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SEDOS

*(Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission)
is a forum open to Roman-Catholic Institutes of Consecrated Life,
which commit themselves to deepening their understanding of Global Mission.
It encourages research and disseminates information
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Editorial



Dear Members and Readers,

We are all so busy coping with life at a phrenetic phase that raises a kind of tension within ourselves. We also feel the tension around us due to the economy, war, communalism, fundamentalism, terrorism, pandemic and other natural calamities. There is ever growing violence and conflict that also raises our temperature.

In the midst of all these violent conflict situations, people are desperately looking for peace. Peacebuilding is the need of the time. Everyone wants it but not everyone tries to build it. We, who carry the mission of Christ are called upon to act now because it is more important than ever.

For personal peace we do all we can through prayer and meditation but the conflicts and tensions around us demand our wholehearted commitment because they affect our lives and the lives of everyone around us.

We have all seen and experienced the trauma of the pandemic. May disturbed and traumatised people are still looking for healing. We have people from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and other areas beset by conflict, insecurity or political repression, risking their lives in an attempt to reach Europe and other safe places. Then there is the war between Russia and Ukraine where people are struggling for life day and night. These situations challenge us to make a concerted effort and to true messengers of peace.

It is not the absence of violence or conflict, that is achieved through weapons. We are not looking for Negative Peace. We are looking for Positive Peace built on the attitudes,

institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.

Peace itself is a very beautiful and powerful word. Peace simply means being in a place where no hatred exists and every corner is filled with love, care and respect; where conflicts are handled peacefully. We must remember, *Peace is a Human Right and it's a Right for Everyone!*

In the present issue of our SEDOS Bulletin we have six articles on the theme, "Mission for Peace." They speak of the need to contribute to establishing peace and working for justice for those suffering.

The first article, "COVID-19: Our Collective Trauma: Dialogue with Psychologically Affected People" by Lloyd Cunningham, SVD, speaks about the effort to bring peace and harmony to those whose lives have been traumatised by the deadly "Corona" virus.

In the second article, "Missions in Seasons of Chaos: Lessons from Yoruba Civil Wars for Contemporary Christian Missions", the writers Akinyemi O. Alawode and Samson O. Adebayo address the security challenges concerning food security, health and social security, job security and safety issues of people of Nigeria. Besides these various problems like banditry, ethno-religious crises, kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping for ritual, armed robbery, exit other threats. In a country that is unsafe and even hostile to Christians and missionaries, it is a big challenge to bring the tidings of Peace. The precarious security situation instils fear in the mind of anyone who wishes to proclaim the Gospel.

In the third article, "Linking Ethics, Economy and Environment for Global Justice and Planet Peace", Selva Rathinam, SJ, emphasises that this planet is not only a home for humans but for all that exists upon it. Everyone has equal rights. But the modern

economies are becoming increasingly unequal and unfair. The rich become richer and the poor become poorer and they suffer. Therefore, the writer suggests a number of Global Measures for a Healthy Planet, Healthy People, Peace and Prosperity.

In fourth article, “Per Una Cultura Della Compassione Prospettive Di Etica Cristiana”, Prof. Vidas Balčius stresses the need to be like Christ in manifesting the love of God to those suffering. The writer says, “Christian compassion is potentially subversive of any social order, since it expresses God's vision of his creation. The conception of the Kingdom in which sinners are forgiven, in which preference is given to the least, in which all are welcome to the banquet and ‘the Lord God will wipe the tears from every face.’”

The Fifth article, ‘Ahimsa’ in a Violent Society: “Ahimsa, Vegetarian Nutrition and Kindness for Global Peace”, Fr. T.K. John talks about a major contribution India has made to the common heritage of humanity: *ahimsa*. According to him, “*Ahimsa* (non-violence) humanises whereas *himsa* debases humanity.” In a world that is becoming increasingly prone to violence and destruction, the role of *ahimsa* is supremely important and highly relevant. It is a collective responsibility and a noble and worthwhile service.

In the last article, “Virtus and Peace: Synthesis in ‘The Moral Equivalent of War’ by William James”, Prof. Frances Fister-Stoga says, “Epidemics and wars are similar - to paraphrase Georges Bernanos: they have no beginning nor end. But although war has been cyclical throughout history, unlike epidemics and natural disasters, war is based on an intentional human choice.” He differentiates between ‘negative peace’: ‘the absence of direct violence between States engaged in by the military and others in general, and the massive killing of categories of human beings in particular’ and ‘positive peace’, that is non-violent and demands

freedom from structural violence to transform conflict.

I am sure that all these articles will enlighten us and inculcate in us a spirit to promote peace individually and collectively. Christ has given the mission of peace to his disciples, that we need to carry out throughout the world. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid,” (Jn 4:27).

Dr. John Paul Herman, SVD
Director of SEDOS



(The book is available at SEDOS office.
The cost is € 40,00 for SEDOS Members.)

Lloyd Cunningham, SVD*

COVID-19: Our Collective Trauma

Dialogue with Psychologically Affected People

The author reports on his own experience of being infected with COVID-19. From his background as a clinical psychologist, he focuses on the effects on mental health. In the collective trauma resulting from the pandemic, there are several groups who are even under normal circumstances excluded from society, but have undergone a more severe exclusion during the pandemic, such as chronically mentally ill persons. After the shared experiences of isolation and loss there will be no easy return to normal life. Rather, there is the call to find new ways for deeper human relationships and to make a change for better life.

I was asked to write this presentation as I was recovering from the physical symptoms of COVID-19 myself. My symptoms began with what I thought was seasonal allergies, but after day two of a runny nose and a sinus headache I felt something different in my body. It is hard to describe but I knew it was not allergies. A day later, I went to get tested and find out what was going on. I found after waiting two days that I was positive for COVID-19. The test confirmed what I suspected, but before going to bed that night, I experienced a panic attack—I felt dizzy and needed to sit down, my breathing became shallow, and sweat began pouring out of my body. Having helped others through panic attacks, I knew I needed to sit down, force myself to breathe more deeply and ride out the attack breathing deeply and drinking water to hydrate. The panic attack was not caused by COVID-19. It was triggered by many thoughts and fears leading up to testing positive. I think as a 67-year-old man, who had heard that people in my age category had the biggest risk of suffering complications

leading to hospitalization and ultimately death. Was I going to be one of the more than 2,936,926 casualties world-wide or 562,000 from the United States, who died of the strange disease that had changed how we live since March of 2020?¹

Today mental health professionals report that those who have experienced the physical symptoms of COVID-19 may not be out of the woods for ongoing mental health symptoms. There are findings that during the course of disease some patients develop blood clots, which can cause possible limb amputations, pulmonary disease, or neurological disorders that reveal themselves as either long or short-term psychosis. The psychosis may continue even after physical recovery.² Ongoing medical study is warranted to understand the full impact of COVID-19 on those who have contracted the virus. However, mental health experts report that whether we have contracted the virus or not, a significant proportion of the population in the world has been effected, through fears and anxiety of either

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¹ World Health Organization (WHO) "Coronavirus Dashboard," last modified April 12, 2021, <https://www.who.int>

² Mental Health America, "Fact or Fiction: Can COVID-19 Impact Brain Function and Mental Health?" updated March 23, 2021.

contracting the disease or what will be the fate of the person who has tested positive for the virus. For many people these fears and anxieties have been compounded from the effects of physical isolation from family and friends, as well as effects of the measures imposed by governments to control the spread through mandated lockdowns and curfews which have shuttered schools, business sites, churches, bars, public transport and restaurants. This has meant that in many countries, all public places and events have been closed down, and even family gatherings have been restricted to only those living in one household.³

COVID-19: As Identified Patient

When I began studying psychology, I first studied family systems. I soon learned that a family would approach a therapist saying that one of the members needed to “be fixed” because the whole family was in distress due to the behavior or symptoms of what we called the “identified patient.” However, more often than not the “indicated patient’s” behavior was a siren’s call for help for the whole family because there was some type of relationship distress. Often the distress was in the relationship of the parents who might be visibly fighting with each other. The identified patient or siren would first begin to act out in order to draw the attention of the parents from their disagreements unto the identified patient. The parents would drop their fight and put their attention onto the acting out child. The acting out of the identified patient-child becomes the projected focus or even scapegoat for the conflict that exists between the parents.⁴ Unfortunately, the tension and conflict that exists in the relationship between the parents is not dealt with, until either the family seeks family counseling, or an intensified crisis

develops in the relationship of the parents that again draws their focus from the acting out of the identified patient.

COVID-19 is the identified patient in our world today and we are rightly focusing our attention in the world on the disease, which does need our attention, because people are becoming acutely ill, placing a strain on the health systems of their locales, and are dying. For many families COVID-19 has become a major stressor that has forced people to work from home, if they have not lost their job, often fighting with their children for the use of the computer and internet bandwidth because school assignments of the children just as work assignments of the adults need to be completed. As I write this, I know I am speaking about a minority of people who even have access to computers and internet. This is true even here in the United States because this type of infrastructure is still scarce in rural communities as well as poor urban communities, which are often disproportionately composed of racial and ethnic minorities.

In this way, COVID-19 is the identified patient and should be examined through the lens of psychological symptoms, along with the state of mental health in our societies around the world. COVID-19 is the siren call beckoning us to examine beyond the symptoms of the virus and the fears that we may have of contracting it because we will find the tensions and stressors that we all live with but are now exacerbated by new layers of anxiety and depressed feelings.

Today, using the tools of insight from psychological systems, I believe we are called, as mental health professionals, to examine the state of mental health in our societies. Often due to stigma, a lack of knowledge and mental health professionals, as well as funding for mental health services especially in marginal and underserved communities there is often a disregard for psychological symptoms that are not accompanied by physical pain. This social disregard for the care of mental health exists with individuals, families, communities,

³ Daniel R. Weinberger, Opinion Contributor “Will COVID-19 Leave Us With A Long Term Mental Health Crisis?,” *The Hill*, last modified April 13, 2021, <http://thehill.com>

⁴ Michael P. Nichols (ed.), *The Essentials of Family Therapy*, Boston, MA: Pearson ©2014, 96.

governments and the church. Sitting in congregations, I have heard very few homilies that have called people to be as attentive to the symptoms of their mental health as to be attentive to their moral health. I believe as a priest-psychologist our mental health has an influence on both our spiritual and moral wellbeing.

