

Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the way of Christ for the sake of the World

An invitation to a process of theological study and reflection on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation during the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Peace and Reconciliation 2001-2010

“For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing walls of hostility between us...So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to you who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2: 14-18)

The Background

The 20th century ecumenical movement took its shape against the backdrop of war and violence. Some major events which had formative and lasting influence were: the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm in 1925 and the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State in 1937, both responding to the challenges posed by the First World War; the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948 addressing the challenges posed by the Second World War; the World Conference on Church and Society in Geneva in 1966 responding to the challenges of a divided world in a Cold War era; and the Programme to Combat Racism that brought the churches together to join the struggle to dismantle the apartheid regime in South Africa.

However, the task of building peace in a violent world has often failed to be seen as an important step in the pursuit of Christian unity. Churches have always stood divided and continue to do so on issues of war and peace, exposing the complexity of considerations that churches have to make in such situations. This is exacerbated by different ways in which churches are associated with ‘the state’ or ‘political powers’ which varied from overt support to total indifference as well as critical engagement. Relationships based on such attitudes continue to determine the role of the churches in witnessing to peace in situations of war and violence.

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of violence itself has become increasingly complex in the 21st century, presenting fresh challenges as well as new opportunities for the churches to work together for peace. Some of these challenges include the ever widening gap between the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, further aggravated by the processes of economic globalisation; countless civil wars and violent conflicts; terrorism and the war on terrorism, now issuing in the dangerous new doctrine of pre-emptive war; a revived arms race and renewed drive for military security; the proliferation of and continuing threat of a variety of weapons despite international treaties; the glorification of violence by the media and entertainment industry; the rise of religious fundamentalism and growing intolerance; and the legitimisation of all these implicit and explicit forms of violence against the innocent, the poor and the powerless.

If upholding the sanctity of life is central to the affirmation of Christian faith, can this global trend of blatant and multiple assaults on life and their legitimisation be a reason for churches to consider the vocation of peace as a faith imperative? Is it possible to view the confession of peace as a new rallying point for the ecumenical movement in the 21st century? In fact several of the WCC's statements and affirmations on the theological significance of justice and peace right from its formation point towards the vocation of peace as an inevitable task of the ecumenical movement. The Faith and Order Commission of the NCCC-USA also highlighted the challenge of common confession of peace through its *The Churches Peace Witness* (1994) and *The Fragmentation of the Church and its Unity in Peacemaking* (2001).

The *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010* presents itself as a timely ecumenical opportunity. The churches meeting in Harare in 1998 for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches called one another to work together during the Decade to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence. Recognising the influence of a variety of historical and existential factors on the churches' mixed response in situations of violence, the Decade calls for repentance for complicity in violence and a creative engagement with the world to find alternatives. The papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and subsequent statements of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II also call upon the churches to work towards building a culture of peace in a world pervaded by a culture of violence. These mark a significant movement through engagement in analysis of violence to an active pursuit of the resources for and possibilities of peace with justice.

During the Decade, the churches are invited to reflect on their positions, attitudes and approaches, both positive and negative, to violence and peace, and to discover new theological bases for the pursuit of peace, justice and reconciliation, drawing from the wellsprings of scripture, church history and experience. A world-wide process of theological reflection on violence and peace is, therefore, seen as crucial. Such a participatory theological exploration in response to a major ethical challenge of our time has the potential to rejuvenate the ecumenical movement, to open new possibilities for greater expressions of Christian unity and to discover afresh the meaning of being church in a violent world.

The Purpose

The initiative on theological reflection on peace along these lines began at a consultation in Boston in April 1998 and then more intentionally in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 1999. The Colombo consultation identified the following as the key concerns: *Identity, unity and diversity; Forgiveness and reconciliation; Texts and contexts; Theological language, symbol, liturgy and image; and Becoming sanctuaries of courage*. Following the global launch of the DOV in February 2001, the WCC, in an effort to give shape to its work and methodology on the DOV, planned to focus on four themes. These are: *The spirit and logic of violence; Use and abuse of power; Issues of justice; and Religious identity and plurality*. Meanwhile the events following September 11, 2001, while reiterating the importance of these themes, have also brought some specific challenges such as the link between globalisation and the war on terror, the role of international law and institutions, etc., and these continue to dominate WCC discussions within the context of the DOV.

