

## Redeemed by violence? Who are we becoming?

### Governing Board - May 2002

---

The Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches devoted a full day of its spring meeting held on May 22-24, 2002, to learning, reflecting and sharing on the times in which we live, times marked particularly by the agonies of the Middle East and by the seemingly endless "war on terror" launched by the United States following the disasters of September 11 in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

Jointly facilitated by **Peter Noteboom**, Associate Secretary for the Commission on Justice and Peace, and **Mary Marrocco**, Associate Secretary for the Commission on Faith and Witness, the day was designed to assist those present to wrestle with such questions as:

- What is the grace hidden in the moment of 9/11?
- What ought we to have learned?
- What kind of people are we becoming?
- How do we pray?
- How do we preach?
- How are we the Canadian Council of Churches now?

An outline of the Bible Study and the texts of the speakers follow:

Bible study

Naming the historical and geo-political context

Theological reflection

Reflections by members of the Governing Board

---

## ***Bible Study***

Rev. Dr. Stewart Gillan led the Governing Board members in bible study based on the text of Isaiah 58. The outline of the Bible Study follows:

### **Introduction of Symbols**

- a. *The Economist*—'A heart-rending but necessary war' marketing package
- b. broken stones
- c. three-figure carving

### **Biblical Text**

Isaiah 58 'The fast that I choose'

### **Placing of Symbols**

Where in the text, as you hear it, would you place each of the symbols, and why?

- a. *The Economist*—'A heart-rending but necessary war' marketing package
- b. broken stones
- c. three-figure carving

### **Asking Questions**

1. In what ways is Israel 'serving its own interests' in its fasting (v.3-4) and Sabbath observance (v.13)? In what ways may the Church in Canada be said to be 'serving its own interests' in faith and witness?

2. What is the 'fast' that the Lord chooses in Isaiah 58? What does such fasting look like today, in Canada and in the world?

3. What reversals (e.g., from hunger to shared meals) do you note in the text of Isaiah 58? What implications are there for our faith and witness together today?

4. What truth is spoken by the broken stones/ancient ruins noted in verse 12? What may be the truth of broken stones in New York, Kabul, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and/or Ramallah? Ottawa, Kanehsatake/Oka, Africville ... ?

5. What will it take for Israel to be called 'the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in?' What will it take for us to repair breaches and restore streets to live in—in Canada and, with global partners, in the world?

### **Hearing Voices**

Tom Waits, U.S. Songwriter

...the fugitives say that the streets aren't for dreaming now,

and manslaughter dragnets and the ghosts that sell memories  
they want a piece of the action anyhow...

**'Tom Traubert's Blues,' Small Change, Asylum Records, 1976.**

Isaiah, Exilic Prophet

You shall be called ... the restorer of streets to live in. 58: 12d

George W. Bush, U.S. President

Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

**Speech to a Joint Session of Congress, 20 September 2001.**

Reinhold Niebuhr, U.S. Theologian

Any justice which is only justice soon degenerates into something that is less than justice. It must be saved by something that is more than justice.

**Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics, N.Y., 1932.**

Without the grace of love, justice always degenerates into something less than justice.

**'Justice and Love,' Christianity and Society, Fall 1950.**

Dorothee Sölle, German Theologian

Just as we were leaving/ to speak out against the arms buildup/ ... one hundred thousand people were coming to town/ to save washington for christ...

...On the way home/ a fellow demonstrator said to me/ don't let it get to you washington will not be for christ/ even if they buy up more radio stations/and teach people to hate themselves and others

But christ I said to him/ is dying right here in washington

**'Christ is dying in washington,' Of War and Love, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1983.**

Karen Lebacqz, U.S. Theologian

All historic enactments of justice stand under the judgment of love. Love requires justice for the complex realities of the sinful social world. Yet, love also transcends, fulfills, negates and judges justice. It transcends justice because it goes beyond, exceeding the demands of justice.

**Six Theories of Justice, Minneapolis, 1986.**

Desmond Tutu, Co-Chair: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, S.A.

It is realpolitik, this forgiveness thing. It is not just something in the realm of religion or the spiritual. If justice is your last word you have had it. You've got to go beyond it. ... Ubuntu says I am human only because you are human. If I undermine your humanity I dehumanize myself. You must do what you can to maintain this great harmony, which is perpetually undermined by resentment, anger, desire for vengeance. That is why African jurisprudence is restorative rather than retributive.

**The Ultimate Test of Faith, Mail & Guardian, 12-18 April 1996.**

Pope John Paul II

The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love that is forgiveness ... But in the present circumstances, how can we speak of justice and forgiveness as the source and condition of peace? We can and we must, no matter how difficult this may be. ... Forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. In fact, true peace is 'the work of justice' (Is 32:17). ... True peace therefore is the fruit of justice, that moral virtue and legal guarantee which ensures full respect for rights and responsibilities, and the just distribution of benefits and burdens. But because human justice is always fragile and imperfect, subject as it is to the limitations and egoism of individuals and groups, it must include and, as it were, be completed by the forgiveness that heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations. This is true in circumstances great and small, at the personal level or on a wider, even international scale. ... Forgiveness is in no way opposed to justice, as if to forgive meant to overlook the need to right the wrong done. It is rather the fullness of justice. ... Justice and forgiveness are both essential to such healing.

**2002 Peace Message: Peace, Justice and Forgiveness, Vatican City**

Miguel Manzano and J.A. Olivar (translation, George Lockwood)

When the poor ones who have nothing share with strangers,  
When the thirsty water give unto us all,  
When the crippled in their weakness strengthen others,  
Then we know that God still goes that road with us.  
When our homes are filled with goodness in abundance,  
When we learn how to make peace instead of war,  
When each stranger that we meet is called a neighbour,  
Then we know that God still goes that road with us.

**'El Camino,' San Pablo Internacional - SPP, 1971.**

Archbishop Michael Peers, Anglican Church of Canada

God is present and God provides ... and if we are conscious that our role is to receive the gifts, the word, the ministry God gives, and that our mission is to bless and let our lives be broken for the world, and to share the gospel of new life, then we will be found faithful in living a life patterned in Christ. That pattern leads us to healing and respect (emphasis his).