The stress of the presence of COVID-19 is creating more and more symptoms in individuals and families of anxiety and depression as they live in isolation due to physical distancing. These uncomfortable feelings and states at times lead to the use of mal-adaptive coping strategies such as substance abuse,⁵ suicidal ideation and domestic violence.⁵

Collective Trauma

In this paper listening to the siren call of COVID-19 I would like to present how the disease has affected most of us due to elevated levels of fear and anxiety provoked by the news we hear, our experiences and the isolation we live due to lockdowns called by political leaders to curb the spread of the disease. For most of us, fear and anxiety already exist in our minds and bodies. They are necessary emotions that exist as warning lights to protect us from people, places and things that may be harmful to us. Both emotions are already unconsciously sitting in our bodies but with COVID-19 the warning lights grow bright which affects our moods, concentration, energy levels and immune system, which in turn affects our relationships with each other and our willingness to engage in our work and social world. For some this has led to the disorders of social anxiety and/or depression. Both often trigger a reluctance to participate in the complicated world of living in a pandemic. It has become so prevalent that some mental health experts have coined the idea we are living through a collective trauma. We discover a world that has often existed in an unconscious way, until we feel the physical pain of anxiety such as through an anxiety attack that feels like a heart attack, or we

cannot get out of bed because of tiredness or aching limbs caused by depression.

We often take our mental health for granted because we do not have the time or the energy to contemplate it. Our fragile mental health is often not contemplated because we are too distracted with life around us. However, when an event that is perceived as traumatic confronts us, the resulting emotions can become overwhelming and tax our usual coping mechanisms. COVID-19 is a shared traumatic experience. It has created a collective trauma triggering our anxiety and feelings of depression not wanting to succumb to the disease and at the same time mourning those who do.⁶

The use of the term collective trauma has made sense to me as the calendar year moved from 2020 to 2021 and I kept hearing repeated over and over again, “Good Riddance to 2020!” Felix Wilfred in his article *Disclosing and Concealing. Human Fallibility and Civilizational Upheaval*, writes, “The year 2020 has turned out to be *annus horribilis*” or Horrible Year.⁷ It seemed to never end.

I was reminded of a nightmare which reoccurred in my sleep when I ran marathon races. In the dream I felt my energy was getting low and I was looking forward to the finish line, which I was told was very close, but then when I got to the spot of what I thought was the end, the finish line had been moved another mile. This is the 2020-2021 experience of COVID-19: The end of the precautions and restrictions seems in sight. Then another wave surfaces and we are back to governments declaring more lockdowns and quarantines. For some this brings anxiety. Others feel the hopelessness of depression just wanting to give up the race. Others exhausted with COVID fatigue throw up their hands, drop precautions and seek to return to life before COVID. Still others

⁵ Weinberger, “Will COVID-19 Leave Us with A Long Term Mental Health Crisis?”

⁶ “The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Abuse,” last modified April 12, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

⁷ Felix Wilfred, *Disclosing and Concealing Human Fallibility and Civilizational Upheaval: Jeevadhara* 51, no. 351 (2021) 6-25, 8.

frustrated and angered by what seems will go on forever resort to violence to express their anger.⁸

The restrictions for gathering in groups have made the treatment for collective trauma more difficult because one of the primary treatments for collective trauma is to use group or community therapy. There is comfort in groups for anxiety and animation for depression.

Remembering the Chronically Mentally Ill

As a clinician, who has worked in prisons, homeless shelters, mental hospitals, and Catholic Charities I would like to bring our attention to another world that the Pandemic has severely affected. These are the people who do not fully participate even in the pre-pandemic social world because of their chronic mental illness and psychotic symptoms that are not understood, even by their families and friends, not to mention the societies where they dwell. They are judged as dangerous, because of how they talk and act. In some societies their illness is given a religious meaning—the demonically possessed. However, no matter if they are judged as psychologically ill or religiously possessed, they are often isolated and quarantined by their families and/or societies. These are the chronically mentally ill, who would be diagnosed psychologically as schizophrenic, bi-polar 1, delusional, demented, or exhibit severe depressions and anxiety disorders. Even in public places, members of society act as if the mentally ill are invisible because their behavior is not considered “normal.” Our internal warning systems question whether it is safe to be around them or not. If the truth be told, I have found in dealing with family members of the chronically mentally ill there is a felt discomfort expressed because of shame and if a family member has a disease of the mind, they are afraid it is contagious. For that

reasons if the chronically ill are not living on the street, they are quarantined in hospitals, group homes, nursing homes, and prisons.

It is in these congregant settings that COVID-19 has hit with a vengeance. Many of the people who died at the beginning of the pandemic were living in nursing homes, hospitals, and prisons. Visiting restrictions were imposed on these sites in an effort to control the rapid spread of the disease. As a result, people who were isolated from society were now denied in-person visits, from the family members and friends who connected them with the outside world. Mental health providers were often denied access as well, so therapy that could have been beneficial for the psychic health of the person was abruptly stopped.⁹

What Is the Prevalence of Mental Health Challenges Today?

It is reported by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that the symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive disorder increased significantly in the United States during April to June 2020, compared with the same time frame, in 2019. Representative panel surveys were conducted among adults 18 years and older across the United States June 24-30, 2020. 1,497 people responded to the survey. Overall 40.9% of respondents self-reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition, including anxiety disorder or depressive disorder, 30.9% of respondents indicated that they were experiencing symptoms of trauma and stressor related disorders (TSRD) which they related to their experience of the pandemic. Notably, 26.3% of the respondents reported they begun to use or increased their use of substances (which would include alcohol as well as legal and illegal drugs) to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19. 10.7% of the respondents indicated that in the past 30 days they had considered committing suicide. Suicidal ideation was significantly higher among respondents aged 18-24 (25.5%) and among Hispanic

⁸ The Implication of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use, last modified April 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/08/health/COVID-mask.html>

⁹ Ibid.

respondents (18.6%) compared to Black respondents who self-reported at 15.1%. The highest group of respondents who had thought about suicide at least days prior to responding to the survey identified themselves as either care givers for adults or essential workers (30.7%).¹⁰

Looking at the data just sighted and reviewing studies conducted around the world there are groups of people who show more vulnerability to the effects of COVID-19. Adolescents, young adults, women, health care and essential workers, along with non-Caucasian communities appear to be the most adversely effected and report more symptoms of anxiety and depression, which gets expressed in less positive coping strategies such as suicidal ideation, use of substances, and domestic violence.¹¹

Vulnerabilities

There are multiple reasons given for why these groups are the most vulnerable to the effects of the Pandemic. What they seem to share is the instability of work or school. Women, racial and ethnic minorities are often employed in jobs that provide less employment security with little unemployment benefits. There is a greater chance that they will not be working from home. Their salary is still needed for family survival, but may be non-existent due to employment lay-offs. At home, they are required to do child-care and help their children continue their education in front of the computer if they have internet access. Both parents and children are living with overwhelming insecurity. Parents not knowing if they will have a job and children not knowing if they will be in class with their friends or trying to share the family computer with their siblings and parents. Young adults, health care workers and front-line workers

wonder if today will be the day they contract COVID-19 at work. Adolescents quarantined at home are isolated from their friends, and are never sure when they will return to school.¹²

What Are the Common Factors of the Trauma that Link Us Together?

The two most common factors that link us all together and our Common Trauma as we live through the experience of COVID-19 are isolation and loss. Throughout the course of the year and half we have lived with different forms of isolation. The forms of loss have been many and perhaps not as obvious, because the life that we lived and perhaps thought we would live has changed. We are mourning the loss of people and a way of life. What was certain in 2019 is not so certain in 2021.

Isolation

Work places, schools, hospitals, places of business, places of entertainment, churches have emptied out and closed their doors in an effort to stop a virus. Families have had to stay within their houses to protect themselves from other family members, friends and neighbors. There was no way of knowing who was carrying the virus, so it was safer to stay to oneself. This has led to nation states shutting their borders. Internationally nations have closed their borders and restricted international travel. Resulting in nations being quarantined from other nations.

Loss

We have all lost something or someone due to COVID-19. It is hard to enumerate the losses that we have all experienced in our isolation because they are so numerous. For each person it will be different. I am not a football fan so the limited number of football games on television were not a loss, but I do enjoy going out to coffee shops with friends and having dinner at a restaurant. These were

¹⁰ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Weekly/August 14, 2020/69 (32); 1049-1057, <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.22.29976141v1>

¹¹ The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use.

¹² Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Weekly/August 14, 2020/69 (32); 1049-1057.

big losses for me. I also lost a number of senior community members due to COVID-19 and I could not go to their funeral because of social distancing restrictions. Important life events, like birthdays, anniversaries, graduations and ordinations are held without any close friends and family present.¹³

Vaccines Bring Hope

At the end of December pharmaceutical companies began rolling out vaccines against the virus. Immediately, there was a sign of hope. Quarantined seniors after receiving their vaccinations were able to meet with other seniors living in the same nursing home. Couples were united. I did not think that it would be a big deal to get the vaccinations, but after getting the second shot it felt like a huge boulder of stress was lifted off my shoulders. I did not realize how much stress there was until it was lifted, because I felt a freedom to move and be in public places.

Because an ever-growing number of people are receiving the vaccine which appears to be effective, many social restrictions are being dropped. Adult children are gathering with their more vulnerable parents whom they have not been in physical proximity with for over a year. Masks are coming off and we are once again seeing people's faces. Church communities are gathering, praying and singing. People are once again going to restaurants and public events.

