer McBride, "The Witness of Sinners: Theologian Jennifer McBride on the Nontriumphal Church," *Christian Century* 130, no. 25 (11 December 2013), 33.

[40] Tom Greggs, "Ecclesial Priestly Mediation in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Theology Today* 71, no. 1 (2014), 87, 90.

[41] Bonhoeffer, "Christians and Pagans," in *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 348-49.

San Salvador Basilica. Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Archbishop Romero knew that, living and ministering in a country under totalitarian rule, he would most certainly have to give his life if he remained true to his radical commitment and witness to Christ. He accepted this fate as a real possibility and prayed that his death might help liberate the Salvadoran people.[42]

Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Archbishop Romero wished to make this sacrifice in communion with his people, so that the world might again see the emergence of authentic humanity—Christ's humanity, a humanity that partakes in the life and love of God at all times, even and particularly the darkest. "It is in this world without a human face, this sacrament of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh today, that the church in my archdiocese has sought to achieve incarnation."[43]

Like Archbishop Romero, Dietrich Bonhoeffer believed that in the present age, the basic truth humankind must continually remember and bear witness to, as one community, is that in Christ God did not become human that humans might become gods, but in order that humans might become fully human, at last.[44] The way to true humanity goes through the shared experience of the cross. In Douglas John Hall's limpid words: "The *theologia crucis*, where it is genuine, necessarily begets an *ecclesia crucis*" that "drives the reluctant faithful more and more insistently into God's beloved world with a view to its healing."[45] In Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the church professed and bore faithful witness to that truth, even and especially in death. The duty incumbent upon us is not to forget by making a confession of our own.

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[42] Sobrino, 188.
[43] Ibid., 154.
[44] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 96.
[45] Douglas John Hall, "*Ecclesia Crucis*: The Disciple Community and the Future of the Church in North America," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 46 (1992), 70.

**FULL LIFE IN "ALL MY RELATIONS"**

**by Russell Daye**

How is it that the very people who call themselves the followers of Christ could have been so complicit in a cultural genocide? Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 NRSV). How could Jesus' people have stolen children, tried so hard to "kill the Indian in the child," and denied so many their rightful access to abundance? These are questions church members and leaders have been living with for more than a quarter century. But have we pushed them far enough? Here is a question we should be asking ourselves: "Is there something fundamentally life-denying in the way we have codified, institutionalized, taught, and lived Jesus' teachings?" Have we made a great mistake? Were we, during the centuries before and throughout the time of the Indian Residential Schools, abusing non-indigenous Christians with a life-denying religion in a fashion that produced agents of abuse and made the cruelty of Indian Residential School (IRS) system possible?

The Gospel of Luke attributes these words to Jesus: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Were we, for centuries, living into these words in a way that was intended neither by Jesus, nor by the author of Luke, proclaiming a great "No!" to much of life, in a way that crushed life in Christians and turned some of them into crushers of life?

And here is another set of questions. As Christians, are we living into the life-full possibilities of repentance, reconciliation, and justice in relation to our aboriginal sisters and brothers? Have we turned to articulate a great "Yes!" to life, and to the lives of our indigenous neighbours? Are we carrying that Yes forward even where it requires sacrifice? This is a crucial question not just for our relationship with aboriginal Canadians, but for the very nature of what used to be called the "mainline church." The imperatives of reconciliation and justice stand on their own. There must be redress for the good of our indigenous peoples. That is the highest priority. But I believe that redress is also necessary medicine for the health of the churches. Our churches are declining at an alarming pace. There are many reasons for this. One of the biggest reasons, I have come to believe, is that many in Canadian society can smell a life-denying legacy on us. The odour lingers in our sanctuaries, and in our courts. The odour is made stronger by the largely pre-conscious knowledge of our life-denying heritage and the guilt that goes with it.

What I will try to do in this reflection is *not* to provide conclusive answers to these questions, but rather to shed some light on

them in the hope that we see a little better as we live into them for a long time. My method will be to bring three living events into dialogue with each other and see what kind of voice rises from the encounter. Whenever I have had the honour of sitting in a talking circle or a sharing circle with aboriginal people, sometimes for four or five days at a time, I have been moved by the power of deep listening and courageous speaking as the circle itself seems to articulate wisdom that no single individual carried into it. My goal is to bring these events into conversation in the hope that a little of this wisdom emerges. The three events I refer to are a drama of political forgiveness, a right-relations encounter that took place this past summer under the hemlocks at Berwick Camp in Nova Scotia, and an encounter with Sanskrit sutras in the company of forty other people at a retreat centre in Massachusetts.

**Political Forgiveness as a Five-Act Drama**

The invitation to contribute to this issue was a welcome opportunity to revisit a model of "political forgiveness" I had developed in the early 2000s in an attempt to describe the work of a society as it seeks to turn from a life-denying, life-destroying history toward a fuller and fairer way of living. In the 1990s and 2000s, the world witnessed a number of powerful experiments in nation-wide healing. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) or similar ventures were launched in such disparate places as El Salvador, Nepal, Germany, Rwanda, Greensborough, North Carolina, and Fiji. The most ambitious of these ventures was South Africa's TRC. The daring, the emotional intensity, and the explosion of previously repressed truth that marked this commission's work captured the attention of the world.

I visited South Africa for extended periods during that time, witnessed a number of TRC hearings, carried out interviews with a demographically representative sample of South Africans, and compared what I learned there to what was being learned in other contexts of "transitional justice." I also brought these lessons into intersection with a deepening understanding of the history of Canada's aboriginal peoples and their struggles for justice and restoration.[1] The product of these

[1] As I did so, I was repeatedly struck by the similarities in the history of our two countries. Apartheid authorities had actually come to Canada, studied and partially replicated our Indian-reserve system as a core component of apartheid. Christian teachings had provided ideological cover and motivation for the oppression of darker-skinned people by white-skinned people.

explorations was a model of what I called "political forgiveness"—a form of deep reconciliation.[2] Because this model was developed for a doctorate in the field of comparative religious ethics, it was also moulded by the perspectives of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and secular ethicists.

Based on the research described above, I developed a model of political forgiveness as a drama in five acts: (1) truth-telling; (2) apology and the claiming of responsibility; (3) building a transitional justice framework; (4) finding ways to heal; and (5) embracing forgiveness.

In my view, truth-telling was the most powerful part of South Africa's TRC. During the opening months of the TRC, as Human Rights Violations (HRV) hearings around the country unveiled the realities of the past, the great walls of denial were washed away by a flood of truth and tears. African, Indian, and mixed-race citizens breathed in deeply the knowledge that nation and world were now accepting what they had known to be true for generations. White citizens were forced to stand unshielded before the horror of what had been done in their name.

After years of witnessing truth-telling related to human rights violations and the amnesty process, the commissioners of the TRC believed that they had witnessed four kinds of truth: (1) objective truth: an accounting of apparent facts; (2) narrative truth: truth with a subjective element, shared in story form by an individual or community; (3) dialogical truth: the kind generated through debate and the sharing of sometimes oppositional narratives by different parties; and (4) restorative truth: the kind that comes out of the above and heals individuals, communities, and the ruptures of the past.[3]

In a context of reconciliation after oppression, perpetrators of that oppression must participate in the truth-telling if dialogical truth is to grow, and restorative truth can even become possible. One of the most powerful forms of truth-telling by a perpetrator or by a representative of the oppressing community is *apology*, especially if the apology is offered with clarity and empathy, and refrains from attempts to explain away or provide excuses for the misdeeds of the past. A good example of such is The United Church of Canada's (UCC) 1986 apology to indigenous

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[2] See Russell Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books), 2004.

[3] Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 289-91.

peoples.[4]

When a person, a nation, a community, or an organization has apologized in such a fashion, it stands unclothed before the reality of past injustice. At this point, there is a turn not just toward speaking truthfully but toward accepting responsibility, and, when responsibility is accepted, that responsibility makes claims upon how one (or a collective) lives, how one's wealth is used, and how one exercises power in society. This is a good segue to the issue of justice.

Even after a truth-telling process has been carried out (or is well underway), and wrongdoers have confirmed the experiences of victims and have apologized and claimed responsibility, much more needs to be done. Victims may have been liberated from denial, but the reality of all the losses stemming from past injustice remains. For example, all of these things were stolen from both the majority population of South Africa and the indigenous population of Canada: children; good education; mental health; economic opportunity; freedom to pursue cultural practices and spirituality; great tracts of land; access to fair judicial hearings; and access to good health care. The scales of justice rest in a profoundly unbalanced position. They need a rebalancing.

Oppressors or perpetrating institutions also stand in need of rebalancing the scales. It is a way for them to make real their confessions and their acceptance of responsibility. They are also in a psychic state of having been harmed, and live in a society that has been harmed by this great disequilibrium and vast inequity. With the South African TRC, an attempt was made to nudge the scales back toward equilibrium through an ambitious reparations process. This process included individual monetary payments as well as collective reparations such as the erection of memorials, as well as *distributive justice* initiatives like affirmative action programmes and support for black businesses.

In Canada, with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement, the perpetrator parties (the Canadian Government and the churches that administered the residential schools) paid millions of dollars into a reparations fund.[5] Cash payments were made to IRS students and their families. Monies were also paid into healing funds. But a great deal remains to be done in the pursuit of rebalancing the scales. The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian

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[4] See *http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apologies*.

[5] For example, The United Church of Canada paid $6 million as part of the IRS agreement, and has voluntarily paid an almost equivalent amount since 1994 to support healing and justice initiatives for IRS survivors.

Residential Schools (TRC-IRS) makes this clear. There are 94 calls for the transformation of Canadian society and the lives of aboriginal people in such areas as child welfare, education, health, language and culture, justice, implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, and business and professional training.[6]

Another great challenge for a society that has experienced rending on the magnitude of Apartheid or the cultural genocide of indigenous Canadians is *healing*. On the one hand, there is individual healing, especially of trauma. Many thousands of individuals carry the violence of the past in their minds and bodies. This brokenness becomes imbedded in families and replicates itself through the generations. On the other hand, there is collective healing. Whole communities and nations suffer common trauma and dysfunction. Judith Herman has written tellingly that "psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless."[7] Victims were very often powerless when they suffered trauma and are frequently powerless in relation to traumatic memories, which can rest frozen and wordless in their psyches. One way to empower victims is to address these memories and transform them into narrative form. When traumatic memory is released into a new articulation of one's personal story, the possibility of a new self-image and self-understanding as a person *with agency* becomes possible.

In both the South African TRC and the TRC-IRS one witnessed both individuals *and communities* finding this kind of agency and liberation from traumatic memory as commission events honoured victims, listened to their stories, affirmed their truths, and celebrated not only their survival, but also their strength and wisdom. This relates to "narrative truth" and "restorative truth" as identified by the South African commissioners.[8]

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[6] *http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.*

[7] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 33.

[8] The work of giving voice to traumatic memories began long before the TRC-IRS was launched. In 1994 the United Church had established its Healing Fund for events and initiatives that would help residential school survivors pursue restoration and wholeness. Over the subsequent two decades several million dollars have been channeled through this fund. In 1996 a national Aboriginal Healing Fund was established for similar purposes. It was granted $125 million as part of the IRS agreement. In fact, healing was a major part of that agreement: $20 million was allotted to communal healing through memorials and $60

The final part of *Political Forgiveness* pursued the possibilities of nation-wide forgiveness:

> I envision political forgiveness in two ways: (1) as a social good, akin to justice or healing or the claiming of responsibility, which can be pursued with tangible policies, even if it will take longer to achieve than these other goods; and (2) as something more mysterious that materializes in crucibles that mix human pain, need, imagination, and good will.[9]

The soil for nation-wide forgiveness can be prepared by truth-telling, apology, and pursuing healing and justice, but it will grow when it will grow. The goal is not to "forgive and to forget," but rather to *forgive and remember*. Truth-telling lingers throughout and long after the drama. Remembrance is key to the future health and fairness of society.