A small representative group of theologians met in Geneva in June 2002 in an effort to synthesise the rich variety of concerns and insights gathered during the preparatory phase, and identified certain themes and worked out a specific time-bound plan of action for the next four years, leading up to the WCC's 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006. Later

in 2002, during the internal restructuring of the WCC, it was felt appropriate to pursue these plans within the context of the Faith and Order that also has the participation of the Roman Catholic Church. With the endorsement of the themes and methodology of the study process by the Officers of the Commission in Cartigny in January 2003, this group was enlarged with some members of the Faith and Order's Plenary Commission. This enlarged group¹ met again in Cartigny in April 2003 and further developed the following outline taking into account the ongoing work of the Faith and Order Commission. This was later presented at the meeting of the Standing Commission in Strasbourg in July 2003. This document is a proposal that unpacks the themes with a view to initiate a process of theological reflection that is expected to be ongoing and open for new themes and directions.

The purpose of this process of study and reflection is:

- to stimulate biblical and theological reflection on the spirit, logic and practice of violence;
- to facilitate exchange of insights and experiences across churches and regions in an effort to foster bonds of partnership for peace and justice;
- to draw on the analyses, experiences, reflections and insights of churches and communities in conflict situations;
- to interact with the questions and challenges of churches in specific situations;
- to interpret and challenge the responses of the churches; and
- to assist the churches with biblical and theological reflections and liturgical resources during the Decade.

The Themes and sub-themes

This study and reflection process proposes five challenges, under the overarching theme: "Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the way of Christ for the sake of the world": i) *Repentance for complicity in violence and apathy in resistance*, ii) *Affirming human dignity, rights of peoples and the integrity of creation*, iii) *Interrogating and redefining power*, iv) *Realising mutuality and interdependence in a world of diverse identities*, and v) *Walking in the way of peace, justice and reconciliation*. Affirming that the Decade is primarily an exploration in faith by the churches for a vocation of peace and a creative space that inspires concrete actions to overcome violence, and taking into account some of the outstanding theological constraints and hesitations in the churches' commitment to peace, it presents the themes as challenges and proposes a methodology that enables inter-active processes of reflection with substantial inter-disciplinary, contextual and experiential input. Even as they respond to specific theological questions, these themes are also related to the DOV's four thematic foci.

This study outline invites churches, study institutions, peace movements, and individuals to participate in this process of theological reflection for mutual encounter and encouragement around these themes. As currently ordered, the themes mark a progression from repentance to action that is intentional and theologically grounded. These affirmations are linked together here in order to assert their fundamental interdependence. *First and foremost*, the *kyrie eleison* must be sung, in the form of a lament, as the churches as human institutions and individual believers are called to confess the myriad ways in which they have contributed to or been complicit in violence. From this starting point, it moves on to an examination of a

¹ Names of the members of this Group are found at the end of this document (Appendix I).

series of challenges that elaborate the tasks required if violence is to be overcome and a theology and praxis of peace developed. The *second* theme points to the core affirmations of human dignity, the rights of peoples, and the integrity of creation, which are pre-requisites to any true culture of peace. The *third* theme recognises the importance of power and points towards the need to interrogate and redefine power since it serves as a source for both good and evil agency in the world. Theme *four* points towards the possibility of discovering models of safety and security based upon the true human condition of interdependence and vulnerability and to embrace an ethic of mutuality extending from interpersonal to international relations. “Walking in the way of peace, justice and reconciliation” the *fifth* theme, therefore pulls those elements together as a final challenge to the churches, serving as a clarion call to action and commitment. It highlights the need for churches to attempt concrete actions as *peacemakers* in service to Christ and the world. Marking the fifth step in the dynamic cycle of confession, theological reflection, and action which comprise the five themes, the last theme leads back towards a renewed confession, as the churches strive to follow more closely in the way of Christ, who is our peace.

The Methodology

This study process presents itself as a space for sharing and dialogue for all those who respond to the call to overcome violence and to participate in the Decade. It proposes the following methodology for wider participation in this process of study and reflection. The following are its salient features:

- participation of study institutions which have offered to initiate or contribute reflections on these themes;²
- to collect and make available the work already done by churches and study institutions;³
- to examine central texts of the churches, including the Roman Catholic Church and the ecumenical movement on peace.
- reflections to be done from and informed by the perspectives of the victims of violence and those involved in situations of violence;
- website as a space for dialogue and sharing; and
- the Core Group to assist the work on the themes, accompany the process and synthesise the work done from time to time for the constituencies of the WCC, Faith and Order, and the DOV.