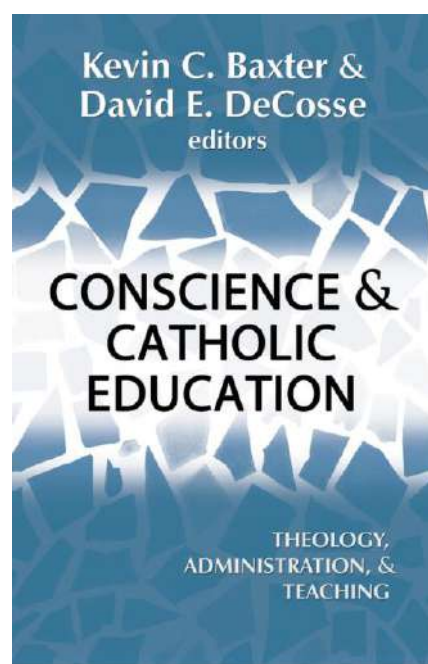
We Will Have to Adjust to a New Normal

Collective trauma does not just disappear, or I should say the feelings of anxiety and fear do not instantly dissipate. They will be experienced for a while, as will the virus. There are still so many unknowns. Will the vaccinations be available for everyone in the world? Will everyone get one? Will the vaccinations work against all new variants of the disease? How long will the vaccinations work in our bodies? Will we need booster

shots? These are just a few questions that separate us from the normal of 2019.

There are social questions that need to be addressed. How do we change the social inequalities that exist between races and genders? COVID-19 shed light on the fact that people of color, women, and the chronically mentally ill were more adversely effected. How do we address the unequal access to the infrastructure of technology and internet—not to mention education? How do we address the accessibility to good and equal health care for all communities of people? How do we assure the availability of medicines and vaccines for people of all nations? If these questions are not addressed in the new normal no one will ever truly feel secure, because if a disease effects one community, one group of people, one nation, one continent, we are all affected. COVID-19 has taught us that isolation is not healthy for our integral well-being. This is a chance to move to a new normal, different from the past. The identified patient, COVID-19, has evoked a siren call to find a new way to pay heed to faulty relationships and make change for a better life, which can become our new normal.

(Ref : *Verbum SVD*, Fasciculus 2 - 3 Vol.62, 2021, pp.321 – 330)



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¹³ Lindsey Phillips, Coping with the (Ongoing) Stress of COVID-19: *Counseling Today* 62, no. 12 (2020) 26-31.

Missions in Seasons of Chaos

Lessons from Yoruba Civil Wars for Contemporary Christian Missions

Introduction

Nigeria is going through some of the worst security challenges in her existential history. The security challenges can be divided into food security, health and social security, job security and safety issues. However, the most glaring security challenge has to do with armed conflicts. The conflict is exemplified in banditry, ethno-religious crises, kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping for ritual, armed robbery and others. Many parts of the nation have practically become theatres of war, which makes residing there almost like an anathema. The nation is summarily largely unsafe.

Nevertheless, amid the violent situation, Christians have been called to be harbingers of the tidings of the Prince of Peace. Those whom Christ saves are duty-bound to extend the frontiers of the kingdom of God through missionary activities. They have been commanded to preach the gospel of salvation, whether it is safe or not (Matt 28.19-20; Rom 1. 16-17; 2 Tim 4.1-5). Christianity is a missionary religion. However, can missions be done in the chaos that has become descriptive of Nigeria?

The task of this article is to show that doing missions in a chaotic situation is not new. It shall demonstrate that the present security situation in Nigeria is not without precedence. It shall illustrate that the Yoruba land, through which most protestant Christian missions came into what became Nigeria, was embroiled in armed conflict when missionaries came. The article shall also draw lessons contemporary missionaries should learn and apply in the current security situation.

Security Challenges in Nigeria

Without mincing words, Nigeria's most significant challenge is security. The situation

has reached a point where everyone in the nation, including political leaders, seems to be at sea. Security challenges in the nation are typically manifested in armed conflicts and terror attacks. Their increased expression may be why the embassies of the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia, within the space of one week, issued travel advisories to their citizens living or doing business in Nigeria to avoid the nation's capital.¹ The three embassies hinged their advisories on Nigeria's increased threat of terrorist attacks. It is not only the embassies of those world powers that feel Nigeria is grossly unsafe. Nigerians also think that security threat is a significant issue in the nation. The result of an online survey by *Premium Times* indicated that 42% of the participants on Twitter rated insecurity as the major challenge in Nigeria.²

The above data are not without bases. The armed attacks in Nigeria in the past ten years have been scary. The horrendous stories of unprovoked armed attacks in Nigeria are numbing. For instance, on June 5, 2022, there was a gun attack in a church in Owo, leaving

¹ Chiamaka Okafor, “US, UK warn Citizens of Terror Attacks in Nigeria” in *Premium Times*, 23/10/2022 available @ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/561301-us-uk-warn-citizens-of-possible-terror-attacks-in-nigerias-capital.html> accessed on 11/11/2022.

2 The online survey asked participants what problem the next president of Nigeria should tackle. The report is available @ https://twitter.com/PremiumTimesng?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1577595120240795648%7Ctwgr%5Edb46763a8d457fa2ffc4e8f272b3213de50df4ea%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.premiumtimesng.com%2Fnews%2Ftop-news%2F561301-us-uk-warn-citizens-of-possible-terror-attacks-in-nigerias-capital.html accessed on 11/11/2022

fewer than 40 deaths and several injuries behind.³ The Owo attack reminds one of a similar attack on a church on Christmas day in Madalla, some nine years earlier.⁴ As if that was not enough, numerous armed attacks have also been conducted on police and military formations in many parts of the nation.⁵ An armed gang attacked the Kuje Minimum Security Prison, and more than 900 inmates were set free, including suspected high-profile terrorists. Reports also indicate that there has been increased armed conflict in the South-East of Nigeria, including the “stay at home” that has become volatile in several parts of Igbo land. There has also been targeted killing in regions including Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Delta, Imo, Anambra, Delta, Edo and Ebonyi states.⁶ The nation’s northeast has been embroiled in armed conflict with the deadly Islamic extremist group Boko Haram and its several splinter appendages. The northwest and north central are also inundated with clashes between the nomadic herders, predominantly Fulani and the farming communities spreading from Benue to Kebbi states and everything in-between. The southwest, which was reputed to be relatively peaceful, has started seeing increased incidences of kidnapping for rituals and ransom. The whole nation is experiencing security challenges. The picture above shows that Christian missions within the national borders also experience insecurity-related challenges. The fact that Christians claim to call upon the Almighty God has not immuned them against the blistering security situation in the nation. Several Christian groups have counted irreparable losses in human and material terms. The northern part of the country is particularly replete with stories of horror meted on hapless Christians. The

kidnap of young girls from the Chibok community and the Leah Sharibu saga is often perceived as religiously motivated crimes. When the extremist Boko haram began, the focus was on church buildings and Christian gatherings. In some locations, the assailants looked for Christian leaders and missionaries to kill or maim. There are too many stories of Christian leaders murdered in cold blood in northern Nigeria. The northern parts of Nigeria have recently been hostile to Christian missionary enterprises.

Nigeria’s security situation makes one wonder whether it is safe to do Christian missions in the nation. The security situation is capable of instilling fear in the mind of anyone who may want to venture into proclaiming the gospel of Jesus in the hostile environments of Nigeria. The enormity of the insecurity at the moment makes people argue that the security challenge has been unprecedented. However, available records show that Christian missions doubled during the armed hostilities in the 19th-century Yoruba land.

The Yoruba Civil War

One of the defining characteristics of the 19th-century Yoruba land was the widespread fratricidal wars that engulfed the entire country. Yoruba country was at war with itself, and the people were severely displaced from the northern end of the land to its southern borders. Prominent wars were the Ilorin wars of the 1830s and 1840s, the Batedo war of 1844, the Ijaye war of 1860-65, and the kiriji war of 1878-1893, which involved practically all of Yorubaland.⁷ Samuel Johnson⁸ amply demonstrated that for reasons such as mutual suspicion, jealousy, royal impudence, insubordination and territorial expansionist ambitions of provincial chiefs and military leaders, the entire land was in armed struggle. For instance, the Owu king was at war against the Apomu. The Egbas joined Ife to Sack Owu; Afonja raided several Yoruba towns and villages to assert his military supremacy.

³ “Foreign Travel advisory on Nigeria” available @ www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/Nigeria/safety-and-security accessed on 11/11/2022

⁴ Christmas Day Bombing Sweeps Nigeria, at Least 39 Dead available @ <https://www.voanews.com/a/at-least-10-killed-as-blast-strikes-nigerian-church-136201763/149937.html>

⁵ Taiwo Hassan Adebayo, “Inside Story of how Nigerian Presidential Guard Fell into Terrorist Ambush” in *Premium Times* 03/08/2022, 4; Solomon Odeniyi and Abiodun Sanusi, “Suspected Terrorists Attack Niger-Abuja Millitary Checkpoint” in *The Punch*, 28/07/2022, 3.

⁶ Foreign Travel Advisory”.

⁷ S. Ademola Ajayi, *Baptist Work in Nigeria (1850-2005)*, (Ibadan: BookWright, 2010), 45-46.

⁸ Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1961).

Everyone seemed to be against everyone in the country.

While the events in Yoruba land were not cast in a religious light, religious elements mixed with unbridled personal desire contributed significantly to the imbroglio of those days. The story of Afonja of Ilorin illustrated, among other things, the insubordination of provincial leaders to the Alaafin of Oyo and the selfish ambition that pitted the country against itself. However, the crisis in the land was further accentuated by Fulani marauders, who began to infiltrate Yoruba land towards the middle of the 19th century. In his pursuit of independence from Oyo, Afonja had recruited the Fulani marauders, called *Jamas*, as his soldiers.⁹ While he was alive, they became a security threat to the northern parts of Yoruba land. Their activities were possibly some of the earliest expressions of banditry in the Yoruba land. Their activities eventually snowballed into a major security crisis throughout the Yoruba land.

The warring parties dispatched by provincial chiefs against one another and the marauding troops displaced many people. In the heat of fratricidal wars, Afonja was killed by the Fulanis under the command of Alimi, an Islamic cleric. Under him, the marauders promptly proceeded to sack the rest of Yoruba land, one section after another. The headquarters of the Empire, Katunga, was also sacked.¹⁰ Smith wrote, "in the course of the Ilorin war, the Fulani had succeeded in capturing and sacking the Alaafin's capital at (old) Oyo (or Katunga) in about 1822, forcing Alaafin Amodu and his people to accept Islam."¹¹ Many Oyo people were forced to leave their homes in the savannah region around River Niger to look for new settlements.