**Right Relations under the Hemlocks**

How much is it growing in Canada now? How much has the soil been prepared through truth-telling, apology, and pursuing healing and justice? This is hard to know, although the commitments of our current national government and the difference in our nation's response to the TRC-IRS as compared to the earlier Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples are encouraging, to say the least. Another question, of particular importance for readers of *Touchstone,* will be: how much is the church entering into the process of deep reconciliation that I call political forgiveness? How much are we making the sometimes painful but ultimately liberating turn toward the embrace of life in all of its God-given fullness that makes national healing possible?

For a partial response to this question I reflect on a nine-day gathering I recently attended. Berwick United Church Camp, which has been meeting under the hemlocks in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley since 1872, had "All Our Relations" as its theme this year. Programmes for children, youth, and adults focused on right relations and reconciliation in Canada, as did worship every evening. As part of this schedule, about 120 adults, almost all United Church clergy and lay members, gathered with me and Commissioner Marie Wilson of the Canadian TRC for five morning sessions. These involved presentations

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million for the TRC-IRS itself, which was understood to be a healing initiative on a major scale.

[9] *Political Forgiveness*, 150.

on the IRS legacy and the work of Canada's TRC, theological reflection, question and answer times, and opportunity each day for participants to enter into sharing circles for a significant time. Sometimes the sharing circles focused on questions/issues related to reconciliation with aboriginal neighbours; sometimes they invited participants to reflect on their own need for healing and transformation. There were also times of guided prayer and spiritual practice.

Some things learned[10] from the church leaders and members (almost all of whom were of European origin) who came to Berwick might be: (1) most care deeply about the legacy of the IRS, as well as oppression of indigenous people in general; (2) there are strong feelings of guilt and remorse; (3) some (clearly a minority) still dwell in the stage of denial or wish "they/we could just move on" (indeed, I think some would be happy to move straight from denial to moving on); (4) most are very open to learning and acknowledging the realities of the past, but few have had any experience of witnessing IRS survivors narrate their truth in person, or of having participated in an activity like the Blanket Exercise; (5) those gathered (with some exceptions) did not have a good knowledge of the TRC-IRS's recommendations or the landscape of justice for Canadian aboriginals, such as the concepts of distributive justice, restorative justice, self-governance, etc; (6) many would very much like to "get more involved," but can't see a way into engagement that doesn't involve substantial awkwardness or anxiety; (7) a significant portion of participants in the morning sessions entered into the sharing circle process with progressive depth and intimacy; (8) "white" Canadian church folk have real hunger for such processes and much healing work to do in their own lives; (9) many of the participants are not getting such opportunities in their own churches; and (10) they also have real openness to spiritual practice but have received very little training.[11]

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[10] It should be obvious that these are *subjective* observations, and they should not be understood to add up to any kind of formal research, even qualitative research. That's not my goal here.

[11] Something I had learned in my original research was reinforced and extended at Berwick. I never did see the five-act drama of political forgiveness as normative in terms of sequence. I had seen flexibility in terms of the order in which apology, justice-building, and healing take place in a society, depending on the contingencies of each situation. However, I felt that truth-telling should always come first and forgiveness would naturally come last. Listening to Commissioner Wilson reflect upon the TRC-IRS and to the sharing of participants, I have come to believe that healing must sometimes follow forgiveness, both for victims and agents

I left Berwick with a sense that the churches and their members need much healing. They need their own liberation (sometimes from trauma) and recovery of agency. Full participation in our national process of reconciliation will come only after such healing. It may be that deep renewal of our faith communities will only come then as well.

**The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra**

Two weeks after leaving Berwick, I travelled to Massachusetts to participate in a spiritual practice retreat led by Dr. Lorin Roche, a Sanskrit scholar and teacher of meditation. The retreat was given form by an ancient Sanskrit text called the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra or The Radiance Sutras.[12] These sutras take the form of a conversation between Shiva and Shakti. The language is beautifully poetic, and each sutra contains instruction in spiritual practice nestled within.

Since my original research, undertaken in the context of graduate studies in comparative religion, I have found it helpful to engage with the scriptures or teachings of other faith traditions. This provides a way to gain a fresh perspective upon whatever challenge I am involved in as a Christian preacher, researcher, writer, or advocate. Engagement with the Radiance Sutras provided good perspective from which to reflect on the reconciliation process in Canada and the ways Christians are succeeding and failing to enter into it. These sutras offer insight into a remarkably broad range of human experience, including joy in creation, grief and loss, desire and sexuality, pain and injury, and love and the encounter with the infinite divine. To reflect fully on insights gained from this event would take an essay in itself; here I can do so only in a limited way.

Drawing upon these sutras, Roche has developed his own multi-step process of human transformation and healing. It follows these stages: Resting, Relaxing, Releasing, Reviewing, Repairing, Restoring, Rehearsing, and Remembering. Roche's model reminds me of the model developed in *Political Forgiveness*. Releasing and reviewing clearly relate to truth-telling. They capture the emotive and cognitive aspects of that activity. Repairing and restoring are key aspects of healing. Restoring and rehearsing (imagining future action while in a place of contemplation—not unlike a liberationist action/reflection model) are central to building justice. Again, remembering is essential.

So what of the first two stages, resting and relaxing? These may

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of persecution.

[12] Lorin Roche, *The Radiance Sutras: 112 Gateways to the Yoga of Wonder and Delight* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2014).

well merit insertion into the *Political Forgiveness* model and into the pursuit of reconciliation by Canadian Christians. One of the things that made the retreat in Massachusetts so fruitful was Dr. Roche's ability to "hold the space" in a way that was both respectful and serious about content on the one hand, and relaxed and playful on the other. Part of this was his presence, but the use of ritual and spiritual practice was also a key factor. This reminded me of Desmond Tutu's leadership in South Africa's TRC. Much of the success of that commission, especially the early HRV hearings was attributed to his charisma, but that charisma was inseparable from his use of prayer and laughter, and his willingness to weep with those who wept almost as a sacred rite. I am also reminded of the use of spiritual practices like smudge ceremonies, sacred fires, or singing and drumming by aboriginal elders at every extended talking circle I have attended. Again, in these circles shared weeping took on the form of sacred rite. In all of these contexts there was a kind of blessed "letting go" that made for open hearts, empathic listening, and honest sharing about even the most painful things.

I believe this speaks to what our churches have lacked and still lack. Our churches have prayer and singing and ritual, but very, very rarely do we go to the emotional ground described in the paragraph above. This inability to go to ground causes us to hive off parts of ourselves—to push them below consciousness. Until this pattern of avoidance changes, we will not be able to fully enter into the kinds of work required to wholly engage in Canada's process of political forgiveness.

Of great importance here is spiritual practice. A central teaching of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra is that spiritual practices are myriad. When we are open, the practices we need for any context or time in our lives will emerge. Fortunately, this is a time of renaissance in terms of recovering the ancient Christian spiritual practice of meditation.[13] At Berwick, participants showed real hunger both to "go to ground" and to grow into spiritual practice. If this hunger lives throughout our church, as I believe it does, feeding it may be the single most important challenge of the mainline church today—feeding it with sincerity and playfulness, and feeding it with honesty about human desire and pain. This feeding may make us able to truly play our part in reconciliation. And it might just remove some of the odour of life-denying religion that keeps so many in our culture away from our doors.

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[13] See, for example, Marin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

**PROTEST AS PRAISE: THE CHURCH'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE KOREAN DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT**

**by David Kim-Cragg**

The explosive power of the Christian church to resist evil is often forgotten in pews and pulpits. Rarely do we see protest mingled with praise in such a way that the call for justice and the act of worship become one. But there was a time not long ago when the Christian church in Korea did explode in a passionate cry for justice that was at the same time a song of praise to God. And it was the spiritual integrity of that action that allowed a small number of Christian leaders to carry the movement for democracy through some of its darkest hours. Members of the church in Canada would do well to remember and take courage from how their friends in Korea answered the call to be prophets in the modern world.

The church's involvement in the South Korean democratization movement is complex. It reflects historic patterns established over the more than two centuries that Christianity has been present on the peninsula. From its introduction in the late nineteenth century, the Protestant faith has been connected with Koreans' desire to be free from oppressive Japanese colonization. However, the nature and degree of Korean Christians' political engagement has varied. In the years following liberation from Japan and in the lead-up to the democratization movement, when the country was under the corrupt but "Christian" leadership of SeungMan Yi, Christians were hesitant to get involved. Student protests in 1960 finally brought an end to the Yi government while Christians mostly watched from the sidelines. When a democratically elected government was overthrown in a *coup d'etat* in 1961, and JeongHeui Bak was established as dictator, the church again was silent. But things were to change.

It was not an interest in politics for its own sake that drew the church into the struggle for democracy, but rather its direct involvement with people at the margins.[1] One example of how this occurred is found in the story of the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM.)[2] Ministers and church leaders first learned of the poor conditions of workers from labourers

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[1] Paul Y. Chang, *Protest Dialectics: State Repression and South Korea's Democracy Movement, 1970-1979* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 79.

[2] The UIM received support from The United Church of Canada. In the 1980s UCC missionary Walter Beecham was assigned to work with the UIM.

who were attending worship services. These Christian leaders then formed the UIM, and obtained manual employment in order to work alongside labourers and help them organize. Their direct experience of Korean factories and sweat shops solidified their conviction that something had to be done.[3]

Before long Christians not only were participating in protests but also leading them. Beginning as a small but visible group, Christian participation evolved into a thoroughly developed Christian social movement.[4] By the 70s these activists within the church had become one of the leading forces in opposition to the military dictatorship.

What started with political and humanitarian concerns evolved quickly into questions of identity and purpose.[5] The Korean church's religious identity in relationship to the democracy movement had at least two primary aspects. First was its theology, the religious language it used to justify its involvement in political struggle. Second was its use of religious ritual as a vehicle for political comment. These two aspects of Christian involvement not only help to explain what made the church's activity Christian, but also how that activity was able to achieve such effectiveness.[6]

An Easter sunrise service in 1973 became the catalyst for further Christian activity, and provides an example of the way that theology and ritual were central to Christian activism. Early on Easter morning Rev. HyeongGyu Bak, minister at Seoul First Church, gathered a congregation of concerned Christians on NamSan (South Mountain) in Seoul. Flyers were distributed and placards displayed that read "Politicians Repent," "The Resurrection of Democracy Is the Liberation of the People," and "Lord, Show Thy Mercy to the Ignorant King." Prayers with a similar theme were also offered. Police arrived to break up the worship service; Pastor Bak and others involved in the service were arrested and accused

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[3] Paul Y. Chang, "Carrying the Torch in the Darkest Hours: the Sociopolitical Origins of Minjung Protestant Movements," in *Christianity in Korea,* ed. Robert E. Burswell Jr. and Timothy S. Lee (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 208.

[4] Ibid., 196.

[5] Ibid.