**Ministry Matters, Winter 2000.**

## ***Naming the historical and geopolitical context***

---

**Dale Hildebrand**, Middle East desk, Global Partnerships Program of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

First of all, I want to say that I feel very honoured to be with you on this most important day. So often, we continue our headlong rush through our work without taking the time to say, "our business can wait, we need to pause and consider the 'signs of the times' as Jesus put it, and what these signs mean." So I commend the meeting planners for setting aside a whole day to try to name this particular moment in history and what it means for Canadian Christians seeking to be faithful to God's call.

I assumed, hopefully rightly, that part of the reason I was asked to contribute to the naming of our current context was because of my Middle East responsibilities, although, as most of you already know, I am no expert in the Middle East. The problem is, despite the fact that this region is a cauldron of conflict, of human rights abuses, a flashpoint for western intervention-most of it extremely violent and unhelpful-and will very likely be the locus of the next major war (Iraq again), we have very few people in the churches working in this area, almost nobody!

Nevertheless, I do want to say some things about the Middle East geopolitical context. Before I do that, let me make a few general comments about this current context we find ourselves in.

It was A.J. Muste, a radical American pacifist, reflecting on the emergence of the U.S. as a superpower after World War II, who made the astute observation that, "The problem after a war is with the victor. He thinks he [the pronoun, while perhaps not intentional 60 years ago, is probably appropriate today as then] has just proved that war and violence pay. Who will now teach him a lesson?" In the last half century, many people have unfortunately learned the bitter meaning of those words.

People in Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia-all subject to massive military attacks by the U.S., sometimes with Canadian support-have been at the receiving end of the doctrine that coercion works. (Vietnam, of course, is the notable exception, although one could even argue the exception given the impoverished state of that country over the past three decades). Because, in one sense, it has worked, hasn't it? From a secular, power politic point of view, it has worked marvelously for the U.S. and its tag along junior partners. How else can one explain how 16% of the world's population (basically the old G-7 countries) can consume 84% of the world's resources? Try that division of resources in any social group without something to enforce it. There has to be some stick (and a credible one!) to protect that kind of inequality.

And if our assessment of globalization is correct (that it will lead to a deepening of the divide between haves and have-nots), then we can expect the stick to become even harsher, and used with increasing frequency, as Thomas Homer-Dixon has written about in terms of the conflict over resources.

The notion of self-defense, in this scheme of things, which is usually ridiculed as a cover for offense, makes perfect sense. It is defense—of the 84% to 16% reality. Of course it makes no sense to the villagers in Afghanistan, or Iraq, or El Salvador who are blown up as they head off to their fields for the day. But to those who know that the appropriation of the vast majority of the Earth's resources by a few is a difficult sell, the resort to force comes in very handy.

There are important nuances to consider. As Jeff Helper, an Israeli peace activist reminded us a few weeks ago, virtually every representative in Congress has significant defense industry contracts in their district. You can't keep cranking up the defense budget unless there are some wars to fight. And if you don't have a war to fight, well, you can always create one.

Unless George W. Bush is bluffing, which I doubt, the next shower of bombs and missiles will be landing on Iraq again as the next phase of the "war on terror". There are still a few ducks to line up before the daisy cutters and cluster bombs start dropping, and there is the small matter of the timing of congressional elections, but these are minor issues. (By the way, I really do look forward to the day when a U.S. president's popularity will be tied to how long he can keep the peace, rather than leading his country into war.)

There will be no seeking approval of the United Nations Security Council to wage war on another country when Iraq is attacked in several months' time. The U.S. could easily have garnered such approval for the Afghanistan war but didn't even bother to go through the motions. What I find more and more frightening about how these wars are waged these days is that there is no longer a clear line between war and peace. Maybe there never was, but at least there used to be the formality of moving from a peace to a war footing. "There is a time for war and a time for peace", the writer of Ecclesiastes says. Now, and especially since September 11, we have the doctrine of "unlimited pre-emptive self-defense", which means you can mount massive military attacks without officially declaring war on someone. And in the end, it means you are perpetually at war, which is basically what we are now being told about the new state of the world post-9/11.

W.H. Auden's poem, September 1, 1939, a poem that has been much reflected on since September 11, contains the following lines:

I and the public know  
what all schoolchildren learn,  
Those to whom evil is done,  
Do evil in return.

I think it's a much better explanation of September 11 than the "Clash of Civilizations" theory. When I was in the Middle East last fall, I asked a Palestinian intellectual about this supposed clash of Islam and the West. I loved his answer. He said, "Look, it was the French, Jose Bove, the

French anti-globalization farmer, who went and trashed a McDonalds restaurant, not us!"

There is in the Middle East, a profound resentment of the U.S. role there, and deep suspicion about U.S. motives-in Iraq, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. It is not about the export of American movies and restaurants; it's about the double standards that have become so stark. People ask why Iraq was nearly bombed out of existence to end its occupation of Kuwait, while Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank drags on for 35 years?

People ask why one despotic regime-say Saudi Arabia-is befriended by the West and another is portrayed as evil incarnate? Why is one country systematically disarmed, while others are saturated with weapons from the west? Yes, certainly these contradictions do create fertile breeding grounds for Islamic fundamentalist groups, but to simply posit a clash of Islamic and Western cultures, a priori, divorced from questions about justice and history, is more than just bad analysis. At some point, it becomes irresponsible and unjust.

Discussion about Middle East issues, and in particular the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, is often seen as so morally polarized that the temptation is simply to set aside issues of right and wrong and try to set up an arrangement that everyone can live with, even if bitterly. We ought not to fall into that trap as Canadian Christians. To understand what is happening in the world today, we have to continue to probe the moral questions of justice. Many of the prophetic books in the Old Testament were written in similar times of chaos, war and injustice. Rather than be silenced by the majority views of the day, the prophets castigated the rich and the powerful and demanded justice.

Which brings me back to the words of a latter-day prophet whom I quoted earlier: W.H. Auden.