1. Repentance for complicity in violence and apathy in resistance

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:9, 10)

The *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace* is a statement of confession as much as it is a commitment to a task. The members of the WCC's Central Committee on the occasion of its global launch said: "We launch this decade in a spirit of repentance that as Christians we have been among those who have inflicted or justified violence." This confession of complicity in violence is also a confession of faith that violence is contrary to the spirit of the gospel and that the churches are called not only to affirm life in its fullness to all people but also to overcome violence within and around.

² Study institutions and ecumenical organisations which have offered to be a part of this activity are in Appendix II.

³ Appendix III is a list of some theological resources on each of the themes.

“We know that we have passed from death to life” (1 John 3:14). The reaffirmation of the centrality of life is an important expression of repentance for complicity in violence. Repentance is both an act in humility lamenting *kyrie eleison*, seeking forgiveness for the sins of commission and omission and an act of renewed commitment, to be open up to new possibilities. Therefore, *Repentance for complicity in violence and apathy in resistance* is seen as the necessary first step in the direction of overcoming violence in the world. This theme resonates with the first of the thematic foci of the DOV, namely, *overcoming the spirit and logic of violence*.

Violence, whether physical, structural, psychological or in whichever form it expresses itself, is a denial and abuse of life. Robert McAfee Brown’s (*Religion and Violence: 1987*) explanation of violence seems appropriate to be mentioned here: “Whatever ‘violates’ another, in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is done or not, can be understood as an act of violence.... While such a denial or violation can involve the physical destruction of personhood in ways that are obvious, personhood can also be violated or denied in subtle ways that are not obvious at all, except to the victim. There can be violation of personhood quite apart from the doing of physical harm.”

Are there reasons for the churches to undertake such a process of repentance? While generally opposing violence and affirming peace, churches are held responsible for their role – complicit, supportive and silent, in situations of violence. The legacies of Christian expansionism which were aggressively pursued alongside colonisation and the death and dehumanisation these have caused (e.g.: the Crusades and the Conquest), the historical nexus between churches and the political and economic powers that not only distorted the gospel but also caused, allowed and justified the violence of the powerful, and the hostile attitudes and actions towards people of other faiths, cultures and values, are but a few examples. Furthermore, the churches’ silence and role in justifying various forms of structural violence - economic, political, cultural, psychological or religious - is also cited. However, it must also be asserted that churches have also played and continue to play prophetic and transformative roles in many situations of violence. The historic peace churches and many others today are passionately committed to a witness of peace and non-violence. The way churches all over the world have opposed the invasion of Iraq is one recent example.

However, this brief overview highlights the need to discern the ways in which some theological convictions and traditional attitudes that the churches have cherished for too long have allowed or perpetrated or justified certain forms of violence. The following issues may be helpful for a reflection in this direction:

- the influence of some doctrines of creation, fall and human being on churches’ attitudes towards racism, sexual discrimination, social hierarchies, the suppression of human freedom, and the conquest and subjugation of the powerless;
- the way atonement is understood and interpreted in contexts where violence and the suffering of the innocent are held inevitable for the ultimate good;
- Christian triumphalism that has left memories of violence, bloodshed besides hatred and suspicion and similar trends and attitudes today;
- certain violent biblical trajectories that hold violence as a divine attribute and their influence on Christian attitudes towards institutionalised violence;
- attempts towards inculturation that sometimes ignore the oppressive potential of certain dominant cultures and traditions and the consequent legitimisation of the oppression of the marginalised;

- strategies of evangelisation that encourage or allow silence and neutrality in situations of blatant assaults on life and denial of justice;
- concepts that hold peace as inner tranquillity or as absence of conflict and thus trivialise violence, forgiveness and reconciliation;
- traditional forms of diakonia that limit Christian response to violence to merely binding the wounds of the victims and avoid resisting and transforming powers and forces that cause violence and suffering;
- the failure to internalise the values of justice, equality and fairness in the ways churches pursue their ecclesial existence; and
- the meaning of denominational existence and loyalty to ecclesiastical traditions in situations of brokenness.

2. Affirming human dignity, rights of peoples, and the integrity of creation

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. . . . God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gen. 1: 27, 29-31)

The second group of themes begins with: *Affirming human dignity, rights of peoples and the integrity of creation*. This theme which also echoes with the DOV theme: *the issues of justice*, affirms that justice is vital to a lasting peace,

The denial of the dignity of the other is both a motivation as well as the first casualty of any form of violence. Violence, therefore, is not only physical harm but also violation of the personhood, of the rights and space of the other. Most victims of any form of violence are the innocent and the powerless who also happen to be in most cases those whose dignity as human beings is denied or derided by religious, social, economic and political structures. History testifies that such derisive anthropological presuppositions have played a major role in the colonisation of the south. Economic globalisation today, besides excluding many, is also hastening the process of the increasing commodification of the human person for the sake of economic growth.