The fall of the old Oyo Empire, the most prominent political unit in Yoruba land, had significant ripple effects on the entire Yoruba country. Oyo had served as the stabilising force for Peace within the whole country. Alaafin served as the protector of the land against external aggression as well as a threat to any provincial power that may want to foment internal trouble within the country.¹² However,

the desecration of the imperial capital and the successive defeats of provincial rulers sent jitters across the land. The power of the Fulanis *jamās* was great, and they aimed at nothing short of the subversion of the whole Yoruba country.

Meanwhile, the Yoruba war chiefs inadvertently assisted the plot through their mutual jealousy of one another. Allegiance was no longer to the King, not even in the capital. The Fulanis launched one expedition after another resulting in the devastation and depopulation of the country. The situation led to an upsurge of internally displaced persons moving from one end of the country. Ijaye, and the war, which immortalised the town's name, is representative of the situation of that age.

Ijaye, an Egba town, was located at the northern tip of the Egba forest, close to the limits of the oil palm belt.¹³ Nevertheless, the sack of the Old Oyo Empire and the concomitant events that accompanied it forced Ikoyi chiefs under Kurunmi to move southward around 1821. Kurunmi and his men summarily took Ijaye intact and its compounds occupied.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Ibadan had metamorphosed from the war camp it was to an emerging significant military power in Yorubaland. The war in the northern part of Yorubaland had forced the Egba people to abandon their scattered forest settlement to congregate around Olumo rock and form Abeokuta. Hence, the emergence of Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ijaye, which may have taken place in about 1830,¹⁵ was a product of the civil wars in the Yoruba country.

Amid the armed conflict of the 1840s, which affected practically every part of the Yoruba country, Christian missions began in Yoruba land. The Yoruba freed enslaved people, many of whom have become Christians, had returned to Badagry, Abeokuta and Lagos. Those immigrants had sent messages to missionaries in Sierra Leone requesting them to send teachers. The response to the appeals gave birth to missionary activities in the Yoruba country. Thomas Birch Freeman of the Wesleyan

⁹ Ibid, 197-198.

¹⁰ Ibid, 142

¹¹ Smith, 322.

¹² S. Ademola Ajayi, *Baptist Work in Nigeria (1850-*

2005), (Ibadan: BookWright, 2010), 42.

¹³ R. S. Smith, "Ijaye, the Western Palatinate of the Yoruba" in *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2, 3, (Dec. 1962), 329.

¹⁴ Ibid, 330.

¹⁵ Ibid, 333.

Missionary Society (WMS), Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Thomas Bowen of the Baptist Mission were the first missionaries to arrive in Yoruba country. Freeman and Townsend arrived in 1842, while Bowen arrived in 1850. Abeokuta became the centre of missionary activities immediately.

Meanwhile, Kurunmi, the Ijaye war chief, was becoming powerful and famous. His fame and the strategic location of Ijaye made Alaafin Atiba confer on him the title of Aare Ona Kakanfo. Oluyole, the warrior-chief at Ibadan was made Bashorun. The intention of Alaafin Atiba was to make Ijaye defend the empire from Dahomi from the southwest and Fulani from the northwest, while Ibadan would protect the empire from the Fulani invasion from the northeast.¹⁶ The relationship between Ibadan and Ijaye was cordial at the initial stage. Smith illustrated that Kurunmi assisted Ibadan in defeating a coalition of Ife and Egba's attack on Ibadan while Ibadan joined forces with Ijaye to sack Abemo.¹⁷ However, with time relationship deteriorated. Ibadan soon faced Ijaye in the Batedo war in 1846. The two war chiefs had territorial expansionist ambitions. Ijaye was destroyed on May 18, 1862. The town was reduced to rubble so much that when Rev Buhler of the CMS visited the town on Dec 10, 1862 (less than seven months after the war), he could not recognise it.¹⁸ The destruction of Ijaye by Ibadan warriors further illustrated the disturbed state of the Yoruba country in the days when missionaries entered Yoruba land.

Missions in Season of Chaos. Christian Missions during the Yoruba Civil War.

Before the armed conflict that involved Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ijaye, mission stations had been established at Ake, Igbein, Itoku, Owu, Oshiele, Ikija and Ibadan. Because of the importance of Ijaye, the CMS opened a station there with Rev Adolphus Mann in charge. Meanwhile, the town had also been prospected by Bowen in 1852. Bowen had intended to go to Igboho. However, Kurumi had barred the caravan to that route. Hence, he invited Bowen to settle in Ijaye. He established the first missionary station there in 1853. David

Hinderer of the CMS had been well received in Ibadan in 1851, and in 1853 started a mission station at Kudeti, Aremo and Ogunpa.¹⁹ Several converts have been made, while the missionaries of the various denominations also proved themselves to be valuable and tactful friends and advisers to the non-Christian rulers. It is instructive to note that Townsend, Bowen and Hinderer spoke Yoruba fluently and could converse freely with the rulers and their people. Although the process and progress of conversion were slow, Christian missions were beginning to impact the Yoruba country. However, as indicated earlier, several factors were working together, resulting in the outbreak of a cataclysmic war between Ibadan and Ijaye. The missionaries were divided in their attitude towards the war.²⁰ The war would have been an entirely Yoruba-Oyo war. However, Abeokuta became allied with Ijaye. Hence, David Hinderer, who stayed in Ibadan, supported Ibadan in the war. He rationalised that because of the threat of Ilorin, the power of Ibadan must not be allowed to reduce. He argued that, if it did, the entire country would be overrun by Mohammedanism, and Christian missions would be jeopardised. He was even distressed that Abeokuta Christians joined the battle against Ibadan. He felt the war was a Yoruba-Oyo war; Egba Christian should have been neutral.

Meanwhile, Townsend aligned with Abeokuta in their support for Ijaye. He argued that Egba represented the most progressive civilised part of the country and that the victory of Ibadan over Ijaye would upset the power balance in the interior, and the Christian course would be in great danger. The leaders of Abeokuta further explained that being Christians did not remove Egba Christians from civic responsibility. The missionaries were too committed to their respective flocks. Furthermore, they had become emotionally involved with the local politics of their domains. Hence, their judgments were clouded with sentiments.

¹⁹ W. O. Ajayi, "Christian Involvement in the Ijaye War" in *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London: Longman Group, 1960), 200–202.

²⁰ This paper section depends largely on W. O. Ajayi, 207–210.

¹⁶ Ajayi, 43.

¹⁷ Smith, 334.

¹⁸ Ajayi, 52.

The war raged with attendant consequences. The centres of missionary activities were bombarded. In Ijaye, the mission house of Adolphus Mann became a camp hospital, and his surgical skill became necessary. He was busy extracting bullets and treating wounds, attending to the needs of orphaned children and making arrangements for some of them to be sent to Abeokuta for safety. Missions in Awaye, Ibara, Biolorunpelu and Oyo were suspended. The Baptist missions were not spared. R. H Stone was travelling to Iddo from Ijaye to warn Vaughan of the impending danger when Ibadan warriors captured him. Ibadan warriors believed Stone, Philip and Vaughan, the American Baptists, and Adolphus Mann had helped Ijaye with their skilled shootings and rifles. Mann was explicitly charged with the offence of using his special telescope to detect Ibadan warriors' movements. Hence, when Edward Roper, the catchiest who came to relieve Mann in Ijaye, was taken to Ibadan among the prisoners of war, they spared him only because he was not the "white man of Ijaye". One can see here that the Ijaye war, like any other of the Yoruba wars, constituted a significant risk for the early missionaries. Missionary activities were grounded to a halt.

The conflagration and stress of the incessant war in Yoruba land had worn everyone involved out. Hence, people were longing for Peace. Christians and their missionaries provided leadership and influenced decisions that led to relief. The first step was to pray. Hence, at Ota, Abeokuta and Ibadan, a series of weekly prayer meetings began. They were praying for the restoration of Peace to the country and the preservation of churches. The Abeokuta Christian soldiers camped at Olokomeji also began to hold Sunday services. Non-Christian soldiers also joined the Sunday services. In most towns, Christians formed themselves into relief bands for the sick and the poor. Those organisations worked through mutual edification, reading of the scriptures and prayers. Some fetched wood to make fires, and others brought medicine, money, and food for the patient. David Hinderer used his office to secure the release of many Christians captured in wars. Other Yoruba Christians in Ibadan also provided material and emotional support to the

missionaries who were cut off from the rest of the world because of the wars.

Furthermore, many widows and orphans were rescued to Abeokuta, where they were placed in the care of missionaries. While the war wore on, to boost the morale of the Christian Egba soldiers, Townsend launched a media war on Ibadan. The news items were crafted to portray Ibadan in a negative light. He made use of his *Iwe Iroyin* extensively. Hinderer responded by advancing Ibadan views through the *Anglo-African* at Lagos.

The fall of Ijaye did not end the Yoruba wars. However, it became a turning point in the protracted crises that crippled the country. It pushed the people to the point where everyone wanted the wars to end. They wanted to live in Peace, and an atmosphere wherein legitimate commerce could flourish. Christian missionaries took the initiative. In December 1862, Captain JPL Davies and Rev James Lamb of the CMS in Lagos secured the permission of the Egba authorities to embark on a peace mission to Ibadan. Rev Buhler joined them in Abeokuta. They intended to relieve the missionaries trapped in war zones and to win the goodwill of various authorities in Ibadan, Oyo and Abeokuta for the immediate restoration of Peace. They visited places ravaged by war and interacted with the people. That visit opened the way for Peace that was later to come.

The missionaries also served as agents of relief in those days of crises. They built institutions and structures that provided succour for the hurting. For instance, when Ijaye fell, refugees flocked to Abeokuta. Egba authorities gave them a separate quarter called Ago-Ijaye. Many Ijaye people became Christian converts in Abeokuta, and Henry Townsend opened a school called Ake Orphanage. It became a charity home for orphaned children sent by Mann and Philips to Abeokuta. Among the refugees were members of the Ijaye Baptist congregation. They settled in Alabama and started a new congregation called Ijaye Baptist Church in 1862.²¹ Many orphaned children rescued from the Ijaye war later became influential members of the larger societies.