[6] 강인철, *저항과 투항: 국사정권들과 종교*, (오산: 한신대학교 출판부, 2013), 262쪽.

In Cheol Kang, *Resistance and Surrender—The Military Regime and Religion* (Osan: HanShin University Press, 2013), 262.

of plotting to overthrow the government.[7] The Easter Sunday arrests became widely known in Korean Protestant Church circles and spurred many to action.

In response to this arrest, a group of theologians met in secret and came up with the "Theological Declaration of Korean Christians." Modelled on the Theological Declaration of Barmen made by the Confessing Church in Germany, the document was later smuggled out of the country and published in different languages. The Korean document proclaims the authors' allegiance to God, their witness to the sovereignty of Christ, and their responsibility to speak out against injustice and oppression. It also articulates the Christian calling to live among the poor and oppressed while criticizing the government as being illegitimate and as having violated human rights in Korea.[8]

The Theological Declaration was an important moment in the development of a theology specific to the situation in Korea. This indigenous Korean theology came to be known as Minjung Theology, and was largely the result of efforts to express in religious language the church's reasons for participation in the democracy movement through the 1970s. This theological articulation was important not only as an expression of Christian faith but also as a shield against political attacks. The accusation of being pro-communist was one of the most difficult problems for those who opposed the military government of the dictator, JeongHeui Bak.

It was therefore important that Christians show that their activism in support of the poor and downtrodden stemmed from their religious faith rather than their allegiance to the northern Communist regime. They countered government accusations to this effect by arguing that they were simply acting according to Christian conscience, and that government intimidation and prohibition of Christian mission work among labourers and the disenfranchised violated the principle of religious freedom.[9] The faith of Christians in the democracy movement provided a rationale for speech and action based on something other than political ideology or loyalty. Christians could defend themselves from the accusation that they were communists by saying that they were simply doing what Jesus would have them do. MinJung theology helped Korean Christians articulate their opposition to political authority and their

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[7] Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea: A History of Christianity and Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 103.

[8] Ibid., 101

[9] Ibid.

solidarity with the marginalized, while helping them to rediscover the Christ who stands with the poor.[10]

In addition to its sensitivity to issues of social justice, the theology developed by the protesting churches had a profoundly ecumenical consciousness as well. Christians in Korea displayed their openness to working with others by organizing protest events that pulled together a number of diverse interest groups.[11] Through the seventies Protestant and Catholic Christians started doing more things together; moreover, their sense of solidary extended even beyond the Christian faith and indeed beyond religion. From the beginning they saw the democracy movement as something that was bigger than the Christian church and they had a healthy understanding of the place they occupied in the movement relative to the many others who were also leading and making sacrifices. Christian activist UJeong Yi expressed this reality as follows:

> In this way denominations and even religions transcended [their differences] so that the ecumenical movement of solidarity was able to form . . . When the church became conscious of its suffering neighbours it also began to follow the students getting involved in a number of different activities in order to live up to its responsibilities. This consciousness made solidarity possible with Catholics and even progressive Buddhists. This kind of ecumenical movement did not start with conceptual or abstract theology. It came naturally from a posture of sober openness to the reality that surrounded us, from a place of solidarity that formed the whole activity. That was its meaning.[12]

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[10]최형묵, 『한국 기독교의 두 갈래 길』, 서울: 이야기쟁이낙타, 2013, "민주화와 인권을 위한 기독교의 투쟁" 부분, 113쪽.
HyungMook Choi, *The Two Paths of Korean Christianity* (Seoul: Storyteller's Camel Press, 2013), 113.

[11] Paul Y. Chang, Gi-Wook Shin, Jung-eun Lee, and Sookyung Kim, "South Korea's Democracy Movement (1970-1993): Stanford Korea Democracy Project Report," Stanford University, 2007, 19. *https://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/KDP_Report_(final)-1.pdf,* accessed on 3 May 2016

[12] *이 땅에 平和를 : 70년대의 人權運動,* 김관석목사 교희기념 문집출판위원회, (성덕인쇄사: 서울, 1991), 11쪽.
*Peace to This Land: The Human Rights Movement of the 1970s*, Rev.

So, while the Christian church was articulating the reasons for its participation in the democracy movement in very Christian terms, it was also able to see, affirm, and celebrate a spiritually unifying principle at work in the diverse groups of people with whom they shared the struggle.

In addition to theology, the liturgical component of Christian identity was also essential both to the religious nature of the church's involvement and also to its effectiveness. Like its theology, the church's religious rites served to underline the Christian religious identity of the participants as opposed to a political agenda. The Easter sunrise service provides a good illustration of this. The Christian celebration of Easter gave Pastor Bak and others a liturgical reason to gather and to deliver a political message couched in religious language. This fusion of religious practice and political resistance was widely deployed by Christians during the democracy movement. In Protestant and Catholic churches, messages of political protest and resistance were worked into worship services. Prayer meetings were a common Christian vehicle for organizing meetings, exchanging information, and encouraging one another in the struggle. In fact, at one point in the struggle, prayer meetings became the last remaining place where indirect criticism of the government was possible.[13] Sometimes Catholics and Protestants held joint worship services and prayer meetings in which the cause of democracy was the main theme. Protest marches would at times

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Kim KwanSeok Church Anniversary Publications Committee (Seoul: SeongDeok Publishers, 1991), 11.

이렇게 하여 교파나, 심지어 종교를 초월해서 연대하는 에큐메니칼운동이 자연스럽게 형성되었다... 교회는 고난받은 이웃을 새롭게 인식하게 되었고, 그에 따라 기독교인으로서의 책임을 감당하기 위한 여러 활동들이 뒤따랐다. 그리고 이러한 인식은 카톨릭, 심지어 선진적인 불교인들과의 연대도 가능케 하였다. 이런 에큐메니칼우동은 이론이나 관념적인 식학에서 출발한 것이 아니고 우리를 둘러싼 현실을 진지하게 받아드리는 자세에서 자연스럽게, 구체적인 행동으로 형성된 연대라는 데 그 의미가 있다. 교회와 학생들의 연대로 1970년 노동운동은 나날이 확장되어 갔다.

[13] Paul Y. Chang, "Carrying the Torch in the Darkest Hours," 211.

spontaneously emerge from large religious gatherings.[14] A wedding ceremony was even used as a means to stage a political protest.[15] Protest in the form of prayer and religious ceremony was a feature of Christian resistance and contributed to the overall strength of the democracy movement.[16]

In his essay, "Carrying the Torch in the Darkest Hours," Paul Y. Chang argues that it was the church's religious identity that allowed it to continue in its political activities when other groups had been effectively silenced by the regime.[17] In an interview with Chang, UJeong Yi spoke of the importance of the church at that time for people in the movement:

> Pastors Mun Ikwhan and Ahn Byung-mu were with me and we served together at Galilee Church . . . Galilee is the land of suffering people and we gathered to pray for the people whose family members were in prison. We prayed for their children and husbands who were arrested and tortured. Many people in need came to the church and shared their hardships with the pastors. Service was held at 11 o'clock at Hanbit Church. After service the prayer started at 3. When incarcerated individuals were released we celebrated it at the church. People could not do that in other places except for the church. Hanbit Church offered us a place to celebrate. The church was truly for people in need.[18]

In 1975 the *United Church Observer* ran two stories about the struggle in Korea, one entitled "Korea's Modern Martyrs"[19] and the other

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[14] Eric O. Hanson, *Catholic Politics in China and Korea* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1980), 104.

[15] In Korea marriage ceremonies are often civil and do not contain a religious element. However, this event had Christian leadership and was likely inspired by the use of ritual in other protest events.

[16] Paul Y. Chang, Gi-Wook Shin, Jung-eun Lee, and Sookyung Kim, "South Korea's Democracy Movement (1970-1993)," 65. *https://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/KDP_Report_(final)-1.pdf,* accessed on 3 May 2016.

[17] Paul Y. Chang, *Protest Dialectics: State Repression and South Korea's Democracy Movement, 1970-1979* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 84.

[18] Ibid., 94.

[19] Martin Bailey, "Korea's modern martyrs," *The United Church Observer,* December 1975, 10ff.

"Willa Kernen: missionary turns militant."[20] United Church missionary Willa Kernen was featured in both articles, which also describe the importance of prayer meetings to the movement. Kernen, originally from Saskatchewan, was described as a meek person who had been changed by her experience of political oppression and resistance. She had been moved by the involvement of her friend, UJeong Yi, and by contact she had had with the families of political prisoners to place herself in the thick of many of the most salient protest actions. In the Division of World Outreach report on Korea in the 1975 UCC yearbook, an account was given of the gravity of the situation in Korea with eight innocent men executed on trumped-up charges of treason. In the midst of such darkness an anonymous American commentator is quoted: "There is something about this Korean Christianity, the likes of which I have never experienced in the U.S. or Japan. Life is brought to worship, and worship to life, all with extra-ordinary integrity to the Gospel."[21]

Through the years of oppression and struggle under an oppressive dictatorship the Christian church mingled its cries of protest with songs of praise proclaiming God to be both sovereign and just, in contrast to the military government of JeongHeui Bak that was neither. At first it was reluctant to get involved. When its stance changed, however, it was not because of ideological commitments or political ambitions but instead through personal relationships developed with people who were suffering. The church understood that it was part of a movement much bigger than itself and was, from the beginning, open to working with others who had a different faith perspective. However, its own religious beliefs were central to its participation in the democracy movement and allowed it to make a strong stand in the face of violence, intimidation, and accusation. Christian involvement was articulated theologically and acted out liturgically. The religious expression of its faith through ritual acts of worship and prayer became a powerful vehicle of resistance. When other forms of protest had been all but stamped out the church raised its voice in protest and its heart in praise.

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[20] "Willa Kernen: missionary turns militant," *The United Church Observer*, December 1975, 10ff.

[21] UCC Yearbook1975, Vol. 2, Board Reports, 153.

## A SECOND LOOK AT THE LEGACY OF THE MISSIONARIES

**by Mac Watts**

Indian cities experience huge demonstrations in their streets often enough that ten thousand people gathering for something in one city might not get headlines in any other, let alone in the Western world. I can testify that I never heard about the crowd of that size which gathered in 2006, not in demonstration but for celebration, in the Tamil city of Tranquebar. Indeed, until mid-September of 2014 I had not even known about the person whose work was being honoured there that year by Tamils of varied religious convictions: an eighteenth century Western Christian missionary with the multi-syllabic name of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg. They were marking the 300th anniversary of his arrival on their shores.

The original impulse behind Ziegenbalg's expedition was a profound feeling of guilt on the part of King Frederick IV of Denmark over the death of his mistress in child-birth. As part of his demonstration of penance he agreed to send a missionary to south-east India where the Danish East India Company had an outpost. Until this time the Company had excluded any church presence because it wanted no one checking on its outrageous treatment of the local Tamils. But they couldn't refuse someone sent by the king, and accordingly the very young German Lutheran pietist, Ziegenbalg—the only volunteer the king could find—arrived, on his own, at the unwelcoming outpost in 1706.

Whatever Ziegenbalg's original attitude to the local Tamils was, he had a wonderful gift for languages. So much so that within six months of his arrival he was not only conversing in Tamil, but also reading and writing it. This meant that he moved from being an outsider looking in on the Tamil community to being inside it and embracing it. He left the physical comforts of the Danish stockade and took up residence among the slaves in the Tamil quarter.