One of the recent Faith and Order consultations, as part of its study on anthropology, on the theme “Human Persons created in the Image of God” in Jerusalem, February 2002, said in its statement: “All persons are created in God’s image, and that image cannot be destroyed or eradicated. Therefore, each and every person, irrespective of their physical or mental capacity, is unique, irreplaceable, and of infinite worth. We believe God took on our human nature in the Incarnation and that Christ is the fullness of the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col 1: 15; Phil 2: 6-11). Therefore, Christ is dishonoured when persons are dishonoured. Christ suffers when persons suffer. Christ is blasphemed whenever the human is defaced (Mt 25: 31-46).” In a world where violence against some is legitimised, upholding and defending the value and worth of every human being is perhaps one radical way by which the churches can confront the spirit and logic of violence. Affirming human dignity also includes ensuring the rights of peoples to live in freedom and preserving the God-given integrity of creation upon which all human life depends.

As part of this task, some of the following issues may be theologically explored:

- the commodification of the human person, people, nature, sources of livelihood and relationships;
- the importance of safety, security and development alongside the struggles for human rights and basic needs;
- the dynamics of the struggles for land, identity and justice in the light of their role in violent conflicts;
- the environmental injustice and environmental racism that surreptitiously find their way into the dominant ideologies of development;
- the ethical questions posed by recent trends in bio-technology;
- western anthropocentrism that undergirds much of the world affairs today including the destruction of cultures, peoples, life sustaining systems, other species, and earth's resources;
- on the other hand, the tendency to override aspirations of individual freedom and human dignity for the larger communal interests and the continuity of certain traditions that best serve the interests of the dominant groups;
- certain dominant religious traditions that stratify and justify social relationships;
- the predicament of the victims of HIV/AIDS;
- the denial of human dignity to people with disabilities;
- the derogatory and reductionist views of human nature which lend legitimacy to state violence and to oppressive laws; and
- certain anthropological assumptions which by over-emphasising the transitory dimension of life, encourage indifference to human suffering and misery.

3. Interrogating and redefining power

“...those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” (Mark 10.42-44)

The role of power is pivotal to the understanding of any form of violence. Therefore, *the use, abuse and misuse of power* has been identified as one of the four thematic foci of the DOV. Violence, after all, is an exercise of power over the powerless or retaliation to such power. What makes power prone to abuse is not the exercise *per se* but the motive and manner by which it is exercised. In plain terms, power in and of itself is morally neutral. It is an important and necessary factor in all human relationships. It is the energy, the potential to act, to effect and to shape. According to the biblical witness, human beings are endowed with the power to name, enjoy and care for the created order (Gen. 1 & 2). However, human uses of power often tend to turn violent. Many visible manifestations of power are associated with aggression, domination, destruction and violence, making power assume negative connotations significantly influencing the logic and practice of violence. Reflecting on the predominant use of power in human history, Max Weber said: “power is the probability that one actor within a relationship will be in a position to carry out his/her own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests”. It is perhaps this probability to fulfil one's desires by any means that makes power not only attractive but also violent and dreadful. Moreover, in a world that presents itself with immense possibilities for those who have power – political, economic, military, technological, etc., power has become a global pursuit inciting rivalry and competition at both vertical and horizontal levels. This violent dimension of power points us to view violence not only as a behavioural trait but also as an instrument to manipulate, subjugate, accumulate and monopolise. Insights from psychology and social sciences may offer useful tools of analysis. This violent potential

of power makes it necessary to interrogate power. An exercise in this direction provokes a host of questions:

- What makes power violent? What makes violent power attractive?
- Why do people not only fear but also glorify power?
- What are the similarities and differences between violent and non-violent power?
- What are the dynamics of power in interpersonal relationships?
- How have religions legitimised and glorified the violent expressions of power and why?
- What are the notions that the churches have always cherished?
- How have the churches related and continue to relate with political and economic powers?
- What are the differences in the attitudes of churches in politically and economically powerful contexts and those in powerless or in multi-religious contexts?
- How have the churches exercised their ritual and institutional power within the communities? What have been their attitudes towards the powerless people within their fold?
- How do churches respond to the phenomenon of the world's economic and military powers coming together along with the increasing support of right-wing religious ideologies to assert their power and their visions of the world?