²¹ Ademola Ajayi, 53.

Lessons for Contemporary Missions

Contemporary missions, like those during the Yoruba civil wars, are situated within the context of general armed conflict. Like the days of the Ijaye wars, missions are faced with the challenge of safety, environmental hazard, armed conflicts and general insecurity. Nevertheless, Christian missionaries must continue to carry out the demands of the gospel in obedience to the command of Jesus to preach the gospel and the human existential needs for the Prince of Peace. Missionary activities during the civil wars, exemplified by Ijaye War, provided vital lessons that are adaptable in the face of the ongoing security situation in the country.

Christian missions and their leaders must display objectivity in emerging armed hostilities. Because Christian leaders, like Mann and Townsend, often have emotional attachments to their religious course, parishioners or tribes, they are prone to make irrational decisions. Such decisions also often get communicated either overtly or covertly. That was the situation in the prelude to the Ijaye war. One is concerned that Townsend and Mann belonged to the same CMS. However, while their reasons were the same, their approach showed that they were more concerned about their ecclesiastical provinces than the overall good of the Yoruba country. Recently, some Christian leaders have been found to inadvertently stoke the ember of violence through utterances that inflamed passions among their followers. For instance, in the wake of Boko Haram armed hostilities, some Christian leaders approached the issue from a sectarian perspective. It must be borne in mind that religious leaders hold a strategic position in the socialisation process of their communities. Their followers take their words seriously. Hence, they must be objective in their comments on issues capable of jeopardising the nation's Peace.

Missionaries should also stay with their parishioners or converts during hostilities. Adolph Mann, R. H Stone, Philip and Vaughan in Ijaye, and David Hinderer in Ibadan demonstrated this. They remained in their mission stations. Until the fall of Ijaye, Stone and others remained there. Hinderer was

reported to have remained steadfast, deploying his sense of humour in situations that should have made him cower. It was reported that he was practically cut off from the rest of the world. Mrs Mann, despite her failing health, was caring for the many orphans and widows in Ijaye. Ditto for Stone and Philip. Their continued presence encouraged their parishioners. When it was time to move out of Ijaye, Philip and, later, Stone led the converts to safety in Abeokuta. Of great significance was the fact that the exit of Mann hastened the fall of Ijaye. The rumoured departure of the white man of Ijaye alarmed the Egba warriors and emboldened the Ibadan warriors to launch a further offensive that ended Ijaye. Christian leaders must realise that by agreeing to serve the Lord, they have also agreed to hazard their lives if need be. Jesus taught that a good shepherd does not abandon the sheep in the face of danger.

Missionaries and mission leaders should be agents of Peace. In hostile situations, people want Peace. Even *dramatis personae* in armed conflict do not desire continued hostilities. Hence, those who represent the Prince of Peace should broker Peace. They must take calculated steps towards ending strife and usher in moments of calmness. Revs James Lamb and Gottlieb Buhler demonstrated that. The missionaries, having failed to be able to stop the commencement of the war, there was a need for men of goodwill to step in to broker Peace. Their visit to several torched locations was reassuring for the victims of the armed struggles. It also led to the gradual sheathing of the devouring sword. It could be hazardous to do that, mainly when conflicts are shrouded in religious garbs. Christian leaders can quickly become the target for extinction in religious conflict. That is the reason why they need calculated involvement in community issues. However, they should not be left behind whenever there is a need to broker Peace.

Missionaries and mission leaders should pray. Prayer does a lot of mysterious things. It can engage the power of God to change tides of events that were once considered beyond human control. While one is careful not to oversimplify the situation, the fact that prayer meetings began in Ota, Ibadan, Abeokuta and several other places was quite significant. Those men and

women were calling on God to bring the hostilities to an end. The situation eventually came under control. While one is concerned about the preponderance of Africans thinking that prayer is all they need to do in all situations, one needs to emphasise that hostile situations demand that those who claim to know the name of the Lord must raise their voices in intensive, intentional and unselfish intercession. The “Nigeria Prays” result, launched by Yakubu Gowon in the days of former President Abacha,²² shows that God answers prayers.²³

Mission leaders should work towards getting material relief for those hurting and troubled. Situations of armed conflict and attendant distress present unique opportunities for Christians to demonstrate the love of Christ. The missionaries did this while staying with their people. Furthermore, believers in Ibadan, Abeokuta and other parts of Yoruba land banded themselves together to form relief clubs. They gathered money for relief materials, and some gathered firewood to make fire, effective medicine in those days, to care for the poor and the afflicted. In Abeokuta, an orphanage was built for the orphaned children while widowed women were cared for by the missions; this is very important for contemporary missions. Children and women are more vulnerable in armed struggles. Armed marauders could sack communities and everyone displaced. Missions should take advantage of the situation to extend the love of Christ. Showing love this way requires mission agents to look beyond their own pain and loss to reach out to those equally hurting.

Modern missionaries and their people should preach the gospel. The primary purpose of Christian missions is to preach the gospel. Hence, contemporary missions should take advantage of every opportunity to preach the gospel. Adolphus Mann and R. H. Stone of the Baptist Missions did that in Ijaye. Mann was quoted to have said that the crisis made the war

chief in Ijaye relax his control against his people’s conversion to Christianity. However, the people were too worried to listen to a preacher.²⁴ The Apostle Paul wrote that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone (Rom 1.18). He also charged Timothy to be ready to preach in season and out of season (2 Tim 4.1-2, 5). Hence, the missionaries should not be afraid to keep sowing the word of God in all directions.

Conclusion

The security situation in Nigeria is not without precedence. The entry of protestant missions into Yoruba land coincided with the period of civil unrest in the Yoruba country. That unrest culminated in the Ijaye war of the 1860s. However, the missionaries did not shrink back. They continued to minister in the name of the Lord amid those hostilities. They represented the Prince of Peace in the seasons of chaos. Modern missionaries should see the security crises as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God by ministering to the need of the hurting. They should also be unbiased mediators among warring gangs and use every opportunity to preach Jesus in chaotic situations.

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(Ref : The article is send by the author)

²² “How I Started ‘Nigeria Pray’. Gowon” in *Daily Trust* 13/09/2015 available @ <https://dailytrust.com/how-i-started-nigeria-prays-gowon> access on 11/11/2022 .

²³ This writer participated as a teenager in that prayer movement. It was a time when Nigeria was in the grip of general insecurity and desperation. The nation's situation improved significantly after those days of the call to national prayer.

²⁴ W. O. Ajayi, 206.

Linking Ethics, Economy and Environment For Global Justice and Planet Peace

Introduction

In the Old Testament the Great Commandment in Deut 6:5 states, “love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.” There is also one insignificant commandment in the Old Testament found in Lev 19:18 “love your neighbour as yourself.” The creativity and the originality of Jesus Christ is that he not only expanded the meaning of the word “neighbour” through the parable of the Good Samaritan but also combined these two commandments together: Love your God “and” Love your neighbour. This conjunction ‘and’ which is in Greek “*kai*” could imply (not only ‘additive’ as in English but also) ‘explanatory’ meaning “that is.” Therefore, the meaning of the above could be this: love ‘your God’; that is, ‘your neighbour!’ In short, where is this God? This God is in your neighbour! Such originality and creativity I see in *Laudato Si*’ when Pope Francis combined environmental crisis with economic causes. We are all aware of the fact in the age of science that the planet we live in is deteriorating. We also know that the economic greediness of the rich makes the poor poorer and the rich richer. Pope Francis links the environmental crisis to its roots in economic forces and calls for certain ethical choices in economic, social, political and psychological spheres if we are to survive in our “common home.” In fact, the word ‘ecology’ comes from the Greek word ‘*oikos*’ which means ‘house.’ This planet is a home not only for humans but also for all that exists upon this planet. If we do not take note of these three “e”s, such as ‘environmental, economic and ethical’ we will be in danger of losing this common home. This paper is divided into three parts. In the first part I summarize the position paper presented by the Task Force on Environmental and Economic Justice for the delegates of the Society of Jesus, Higher Education Directorate 2018 Meeting in Bilbao, Spain. In the second part I look at it from the Indian realities and in the final part I

will present the plan of action envisaged by the Higher Education run by the Indian Jesuits.

1. Integral Ecology

a. A History of the Earth, the Evolution of Biodiversity and the Late Arrival of Humans

By “integral ecology” what Pope Francis means is that everything is connected to everything else on this planet by intricate plan of nature. The five elements (*panchabhutas*) of air, water, earth, fire and ether mix and intermingle to create an atmosphere for all to exist on this planet. Thus, 4.1 billion years ago the first living organism, a prokaryotic (*pro* means before and *kary* means nucleus) unicellular bacterial life form on earth came into existence. From here eventually arose all other higher forms of life. Started out as ocean bacteria, it evolved into cyanobacteria (*kyanos* in Greek means ‘blue’ and therefore is also called blue-green algae.

They are photosynthetic prokaryotes which are able to produce oxygen) to capture solar energy to support their own metabolism through photosynthesis. The capacity of cyanobacteria to produce oxygen changed our atmosphere making it 20% oxygen and gave rise to the evolution of larger and more complex life forms. 360 million years ago the process of evolution gave rise to diverse forest ecosystem all over the planet. The tree of life contributed to the evolution of higher forms of life like reptiles and mammals. All species in the web support the balance of the biosphere. Some become food to others, others decompose the waste of plants and animals, some convert CO₂ to oxygen, and others convert oxygen to CO₂. Such complex web of life supports to regulate the planetary systems. 65 million years ago our ancestral group, the primates came into existence. About 2.8 million years ago modern humans of the genus *Homo* first appeared in Africa. Only 300,000 years ago our species, *Homo sapiens*, the most highly evolved species of *Homo* came into existence. Thus, the humans

are very late arrivals in the evolutionary timeline. Around 10,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* invented agriculture in the Fertile Crescent. During this time of primitive agriculture, the world population was 1 million people. During the Napoleonic times, around 1810 the world population reached 1 billion. By 1930 in only 120 years when we discovered coal and nitrogen fertilizer, we reached our second billion. The advent of agricultural technologies, namely the capture of atmosphere nitrogen gas and conversion to cheap ammonia fertilizer transformed agricultural production and increased crop yield significantly.