Ziegenbalg came to see that to become a Christian a Tamil did not have to adopt European ways or a European language. Their own language, their own dress, and many of their own religious traditions were to be affirmed. What was at stake was *whom* we worship. *How* we do it has continuously to be discovered, and the Tamils had to find their way from within their own existing customs. He did rule out, however, some practices as being contrary to the Gospel, such as the burning of widows with their husband's body.

He was there for only thirteen years, and the estimate is that he never had more than about 250 converts. But among all his other activities he managed to translate the whole of the New Testament into Tamil, and was able to translate some parts of the Old Testament before

his untimely death back in Europe at the age of 37. The impact on the Tamil language of that work was comparable, it seems, to that of Luther's German Bible on the German language. Apparently at the time there was a disparity between classical Tamil, as found in their manuscripts, and the spoken Tamil of the day. Ziegenbalg took the old script and adapted it with the current form of use. But then the written script needed to be learned, so he had schools built for both boys and girls. Some claim that the movement towards the liberation of women in India got its start in these schools Ziegenbalg established for girls. And it is his Tamil script that is still in use today. Some years ago I read that a monument had been erected in Tranquebar to pay tribute to the three people who made the most significant contributions toward the survival of Tamil language and culture, two of the three being western missionaries, one Catholic and one Protestant. I now know that Ziegenbalg is the Western Protestant in that monument.

It was an article in the September 8, 2014, issue of *The Christian Century*, entitled "Mission in Spite of Empire," that first introduced me to Ziegenbalg, and it is largely upon that article that I have relied for the details about him. It was written by Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, an assistant professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. After describing the various aspects of his life and work she says,

> Despite its short duration, modest number of converts, and perpetual affliction, Ziegenbalg's ministry changed the entire trajectory of the Tamil people. As both contemporary Tamil scholar Daniel Jeyaraj and British mission scholar Andrew F. Walls affirm . . . Christianity is not the culture-destroying invasion so many assume it to be; again and again it has proven to be an active force in preserving cultures.

**The Vernacular**

This, of course, is what Lamin Sanneh has been saying in his books for years. Sanneh came originally from Gambia in West Africa. He was born in 1942 into a Muslim family where his mother was one of several wives of his father. As a teen-ager his interest in Christianity was aroused, though it was only his remarkable tenacity that enabled him to persuade a Western Christian missionary to allow him Christian baptism. In any case, his intellectual gifts eventually won him a scholarship for graduate studies in Europe and Britain, and his doctoral studies were focused on the very faith community that he had left, Islam. His first full-time academic appointment was in Aberdeen, Scotland, and he assumed that

he would be concentrating on the specialty he had been hired for—Islam. Those of us who know the academic world are not surprised to hear that he had hardly unpacked his bags when he was asked if he would fill in on a course usually taught by one of the staff who had just gone off on sabbatical. The course was on African Christianity.

Sanneh says he was of a mind to refuse the assignment when he received from a London publisher a manuscript dealing with, of all things, African Christianity. It was intended to be a text book for schools and colleges in Africa, and the publisher wanted Sanneh to give his opinion about its qualities. Sanneh was shocked at the poor quality of the book, and decided that even he, with no scholarly background in the discipline, could do better. Accordingly he told the dean he would teach the course and plunged into the subject. He claims his discoveries not only put him at odds with those who had created, and the many who still hold on to, the denigrating frame within which Western Christian missions in Africa (and elsewhere) are interpreted, but it also turned out to be a watershed in his academic life.

> While . . . lining up the requisite texts and consulting authorities in the field [of African Christianity], I found myself stumped by a nagging problem in the sources for which I was totally unprepared: the apparent facility with which Western missions downloaded the text of scripture into the vernacular idiom, adopting in the process the local concept of God . . . [H[ere were missionaries, who ought to know better, embracing [the pagan gods] with equanimity. Gales swept through my mind and left me speechless. It stumped me that, in spite of its relative disadvantage as an undocumented language without any literary works to its credit, the mother tongue [of the local people] should attract the interest and devotion of missionaries who made it the language of scripture—something Muslim agents would never dream of doing [with the Qur'an].
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> The thought sat like an undigested lump in my throat. I, like so many others, had been trained to think of Christian missions as Western cultural impositions only . . . Surely, given the fact that missions were about transporting an official European Christianity, they would not so readily give up their advantage by conceding strategic ground to the vernacular, would they? Who else gave the vernacular such high regard?[1]

[1] Lamin Sanneh, *Summoned from the Margins* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2012),

Well actually, the original Christians did! The language of Jesus was not the language even of the New Testament. Christianity, Sanneh realized, was unique in that it was a religion "transmitted without the language of the founder of the religion . . . it invests itself in all languages except the language of Jesus. It is as if the religion must disown the language of Jesus to be the faith Jesus taught. Christians do not pray, worship or perform their devotions in the language of Jesus."[2] In another of his books Sanneh provides many examples of this phenomenon, which include references to the practices of Western missionaries.

I'll content myself with only one of his examples of the latter, which is a reference to the historian, Arnold Toynbee, on the much-maligned Spanish Catholics in South America. Toynbee says they established a chair of Quichua (the language spoken by the indigenous people in the area we now call Peru) at the University of Lima in 1576! Not long after, a knowledge of Quichua was made obligatory for anyone ordained to the priesthood.[3] We see displayed here the respect the early Catholic missionaries in South America had for the local people—the kind of respect that in other parts of the world resulted in the enhancement of the local languages and cultures.The arrival of hundreds of thousands of European settlers flooded into the South American continent and pushed the indigenous peoples to the margins, with tragic results. The same development was to be seen throughout North America, and in Australia. That development is deserving of an article of its own, though we note it here since it has been grist for the mill of those who discredit all of the Christian missionary enterprise of the past several centuries.

So, to go back to Ziegenbalg. For years the only book on him available in English was written not by a Christian but by an admiring Hindu, Brijraj Singh, *The First Protestant Missionary to India*. It is largely a sociological account of Ziegenbalg's impact on Tamil life, though Sarah Wilson comments that "the book exuded affection for its subject." Now an Australian documentary film-maker, Christopher Gilbert, has produced a film on Ziegenbalg, entitled *Beyond Empire*. Gilbert had never heard of his subject until a New York Tamil hunted him down in 2006 with the proposal that Gilbert look at Ziegenbalg as a possible focus for a documentary. Wilson considers Gilbert's work to be remarkable in that it ends with a challenge to Western presuppositions:

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216f.

[2] Sanneh, *Summoned from the Margins*, 222.

[3] Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 91.

> The idea of missionaries as cultural destroyers is so deeply held as an article of faith now, especially in the West, that it causes even people of good will to want to separate Ziegenbalg's work from his religious belief, as if somehow he did what he did in spite of his faith in Christ, and not because of it.

Wilson informs us that DVDs of the documentary are available at *beyondempires.com*.

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A profile of important United Church figures, or of figures influencing United Church people and ministries, is included in each number. Profiles also are approximately 3000 words in length. The profile editor is Prof. Sandra Beardsall, who can be contacted at *sandra.beardsall@usask.ca*. Each number also contains book reviews, normally no more than 750 words each. The book review editor is Prof. Donald Schweitzer, who can be contacted at *don.schweitzer@usask.ca*.

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**FROM THE HEART**

## RECONCILIATION

**by Jordan Cantwell**

We talk a lot in the church these days about reconciliation. Thanks to the courage of many survivors and the determination of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners, there is a growing awareness in our country about the history of Indian Residential Schools and the devastating impact that they have had on generations of Indigenous people. As we have learned that history, we have also been made aware of the role the churches played in the schools. We are beginning to understand how our attitudes, doctrines, and theology have been used to justify and contribute to genocidal policies and actions. We are appalled. And though we may not always know how, we know we need to make things right.

Reconciliation is not a new concept for Christians. In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul writes:

> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:17-20, NRSV).

According to Paul, reconciliation is the primary purpose for God's action in Christ. Through Christ, God takes the initiative to repair the breach in the human-divine relationship. God does this by bearing the burden of our brokenness and transforming it through an act of mercy and trust. The result is a new creation—everything old is dead and gone; all things are made new.

This understanding of reconciliation offers important wisdom as we consider how to begin to bring healing and justice to the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. It is costly work that requires deep love for the one from whom we are estranged. Reconciliation is not imposed as a demand; it is offered freely as a gift — a gift that the other is free to refuse.

Apparently, reconciliation is also an on-going process, not once

for all. Paul tells us that, having shown us the way of forgiveness and self-sacrificing love, which opens the door to reconciliation, God then invites us to become co-workers in the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, it's not done yet. Christ has shown us how to do it, now we are invited to join the action—to become Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation.

This is a very timely text for the church at this moment in Canadian history. We know we are in need of reconciliation between the first peoples of this land and those who have settled here. At the same time, we know it won't be easy. Undertaking this journey of reconciliation will change everything . . . even the things some of us may not want to change.

My journey towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada began in the summer of 1990. I went to South Africa with a group of young adults to learn about Apartheid. As we saw the reality on the ground, I could not understand how white South Africans could tolerate such an obviously unjust and inhumane system. Of course it was obvious that they benefitted in all kinds of ways from Apartheid—socially, politically, economically — but at what cost! Couldn't they see that their acceptance of and participation in this obscene system was destroying their humanity as well? It was clear to me from where I stood—on the outside looking in—that Apartheid was bad for *all* South Africans, including Whites.

I found it easy to stand in judgement of Whites in South Africa. Hearing my self-righteousness, our hosts at the South African Council of Churches advised me to learn Canadian history and to pay attention to what was going on in my own backyard. They told us that the South African Bantustan system (a system of racial segregation through "Homelands" for Blacks only) was based on the Indian reservation system in Canada. They also told us that South Africa had borrowed the pass system from Canada as a way of controlling and containing black South Africans . . . just as we had used it to do the same to Indigenous folk in western Canada. The message was clear—I am not innocent of the blindness and complicity which I so easily condemn in others.

While we were in South Africa that summer, the Oka crisis erupted back home. It was in that moment that I began to understand how my humanity, and the humanity of every Canadian was being twisted and maimed by our toleration of the systemic injustices perpetrated in this country against Indigenous peoples. To work to end these injustices, which is the first step towards reconciliation, is to labour for my own freedom, as well as that of my Indigenous relatives.

*The divine invitation to become ambassadors of reconciliation is an invitation to accept liberation from ways of thinking, acting, and organizing our societies that destroy our humanity and the planet on which we live.*

The work of reconciliation is not the work of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples; it is not the work of settler peoples or of new comers to Canada; it is not the work of churches or governments . . . it is the work of all of us—every one of us. God invites us to be partners in reconciliation because God knows that our own healing and wholeness depends on our participation.

What a gracious invitation! Curious, then, that Paul has to entreat the Corinthians to accept it. To "entreat" means to plead, beg, implore. It seems that at least some of the members of the Corinthian church were resistant to receiving God's gift of reconciliation. This gives us our first hint that the gift of reconciliation comes with a cost for the one who receives it as well as for the one who offers it.

As Paul so astutely notes, the reconciliation that God has initiated and in which we have been invited to participate dismantles the old and makes all things new. These words of hope and promise contain a hard truth. The systems and structures that privilege some at the expense of others, as well as the attitudes and doctrines from which they emerge, are among the "old things" that must pass away. However, most people are invested, one way or another, in the *status quo*. Cherished beliefs and ideals may be tied up in the conventional wisdom that underpins the way we do things. Some folk, like me, enjoy a great deal of social and economic privilege because of structurally imbedded imbalances of power and opportunity in this country. The invitation to be liberated from ways of thinking and acting that have "worked" for us can actually feel threatening, especially when we can't see how they are hurting us.