From the same poem he writes:

All I have is a voice  
to undo the folded lie,  
The romantic lie in the brain  
Of the sensual man-in-the-street  
And the lie of Authority  
Whose buildings grope the sky:  
There is no such thing as the State  
And no one exists alone;  
Hunger allows no choice  
To the citizen or the police;  
We must love one another or die.

---

**Michael Marmura**, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations

I'm glad I came in time for the Bible Study and thus was able to read some of the quotations (which Rev. Stewart Gillan provided). The ones which impressed me most are those that set out the relation between justice and love. I wish to speak about a misunderstanding of the Middle East where the issues are essentially moral, having to do with basic human justice; and where sometimes the religious factor is not only misunderstood but can also overlie, distort and pervert the moral issue.

What has happened to the indigenous population of Palestine is wrong—not a mere wrong, but an enormity. Yet many in the West, including Christians, turn their eyes away from this wrong; they do not want to see it. A main stumbling block to any peaceful resolution of the problem is the lack of a genuine recognition of the wrong and the intense human suffering that has ensued.

It is now fashionable to speak about the clash of civilizations. This, in my view, is yet another way to bypass the moral questions that face nations. One can argue that the past conflicts between any two nations—France and Germany, if you like—represent a clash of cultures, or civilizations, or what have you. Does that mean that when there is a conflict, the conflict is simply an inevitable clash of cultures, of civilizations, and that questions of international morality and legality do not enter into it?

What we are seeing now in the Middle East is the climax of something that started years ago when decisions for the indigenous Palestinian population were made arbitrarily by outsiders without consultation of the people themselves. Why should I, who come from an old Palestinian Christian family, lose my country, my home, because a Balfour in England makes a declaration or a Truman in the U.S. makes a decision about my ancestral homeland? The violation in all this is not simply a violation of rights, but a negation of personality—perhaps the ultimate sin one human can inflict on another.

At the age of 11, I went with a group of youngsters for the first time to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. It was a sunny day; the skies were blue; and the stones seemed to glimmer in the sun. I was struck by the mystique of the place. I felt that I was part of the very stone building and grounds. It seemed to me that I was hearing the voices of the caliph Umar and of Saladin who freed Jerusalem from the Crusaders—two of Islam's archetypal heroes. And I, the son of an Episcopal clergyman, felt that these were my heroes no less than the heroes of my Muslim classmates. I, born in Jerusalem, never felt so completely that this city was in my very bones. When in 1967 the Israelis illegally occupied the Old City, it was not merely the illegality of it—tacitly admitted even by the United States—but, more so, it was the ultimate in the "negation of personality" I mentioned earlier.

Palestinians become very pessimistic. Some find solace in the poetry of the philosophical Arab poet al-Ma'arri, who died in 1058. A pessimist (though not without a keen sense of humour), he

declared:

*How have I provoked your enmity?  
Christ or Muhammad 'its one to me.  
No rays of dawn our sight illumine.  
We are sunk together in ceaseless gloom.* (Translated by R. N. Nicholson)

These lines, with all their pessimism, remind us at least that much of humanity is in the same boat. Many of us remain floundering, not knowing where we are and, in this sense, negative as it is, we are brethren. But we ought to seek to be brethren more positively, hoping that justice and compassion, by the grace of God, may prevail.

But to return to our main topic. The Palestinian population has deep, deep roots in the land where they have existed (acquiring an Arab character) since early in the 7th century. But their roots go much farther than that. The language of the Palestinian villagers still carries echoes of the Canaanites—who were there before Abraham.

Religion certainly has become part of the problem. But it is really something additional. I remember at the time of the Khomeini revolution in Iran, when I should have been happy because he supported the Palestinian cause. I was disappointed, however, because he based that support on the claim that Palestine was part of the land of Islam. I would have been much happier had he said: "I, as a Muslim, believe in a just God and what has happened in the last century in Palestine has been a violation of the basic laws of justice ordained by God and that is why I support the Palestinians."

I am not trying to underestimate the horrendous injustice that has visited the Jews of Europe. For centuries they have been dehumanized, vilified, abused and persecuted—a persecution that reached its climax in the Holocaust. But the Zionist movement preceded the Holocaust. It is quite understandable that in the 19th century Jews began to seek a homeland. But, and this is the heart of the moral issue, to seek one's salvation by displacing and destroying another people is immoral. The early Zionists persuaded themselves, and the world, with the untruthful slogan that Palestine was "a land without a people." If this were the case, there would have been no problem and no tragedy.

Historically, before the Arab expansion, Palestine was part of the Byzantine Empire, its population largely Christian. Around 640 A.D., Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslim Arabs, and eventually all of Palestine, Syria, Egypt and beyond. When the caliph Umar came to Jerusalem, he made a treaty with the Patriarch, guaranteeing the freedom of religion and the preservation and protection of the Christian churches—a policy that has been followed by all subsequent Islamic dynasties.

When the Arab armies came, they remained in camps which became administrative districts. Undoubtedly there was intermarriage with the local population. But there was no forced conversions, no massacres and certainly no ethnic cleansing. Some of the Palestinians adopted

Islam, some for pragmatic reasons, some out of genuine conviction, perhaps partly as they found it an escape from the Christological controversies of the period. Some remained Christian but adopted Arabic as their language, with its mores and culture. They became part of the community whose descendants are referred to nowadays as Palestinian Arabs.

Where then do we go from here? One thing is a recognition that a terrible wrong was done, without concluding that to undo the wrong means eradicating the State of Israel. The Christian churches need to know that Palestinian villages, homes, orchards are still being destroyed; that their land is being expropriated, their people humiliated and imprisoned under a brutal 35-year-old occupation.

There is a slight, slight hope in the fact that there are Jewish thinkers, in the tradition of the ethical prophets, who acknowledge the wrong. There are Israelis who seek peace and justice. These are slight openings for accommodation and should be encouraged and nourished. One has to hope, and in a situation of hope, one must remember that both Israelis and Palestinians have much to give to each other.