The discovery of the fossil fuel energy such as coal, oil and nitrogen gas to fuel the combustion engine multiplied the capacity of humans to do work. The above two things together transformed the existence of humans on the planet. Today we have 7.5 billion people on the planet and heading for 9-10 billion by 2050. This population explosion in just the last 100 years of the entire 2.8- million-year history of humans on earth is alarming. These technological developments with our increasing ability to use energy and other resources coupled with our unstoppable desire for material riches in the capitalist economy has driven us to exceed nature's natural checks and balances and the biosphere is greatly suffering as a result. Consumerism is flooding the planet with accumulated waste and our use of fossil fuels is changing the climate transforming the earth into an unlivable habitat for all of the species in the biosphere, including ourselves.

b. Planetary Boundaries

John Rockstrom from the Stockholm Resilience Centre with many scientists and economists from around the world developed a diagram, termed Planetary Boundaries which helps us to understand how much damage we have done to the planet Earth. There are nine major environmental threats to the planet in this schema. We can do some deforestation, emit some pollution, extract some water, fossil fuels, and minerals from the land and fish from the oceans within a limit, and the earth will recover. But what we see is we have already far exceeded the planet's ability to rebound with regard to climate change, nitrogen flow and biodiversity loss and these three perturbations

have greatly destabilized the earth's major planetary systems. We cannot continue to pollute our air, water and soil and exterminate the biosphere and expect to be able to survive on this planet. We are completely dependent on the goods and services of the biological diversity on the planet. In addition to providing 100% of our food and over 80% of the world's medicines, the forests, grasslands and oceans grace us with the oxygen we breathe, consume our bodily wastes, regulate the water cycle and stabilize the climate.

c. Modern Technology, Economic Growth, and Human Growth

In 1798 Economist T. R. Malthus urged controls on population growth as he demonstrated that human populations grow exponentially while food production grows at an arithmetic rate and a time will come when the earth will not be able to support the needs of the numerous humans. Within 50 years of the Malthusian Theory of Population, technological advances in energy (energy-dense coal replacing horsepower and wood) and fertilizer (nitrogen gas from the atmosphere being converted to cheap ammonia fertilizer) allowed us to have more yield out of agricultural land which supported more humans. Subsequent technological advances in food production, health, transport, industry, etc., in turn, perpetuate the continued growth of the human population. But today with 7.5 billion and growing, the finite resources on our planet pose dire consequences not only to us, but to the rest of Creation. Entire ecosystems continue to be plowed down, species are driven to extinction to make way for our kind, and our common atmospheric, geologic and oceanic resources have become open dumping ground for our toxic industrial waste. The poor and indigenous continue to be exploited and left behind with smaller pieces of the pie. In 'Laudato Si' Pope Francis points out that we are leaving the poor to be destitute with inarable land, and water and food insecurities.

On a planet with finite resources, we have a fatally flawed unidirectional economic model of growth. Our economies are driven by extracting natural resources (mining, deforesting, fishing, harvesting) and exploiting human workers in order to make goods that are mass produced, sold, single-used and disposed to purchase again

and again as Starbucks' disposable coffee cups in developed nations. In our current economic systems nature is depleted, natural resources dwindle, and trash and toxins pile up. While our planet is dying, we insist on the relentless growth of our capitalist economies turning a blind eye to the truth that our own children will be unable to thrive. Today we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product. This does not affect only future generations, but also the current ones. Modern economies are becoming increasingly unequal and unfair. The rich become richer; the poor become poorer and also suffer more from environmental problems. What the people desire is a clean, healthy, civil, peaceful and just future. Yet the people's voices are not being heard and are not what is driving the globalized economic machine. The multinational corporations have the most powerful lobbying interests in the world, and have influenced the spirit of governance away from the people. As a result, for example, in the name of development, most African governments have sold their rivers, forests and land to corporations for exploitation. The practice suggests that the economic survival of the people depends on the destruction of their environment.

d. Global Measures Needed for a Healthy Planet, Healthy People, Peace and Prosperity
Global problems require global leadership. In 2015 world leaders at the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Global Development Goals. Likewise, in 2016 world leaders agreed upon the Paris Climate Agreement which pledges to keep the planet within 2 degrees Celsius of warming. In addition, the European Commission is advancing a Strategy for a Circular Economy to build a fair and sustainable economic framework. However, given the lack of a true global authority achieving these goals poses an enormous challenge. Changes that need to take place should include a decline of carbon emissions to zero, with a shift to renewable energy systems leaving the remaining oil, coal and natural gas in the ground, a sustainable use of our natural resources including a sustainable agriculture and land use, sustainable and inclusive cities where 70% of the population will live and thrive, a fairer society which takes

care all people and especially the most vulnerable populations with more equitable health, education and governance systems, technological development that is ethical and intentional and meets the needs of these world challenges including information and communications technologies.

Implementation of such ambitious goals requires engagement at all levels of society, from the individual to the global community. It is the opportunity and responsibility of the Jesuit Higher Education to advance this movement to rescue the planet and humanity.

2. The Indian Context¹

a. Early Indian Thought

The above 'integral ecology' is the insight of 'early Indian thought' too. Here the emphasis is on the theology of dependence on creation. At the opening stage of Vedic literature, the Indian Sages looked at the world in a cyclic perspective. The rain (*parjanya*) is sent from heaven or by god. The rain gives forth food (*anna*) on the earth. The result of this food is the survival of human (*purusha*). The human offers in thanksgiving sacrifice (*yajna*) which is taken up by the air to god (*brahma*) who survives on it and once god is satisfied the god sends rain (*parjanya*) and thus the cycle of the survival of the whole cosmos, human and god continues. This cycle is called *yajna chakrapravartana* (the wheel of sacrifice in motion). Here everything depends upon everything else and this cycle goes on and on and never ending. Here the human is only a part of the whole of cosmos. The human is not above but a part of cosmos. In this process human is heading towards bondage because of his work. Work leads to bondage whatever it may be, according to the Indian Vedic Thought. This is called Karma theory. Does it mean that the human has to give up the work? No. Since everything depends upon everything else the contribution of the human work for the welfare of the whole (*lokasangraha*) is necessary. According to Karma theory it is the fruit of the work that leads one to bondage. In trying to solve the

¹ See my article on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation: A Biblical Perspective," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 77:2 (February 2013): 136-154 where I have elaborated the Indian ecological reality under the title of Integrity of Creation.

problem of bondage the Indian Philosophy makes a subtle distinction between the work and the fruit of the work. What is necessary is not *karma thyaga* (sacrifice of the work) but *karmaphalathyaga* (sacrifice of the fruit of the work). When we selfishly hold on to the fruit of the work it leads us to bondage. That is why we need *nishkamakarma* according to *Bhagavad Gita* where Krishna suggests that we have rights only on the work or the action, and not on its results, whether it is good or bad. Our works, our desires should be “desireless” and we should not desire for any pleasing (or unpleasing) result.² This is the theology of dependence needed to respond to the ecological crisis today.

b. The Current Indian Reality

At one time in India we thought that the ecological crisis is nothing to do with economic, political and social justice and therefore for the poorer nations, the environmental issues were a luxury. But today we realize that the ecological problem is our urgent issue both for the rich and for the poor since it affects life, the life of the planet.

The economic, political and social issues are connected with the ecological issues. The decision of the government to turn the habitat of the poor tribals into a mining area gave rise to the famous Chipko movement spearheaded by the poor tribal women. The shrinking of the villages and forests and the expansion of the slums in our cities portray the greediness of the rich and the plight of the poor. The starting point for the integrity of creation should begin not with scientists or with fancy for growing trees around the houses but with the cry of the poor.³ Thus, the renewal of the society and the renewal of the earth are interconnected.

It is not an exaggeration to say that quite a number of socially conscious committed scientists opened our eyes to the endangered environment caused by air, water and land pollution which threatens to wipe out the very

life on earth. It is in contrast to those scientists who took delight in taming, dominating and subduing the objectified nature for the development of the human beings. The fast depletion of non-renewal resources and species, the thinning of the ozone layer that exposes to the danger of radiation, the imbalance in the building up of gases to create the greenhouse effect, the increasing erosion of the sea coupled with the population explosion, the subordination of women and children to the needs of men, the wasteful affluence leading to war, hunger and poverty⁴ are well known in today's world that requires urgent attention on the integrity of creation.

Since the modern life style caused by industrial and technological growth leads to the exploitation of human beings and nature we need to put a personal and communal limit to our need or rather to our greed in our consumption in our life style. The use of power is very important for value formation. Jesus resisted power to dominate and utilized it to serve. Do we use power to dominate or to serve and build solidarity? Finally, whom are we listening to in our decision makings and whose interest do we serve? Our solidarity with the poor should make us include them in our decision making as equal partners.⁵

c. The Context of Maharashtra, India

In Maharashtra where the Jesuit Jana-Deepa (JD), Pontifical Athenaeum of Philosophy and Religion is situated, the government has banned single-use plastic items including carry bags, disposable cutlery and thermocol from June 23, 2018. The violation will attract penalty ranging from Rs 5,000 - Rs 25,000. But the good news is that there are environment-friendly alternatives for most plastic items. Here are a few:

1. Containers, plates, cups and trays made of betel leaf bamboo and wood. These are food grade with no chemicals and binding agents, and can be decomposed into the soil within eight weeks. Also, most are microwavable and can be reused. Plates and bowls made of dried leaves were used in traditional ceremonies before plastic items took over.

² See “Nishkam karma of Bhagavad Gita,” accessed 20 September 2015; available from <http://www.Swamivivekanandaquotes.org/2014/05/nishkam-karma-of-bhagavad-gita.html;Internet,1>

³ See K.C. Abraham, “Liberative Solidarity: Contemporary Perspectives on Mission,” in <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1450andC=1295>, accessed on 28/7/12.

⁴ See K.C. Abraham, “Liberative Solidarity.”