This task of interrogation with the purpose of redefining makes searching for alternative paradigms an important aspect of overcoming violence. In the search for theological bases for a vocation of peace in a world gripped by a fascination for violent power, there is an urgent need to redefine power as a divine gift to "do good and to seek justice and peace." It must also be mentioned that there have also been several attempts and initiatives to question, expose, and overcome unjust use of power. The non-violent movements of Gandhi and Martin Luther King both knew how to organise power to carry out their causes through non-violent means. Martyrs in Christian history offer powerful witness to their faith. Therefore, we need to ask:

- What is the validity of these alternative models of power today?
- What are the parameters for a redefinition of power that can counter the fascination of and potential of violent power?
- What are the resources for such an exercise?
- What are the prospects of redefining power from the perspectives of its victims?
- What alternatives do feminist and contextual theologies offer?
- What alternatives do people's movements provide?
- What is the future of the resistance movements of the poor, the powerless and the excluded in a world where the powerful are ruthlessly seeking to legitimise their hegemonic power?
- How can the creative, life-affirming force of power be affirmed?
- Can the power of service also transform relationships and structures besides tending to the victims of violence?
- What does empowering mean?
- What is the validity of the value of shared power, i.e., power that arises out of solidarity, relationality and the recognition of interdependence?
- What is the power of non-violent coercion in the light of the arguments in favour of violence as a means to achieve peace?
- What are the prospects and limitations of humanitarian interventions?

4. Realising Mutuality and Interdependence in a world of Diverse Identities

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:12, 13).

“Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever”. (Isaiah 32:16,17)

Awareness of power and feelings of self-sufficiency that reject the need of the other are often in the background of most acts of violence. Sometimes such aspirations make people aggressive in their pursuits even if it means violating the space and rights of others. This tendency to pursue one’s own growth and fulfilment of desires by excluding and manipulating the other is present at all levels of human relationships. The present war on terror, pre-emptive wars, and the increased spending on defence for peace and security despite terrorism exposing the myth that military strength would ensure security, is an expression of this tendency to overcome vulnerability through violent means. The present market economy, driven by the logic of survival of the fittest, is disempowering many in order to empower a few. In an increasingly pluralistic world, aggressive pursuits of the preponderant provoke violent struggles for identity and justice on the one hand and for power and resources on the other. Dominant – dependant relationships, thus created, exploit the identities of race, class, caste, gender, religion, language and ethnicity and brutalise the human society. The same narrow, selfish pursuit is also evident in the violent ways humanity has related with the earth and its life systems.

Either as extremely parochial or exclusively spiritual or deliberately neutral, the dominant streams of world religions have often failed to create and sustain values that uphold human interdependence and mutual responsibility in this ethos of increasing fragmentation and polarisation. Even the traditional Christian faith expressions are no exception. In spite of the strong accent on the love of the neighbour as decisive in a relationship with God, popular notions of salvation as ultimate in the human quest for fulfilment seem to be moulded by this spirit of individualism that promotes social irresponsibility.

Overcoming violence, therefore, involves dealing with these notions and tendencies that influence human relationships. Hence, this theme *Realising mutuality and interdependence in a world of diverse identities* points towards the need to promote just and humane values to guide human relationships. *Religious identity and plurality*, one of the DOV’s four themes, complements this theme. Reflection on this theme could also draw from the Faith and Order study on Ethnic Identity, National Identity and the Unity of the Church. The following questions may help further reflection on this theme:

- Is vulnerability a sign of weakness? Is it possible to view vulnerability as a redeeming factor, an opportunity to be and to become more human?
- Is it possible to ensure safety and security with relationships based on mutuality and interdependence rather than with military invincibility and economic abundance?
- How can the tension between human security and doctrines of national security be addressed?
- How is it possible to maintain the balance between personal and communal interests and to inculcate the value of mutual accountability and responsibility in interdependent relationships among nations, communities and within families and marriages?

- What are the prospects of realising mutuality and interdependence in situations marked by violent struggles for power, identities and resources?
- What is required to facilitate processes of reconciliation that lead the perpetrators, the powerful and the wealthy to repent and to seek relationships of partnership rather than dominant – dependant relationships?
- What needs to be done to constantly uphold the values of truth and justice in all attempts towards reconciliation that are also crucial to address questions of restoration, retribution, and reparation?
- How can tolerance be promoted amidst diversity marked by intense struggles for power, identity, resources, opportunities, and justice?
- What new meanings can be derived from the biblical concept of *kenosis*? Is it possible to re-vision *koinonia* and *ecclesia* as offering models of mutuality and interdependence?
- Is it possible to reinterpret the concepts of trinity and *perichoresis* as models of mutuality and interdependence?
- Can overcoming violence be an opportunity for churches to be in partnership and solidarity across regions and continents?