As I see it, the State of Israel can only exist within secure borders if it recognizes and enables the right of Palestinians to live with dignity within secure borders and if it brings to an end the expropriation of their land. An ending of the occupation is the moral and legal prerequisite. The present Bush-Sharon axis bodes ill for the entire Middle East, including Israel.

I now want to say a word about the Sabeel Ecumenical Centre in Jerusalem, an organization with chapters in Canada, the U.S. and other countries. Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots movement among Palestinian Christians that encourages people to discern how their faith connects with the hard realities of Palestinian daily life: occupation, violence, discrimination and all manner of human violation. Sabeel is convinced that violence is not the answer for it dehumanizes both the victim and the victimizer. They need the prayers and support of the church world-wide in their struggle to be faithful and free.

---

**Chaplain General/Commodore Tim Maindonald** of the Military Chaplaincy of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I bring you greetings from the Inter-faith Committee on Military Chaplaincy and from its chair, Bishop Don Theriault.

There are more Canadian service personnel now serving outside the country than at any time since the Korean War, and with them go Canadian clergy in uniform as chaplains. Thank you for the prayerful support we get from the Canadian churches within Canada, recognizing the service and sacrifice both of those in uniform and for the military families who carry their burden alone while a spouse is away serving overseas at this particular time.

Most recently, we have seen the tragedy of the "friendly fire" incident and the death of four Canadian service personnel. The work within every theatre of operation is dangerous. This incident focused Canadian public attention on the meaning of service and sacrifice through the memorial services in the country, including the one in Edmonton.

From the moment the notification was made that we had lost four Canadians, 22 of your clergy made the announcements across Canada to the primary, secondary and tertiary next of kin. We then were with the members of these families on their journey of loss and reconciliation.

One of the first phone calls I received was from the chief of chaplains of the Air National Guard with condolences to service members and the people of Canada. I've been invited to attend their national convention this summer to talk about the response of chaplaincy in the military when things go horribly wrong.

There are many roads on the journey towards peace in the world. Most recently, the Canadian Forces Chaplaincy has embarked on an understanding of the issues of justice, reconciliation and peace and been invited to share with clergy in uniform elsewhere in the world. We have been to Estonia and we've been invited to come to South Africa to talk with their chaplaincy about peace-making and peace-keeping in the South African context. The Chaplain General from South Africa is going to be in Canada later this year to attend our annual retreat for chaplains. In these ways and in many others, the ecumenical work of Canadian military chaplaincy offers ideas and encouragement to chaplains around the world.

---

**Padre (Canon) Major Baxter Park** of the Military Chaplaincy of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I joined the military in 1989 after serving five years as an Anglican priest from the Diocese of Western Newfoundland. About a year after I joined, I was the chaplain to the Task Force that went to the Persian Gulf in 1990. That was a life-changing experience for me.

Post the events of September 11, I can say that the Persian Gulf was my 9/11. I grew up in a community with less than 1,000 in Newfoundland; I ministered for four years there as director of a parish with 12 communities with less than 500 people in each. A year after joining the military I went down Suez canal and saw the destruction from previous wars; I visited the refugee camps in Africa where I saw the results of wars and I became a fervent supporter of the need for peace in our world.

Today I minister to a parish at Trinity Chaplaincy in Kingston where we pray urgently and fervently for peace. It is easy to do that as a congregation when you have five members who are involved in some way or other with present operations, including one of the Chaplains who works on my team who is in the Middle East right now. We have seen the devastation of war and we became firmly committed to peace, which we know means much more than absence of war.

Karen Armstrong, in an interview about her book *Battle for God* said: "You can make a war in minutes, but peace takes a long time." I've tried in my ministry to be involved in communicating with people, even those who do not understand my perspective. I would like to see the Canadian church taking initiative in dialoguing with other faith groups. Hans Küng said there will never be peace in the world until there is peace between the world's religions. There will never be peace among the world's religions until there is dialogue. That is at the heart of finding ourselves in a place where we can bring an end of violence.

I've enjoyed working with the EcoJustice Committee of the Anglican Church. I want to draw your attention to a document that we developed last year called *Just War, Just Peace* which is a great resource to use in parishes or small groups. An addendum on terrorism is being prepared to add to that document which we hope will be ready before September so it can be used on the anniversary of the September 11 incidents.

I conclude with a quote from former U.S. President Bill Clinton from a speech sponsored by the BBC some three or four months ago: "What this (terrorism and the response to it) really is all about is that simple question-which one will be more important to us in the 21st century-our differences or our common humanity."

---

**Major Eric Reynolds** of the Military Chaplaincy of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In this morning's Globe and Mail, I read: "Modern comforts aside, war is still hell." There is an interesting interview with a World War II veteran commenting on whether or not there was a difference between what he experienced in combat and what Canadian soldiers are experiencing in Afghanistan: "There is a big difference, that's for sure, but basically it is the same. It's a human being up against guns and bombs and of course today it's more high powered... but it is all the same. It's killing."

We as military chaplains are a bit of a paradox. On the one hand, we wear the uniform of our country and the driving doctrine for the Canadian forces as outlined in all official documentation is that Canadian forces exist to win Canada's wars. And yet we as clergy in uniform are espousers of peace. We preach peace; we try to live peace as much as we possibly can. And when reluctantly we have to engage in the use of force, it is done as St Augustine says with a great deal of regret.

The challenge for us as military chaplains, as it is for you as representatives of your particular denominations, is that we live with one foot firmly planted in the city that we live in here and now and our other foot planted in hope in the heavenly Jerusalem, the City of God. Often it is difficult for us not to feel tension when we live in those two worlds. What's been fascinating for me is that it has only been very recently, not just as a result of September 11, but even earlier in our history with the unfortunate incidents in Somalia in which Canadian forces troops were involved, we as chaplains are now beginning to have a larger, I would say prophetic voice within the halls of both military and governmental power.