Jesus understood this, which is what allowed him to have compassion for the rich man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. And it is undoubtedly why so much of his ministry was aimed at subverting conventional wisdom and offering an alternative way to see the world. There are myriad examples of Jesus' teachings that deconstruct the "truths" by which we organize our societies; here are just a few: "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last"; "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you"; "Blessed are the poor"; "The greatest among you will be your servant"; "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Yet not with words alone did Jesus challenge the cultural

assumptions of his day. He modelled with his very life the "upside-down" values of the kin-dom of God. He identified himself with those who were structurally excluded, disparaged, and ignored. He also confronted head-on the social, religious and political systems that justified and propped up the status quo. In both his words and his actions Jesus showed us the way that leads to reconciliation.

It is the way of costly solidarity. Reconciliation requires that I step outside of my own experience and how that has shaped my perception of reality. It means becoming willing to see the world from the perspective of those whose voices have historically been ignored or dismissed. Doing this will challenge my worldview, and shake the foundations of everything I have taken for granted. No wonder the Corinthians were reluctant to receive this divine offering . . . It requires a great deal of courage to unwrap the gift of reconciliation!

So why do it? Why follow Jesus down a path that is guaranteed to radically disrupt our lives and the foundations of our society?

For me, the answer goes back to the insight that I had in South Africa. To accept a situation that is designed to ensure the prosperity and privilege of some, while others are condemned to suffer grave indignities, is consciously to choose to be less than the Creator has made me to be. Worse, it is to spit in the face of the divine, which is etched in the features of my oppressed relatives.

It also has to do with how I understand the promise of resurrection. As I see it, resurrection is the new life that can only emerge once the old self has died. This new life is always better—more joyful, more fulfilling—than the life that is left behind . . . though we cannot see or imagine that until we have been raised up from the ashes of what was. Foundational disruption and disintegration are the necessary precursors to the abundant life that Christ offers. This is the fundamental paradox of our faith.

Of course the challenge for us today is that we are still living the first life—the pre-death, pre-resurrection life. From here, it is impossible to fully anticipate the beauty and possibility that will accompany real justice and genuine reconciliation in Canada. We don't even know what may be required of us to get there . . . only that the work of reconciliation in front of us will take us down paths that will shake us to our roots.

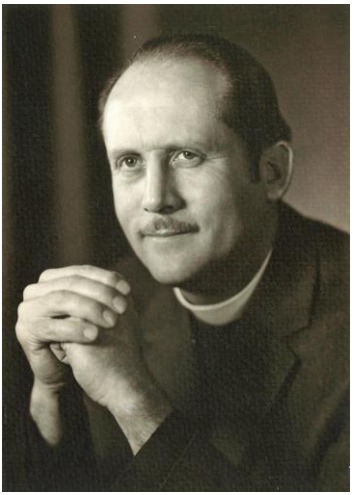
We need great courage and tremendous faith to make this journey together. May we do so, holding fast to our trust in the Creator—who is making all things new.

**PROFILE**

**BOB (ROBERT GEORGE WESLEY) LINDSEY**

Born in Toronto, June 22, 1926; Died in Grimsby, Ontario Dec. 17, 2014

**by Barry K. Morris**



Bob Lindsey was a multilayered, multitasking person with deep Canadian roots and a life-long personal and pastoral passion for the social teachings of the Christian faith through what he called the "mind of the church." He attended King George Junior Public School in West Toronto, Humewood Public School, and according to his oldest son, Joseph, Vaughan Road Collegiate. Bob described his ministry path in a submission for a Class of 1956 Emmanuel College collection:

> Wilma and I married in November 1952. She was nursing at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto and I was selling ads for the Woodstock *Sentinel-Review*. A few months later we ran into an old friend, Cliff Waite, from my time with Frontier College in Northern Ontario and Newfoundland. He was going into the ministry of The United Church of Canada. At the time he told us of this I was casting about for some vocational future, maybe on a small farm that could be more in keeping with my convictions than selling ads. It had to be a Call, what else?[1]

It was while Bob studied at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, that he got to know Wilma, who was training at the same hospital where Bob worked part-time as an elevator operator. Wilma comments that they had previously met through church circles and activities and in her Ottawa Valley home region. She had commented to her brother that Bob was the nicest man she had ever met, though at the time she had another boyfriend. Moving from friendship to a 1951 engagement, they married in Almonte in November 1952. This marriage, which lasted longer than sixty-two years, was a deep covenant that grounded Bob's and Wilma's ministries. It was rooted in shared struggles,

[1] Bob had previously worked in farming with relatives in the Bolton, ON, area.

and even suffering. They took patient turns caring for one another in the honouring of their vows.

The Lindseys had six children: Joe (Toronto), Cathie (Wellington, New Zealand), Rob (London, England), Amy (Delft, Netherlands), Mark (Burlington, Ontario), and Mary (Toronto). Joe comments, "No one in our household could have passed through their childhood without knowing intimately that our Dad's calling was very much about making this world a better place through everyday acts of kindness and charity, as well as the sometimes more difficult demands of taking concrete social and political action."

Following Bob's official retirement, he and Wilma worked together in Grenada for seven and a half creative years, with Wilma starting Sunday schools, counselling young women, offering hygiene and health classes (she had hoped to resume nursing, but was not afforded that opportunity), and leading ecumenical youth programs, along with what son Joe describes as "endless networking and visiting." Bob meanwhile pastored with the Grenadian Presbyterian Church. In his Ontario retirement years he continued serving the church (again contributing to its "mind") in the humble capacities of teaching Sunday/Church school classes, visiting shut-ins, and participating in breakfast programs and "fish-fry" fund-raisers.

I encountered Bob Lindsey in Toronto in the 1970s when I was with the Toronto Christian Resource Centre. I had first heard his name when he was a United Church minister with Regent Park United Church, Toronto, in the 1960s. There he welcomed and worked with nearby Jesuit student-scholastics to engage in Canada's first public housing project, North and South Regent Park. He worked in further parish ministry in Windsor before accepting a position in the Department of Church in Society in the United Church's Division of Mission in Canada (DMC) from 1973 to 1981. These were bold and heady days, when the social teachings and ministries of our church were (almost) adequately funded and sustained. While in Windsor, Bob responded helpfully to Vietnam draft dodgers and/or war resisters or defectors. As he had also spent the first years of ministry at Cross Lake, Manitoba—mastering the Cree language while there—and then four years in Midland, Ontario, he parlayed these experiences, the tough inner-city work of Regent Park, and his Windsor border ministry into his head office portfolio. What a commendable range of diverse and intense ministries!

During Bob's time in Toronto, I advised some former Frontier College, Company of Young Canadians, and Kitimavik participants to apply for some United Church seed funds to assist their adventures. They

had formed "Common Act," a bold endeavour to create an "organization of organizers." They incorporated the best of liberation theology of the time, especially Gustavo Gutierrez's *Theology of Liberation,* with its emphasis on solidarity with the poor as having clear priority over theories. Bob related to it immediately, sensing a resonance with some of his own reading, including Che Guevara on the "new man" through socialism, Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks,* and Ignacio Silone's *Bread & Wine* novel. Bob's catalytic support helped to animate *Common Act* for years.

I encountered Bob's efforts again when I was appointed to the DMC's Poverty Task Force. Bob had sparked the task force to do some fresh research and make connections to the anti-poverty groups and welfare rights groups of the time. This task force aimed "to speak truth to those in power": not only to layers of government but also to the church itself. First person stories complemented the emerging narrative, including an anthology of narratives called "The Poverty Trap." With Bob's indefatigable energies, it commissioned a participant-observer's study of the *Just Society Movement*, enabled by the short-lived but well-informed Praxis Corporation of Greater Toronto (ably led by Howard Buchbinder). A firm feature of the Task Force was its consistent inclusion of poor people, eliciting and affirming their voices of experience. In all of his administrative roles, Bob gave due attention and merit to the support staff as well.

When I moved to Winnipeg, where I continued in urban core and ecumenical ministry, I was privileged to stay on the Task Force and to witness its advocacy of a Canada-wide guaranteed adequate annual income—first at the national level of the church, and then at conference and presbytery levels. We felt it crucial to deepen and widen the base for otherwise top-down church resolutions, so that politicians could not easily dismiss the range of grass-roots church support. I especially appreciated Bob's willingness to engage in good ol' fashioned Methodist-style circuit rides. He frequently left Church House and its endless meetings to visit urban ministers, anti-poverty activists, and administrative staff in order to represent and cultivate the *mind of the church* on this matter. How we were encouraged by such a sympathetic presence!

One of Bob's apt biblical texts was the Torah's encouraging caveat that the poor help to keep our hands open, and not only when praying (see Deut. 15:11). He balanced the pastoral and even the priestly ministerial functions with the prophetic, as evidenced in regular visits with former parishioners and others asking for emergency help or

encouragement. He also affirmed activists engaging in personal sensitivity training, to sustain a vital balance in their otherwise challenging/challenged lives (this leavened occasional tendencies of self-righteousness by social-political activists). Enlivened by writings on the connections between pastoral and activist ministry, Bob's pastoral instincts complemented the prophetic. As he wrote in a 2007 e-message to me: "Ministry is not something general and abstract but specific for specific situations or moments; e.g., at the doors of death, during unemployment, or break-up of the family, etc."

To keep flesh on the body as well as to stimulate the "mind of the church," Bob animated a core proposal for an inter-denominational funding pool for local poor people's efforts to address and redress the conditions and causes of poverty. This was named PLURA, an acronym that stood for the participating denominations: Presbyterian, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic and Anglican. Initially this was a hope-against-hope effort to lure the federal government into matching the collective commitments of these churches—if not tripling them. Predictably, the negotiations stalled with alleged priorities such as federal budget cuts. Undaunted, PLURA soldiered bravely on, smaller but with an independent prophetic integrity. It was an opportunity for United Church personnel and poor people's networks to elicit and grant seed money for grassroots projects.[2]

Both within and outside of Church House, Bob authored or contributed to the church's literature on social issues. In his view, mere good will was insufficient for justice-making and justice-keeping (thus the need for collective bargaining: for power below to match power above). He argued that the church needed to retrieve its serious ethical principles on alcohol use/abuse; and on the industry undergirding its production, advertising, and sale. From the United Church's General Council's Record of Proceedings (ROP), retired librarian and archivist Rev. Grant Bracewell notes that among his contributions, Bob Lindsey was cited twenty-three times in the ROP up to 1984. These include: "Nationalization of the Alcohol Industry in Canada: a well-intentioned but misdirected policy for The United Church of Canada" (1980); the Interchurch Committee for Refugees (1982); PLURA (1982); and as the author of a background paper to the DMC report "The Church and the

[2]A small part of the PLURA story is captured by Maritime Catholic activist Mary Boyd in *Coalitions for Justice: the Story of Canada's Interchurch Coalitions,* ed. Christopher Lind and Joe Mihevic (Ottawa: Novalis, 1994), 134-150.

Economic Crisis" (1984). He also published a terse one-page reflection on the enduring merits of a negative income tax policy for Canada, in the "Persistent Impoverishment" section of the Division of Mission in Canada's special edition of *Signs of the Times: Resources for Social Faith 1981* (ed. Norman Vale).