5. **Walking in the way of peace, justice and reconciliation**

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? ...And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?” (Matt 5: 44, 46 & 47)

Overcoming violence clearly involves undertaking first the hard work of overcoming violence within one’s self, and then affirming human dignity, the rights of all peoples and the integrity of creation; confronting the violent powers with alternative ways of exercising power; and realising mutuality and interdependence in relationships. The insights gained from each of the above themes would be helpful in elaborating the theological bases for a vocation of peace, reconciliation and non-violent resistance. These affirmations pose several challenges to the churches to present themselves and also propose alternatives to all structures of relationships which turn oppressive and violent.

However, concrete actions are demanded from churches and Christians in response to these challenges. Therefore, this final theme needs to be seen as an invitation to the churches to *live* a theology of peace as a sign of the coming reign of God - God’s new order, and to keep, as a sign of solidarity, the experiences and visions of the victims of violence and injustice always in the foreground of this work. Reflection on the following areas may offer some creative possibilities:

Christology of peace: What is the meaning of following Christ in a violent world? What are the problems and possibilities in the formulation of a new Christology of peace, particularly as an alternative to the traditional western Christologies that have been intricately and extensively associated with Christian triumphalism and aggressive Christian expansion? What can be learnt from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ about peace that can inform contemporary practice? What kind of language is required to talk about Christ as a path of peace, justice and reconciliation in a pluralistic world? Is it then possible to view Christ the *logos* as counter to the logic of violence? Different people may understand *logos* differently. Some may be reminded of the theological debates of the early church leaders. Others may view the idea as a new way of talking about Christ as the living prophetic Word of God in action (the *dabar* of God), which is biblically connected with creation through the Word

(Gen. 1). A call to follow this prophetic word could, therefore, be a call to work for transformation.

Justice and peace as form and functions of the church: The Church is defined both by its *being* and by its *doing*. The church, as a community of disciples, is a lived ethic. The Ecclesiology and Ethics study of the Faith and Order and Justice, Peace and Creation of WCC amply emphasises this point. The study points out that the church not only announces the coming reign of God but also makes that vision present through its own life and actions. If so, is it possible to see peacemaking as a *status confessionis*? What are the problems and possibilities for the churches to present themselves as alternative social visions that embody the value of just peace through their form and functions? In other words, how can the churches affirm the dignity and rights of all within and around, understand and exercise power in non-oppressive ways, and realise mutuality and interdependence in their own concrete ecclesial contexts? Faith and Order's ongoing study on ecclesiology may offer some insights.

Missiology of Shalom: If peace is, in the words of Bonhoeffer, "not only to enjoy but to do", then missiological explorations need to be guided by the biblical vision of *shalom* (Isa. 54:10; 65: 17-25). This implies a call to become and build communities of *shalom*. The concept of *shalom* may be a helpful link with the other major Abrahamic traditions. Other religious traditions also uphold similar social visions. *Shalom* reminds us of our bondedness with creation and compels us to uphold the wholeness of the created order. While affirming its universal character, is it possible for the churches to realise the vision in partnership with other communities? Therefore a missiology committed to the vision of peace with justice may help the churches not only to realise the vision but also to move towards greater self-discovery as they work with people of other faiths for a world of peace with justice.

Spirituality for a culture of peace: If *shalom* is the vision of a polity of justice and peace and one that articulates the eschatological hope, then resistance to and confrontation with forces that hinder *shalom* become important expressions of faith. It calls for a new understanding of being Christian, a new spirituality that seeks the practice of faith rooted in ethics and is convinced of and committed to uphold the inter-relatedness of life. As such it is action-oriented, creative, open and inclusive. It confronts violent structures, cultures and forces that influence relationships at all levels with a view to transform the same. Is it then possible to envision a Christian spirituality beyond the narrow confines of religion for the sake of life and the world? Is it possible to identify such boundary transcending experiences in the experience of the churches and communities?

Programme desk on Theological Study and Reflection on Peace, Faith & Order, World Council of Churches, Geneva, September 2003.

*For further information, contact: dem@wcc-coe.org or anf@wcc-coe.org
T 0041 22 791 6422 / 6707
F 0041 22 791 6407*

Appendix I

Members of the Core Group

Rev. Lehlohonolo Jacob Bookholane, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Lecturer, John Wesley College and Research Assistant, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Rev. Dr Sathianathan Clarke, Church of South India, professor of systematic theology, United Theological College, Bangalore, India.