I am currently involved in a working group that is drafting a statement on Canadian professional ethos and ethics. One point being made in that process is that the Canadian forces personnel must be provided with moral and material benefits to enable them to grow as individuals and accomplish their mission and tasks. There was not a single reference to spiritual needs. Fortunately, the church has representation on that working group where we serve almost as a prophetic voice even in the heart of the military, to remind our military and civilian masters that there is that spiritual dimension that must always be addressed.

At a discussion on Christian pacifism in Toronto, one person stood up and said, "I can tell you without a doubt that if Jesus were living today, he would not be wearing a uniform." I didn't take that as a personal affront but the question I asked was, "If you really believe that, what are you telling our nearly 55,000 Canadian military personnel? That they are alienated from their church and from their system of beliefs?"

Every Canadian forces member works for peace. Constantly day by day, there isn't a moment but that one of us is working for and praying for peace. If you take a look at international law of armed conflict as enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols of the Geneva Conventions, the ultimate aim of application of force is the restoration of peace. But, as has been said so many times, peace without justice and peace without love is very shallow. Our

challenge as church is how do we work to bring justice, not only to our own community, but how do we live justice, preach justice to our communities and our world? How do we beat our weapons into ploughshares? I am looking forward to the day when I can take off this uniform and say I have done my little part to foster peace. And even then, I will continue to work for peace and pray for peace.

---

## ***Theological Reflection***

**Father Pavlos Koumarios**, Ph.D., Greek Orthodox Church, Associate Professor at the University of Sherbrooke.

### **The Gifts of a Temptation: theological reflections on September 11.**

The events of September 11, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, revealed how much Christians of all denominations have become distanced from the teachings of the Bible. Can we be allowed to breathe the name of Christ and to pretend that we are the body of Christ, His Church, after the way that most of us officially reacted against the events of September 11?

Certainly, this statement and this question have a rather general and purposely provocative character. Only God knows the hearts of each one personally. And perhaps, some of us, either as individuals or as persons, reacted in a way that escaped the attention of others, especially the attention of the public; therefore, the above statement tends to be of a limited value. This statement is based on official declarations and the indications of the most widespread expressions of feelings and emotions.

Fear, panic, insecurity, discomfort, despair, anger, and animosity: these were the spontaneous, emotional, direct responses of the majority of North American society. And in effect, we took refuge in God in order to heal our fear, our insecurity and despair. But we did not take refuge in God in order to heal our anger and our animosity. For these ... we took refuge in weapons!

I will anticipate a comment: the name of our faith is Christian, but the manner of our piety is pagan!

But let us come back to our emotional reaction: why fear and panic? Isn't this what human history is meant to be? What does the Bible say? "And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of sufferings..." (Matt. 24: 6-8)

Therefore, this is what this world is intended to be, the fallen world, the world under the power of the prince of darkness. Should we be surprised? Is this something new, something we did not know, we did not expect?

Why insecurity and discomfort? Let me rephrase that question in order to make my meaning more evident: why insecurity and discomfort now? Have we taken into consideration that there are people all over the earth experiencing wars and calamities every single day of their lives? We must pause and consider that there are human beings who have the same rights as we do, yet they have lived their entire lives inside the fire of war. They have grown up with the sound of shooting and are awakened every night by the flashes of bombs. Thus, these people do not have even one moment of security and safety.

Oh, yes, we are the spoiled children of North America. We have had a whole century of peace, while everywhere on the earth people were dying in wars, were being tortured in persecutions and were losing their human dignity under coercive regimes. Therefore, nothing can be allowed to break our peace. We are different human beings; we are not supposed to lose this great privilege of peaceful and serene lives! So, other people can suffer, other people can experience war, but not us! Why is this?

It is time now to consider the meaning of peace for us. What is peace? What is the peace that we have been enjoying so far, which we do not want to lose now? Is it the peace of Christ, or is it the peace of the world? Have we confused peace with individual safety? What we call peace, do we mean rather a social setting which makes every individual comfortable in his or her own individuality? In other words, the highway to selfish pleasures?

Is that the kind of peace we are supposed to have as Christians? When our brothers and sisters are suffering in every corner of the earth, are we supposed to have this kind of "peace", this kind of selfish easiness? Is it possible that when Christ said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give you" (John 14: 27), He was distinguishing the selfish easiness from the real peace which comes from above and is the peace of one who forgives and gives of himself or herself?

Under the pressure of fear and insecurity we took refuge in God. The religiosity of Americans increased vertically after the events of September 11. Do we remember God only when we need Him? Do we remember Him only when our individual self is threatened? Is this a sound Christian religiosity? Is Christian piety the need for self-protection and safety? Or rather, is Christian piety the strength to forgive, and the readiness to give?

And, finally, anger, animosity and war! We, Christians prayed to God to lead ... our retaliation! And we played our Christian game following the devil's method. We lied; we did not call things with their rightful name: we pretended that the enemy was not a country, not a nation, not human beings, but rather that the enemy was just an "idea"; the enemy was "terrorism"! We did not have the courage at least to admit that behind terrorism are the terrorists, i.e., human beings whom we wanted with all our hearts to kill!

When we prayed to God to help us fight terrorism, it reminded me of an experience I had some years ago, when a Greek orthodox man asked me to bless his strip club. I tried to explain that I could not bless a place of sin, where adultery was committed. He could not understand this. I further insisted that what was taking place there was against the will of God, and that if I blessed that place, it was likely that his business would go bad. Indeed, if God decided to do something for this place, He would probably close it. In the same way, are we not asking God to bless something that is against His will, when we pray to Him to bless our activity of retaliation?

How can we pray to God to bless revenge? Was it not He who climbed on the Cross willingly? Was it not the Lamb of God who forgave the people who nailed Him on that Cross? Was it not

He who said:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; ... But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. ... If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same?" Mat.5:38-47.

And all of a sudden, what happened to our open-minded, all-inclusive, all-embracing North American society? What happened to our theories about equality, and respect of everyone's religion and culture? Muslims became a threat and a target. They became, in everyone's eyes, the bad guys who, induced by their own religion, killed people. Every Muslim, every human person from the Middle East, every person with darker skin color and a beard, and even children, became suspicious as potential terrorists! Where were the preachers of equality and human rights at those moments? Where did they hide themselves? The shadow of the Twin Towers falling into ruins darkened the minds and cooled down the hearts of those who passionately used to speak about equality and mutual respect.