Bob's final publication was a novel, *Royal Spring* (2004), which covered the first half of the twentieth century and focused on several families (the Tyrones, Fines, and Flynns) in the greater Toronto area. It engaged class, religious, and historical issues in and through these families and the five decades. Bob read widely and made extensive use of the public libraries—in his last few years he enjoyed Thomas Piketty's C*apital in the Twenty-First Century* and biographies of political figures. By his chair could be found the latest issue of *The Nation*, the Saturday *Globe & Mail,* and *The Guardian.* He read and translated Latin as a morning exercise and discipline, and derived much pleasure from translating ecclesiastical Latin for those around him, to say nothing of his love for Latin phrases.

During my last visit with Bob and Wilma, we watched Barak Obama's election victory in November 2008 in their home in the United Church retirement community, Albright Gardens, in Beamsville, Ontario. We were mindful that this was a momentous occasion but surely not yet on the scale of significant qualitative and far-reaching change that was needed then, as now. As hopeful realists, we wondered what the future held, now that many North American once-mainstream churches are in the minority, cutting back tangible support to innovative social change efforts; and without the availability of training centres like the Canadian Urban/Action Training Centre (CUT) and supportive networks like the Urban Core Support Network.

For several years I cajoled Bob to follow up his creative writing venture of *Royal Spring* with an account of his decades in ministry, as similarly he encouraged Ed File to narrate his account of those invaluable CUT years. Indeed, remembrance of Bob's ministry sparked plans for CUT's 50th anniversary in September 2015, Bob and Ed having been 1950s classmates at Emmanuel College. Bob's novel describes "time without pressure, an opportunity to reflect on the past and conjure up the future" (145). He still had much to retrieve and integrate from his last five decades of the twentieth century. How is it we ever hunger for such memoir insights—intimated by St. Augustine's *Confessions*' prayer for stability out of our enduring restlessness?

Had such a memoir come to fruition, it would likely have included Bob's matching and mixing the rural and urban, local and

national, ecumenical and secular dynamics of ministry; working with the First Nations of northern Manitoba (Cross Lake) and beyond; ministering on the border during an intensely controversial war; pioneering and broadening ecumenicity in the inner-city; navigating cumbersome administration while patiently cultivating and animating the "mind of the church"; and his mission ventures in Grenada with Wilma. It would also have included his theological reflections, which would surely have been drawn from the stirred wells of biblical motifs, social gospel legacies, Christian or prophetic realism, liberation, and readings of contemporary crises—all set down with compelling clarity, concreteness, and comprehensiveness.

As the intended point of a "profile" is to mark a person's legacy, let us hear testimonies to Bob Lindsey's life, work, forays, and deep hunger for knowledge, tempered wisdom and courage. Robert Wright, now in his 80s, conveys the following from his Saddle Lake and Good Fish Lake (Alberta) indigenous ministry setting:

> When Bob was doing the anti-poverty task group work we had him come to a meeting of the Hamilton Conference—held at Oakville, and we arranged for him to be interviewed by a local reporter. We met outside the very prosperous seeming church building, beautiful yard, beautiful area. The reporter faithfully wrote copious notes, but when Bob paused briefly the reporter asked: "Where will you get the money to pay for all this?" To which Bob quickly responded: "From the rich." The reporter literally dropped his pen and said, "And you came to Oakville to say this!"

Former United Church Moderator Bill Phipps complements this incident in his remembrances:

> Bob's care and skill as a pastor came through in countless ways, as we became engaged with the community and social justice activism. I do remember the energy of those times, when Bob's leadership was key to so many initiatives, along with people such as Clarke MacDonald and Albion Wright.

On an ecumenical note, former Jesuit and now retired Anglican cleric, Jim Houston reflects:

> When I was with FODARA (Federation of Don Area Residents

> Associations), working out of the Community Secretariat, a group of us pulled together a coalition of Community Food Co-ops. It was decided that a big, jointly owned van would be a great asset to all the co-ops. It struck me that Bob, up there at 85 St. Clair (Church House), might have some money in one of his budget envelopes to help with the purchase; so I called him. The only question he asked was, "How much would you need?" When I called him back with a number $5000, I think it was, he asked only one more question, "To whom do I make out the cheque?" He explained he had that amount, and had to spend it within the next couple of weeks or lose it. He put a cheque for $5000 in the mail that very day.

It bears repeating that from his beginnings in ministry to the end, Bob was aided by a faithful covenant with Wilma, through their thick of affections and thin of differences, health and sickness, joys and sorrows and now, life and death. Unless a seed falls into the ground, resurrected life is not possible. For all that has been: thank you. For all that will be: yes! (cf. Hammarskjöld's *Markings*). We might say that the Lindseys' ministries were a faithful reflection of the Word that became flesh and pitched its tent among us (John 1:14).[3]

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[3] With appreciation to Don Brown for an edited version and with gratitude to those cited and drawn from, especially Joseph Lindsey and Wilma.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture, and The Renewal of Praxis*

**Anthony J. Gittins. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2015. Pp. 252.**

Anthony J. Gittins begins his book by stating that "intercultural" is a theological word (xiv), and therefore that intercultural living expresses an important goal for people of faith. While Gittins has religious orders particularly in mind, intercultural living represents a great potential for all communities of faith to embody and practise. The book combines theoretical approaches to intercultural living with practical suggestions as to how to create intercultural communities.

Gittins lays out a theological foundation for "intercultural living" to be considered a call to "conversion" (1). Conversion is a continuous process, deeply personal but never private. It is relational and communal because it is a response to the circumstances and situations (including cultural changes) affecting other members of the community.

Theology does not exist in a vacuum. In fact, doing theology is often an inter-disciplinary endeavour. Gittins strongly believes in this endeavour as he acknowledges that many important insights into intercultural living are drawn from the fields of sociology and cultural anthropology. Such terms as "multicultural," "cross-cultural," and "intercultural," and studies on culture including "acculturation" and "inculturation" are the product of these fields. Once he carefully examines these terms he attempts to connect culture with faith for the sake of intercultural living. The basic argument is that human community cannot live without culture and that faith cannot be separated from culture: "There is no naked Gospel" (62). Faith always takes root and ripens in actual cultures and in given times. Gittins offers the life of Oscar Romero as an example of how culture and faith were integrated in his culture and particular time when his hope was "to evangelize the structure of society," and where "to evangelize" meant "to bring salvation to people," using Jon Sobrino's words (78).

Gittins admits that integrated intercultural living is not easy. It requires skill and practice. Gittins offers steps to mutual understanding: first to acknowledge, appreciate, and respect one another's differences, and at times to negotiate inevitable frustrations and misunderstandings. To achieve these steps successfully, one must be equipped with knowledge of social profiles and social types, which he helpfully illustrates (81-92). Gittins also provides critical communication tools

arising from varied contexts.

Gittins then moves on to the development of "cultural competence," suggesting a model for intercultural living, utilizing Milton J. Bennett's work. Bennett`s major point is to make a shift from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism. When a person or a community is in the mode of ethnocentrism they tend to deny others, be defensive of their own ways of doing things, and minimize differences. Equipped with cultural competence, one can move to ethno-relativism, characterized by acceptance instead of denial, adaptation instead of defence, and integration instead of minimalization.

Gittins argues that culturally competent living based upon acceptance, adaptation, and integration enables people to identify God's mission from a position of marginality. Once one is fully aware of the centre, s/he is able to recognize people at the margin and people in between the centre and the margin. Moreover, one is drawn to follow the life of Jesus, who is the "new marginal person *par excellence*," referring to Jung Young Lee's work (122). The very fact that God became incarnate means that God intentionally and voluntarily chose to be at the margin, as a way of denouncing the power of the centre. While no one should be forced to be at the margin, Gittins sees a positive possibility of identifying ourselves as both central and marginal. Intercultural living is to embrace our positions of "both-and" towards "in-beyond" (128).

Since intercultural living is primarily a communal life, Gittins stresses the importance of "*communitas*" (168), a voluntary community with a task, whose members are committed to embrace a degree of marginality and vulnerability as exemplified by the life of Jesus. To this extent, intercultural living is "the challenge of radical discipleship" (177). This challenge can be met, he continues, when the community intentionally embodies the practices of invitation, inclusion, and radical welcome (180-186).

For those of us who desire to create an intercultural community, the book is a great read. Especially if one wants to explore the way of Jesus in encountering and embracing others at the margin, this book offers salient insights.

HyeRan Kim-Cragg,
St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon
*hyeran.kimcragg@usask.ca*

***Winning the Race? Religion, Hope, and Reshaping the Sport Enhancement Debate***

**Tracy J. Trothen. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2015. Pp. 209.**

On the day I finished reading *Winning the Race?* (6 July 2016), I happened to be at the University of Bath training with a group that included two U.K. paralympians who would be heading to Rio. The news broke that Oscar Pistorius, the famous South African para-athlete, known as the "Blade Runner," had been sentenced to a six-year prison sentence for the 2013 murder of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp. Back in 2008, *Time* magazine had classified Pistorius, who is a double amputee, as one of the one hundred most influential people in the world, placing him under the category of "Heroes and Pioneers." After world record international success in para-sport and impressive results against able-bodied competitors, disputes with the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) as to whether or not his prosthetics constituted an unfair advantage resulted in a ban in 2008 that was overturned only upon arbitration. The year 2011 saw Pistorius compete at the IAAF world championship, and in 2012 he became an Olympian at London. His story provided hope and inspiration far beyond the para-sport community.

The sentence of Pistorius in 2016 for murder was handed down by Judge Thokozile Masipa, the same court official who had earlier convicted and sentenced him for culpable homicide, resulting in Pistorius serving only one year in prison. Under South African law, the minimum time served for a murder conviction is set at fifteen years, but Judge Masipa cited "substantial and compelling circumstances" as a mitigating concern in handing down the above-mentioned six-year sentence to the "broken man" before her in the dock. "The life of the accused will never be the same . . . He is a fallen hero who has lost his career and been ruined financially. He cannot be at peace."

Tracy Trothen, associate professor of theology and ethics in the School of Religion at Queen's University, cites Pistorius frequently in *Winning the Race.* Although she could not have been expected to foresee recent developments before sending off the final version of her manuscript, the brilliance of her monograph is that it provides a framework for understanding complicated case studies like the one represented by the Pistorius story.

To unfold the potential of *Winning the Race* and its significance, it is first necessary to situate its contribution to the literature on religion and sport. In that regard Trothen is somewhat singular in taking seriously the prospect that sport contains a religious and spiritual dimension for at least some of those involved as participants and spectators. She also brings what she describes as a "left-leaning" Christian ethical perspective to bear upon debates about the enhancement of the human body to benefit both sport performance and the experience of fans. Further, her discussion extends to include ethical issues surrounding the variability of what might be termed "natural endowments and skills levels." She also raises inter-generational issues that may come into play through such enhancement techniques as "gene doping."

The framework that ties together her project is Trothen's hope-centered approach to the enhancement debate, proposing, as she does, that sport's spiritual and religious dimensions include hope. Though largely left out of the discussion in the mainstream ethical debate, *Winning the Race* convincingly argues that it is pertinent to consider how hope is either positively or negatively affected in sport by enhancements. In this area, Canadians need look no further than the Ben Johnson case, which Trothen mentions, and how the stripping of his Olympic gold medal in the 100 meters sprint for steroid abuse in 1988 affected the nation and, indeed, Track and Field globally.