Rev. Araceli Ezzatti, pastor, and National Coordinator of the Area of Social Pastoral Work, Methodist Church, Montevideo, Uruguay.

Dr Duncan Forrester, Church of Scotland, Professor, Faculty of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Rev. Dr Drea Fröchtling, pastor, Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Hannover, Sehnde, Germany

Prof. Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, Dean, Faculty of Theology and Biblical Religions, University of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa

Rev. Michael Markert, pastor, Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Saxony, Leipzig, Germany

Rev. Dr Judith McKinlay, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, Senior Lecturer, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

Rev. Dr Janet Parker, Presbyterian Church USA, Assistant Professor of Religion and Society, Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, USA

Dr. Ann K. Riggs, Religious Society of Friends, Director of Faith and Order Commission, National Council of the Churches of Christ USA Washington, DC, USA

Fr Vladimir Shmaly, Russian Orthodox Church, Secretary, Synodal Theological Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow, Russian Federation

Appendix II

Participating organisations and study institutions (Open to further inclusions)

Healing and Reconciliation, South Africa Council of Churches, Johannesburg, South Africa

Non Violent Actions and Strategies for Social Change, Harare, Zimbabwe

Theology and Interfaith Relations, All Africa Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya

National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, Colombo , Sri Lanka

National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines

Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, HongKong SAR, China

Centre for Empowering Reconciliation & Peace, Jakarta Barat, Indonesia

Academy of Mission at the University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

The Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot, United Kingdom

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, London, United Kingdom

Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, Oslo, Norway

Irish School of Ecumenics, Dublin , Ireland

Lutherisches Kirchenamt der VELKD, Hannover, Germany

Ecumenical Institute of the University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany

Orthodox Peace Fellowship, Alkmaar, The Netherlands

Middle East Council of Churches, Limassol, Cyprus

Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies, Jerusalem, Israel

Boston Theological Institute, Newton Centre, USA

Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit of the United Church of Canada.

South Pacific Association of Theological Schools, Suva, Fiji Islands

Instituto Superior Ecu mico Andino de Teologia, La Paz, Bolivia

Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Crist s do Brasil, Bras lia, Brazil

Methodist School of Theology, Sao Paulo Methodist University, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Appendix III

Resources for study (Open to further additions)

Overall theme

Breaking Barriers: Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, ed. by David M. Paton, 1976.

Ecumenical Review: 40th Anniversary edition

“For the Peace From Above”: *An Orthodox resource Book on war, peace and nationalism*, 1999.

LWF documentation on Peace, No. 24, 1987.

Study Encounters during 1967 – 76.

Together on the Way: Official report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, ed. by Diane Kessler, 1999.

“Power and the state” and “International peace and security” in: *Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our time, World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, July 12- 26, 1966*.

“Report on the universal church and the world of nations” in: *The Churches Survey their Task: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937 on Church, Community and State*, 1937.

The Stockholm Conference 1925: The Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held in Stockholm, 19 – 30, August 1925, ed. George K.A. Bell, 1926.

Gros, Jeffrey and John Rempel (eds): *The Fragmentation of the Church and its Unity in Peacemaking* 2001.

Macquarrie, John: *The Concept of Peace*, 1973.

Morlene Miller & B.N. Gingerich (eds): *The Churches Peace Witness*, 1994.

Theme I: Repentance for complicity and apathy in resistance

Writings in contextual theologies

Faith and Order study on Ethnic Identity, National Identity and the Unity of the Church.

Theological works:

Boesak, Alan: *Farewell to Innocence*, 1977.

Brock, Rita and Parker, Rebecca: *Proverbs of Ashes*, 2002.

Brown, McAfee: *Religion and Violence*, 1987.

Brueggemann, Walter: *Revelation and Violence: A study in contextualisation*, 1986.

Enda McDonagh (ed.): *Irish Challenges to Theology*, 1986.

Fiddes, Paul: *Past event and present salvation: The Christian idea of atonement*, 1989.

Girard, René: *Violence and the Sacred*, 1977 and *The Scape Goat*, 1986.

Gottwald, Norman K: *Bible & Liberation: Political & Social Hermeneutics*, 1983.

de Gruchy, John W. : *Apartheid is heresy*, 1983.

Liechty, Joseph & Cecilia Clegg: *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*, 2001.

- Loubser, J.A.: *The Apartheid Bible: A critical review of racial theology in South Africa*, 1987.
 Sacks, Jonathan: *The persistence of faith: religion and morality*, 1991.
 Terrel, Joanne Marie: *Power in the Blood? The Cross in the African-American Experience*, 1998.
 Tillich, Paul: *Theology of Peace*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1990.
 Weber, Max: *The Sociology of Religion*, 1993.