Finally, is there something else to learn? Has anything else changed in our approach to our faith, or could it change?

Even from acts with a negative character, we can learn: how strong a human being could become, when he or she were able to overcome the fear of death. For so many months we have gotten used to responding to the call to feel the fear and despair of the passengers of the hijacked planes and of the people trapped in the crumbling towers. This is good. Love means to sympathize with others, with their sorrow and suffering.

But what about the other group of people: the hijackers? Oh, no, I would never wish to feel the hatred they felt, or the malevolence and the wrath with which they hit the towers and the Pentagon. But, their spiritual strength, when they knew days earlier that they were going to their death. They were afraid, they had moments of wincing. But, finally they overcame themselves, they familiarized their hearts with the idea of the crash, they prepared themselves psychologically to be ready to answer in their mind all the thoughts of hesitation that might arise at the last moments, in order to hold fast the ruder towards the target and die in extreme pain in order to fulfill their mission.

Why did I say all that? I realize that this is a risky topic, but follow my reasoning.

If the hijackers overcame the fear of pain and death in order to accomplish their mission, which was evil, are we ready to do the same for good purposes. Are we ready to overcome the fear of pain and death not in order to kill, but in order to give life? Are we ready to overcome the fear of pain and death in order to talk, to shake hands, to embrace a fellow human being with AIDS? Are we ready to overcome the fear of pain and death in order to meet with someone whose

presence, physical conditions or intentions are threatening to our life, to talk to them, to become friends with them, to spend time with them?

Are we ready to overcome the fear of pain and death not to take revenge, not to retaliate, but to spread forgiveness, peace and love?

Saint Maximos, the Confessor of the seventh century, says about Love: "Out of ignorance concerning God there arises self-love; and out of this comes tyranny towards our neighbour." (Maximos the Confessor, To John the Cubicularius, P.G. 91:397A.).

"The one who loves God cannot help but love also every human being as himself or herself, even though he/she is displeased by the evilness of those who are not yet purified. When he/she sees their conversion and amendment, he/she rejoices with an unbounded and unspeakable joy."

"When you are insulted by someone or offended in any matter, then beware of angry thoughts, lest by distress they sever you from charity and place you in the region of hatred."

"Do not tolerate suspicions or people that would be occasions of scandal for you against anyone. For those who take scandal in any way from things which happen, intentionally or unintentionally, do not know the way of PEACE, which through love brings those who long for it to the knowledge of God."

"The one who does not disdain glory, pleasure and greed, cannot cut away the occasions of anger. And the one who does not cut them away cannot attain perfect love."

"If you hate some people and some you neither love or hate, while others you love only moderately and still others you love very much, know from this inequality that you are far from perfect love, which lays down that you must love everyone equally."

"The one who does not envy or is not angry, or who does not bear grudges against the one who has offended him/her, does not yet have love for him/her. For, it can be, that even one, who does not yet love, does not return evil for evil because of the commandment, but in no way does he/she render good for evil spontaneously. Indeed, deliberately to do good to those, who hate you, is a mark of perfect spiritual love alone."

"Human life is a "shadow of death". Thus if anyone is with God and God is with him/her, he/she clearly can say, "for though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because you are with me."

"Sadness is linked to resentment, Thus when someone's mind recalls the face of a brother with sadness, it is clear that he bears him a grudge. But 'the ways of the resentful lead to death' (Prov. 12: 28), because 'every resentful person is a transgressor of the law'" (Prov. 21: 24).

"If you bear a grudge against anyone, pray for him/her and you will stop the movement of the passion. By prayer you separate the sadness from the memory of the evil which he/she did you, and in becoming loving and kind you completely obliterate passion from the soul. On the other hand, if someone bears you a grudge, be generous and humble with him/her, treat him/her fairly, and you will deliver him/her from the passion."

"The purpose of the divine Providence is to unify by an upright faith and spiritual love those who have been separated in diverse ways by vice. Indeed it was because of this that the Savior suffered, "to gather together into one the children of God who were dispersed. Therefore, the one who does not endure disturbances or bear up under distress or undergo hardships, walks outside divine love and the purpose of Providence."

"Be on guard lest the vice that separates you from your brother/sister be not found in her/him but in you; and hasten to be reconciled to him/her, lest you fall away from the commandment of love." [Maximos the Confessor, *The 400 Chapters of Love*; Maximus Confessor, "Selected Writings", Paulist Press, NY 1985, pp.37-77.]

---

***Reflections by members of the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches:***

---

**Bishop André Vallée**, Roman Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Hearst and President of the Canadian Council of Churches.

While meditating and reflecting on the state of the world today, in the light of September 11, the Middle East crisis, the war in Afghanistan and the wars in many countries of the world especially in Africa, I tried to keep away from such events as the suicide attacks in Jerusalem and the brutal retaliation by the State of Israel and reflect on the more crucial question which could be stated this way: "What has led the world to such upheavals?"

What happened on September 11 is often described as an event which has caused the world never to be the same again. Some people might say that we are facing today a cultural war between the Christian world and the Muslim world. It may appear so but I don't think that it provides an adequate explanation. I would even dare to say that this event is more a consequence than a cause. The root cause of today's unrest lies at another level.

Let me quote Pope John Paul II in his homily in Edmonton during his visit to Canada in 1984: "The development of people is a question of greatest importance and social and international responsibility." Pope John Paul II says that the brotherhood of Christ with every single person means our brotherhood with the whole human race. Christian charity is speaking "of the whole universal dimension of injustice and evil." Of particular importance today is "what we are accustomed to call the North-South contrast." The south is "becoming always poorer and the north becoming richer."

John Paul II went on to stress that the poor peoples of the world will judge the rich. They are not only lacking food, but also deprived of freedom and other human rights and they will judge those people who take these goods away from them. The struggle against injustice is not only against destitution. We must help to build a world where every person, regardless of race, religion, or nationality, can live a "fully human life" without servitude to man or to nature. This development is "the new name" for peace.