With the added subtlety of her analytical categories of (1) winning, losing, and anticipation, (2) star athletes, (3) perfect moments, and (4) relational embodiment, cases like those of Oscar Pistorius and Ben Johnson come into particular focus: we expect that them to be good people because they are highly successful athletes; we want them to be pure and, in tension with these values, to be winners. It follows that despair creeps in if that hope is shattered. This analysis provides an important insight about the nature of people, performance, and morality.

An additional strength of this monograph is the sheer number of issues Trothen engages. While at times *Winning the Race* is repetitive, even this feature can be considered an asset. In fact, combined, these two characteristics of the book make it especially helpful for student reading in support of courses in theological ethics or religion and sport. Church reading groups will benefit for similar reasons, as will scholars in the fields of moral theology and religious studies.

Indeed, Trothen's impressive research means that there is something in the pages of *Winning the Race* that will resonate with most people, particularly those readers who are interested in sport, the nature

of hope, and the challenges surrounding faithful living in this world.

Christopher Hrynkow,
St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan
*chrynkow@stmcollege.ca*

***Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love***
**Elizabeth A. Johnson. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. Pp. 323.**

Elizabeth Johnson's *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* focuses on the theological significance of what Holmes Rolston calls the second big bang, or rather, the emergence of life and the ecological origin of species (xiii-xiv). The title is taken from the book of Job, in which Job says, "Ask the beasts and they will teach you" (12:7). Johnson notes that Christian tradition has lost sight of this ecological imperative. Over the centuries, she argues, attention has turned almost exclusively to humans, which "seems odd," she admits, considering that the Abrahamic God is the Creator of all things (1-2). In particular, an anthropocentric paradigm limits the good news of Christ's resurrection to the redemption of humans and ignores the biblical theme of a cosmic redemption of all life (Rom. 8:18-23). Creation recedes to the background as the stage for the human drama, while non-human creatures are objectified for our use (2-3). *Ask the Beasts* works against this neutral understanding of nature to establish the intrinsic value of living species as subjects demanding care in their own right (xiv). Such an approach demands a "change of method," Johnson argues, to undermine pretensions of human superiority and to attend to the marginalized "other," to those who are without a voice (xv). As framework for her argument, Johnson engages Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* with the Christian story of God in the Nicene Creed (xv). The goal is "to discover that love of the natural world is an intrinsic part of faith in God, to practical and critical effect" (xviii).

Building on her work in *She Who Is* (1992), Johnson turns to the biblical figure of Wisdom, or *Sophia* in Greek, to set the foundation for a more comprehensive ecological theology informed by both scientific and religious sources. Of central importance, *Sophia* is gendered female and frequently represented as a woman. She is with God in the beginning, is immanent in creation, and orders all things as life-giver and sustainer (140-143, 194). Identified with the Torah, *Sophia* embodies divine power and omniscience, is incarnate in Christ through the Spirit, and restores dignity to the female as manifestation of the divine (141, 193-195).

Christ therefore comes to signify *both* male and female, reconciling opposites in a unified diversity, and suggesting, through the Spirit, the diversity of God immanent in the church and the world (149, 193-194, 255, 261, 268, 276).

Moreover, in his historical specificity, Jesus reflects the divine presence and self-communication already available in the particularities of creaturely being, action, and goodness (146, 149-153, 156-158, 163, 165, 173, 175, 197). At the same time, the divine love expressed on the cross can demonstrate God's love for, and identification with, creaturely flesh in its evolutionary emergence, while representing God's redemptive presence and promise to every suffering creature (196-199, 207-210). Explains Johnson, God endows the universe with the innate and autonomous capacity to evolve, to self-organize, and to emerge into the new; to be "a free partner in its own creation" (155-156). God lets the world be what it will be, while *participating* in its becoming out of love and respect for the freedom of both creature and creation (158, 160, 162-163, 191). Paradoxically, then, God realizes Godself in the autonomous development of all life in its specificity.

Overall, *Ask the Beasts* is a rich and rewarding read. The chapters summarizing Darwin's *Origin* are concise, comprehensive, and useful for those who have not read his text. But although Johnson acknowledges the magnitude of suffering and death intrinsic to evolution, and although she points to the need to engage specific experiences of the marginalized "other," her articulation of John Polkinghorne's "free process defence" overlooks the depths of "natural evil" experienced at the level of the individual (xv, 133, 172, 191). To maintain the biblical assertion of the goodness of a creation beloved by God (Gen. 1:31), the free process defence asserts that God lovingly gifts creation with a freedom and an independence to explore and realize its endowed potential, to become something other than God through the interplay of chance and necessity, and thereby to achieve a loving and self-aware relationship with the divine (191). In this way, Johnson extends to natural processes the free will defence, which asserts that human freedom is an intrinsic good, preferable to a life without freedom, even if that freedom can be misused or result in destructive choices.

However, "the world" is not a person who can make decisions about its future, or experience suffering, or enjoy the accruing of value consequent upon natural selection (191). Rather, the world is an ecological community of individuals, whose life-spans are fleeting, and whose circumstances are not of their own choosing; no creature has control over its genes or the context into which it is born; and very few

creatures have any understanding of their location in time or space or their contributions to an evolving natural history. Without engaging the specific realities of these sentient creatures, the "free process defence" remains vulnerable to "the argument from divine neglect," that, as analogical parent, the Abrahamic God fails to balance the need for freedom with the need for protection. Moreover, the free process defence runs the risk of justifying suffering and death as the necessary cost of a greater good. Indeed, when one engages the concrete specifics of creaturely struggle and wasted life intrinsic to the evolutionary emergence of novelty, one comes up against the incomprehensible and incorrigible mystery of God and the need to approach nature as existentially fallen. Demonstrably, then, *Ask the Beasts* is an informative thought-provoking resource and model for discussions around science and theology.

Simon Watson,
Emmanuel College, University of Toronto
*simonr.watson@utoronto.ca*

***How Human is GOD? Seven Questions about God and Humanity in the Bible***

**Mark S. Smith. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2014. Pp.192.**

"Mark Smith is professor of Bible and ancient Near Eastern studies at New York University. Previously he taught at Yale University, Saint Joseph's University . . . and Saint Paul Seminary . . . he is past president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America" (back cover). In this volume his deep grounding in Hebrew Scripture and knowledge of the world in which that Scripture was written is evident and is a great gift to the reader.

In the beginning of our faith story we are told that humanity is created in God's image. Does this mean that God is also in our image? In this well-referenced volume—of the 192 pages 58 are endnotes and recommended readings—Smith invites us to think about God as God is revealed in the words of the Hebrew Bible. He offers seven chapters, each of which explores (and maybe even answers) one of the seven questions referenced in the subtitle of the book.

These chapters are divided into two sections. In the first section we have questions about God: "Why Does God Have a Body?" "What Do God's Body Parts in the Bible Mean?" "Why Is God Angry in the

Bible?" and "Does God in the Bible Have Gender or Sexuality?" The second section explores questions about God in the world: "What Can Creation Tell Us about God?" "Who—or What—Is the Satan?" and "Why Do People Suffer according to the Hebrew Bible?" Obviously many, if not all, of those topics could be a lengthy book (or books) in and of themselves, which is why Smith gives such good notes and recommended reading for those who want to go deeper.

The nature and understanding of God is an unending discussion for people of faith. The questions about God never seem to get fully answered, but Smith makes an interesting suggestion in the prologue: ". . . the emergence of the understanding of God within ancient Israel was a redefinition of divinity in its time . . . the change in ancient Israel's sense of God may anticipate changes taking place today" (xiii). As we continue to re-vision how we understand God, we need to remain grounded in the witness of Scripture and this book is very helpful in doing just that.

Of course the challenge in talking about God is that all we can use are metaphors, and when we turn metaphors into literal statements, things can get weird. Smith recognizes this. And so, even as he speaks about God's body, he asks, "What are we to make of anthropomorphism? Is it simply a projection . . ." (5). However, as he points out, we use the language we have. Since we understand God as being personal and in relationship we will end up describing God in some of the same ways we describe other persons. But later Smith points out that "human language applied to God not only falls short; it only makes sense for God when it is recognized as being partial and falling short" (64). Smith pushes us to recognize that the descriptions he offers are not all that God is, a helpful reminder for us as we wrestle with our own understanding of God.

While this book ably addresses some of the easier aspects of God (God's body parts, knowing God in creation), it also does not shy away from taking on some really difficult subjects (God's gender/sexuality, God's anger, why people suffer). Smith knows that some of what Scripture says about God is challenging and is able to name and explore that challenge. This exploration invites the reader to look deeper. As a person of faith it would be easy to accept simple answers to difficult questions, but Smith pushes us to look at what the text really says, even when it may move us out of our comfort zone. As a whole, the book calls us to see God "through the positive lens of creation and through the negative lens of evil and suffering" (128), and so pushes us toward a more complete, more nuanced picture.

Early in the book we read "we may be drawn to images of God that move us or comfort us . . . Sometimes, though, we do not really use our brains very much in thinking about God" (ix). Near the end we read "Human images constitute a starting point for thinking about God . . . This is a beginning, not the end . . . we change—our discovery of who God is changes" (129). This sums up an approach to exploring who God is; an approach that includes our own experiences and feelings but also our logic and reason as well as the witness of those who have gone before us. This seems like a really good thing to encourage people to do, as we try to answer who God is and how God is a part of our lives.

Gord Waldie,
Grande Prairie AB
*gwaldie@stpaulsuc.ca*

***EPIPHANY: A Christian's Change of Heart & Mind over Same-Sex Marriage***

**Michael Coren. Random House Canada, 2016. Pp. 240.**

Jewish by birth, Catholic by conversion, outspoken by disposition, Michael Coren inveighed fiercely against gay sex for years. But then the culture finally convinced the conservative writer and broadcaster that we can't expect gays to resist their sexual orientation any more than we can expect straights to resist *their* sexual orientation.

So, praise God, Coren changed his mind. But he didn't change his fundamentalist leanings. In *Epiphany* he ties himself in pretzels explaining how he can support gay rights while still taking seriously such passages as Leviticus 20:13: "If a man has intercourse with a man, they both commit an abomination." This particular passage, Coren explains, may appear near the beginning of the Bible, but in fact it was composed while the Jews were living in exile in Babylon. The chosen people were in danger at the time of dying out as a race, and therefore badly needed babies to continue the family of God. That's apparently why God was so angry with them for having gay sex. They should have been having those babies to keep God's people alive! After they had returned to the promised land, and there was no longer any danger of extermination, they could enjoy those sexual relationships that weren't going to produce more little Israelites.

Coren presents such arguments with a straight face instead of simply admitting that the writers of the Bible were people of their

(homophobic) times. Yes, the Bible is the authoritative witness to God's self-revelation in Israel and Jesus Christ. But it is also a human (and sometimes very human) witness. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," says Paul, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). What's wrong with leaving it at that?

On account of his fundamentalist creed, Coren has to come up with a positive theological rationale for everything the Bible says about homosexuality. Paul, he claims, is not really condemning gays when he slams certain women for "exchanging natural intercourse for unnatural," and certain men for "giving up natural intercourse with women and becoming consumed with passion for one another" (Rom. 1: 26, 27). The Apostle is merely addressing "straight men who are indulging in what is unnatural to their characters" (100). Their sin, in other words, is not gay sex so much as it is curiosity on the part of heterosexuals trying other lifestyles just for the heck of it.