Theme II: Affirming human dignity, rights of peoples and the integrity of creation

F & O's study on Theological Anthropology
 Writings in eco-theologies and human rights
 Works of the Black, Dalit and feminist theologians.

Theological works:

- Brueggemann, Walter: *The land: place as gift, promise and challenge in biblical faith*, 1978.
 Gnanadason, Aruna: *No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence Against Women*, 1997.
 Huber, Wolfgang: *Violence: The Unrelenting Assault on Human Dignity*, 1996.
 Kobia, Sam: *The Courage to Hope: The Roots for a New Vision and the Calling of the Churches in Africa*, 2003.
 Kinsella, Noel A.: *Human Rights and the Explosive Presence*, 1979.
 Little, David: "The Western tradition" in: David Little et al., *Human Rights and the Conflict of Cultures: Western and Islamic Perspectives on Religious Liberty*, 1988.
 Lissner, Jorgan and Sovik, Arne (eds): *A Lutheran Reader on human rights*, 1978.
 Rasmussen, Larry: *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, 1998.
 Land is Life: *Towards a Just Sharing of Land*, LWF Documentation No .27, 1989.
Theological perspectives on human rights: Report of an LWF consultation on human rights, 1976.
Women's Human Rights, LWF Studies 1984.

Theme III: Interrogating and redefining power

Studies on alternative models of communities
 Study of biblical prophetic trajectories
 Studies on north-south mission experiments, liberation movements, people's movements.
 Lives of exemplars such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Thomas Merton, Beyers Naude, etc.

Theological works:

- Archbishop Anastasios, *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*, 2003
 Brueggemann, Walter: *Power, providence and personality: Biblical insight into life and ministry*, 1990.
 Forrester, Duncan: *Theology and Politics*, 1988.
 Küng, Hans: *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, 1997.
 Lorenz, Eckehart: *Justice through violence? Ethical Criteria for the legitimate use of force*, 1984.
 May, Rollo: *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence*, 1972.
 McIntosh, Alastair: *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power*, 2002.
 Rahner, Karl: *Theology of Power*, 1966.
 Raiser, Konrad: *For a culture of life: transforming globalisation and violence*, 2002.
 Tinyiko, Sam Maluleke: "Black and African Theologies in the New World Order: A time to Drink from Our Own Wells", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 1996.
 Weber, Hans Ruedi: *Power: Some biblical perspectives*, 1986.
 Weber, Max: *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, 1952 and *Essays in Sociology*, 1957.
 Wink, Walter: *Engaging the powers*, 1992.

Theme IV: Realising mutuality and interdependence

"The Nature and Purpose of the Church" study process (Faith and Order)

Women Being Church study process of JPC-WCC,

Theological works:

Best, Thomas F. and Gassmann, Günther (eds): *On the way to Fuller Koinonia, Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper No. 166, 1994.

Best, Thomas F. and Robra, Martin (eds): *Ecclesiology and Ethics, Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral formation and the Nature of the Church*, 1997.

Camilleri, Joseph A: *Religion and Culture in Asia Pacific: Violence or Healing?* 2001.

Falconer, Alan D. & Liechty, Joseph (eds): *Reconciling Memories*, 1998.

Jacques, Genevieve, *Beyond Impunity*, 1999.

Juergensmeyer, Mark: *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, 1994.

Lederach, John Paul: *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*, 1999.

Vulnerability and Security: Theological and Ethical reflections, Church of Norway, 2000.

Volf; Miroslav: *Exclusion and embrace: A theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation*, 1996.

Theme V: Walking in the way of peace, justice and reconciliation

Theological works:

Kässmann, Margot: *Overcoming Violence: The challenge to the churches in all places*, 2000.

Lehmann, Paul L.: *Ethics in a Christian Context*, 1963.

Macri, Jr. Anthony L., Rahner, Karl and Tillich, Paul: *Examining the Condition of Humanity and Interpreting the Christ Event*, 2002

Moltmann, Jürgen: *The Crucified God*, 1972 and *The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit*, 1975.

Mofokeng, Takatso Alfred: *The crucified among the crossbearers: towards a Black Christology*, 1983.

Müller-Fahrenholz, Geiko: *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis*, 1995.

Volf, Miroslav: *After our likeness: The church as the image of the trinity*, 1998.

Wengst, Klaus : *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, 1987.