On the tenth anniversary of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Catholic bishops had this to say: "Today the poor and oppressed peoples are demanding an alternative to the present economic order. The nations of the Third World are calling for a new international economic order based on a just distribution of wealth and power. Greater emphasis is being placed on pursuing more self-reliant models of development in which the resources of Third World countries are to be developed and used to meet basic human needs of their populations. Yet all too often, the legitimate struggles of people to bring about these necessary changes are impeded by the strategies of powerful corporations and governments

that befriend them."

To me, the core of these messages can be summarized in two simple words: justice and development. And development is the new name for peace.

I had the privilege of living in the Third World for 13 years and being in contact with it for 19 years. Here are some of my observations which cannot but be coloured by my roots in the First World.

One of our most serious problems in relating with the Third World is the difference in our cultures. Asian culture is miles apart from the Canadian or American culture. It is the same with South American or African cultures. The North American culture necessarily colours our way of thinking, influences our way of acting, shapes our values, and conditions our way of life. Other cultures do the same for those who live within them. Is it even necessary to point out that our help in the Third World has always been influenced by our culture?

When I was an assistant parish priest in a remote village of the Philippines, I remember receiving bags of powdered milk for distribution to the children—a nice gesture from our American friends. What they did not know was that Filipino people in those remote areas had not the faintest idea what powdered milk was. The children simply ate the powder to find out a little later that they had terrible belly aches.

In our seminary in the Philippines, we taught our students social consciousness—naturally according to our own insights. One summer, the students decided to go to a small village to survey the most pressing needs of the people, guided of course by our North American values. They found out that the most crying need of the village was for running water. During the following school year, they collected the money they needed and set out the next summer to install a running water system for the village. When water started to run freely in their houses, people were extremely happy and the seminarians returned satisfied with their contribution to the development of their people. After all, is not development the new name for peace? They returned a year later to find out that the people had sold the copper pipes and returned to the old village pump. They had forgotten that in a small remote village, the village water pump is part of a social structure which is a vital component of their culture.

During my first year in the Philippines, I took time to learn the language. I had a Filipino teacher. We became close friends and I could easily venture into his personal life. I knew that he was living in what I would call a shack. Yet he had accumulated a little money and owned a piece of land in the countryside. His land was not productive and was being tended by a poor farmer. One day I asked him, "Why don't you grow coconut trees on your farm? You could harvest coconuts, sell the flesh of the coconut (which is called copra) and make money. Then you could build yourself a beautiful house?" He replied, "I don't need it; I am happy as I am."

A mistake we committed in the Philippines was building a beautiful seminary with cement and tiles, beautiful study halls, dormitories, showers, and so on. We forgot that our seminarians, for

the most part, came from poor families and were spoiled with the kind of environment we provided them with.

Democracy is the form of government which is the norm in the Western world. It is so much a part of our culture that we believe it should apply to all countries on the planet without modification or adaptation. Indeed, a condition of foreign aid is often the insistence on the practice of democracy, as we understand it, without any room for adaptation. I deeply believe that democracy, as it is practiced in Canada or other Western countries, is not suitable to many Third World countries. Countries with a long tradition of tribal government or countries strongly influenced by a patriarchal structure can move to a democratic style of government only with great difficulty. Have we ever sought another form of democracy, not to say another form of government, for such countries?

Here in Canada, we have a good example of what can be done even if it proves to be imperfect. On reserves, our Native brothers and sisters have in place a form of government which takes into account their culture. It is the band system where the chief is elected and so are the members of the band council. But the elders play an essential role in the government of the reserve. This is in conformity with their culture. In other words, democracy is a good system if it fits with the culture of the people. Otherwise, good, effective, honest government is an impossibility. "Imposed" democracy often leads to corruption, irresponsibility, and inefficiency. In countries with such a history, corruption is often institutionalized. To me this is the result of a misunderstanding of the sense of responsibility as applied in a real democracy.

Another anomaly found in poor countries is the system of exploitation ever present at all levels of society. Such exploitation is deeply engraved in the economic system of the First World and is a condition for its continued success. At the same time, it is the root cause of poverty for many countries. Just one example: if you look at the origin of many commodities we use daily, you will find out that they are made in China, in Taiwan, in the Philippines. The reason is simple: it costs probably two dollars to produce a pair of running shoes in China while a Western company sells them for \$80 in Canada, with a margin of profit you can easily calculate. This allows Canada to preserve its very high standard of life while exploiting other countries. Yes, I know that there is no easy solution. But one thing is clear, exploitation is at work in such a system.

Should we then close our eyes to the exploitation being practiced by citizens of those poor countries? No! Ten years ago, during the civil war in El Salvador, it was said that 14 families owned the whole country. Those same families conducted the war against those who wanted to free themselves from such slavery. Exploitation was the root cause of that civil war.

Exploitation thrives on injustice and that is the main reason why it should always be denounced. What is more, exploitation and injustice breed violence.

"There is also the scandal of glaring inequalities, not merely in the enjoyment of possessions but even more in the exercise of power. While a small restricted group enjoys a refined

civilization in certain regions, the remainder of the population, poor and scattered, is deprived of nearly all possibility of personal initiative and of responsibility, and often times even its living and working conditions are unworthy of human person" (Gaudium et Spes No. 63, par. 3).

In one of the international synods held in Rome, the bishops added: "These serious injustices ... are building around the human world a network of domination, oppression, and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and the enjoyment of a more just and fraternal world."

Inequalities in the enjoyment of possessions and in the exercise of power, domination, oppression, and abuses which stifle freedom-even in our rich society inequalities are often flagrant and power resides in the hands of few. It is true in our country; it is true in the Third World countries; and it is true even at the international level. In today's world, one superpower rules the world. There is no sharing in the building up and the enjoyment of a more just and fraternal world. How can we expect peace in such a context?

I could go on for hours talking about justice and liberation, economic order, political order, continuing poverty throughout the world, industrial exploitation, discrimination, underdevelopment of the Third World, the problems of global economy, international trade, and so on. In all of those issues you could find injustices, exploitation and seeds of violence.