⁵ See K.C. Abraham, “Liberative Solidarity.”

2. Edible cutlery made of food grains are an interesting option.
3. Cloth, silk, jute, canvas, muslin, wicker bags can handle up to 3-5kg weight. Many of these bags come with bold printed lettering that reads: "I am not a plastic bag" or "100% compostable" and "does not contain plastic."
4. Steel containers can be used to buy and carry milk and other liquids, and meat.
5. Paper and compostable garbage bin liners made of potato and corn starch.

3. Plan of Action

a. Some of the Best Practices in the Jesuit Institutions

In June 16-17, 2018 when the heads of the Indian Jesuit Higher Education gathered together in Bangalore one of the issues addressed was ecology. In our group sharing the following best practices and concerns were voiced in this regard.

1. Intellectual: Awareness of the 3 E's (environmental, economic and ethical) is given through inaugural orientations, seminars, conferences, credit and foundation courses, research articles and alumni efforts.
2. Participation by Staff and Students: Whole hearted cooperation, seedlings and seed planting, vermin-bin, seed bowl *dhan*, plants, plants instead of shawls for guests, rallies and picture and poster campaigns, eco walks and trekking.
3. Media Education: Short films, documentary films, slide shows, folk songs and awareness skits, eco-topic for competitions, publishing write ups and books on eco issues.
4. Institutional Contributions: Solar power generation, plastic and flex free campus, separate bins for perishable and non-perishable waste, introducing LED lights, planting and taking care of trees, making greener campus, eco clubs, waste management, manure from waste, water management, rain water harvesting, eco celebrations, recycling waste water and installation of bio gas plant.
5. Research: publishing of papers on eco issues, getting patent rights for eco inventions as already done in Entomology, eco institutes and laboratories, green houses and the appointment of co-ordinators in all our communities to implement eco issues and practices.

b. Concerns Raised on the Continuity of the Environmental Work

1. Most of the programmes are left to particular or individual initiatives.
2. No continuity for many of the programmes,
3. Follow up is not done,
4. Individual consciousness is missing,
5. No Mass movement to oppose eco-unfriendly governmental projects and machinery.
6. Alumni are taken for granted.

Conclusion

If we allow the human consumptive and growth process to increase on the earth, more than half of the existing species will be gone by the end of this century. There is no possible way we can put the earth back together when we lose our species. Since we are killing off the species on which we completely depend for our own existence, Pope Francis urgently asks us to attend to an Integral Ecology. Only a small fraction of humanity is benefitting from the capitalist economic model, while we are all speeding headlong into crisis. We need to integrate reconciliation with Creation into our behaviour, university cultures and curricular teachings to experience a positive feedback to our own health and to that of people at the margins. The overall goal of *Laudato Si'*, is to help all of us recognize the urgent need to become integral ecologists and for this we need to dare to imagine a healed Earth and must be willing to put our hands, hearts, and minds to the task and especially through our expansive social and educational directorates.

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Per Una Cultura Della Compassione

Prospettive Di Etica Cristiana

Tracciare i lineamenti della compassione, tradizionalmente definita in termini di «sentimento di pietà verso chi è infelice, verso i suoi dolori, le sue disgrazie, i suoi difetti; partecipazione alle sofferenze altrui», oppure nel senso più ampio ed etimologicamente più preciso di «patire insieme»¹, nel mondo del vivere e del pensare odierno diventa un impegno sempre più complesso. Questo è dovuto al fatto che le attenzioni rivolte a quella verità espressa con il concetto *compassione*, soprattutto nel pensiero occidentale di varia ispirazione, sono cambiate. Nella letteratura recente il tema della compassione viene trattato con un approccio multidisciplinare, con il riferimento ad una ampia gamma di dati generati da ricerche di vario tipo² quali: le origini evolutive della compassione radicate nello sviluppo del sistema motivazionale di accudimento nei mammiferi, con le condotte corrispondenti³; il funzionamento del cervello e il ruolo fisiologico del sistema nervoso vegetativo nella regolazione dell'affetto per raggiungere la calma e il rilassamento grazie all'attivazione dei sistemi di elaborazione affiliativi⁴; gli effetti benefici fisiologici,

psicologici e comportamentali delle relazioni affettive sulla persona e le conseguenze negative in caso della loro mancanza⁵. Un altro ambito ampiamente presente nella bibliografia, in cui si evidenzia la centralità del concetto di compassione, è relativo all'etica buddista⁶. Inoltre, va evidenziato il crescente numero di proposte per coltivare la compassione attraverso specifiche tecniche, ritenute promettenti nell'aumentare la capacità di essere

¹ *Compassione*, in <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/-compassione>.

² Cf. J.N. KIRBY - S.R. STEINDL — J.R. DOTY, *Compassion as the Highest Ethic*, in L.M. MONTEIRO — J.E. COMPSON — F. MUSTEN (eds.), *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions*, Mindfulness in Behavioral Health, Springer International Publishing AG, NY 2017, 253-277.

³ In modo esemplificativo, cf. S.L. BROWN - R.M. BROWN, *Connecting Prosocial Behavior to Improved Physical Health: Contributions from the Neurobiology of Parenting*, "Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews" 55 (2015), 1-17, DOI: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2015.04.004; R. GILBERT, *The Origins and Nature of Compassion Focused Therapy*, "British Journal of Clinical Psychology" 53 (2014), 6-41, DOI:10.1111/bjc.12043; O. MAYSELESS, *The Caring Motivation: An Integrated Theory*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2016.

⁴ Cf. R.A. DEPUE - J.V. MORRONE-STRUPINSKY, *A Neurobehavioral Model of Affiliative Bonding*, "Behavioral and Brain Sciences" 28 (2005), 313-395,

DOMO. 1017/S0140525 X05000063; S.W. PORGES, *The Polyvagal Perspective*, "Biological Psychology" 74 (2007), 116-143, DOI:10.1016/j.biopsycho.2006.06.009; O.M. KLIMECKI - S. LEIBERG - M. RICARD — T. SINGER, *Differential Pattern of Functional Brain Plasticity after Compassion and Empathy Training*, "Social Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience" 7 (2014), 9, 873-879, DOI:10.1093/scan/nst060; R.J. DAVIDSON, *The Biology of Compassion*, in C. GERMER — D. SIEGEL (eds.), *Wisdom and Compassion in Psychotherapy: Deepening Mindfulness in Clinical Practice*, Guilford Press, New York, NY 2012, 111-118.

⁵ Cf. S.H. KONRATH — E.H. O'BRIEN — C. HSING, *Change in Dispositional Empathy in American College Students over Time: A Meta-analysis*, "Personality and Social Psychology Review" 15 (2011), 180-198, DOI:10.1177/1088868310377395; H. PARK - J.M. TWENGE — EM. GREENFIELD, *The Great Recession: implications for Adolescent Values and Behavior*, "Social Psychological and Personality Science" 5 (2014), 310-318, DOI: 10.1177/1948550613495419; J. LEAVISS — L. UTTLEY, *Psychotherapeutic Benefits of Compassion-Focused Therapy: An Early Systematic Review*, "Psychological Medicine" 45 (2015), 927-945, doi:10.1017/S0033291714002141; J.N. KIRBY, *Compassion Interventions: The Programs, the Evidence, and implications for Research and Practice*, "Psychology and Psychotherapy" 90 (2017), 3, 432-455, DOI:10.1111/papt.12104; P. GILBERT (ed.), *Compassion. Concepts, Research and Applications*, Routledge, London 2017.

⁶ «In Buddhism, an act is essentially unethical if its aim is to cause suffering and ethical if it is meant to bring genuine well-being to others», in M. RICARD, *Altruism*, Atlantic Books, London 2015, 239. Si vede anche R.J. DAVIDSON - A. HARRINGTON, *Vision of Compassion: Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists Examine Human Nature*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2002; KIRBY — STEINDL — DOTY, *Compassion as the Highest Ethic*, 262-263.

compassionevoli e persino di influenzare i processi fisiologici e psicologici, potenziando così la maturazione della persona come soggetto etico⁷, con finalità di accettazione di sé e di maggiore soddisfazione professionale, specialmente nell'ambito delle scienze della salute, proponendo la compassione come principio guida per favorire lo sviluppo di un mondo più umano⁸. Il crescente interesse attuale da parte del mondo delle scienze per il tema della compassione più volte rinvia alla sua utilità per la riuscita, sociale e personale del vivere e del convivere. Generalmente inteso come atteggiamento di empatia per l'altro che si traduce nella capacità di leggere le situazioni di

precarietà e di intervenire in modo dovuto⁹, la compassione resta spesso percepita in un'ottica "efficientista" come una scelta di atteggiamento operativo finalizzato ad assicurare sia lo stare bene con sé stessi e la serenità interiore, sia i rapporti pacifici con gli altri¹⁰.

Partendo dall'inquadramento offerto del tema, va precisato che l'interesse della riflessione successiva non è volto né all'analisi approfondita dei presupposti scientifici della compassione — trattati dal punto di vista biologico-fisiologico, innanzitutto nella prospettiva di neuroendocrinologia del comportamento — e neppure al suo esame nella prospettiva psicologica, di solito volta alla ricerca degli effetti positivi di affetti sull'autostima e la fiducia in sé, insieme con la capacità di socializzazione nell'ambito professionale e relazionale. L'attenzione primaria è quella di evidenziare un apporto della morale cristiana per la comprensione della compassione con l'interesse alla dimensione etica, cioè all'implicazione della coscienza morale della persona che ha vissuto l'esperienza dell'incontro con Cristo, *homo perfectus*, in cui l'uomo è stato pienamente rivelato a sé stesso¹¹. Nella possibile conoscenza della pienezza

⁷ Fra i metodi principali basati sulla coltivazione della compassione di solito si indicano (terminologia in lingua inglese): Cognitively Based Compassion Training, Cultivating Emotional Balance, Compassion and Loving-Kindness Meditations, Mindful Self-Compassion, Compassion Cultivation Training, Compassion-Focused Therapy. Cf. J.N. KIRBY — E GILBERT, *The Emergence of Compassion Focused Therapies*, in E GILBERT (ed.), *Compassion: Concepts, Research and Application*, Routledge, London 2016, 258-285; J.N. KIRBY C.L. TELLEGEN — S.R. STEINDL, *A Meta-Analysis of Compassion-Based Interventions: Current State of Knowledge and Future Directions*, "Behavior Therapy" 48 (2017), 6, 778- 792; KIRBY - STEINDL - DOTY, *Compassion as the Highest Ethic*, 266-271. Si vede anche la pagina del "Compassion Institute".