Michael Coren recently left the Catholic Church over the issue of homosexuality and became an Anglican, taking his conservative convictions with him. He remains nevertheless a gifted journalist, and those gifts are on fine display in the second half of *Epiphany* where he interviews a number of gay Christians and encourages them to tell their stories in their own words.

We hear chilling accounts of parents of gay children ex-communicating their kids the minute those kids come out of the closet; and of ecclesiastical leaders ex-communicating priests even if some of these same ecclesiastical leaders happen to be gay themselves. We also hear of gays getting beaten up by straights, sometimes even murdered by straights. Many of these stories have been told before, but the cumulative effect of them in this book is heartbreaking.

Gays are still sinners, of course. But then we're all sinners saved by grace and grace alone. Michael Coren should be commended for struggling to articulate a better understanding of God's grace in the presence of our gay friends and family. But the control freak in him should let go of the hoary old doctrine of biblical inerrancy, and his argument could be even stronger.

John McTavish,
Huntsville ON
*jmctav@vianet.ca*

**SERMON**

**JESUS, KILLER OF HATE**
**by David H. C. Read**

*For he is himself our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood he has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace. This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, on which he killed the enmity (*Eph. 2: 14-18).

A couple of weeks ago, many miles from here, I found myself sitting reading this passage in the French of the Jerusalem Bible. At my feet lay the newspaper that I had just finished. It had left me with the usual feeling of depression at the amount of violence, corruption, and terror that fills our world. In Marseilles an Algerian worker had run amok in a bus, killed the driver, and wounded several passengers. In the following four days four Algerians had been found murdered in the same city. In London a secretary had her hand blown off by a bomb planted in a letter she was opening. In Stockholm four bank employees were being held day after day at the mercy of a couple of desperadoes. From the Middle East came tales of murderous threats and sabre-rattling speeches. From the United States, apart from the usual stories of violence, one learned that corruption had now reached the level of the soap-box derby. Strife, conflict, hate, murder—of course one knows that such things make news, but somehow it all seemed just a little bit worse than usual this summer.

I didn't pick up the Bible to forget it. For that I turned to the adventures of Inspector Maigret or the amiable lunacies of Bertram Wooster. Having been through Genesis in the French Bible, I had discovered enough murder, war, crime, corruption, and violence to satisfy any reader of the tabloids. But here I was in Ephesians reading about Jesus. And from this striking passage one sentence leaped out at me as it never had in our English versions. "*Il a tué la haine*," I read. "He has killed hatred."

"He has killed hatred." Here is the writer summing up the story of Jesus who, to the secular historian, was simply one more among millions of victims of human cruelty and hate, as a victory over hatred itself. In the New English Bible we read of the "cross, on which he killed the enmity." This is either nonsense, or else it contains the ultimate secret of hope and confidence for a despairing world.

The newspapers at my feet seemed to say that it was nonsense. If Jesus killed hate, they seemed to say, how do you account for this mess we are living in two thousand years later? If Jesus killed hate why have these so-called "years of our Lord" been filled with wars, persecution, and vicious animosities even among his own followers? This is a hard question for the Christian to answer in any age, and perhaps harder than ever in this age of disillusionment when so many hopes of sixty years ago have been shattered in the fires of war and persecution.

"Jesus killed hate." We are here this morning because we believe that, in spite of all that has happened, of all that is still poisoning our world, and of the evidence of our own hearts, these words have meaning. In them is the secret of a faith that can nerve us to face the hate-filled world in which we live, to overcome the hostilities that smoulder in our own lives, and to be instruments of peace in the place where God has set us. We are not prepared to write off the Gospel as an illusion or the testimony of the saints as pious fraud. And so we are ready to listen again to what the Bible means when it speaks of the victory of Jesus over the powers of hate.

It doesn't take long to realize that the writers of the New Testament were as aware as we are that the brief life and early death of Jesus did not immediately and miraculously banish hatred from the earth. These men, a generation after the crucifixion, were surrounded by the forces of hate, and exposed to its cruelties every day of their lives. They were hated by every section of the community, except perhaps the poor. The world around them seethed with hatreds just as if Jesus had never lived and died. So what did they mean when they pointed to that Cross and said: "He has killed hate"?

I believe they were talking about the very centre of the Gospel—the good news that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." They were saying that God had released into the world a power greater than all the legions of hatred and division, a power that would never be extinguished before mankind had found its ultimate unity and harmony, and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." In the very teeth of their own experience of violence and hatred they proclaimed Christ's victory of love. Like their Lord they looked beyond the battlefield to the place of ultimate decision and saw "Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Since faith, according to the New Testament, is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," they lived in this conviction that "Jesus has killed hate," that love is the final victory, and that all who truly live in Christ share in his reconciling power. After all these years we have still the same choice

to make: either this is a chaotic and meaningless world where hate runs rampant until human beings blow one another to pieces, or there is a God who has injected into the human family a redeeming and reconciling force that works in everything for good with those who love him.

We can understand how Jesus has killed hate only from the biblical perspective where hate is seen as a consequence of human rebellion against God. This is illuminated for us dramatically by the myth of the Tower of Babel. As an attempt to explain the origin of the multiplicity of human languages, this tale can be read as a picturesque piece of folklore. What it is really saying, as the Word of God to us, throws a light on our human situation as brilliantly today as when the Book of Genesis was compiled. The confusion of languages is a perfect symbol of the breakdown in communication, the suspicions and misunderstandings, the barriers of race and culture, which breed the hatreds and the wars that afflict the human race.

This summer the old farmer who was next door to our summer home in the south of France was watching our little boy one day try to communicate with his grandchildren. As he saw the frustration and vexation of children who couldn't understand each other's language he shrugged his shoulders, grinned, and said to me: "La Tour de Babel." What this story does is to link this confusion and division to the arrogance of humanity in seeking the place of God. "Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven." The rivalries of mankind stem from the ultimate rivalry, the desire to play God, and the rejection of his rule. The chasm between groups of human beings is a measure of the chasm between them and their God. They begin to hate another because, in their pretension, they hate the Lord who made them.

Another way of describing this predicament is the picture of humanity as designed to form a great circle facing inward to the Light of God. When they turn round and face outwards, not only has each one lost the central Light but he can no longer see his neighbor's face. The answer, then, to the hatreds that burn in the human race lies in a turning back towards the face of God. Reconciliation between human beings depends on a common reconciliation with our God.

It is in this light that we are asked to look again at the mission of Jesus. The Gospel is nothing less than a summons to accept the reconciliation that he brings. Every word and act of Jesus has to do with his reconciling power, and for him the breaking of the barriers between human beings and human groups has always to do with the breaking of the barriers between them and their God. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." He plainly said that it was useless to express our

desire for reconciliation with God if we are unwilling to be reconciled with our neighbour. "If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift." It was because he walked with an unclouded communion with his heavenly Father that he ignored completely the division and hatreds that rent the community in which he lived. Roman soldiers, Samaritans, tax collectors—all objects of the most intense hatred—he treated exactly the same as Jewish patriots and the devout of the synagogue. It was as if hatred itself had been killed within him. He loathed the cruelties and hypocrites he saw around him but seemed incapable of hating anyone at all. So when he said that he had come "to seek and to save those who were lost" he was really offering to restore to any who would accept him that communion with God and one's fellows which human hate had broken.

But there was something more in this story than merely the picture of one who rejected hate and taught his followers to eliminate it from their hearts. The Gospel is not simply a tale of a good teacher whose advice on the whole has been rejected. It is about the cosmic struggle between love and hate. It is about the reconciliation of mankind with our God. It is about the re-creation of the world, the creation, as our text says, of "a new humanity." Therefore, it is a story of the Son of God who comes to bind up the wounds, to absorb the hatreds, to eliminate the barriers, and to move mankind toward the ultimate harmony of God's design.

Therefore, Jesus did not kill hate with words, nor even with spectacular deeds. He killed it by submitting himself to the worst that it could do. This is why the Cross hangs over every celebration of Christian worship and is never far away from true Christian preaching. For this was the divine answer to the rebellion of men and women against their God and to their hatreds and their fears. When Jesus died, the victim of the very forces that threaten us so terribly today, the power of hate was broken. There was nothing more fearful that it could do—to torture and kill the Son of God himself. And so when his disciples met him on Easter morning and knew that he had come back from the hell through which he had passed for us, they could look back on that Cross as a sign, not of defeat, but of victory. "He has killed hate," they said. "He is himself our peace."

The man who wrote these words was no secluded mystic. He knew the hatreds that still raged. Paul himself was the victim of one of the most virulent hatreds that has ever stained the pages of history—the

mutual hating between Jew and Gentile. And so he takes this bitter division as an illustration of the killing of hate. Writing as a Jew to Gentiles he says: "Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them . . . so as to create a single new humanity." "This was his purpose" he wrote, "to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross on which he killed the enmity."

"He killed the enmity." Have we yet learned that we cannot find in the Cross the symbol of our reconciliation to God, the pledge that our sins are forgiven, and that we are accepted in spite of our rebellions, unless we at the same time find there the symbol of our union with every human being, no matter what label they bear? Have we yet learned that the fostering of resentments, prejudices, and petty hates in our heart draws down the shutters on the grace of God that is waiting for us in the Gospel? And do we really believe that there is still no more powerful instrument for dealing with the fearful hostilities that rampage in our world, and in our city, than the Spirit of Christ, the Killer of hate?

A letter arrived in our Church House just as I was finishing this sermon. It was addressed to no particular minister—just to the church. And it contained one sentence: "Dear Sir, What must I do to save my soul from hell?" I've no idea what lies behind that cry and have to guess as I answer. But it was like a call from the world of today, from the millions who are not perhaps so worried about the fate of their individual soul, but are being driven to despair by a world that seems hell-bent on the path of hatred, violence, and lunatic destruction. It is still the joyful task of the church to point to Jesus, the Killer of hate, to insist that there is no technique for saving the world that ignores the grace of God (no matter what our humanist friends may say), and to invite all our contemporaries, no matter what their racial, social, or religious background may be, to discover in Jesus their Saviour and their Lord.

*David. H. C. Read began his ministry in the Church of Scotland, serving rural and urban congregations before becoming a chaplain to Edinburgh University. From 1939 to 1945, Read was a P.O.W. in German concentration camps. In 1956, Read began a 33-year ministry at New York's Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. The author of more than 30 books and for many years a regular preacher for NBC's "National Radio Pulpit," Dr. Read died in 2001 at 91. Read's sermon "Jesus, The Killer of Hate" was originally published by MAPC's in-house press on Sept. 9, 1973, and is re-printed with the congregation's kind permission.*

## *SAVE THE DATE! June 1-2, 2017*

### God and Godly Consequences:
### A theological symposium
### for The United Church of Canada

*Touchstone* journal is planning a symposium for June 1-2, 2017, in Toronto, focusing on the theme of the doctrine of God and the implications of that doctrine (e.g., providence, theodicy, and prayer). Through this event, the journal hopes to foster scholarship and to encourage the faithful intellectual life of United Church members and adherents. Lay persons, ministers, and academics are encouraged to consider presenting a paper.

All are welcome to attend. This would be an excellent opportunity for Continuing Education.

More details will be available on the Touchstone website in late November (*touchstonecanada.ca*).

***At this time we are seeking a host site, volunteer assistance with local arrangements, and funding assistance. Please contact Dr. Rob Fennell, chair of the editorial board, if you are able to help (*rfennell@astheology.ns.ca*).***

***SAVE THE DATE! June 1-2, 2017***