Permettez-moi ici de citer Gaudium et Spes: "En vérité, les déséquilibres qui travaillent le monde moderne sont liés à un déséquilibre plus fondamental, qui prend racine dans le coeur même de l'homme. C'est en l'homme lui-même, en effet, que de nombreux éléments se combattent... . En somme, c'est en lui-même qu'il souffre division, et c'est de là que naissent au sein de la société tant et de si grandes discordes" (G.S. N.10).

Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans put it this way: We are well aware that the Law is spiritual: but I am a creature of flesh and blood sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand my own behaviour; I do not act as I mean to, but I do things that I hate. While I am acting as I do not want to, I still acknowledge the Law as good, so it is not myself acting, but the sin which lives in me... Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Rom. 7: 14-17, 24

---

**Dona Harvey**, United Church of Canada, member of the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches

As we reflect on the impact of the events of September 11 on our lives, we are confronted by the age-old juxtaposition of the Bible and life: How do we live and believe? What are we as Christians called to do, as individuals, as the Church and as the Canadian Council of Churches?

This issue of living what we believe became very real for me, for my husband and our family, when we received an e-mail that one of our favourite nephews was about to leave for Palestine for two weeks to visit the Christian Peacemaker Team based in Hebron in the West Bank. The purpose of Nick's visit was to decide whether to join the Christian Peacemakers in Hebron and accept a three-year assignment.

When we first heard the news, we quickly e-mailed back to Nick's father and said, "It's dangerous over there! Can't you persuade him to wait a while, or not to go at all?"

Bill and I knew well the streets of Hebron and the work of the CPT. Christian Peacemakers are drawn primarily from Mennonites and Church of the Brethren, although they include people from many denominations. Their purpose is to bring the Gospel to the front lines of conflict, to provide support to those in danger and a witness to peace. Many times, they place themselves between soldiers and protesters, trying to stop the bullets from flying or bombs from being tossed or homes from being demolished.

Much of the CPT work is noble, some of it is helpful and some of it is not. Sometimes the presence of these Western outsiders puts local people at even more risk. And there are, I fear, some CPTers who are what I would call "pious twits" who love to grandstand in the name of Christ. For all the astute, committed CPTers we've met in Hebron, we've also come across several who add to strife rather than foster the Gospel of peace.

So our first response to Nick was a protective one: We didn't want any harm to come to him. For us, for Nick and his family, the issue of the Gospel and its relationship to life suddenly became very real.

For Nick's parents, it took much soul-searching, praying and some tears, before they could give Nick their full blessing. We then wrote to Nick, finally offering him our support while cautioning him about what lay ahead. We received a long message back from him. His reflections go to the heart of the question, "What are we as Christians called to do?" I'd like to read some excerpts:

"It's funny when I think back to my trip to visit you in Jerusalem as a nine-year-old. It's amazing how little I grasped. I never really thought about the massive army presence and the fact that I often saw civilians walking around with unconcealed firearms. Or what it meant that the planes that flew over us were on their way to bombing Lebanon. And even though I knew that the bunkers that Peter and I played in were maintained on account of the constant threat of war, for me they were merely a place for recreation. It's amazing how oblivious I was.

"But I think you're right ... something was definitely planted in me when I was there, as well as long before that in my Anabaptist ancestors. And whatever was planted I do see as a calling. When I was in Zambia, a fellow MCCer (Mennonite Central Committee) helped me recognize that I did what I did because I was called by God to do so. I had never really thought of it that way and the recognition was profoundly affirming and encouraging. Of course, Christ called us all to be peacemakers, but while that can mean a variety of things to a variety of people, for me it means getting on a plane to Tel Aviv."

The issue that faces us again and again in life is "calling." What are we called to do? The answer isn't always easy, nor is it always safe and comfortable. Sometimes the sacrifice is enormous, painful and uncertain for us and our loved ones.

And so we wrestle, day by day, with this question of how to live the message of the Gospel. Not everyone can head off to Africa or the Middle East to respond to the challenge that God puts before us. But we can respond to Christ's call to live love and to live in peace, even in the simplest of ways.

Let me give you an example of several little things that made a difference. After the September 11 trauma, many Canadian and American Muslims became the objects of vitriol and abuse. Their mosques were vandalized, threats and hate mail abounded. A church in Guelph - Dublin Street United - decided it needed to do something to offer support and comfort to the local Muslim community. The church organized an inter-faith service of peace, inviting representatives from various faith communities in Guelph to participate in an expression of mutual respect and love.

The service was a simple one, with Jews, Sikhs and Muslims participating. The Muslim community sent by far the largest delegation, and was so grateful at the caring outreach that they invited members of the community and the entire Dublin Street congregation to join them several months later for the feast to celebrate the end of Ramadan. This weekend, Guelph's Muslims, Christians and Jews are coming together again, this time for an inter-faith march for peace. The walk begins at the synagogue, moves through downtown past the United Church and ends at the northern edge of the city center at the mosque. At the beginning and end of the march, we will pray for peace for all peoples to the God we all worship and love.

God calls us to do what we can do, in small ways and large. The noted scientist and author, Stephen Jay Gould, who died this week, wrote a letter six months ago to a Canadian newspaper thanking the people of Halifax for their compassion in the wake of September 11. Gould was flying from Europe to New York when his plane was diverted to Halifax airport in the wake of the terrorist attacks. He was amazed by the kindness and generosity of the Haligonians.

If I may paraphrase what he said: "They just opened their arms and took us in," he said. "And we weren't even in trouble! The airline had assured that we had food and accommodation, but the people of Halifax understood the trauma that all of us were feeling and they just opened

their hearts to us. They invited us to their homes; they took us on tours around the city' they helped us get in touch with family. They cared for us in a way that none of us will ever forget."

Mother Theresa says, "We are called to give life to the word of the Gospel, and to do what we can do. We cannot allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the extent of hatred, violence and disorder. We must simply do what we can do." Amen.