⁸ Cf. SH. SINCLAIR - J.M. NORRIS - S.J. MCCONNELL - H.M. CHOCHINOV - TH. F HACK N.A. HAGEN — S. MCCLEMENT - SH. RAFFIN BOUCHAL, *Compassion: A Scoping Review of the Healthcare Literature*, "BMC Palliative Care" 15 (2016), 6, published online 2016 Jan 19, DOI: 10.1186/s12904-016-0080-0; S. PATEL - A. PELLETIER-BUI - S. SMITH - M.B. ROBERTS - H. KILGANNON - S. TRZECIAK - B.W. ROBERTS, *Curricula for Empathy and Compassion Training in Medical Education: A Systematic Review*, "PLOS One" 14 (2019), 8, published online 22 Aug 2019, DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0221412; LIN ZHANG — ZHI-HONG REN - GUANGRONG JIANG - D. HAZER-RAU - CHUNXIAO ZHAO - CONGRONG SHI - LIZU LAI - YIFEI YAN, *Self-Oriented Empathy and Compassion Fatigue: The Serial Mediation of Dispositional Mindfulness and Counselor's Self-Efficacy*, "Frontiers in Psychology" 11 (2020), published on line 2021 Jan 8, DOI:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.613908; SH. SINCLAIR — J. KONDEJEWSKI - E JAGGI - L. DENNETT - A.L. ROZE DES ORDONS - TH. F HACK, *What Is the State of Compassion Education? A Systematic Review of Compassion Training in Health Care*, "Academic Medicine" 96 (2021), 7, 1057-1070, DOI:10.1097/ACM.00000000000004114. Si vedono anche le informazioni riportate nella pagina web del *Compassion Institute*:

<https://www.compassioninstitute.com/>;
<https://archive.is/FnwAF>

⁹ Cf. C. Dotolo, *Compassione*, in B. Kanakappally et al. (ed.), *Dizionario Hindu-Cristiano. Luoghi per il dialogo interreligioso*, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2017, 273.

¹⁰ Fra gli effetti funzionali-positivi della compassione, vista come forza motivazionale e preparazione per assistere con maggiore disponibilità le persone sofferenti e bisognose per diminuire la loro sofferenza, sono spesso evidenziati: riconoscimento della sofferenza come parte integrale dell'umano, sensibilità accresciuta per i sofferenti, equanimità e atteggiamento di solidarietà e di rispetto, capacità acquisita di tollerare lo stress e l'angoscia, pazienza e voglia di alleviare e di prevenire la sofferenza. Cf. C. FELDMAN — W. KUYKEN, *Compassion in the Landscape of Suffering*, "Contemporary Buddhism" 12 (2011), 143- 155, DOI: 10.1080/14639947.2011.564831; J.L. GOETZ - D. KELTNER - E. SIMON- THOMAS, *Compassion An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review*, "Psychological Bulletin" 136 (2010), 351-374., DOI:10.1037/a0018807; K. NEFF, *The Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion*, "Self and Identity" 2 (2003), 223-250, DOI: 10.1080/15298860390209035; C. STRAUSS - B.L. TAYLOR - J. GU - W. KUYKEN - R. BAER - F. JONES - K. CAVANAGH, *What Is Compassion and How Can We Measure It? A Review of Definitions and Measures*, "Clinical Psychology Review" 47 (2016), 15-27, DOI: 10.1016/j.cpr.2016.05.004.

¹¹ Cf. GS 16.

dell'*humanum* autentico, resa accessibile grazie al dono ricevuto, consiste precisamente lo specifico del cristiano. Anche il senso della compassione, che si apre alla luce di tale privilegio, rinvia alla persona-soggetto morale credente, inteso nella totalità-unità del suo essere, e alla sua qualifica profonda a livello della coscienza fondamentale, con le implicazioni inevitabili per la continuità dell'«suo» esistere: capire il senso della presenza dell'altro, riconoscere l'oggettività del bene possibile, decidere ed agire di conseguenza¹². In altre parole, ci interessa la compassione in chiave di un *atteggiamento basilare operativo* che non è una delle possibilità in vista di un maggiore perfezionamento personale, ma una parte costitutiva e vincolante della natura creaturale dell'uomo, fatto all'immagine e somiglianza di Dio e, grazie all'azione dello Spirito Santo pienamente svelato e ultimato in Cristo¹³.

Per individuare meglio il senso integrale della compassione dal punto di vista della morale cristiana, si intende recuperare per gradi la profondità dell'implicazione della coscienza cristiana, andando oltre una semplice analisi delle effettive opere compassionevoli. Di conseguenza, diventa centrale la questione sulla realtà fondante — Dio in quanto *princeps analogatum* e il punto di riferimento per la comprensione della natura creaturale dell'uomo e della sua autorealizzazione personale e

comunitaria pienamente riuscita. La domanda sulla compassione, quindi, *in primis* interroga sul concetto evocato in quanto attributo divino essenziale. In seguito, una breve analisi della piena rivelazione di Dio in Cristo servirà a dischiudere il fondamento e il significato etico dell'essere compassionevole dell'uomo. Come ultimo passaggio, partendo dal comune umano salvato e ricreato in Cristo, Uomo nuovo, sarà appurata la possibilità o meno di universalizzare la compassione in quanto tratto profondo e costitutivo di ogni essere umano.

1. La compassione, attributo di Dio e qualifica dell'uomo

«Parlare di un Dio indifferente [...] significherebbe condannare gli uomini all'indifferenza»¹⁴. Secondo questa affermazione di Jürgen Moltmann, la comprensione della realtà divina personale si riflette inevitabilmente sulla conoscenza di chi è l'uomo-creatura, *imago Dei*¹⁵. Questo vale anche nella ricerca del punto di riferimento per la giusta comprensione della compassione. Per la ragione evocata *princeps analogatum* è Dio stesso. La compassione, quindi, va vista partendo dalla realtà divina di cui la compassione è attributo essenziale. Solo la meditazione su questa verità qualificante Dio stesso e la sua piena rivelazione in Cristo potrà dischiudere il fondamento ultimo e il significato autentico vissuto nell'essere compassionevoli.

Nella riflessione intrapresa si parte dall'azione creatrice di Dio come la relazione fondante: grazie a essa viene costituito l'uomo-creatura in quanto *Tessere relazionale* e *modo umano* di essere nel mondo. La creazione dell'uomo a immagine e somiglianza è la manifestazione del *pathos* di Dio per l'uomo, sua creatura: chiamato all'esistenza *per l'amore*, l'uomo è creatura *per amare*. Ogni limite per la pienezza della vita, causato dalla libertà autoreferenziale dell'uomo, diventerà ormai l'inquietudine di Dio-Amore e il suo impegno fedele per il

¹² Cf. K. DEMMER, *Dalla coscienza all'agire: l'azione morale*, in ID., *Fondamenti di etica teologica*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi, PG 2004, 311-386; D. ABIGNENTE, *Prossimi, responsabili, discepoli. Il senso di una prospettiva*, in D. ABIGNENTE — G. PARNOFIELLO (edd.), *La cura dell'altro. Studi in onore di Sergio Bastianel sj*, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, Trapani 2014, 60-78; V. BALČIUS, *L'agire. Tra virtù e opzione fondamentale*, UUP Città del Vaticano 2016, 101-116, 173-178.

¹³ Sant'Ireneo di Lione, parafrasando il racconto paradigmatico di buon samaritano, fa il riferimento all'immagine e somiglianza (di cui - si può presumere — fa parte anche la compassione) attivata nel credente per opera dello Spirito Santo e perciò da vivere in modo fruttuoso: «Perché il Signore ha affidato allo Spirito Santo l'uomo che gli appartiene, l'uomo che era caduto tra le mani dei briganti; di quest'uomo ha avuto compassione, gli ha bendato le ferite, dando due denari regali perché, dopo aver ricevuto per mezzo dello Spirito l'Immagine e l'iscrizione del Padre e del Figlio, noi facciamo fruttificare il denaro che ci è stato affidato, e lo restituiamo al Signore moltiplicato», IRENEO, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 17, 3, SC 34, 306.

¹⁴ J. MOLTSMANN, *Il Dio crocifisso. La croce di Cristo, fondamento e critica della teologia cristiana*, BTC 17, Queriniana, Brescia 2013, 322.

¹⁵ Come si esprime a proposito di questo il gesuita Alain Thomasset, tale visione «avrebbe condannato l'umanità a negare la compassione», ID., *La virtù della compassione: divenire prossimo*, in Io., *Un'etica teologica delle virtù sociali. Giustizia, solidarietà, compassione, ospitalità, speranza*, BTC 209, Queriniana, Brescia 2021, 122.

superamento dei condizionamenti guidando sia una singola persona, sia il suo popolo intero verso la maturità del relazionarsi responsabile con Dio e con gli altri grazie alla libertà liberata¹⁶.

Dio è dunque compassionevole: *con passione* e nella gratuità del suo amore egli crea e accompagna ogni uomo in ogni sua necessità lungo la storia. Grazie a questa passione di Dio — il massimo e durevole interesse per ogni uomo e tutto l'uomo, raggiungendo tutti in modo più adatto nella concretezza della loro vita — si dilata anche il senso consueto della compassione. Essa non è più riconducibile a un semplice sentimento di pietà verso le sofferenze altrui oppure a un emotivo patire-insieme. La compassione, avendo l'origine in Dio stesso, scaturisce dalla profondità del cuore della persona umana facendo parte della sua indole: l'atteggiamento dell'accoglienza gratuita dell'altro in quanto parte costitutiva dell'essere *imago Dei*, con una risposta vincolante al bisogno qualsiasi secondo la regola del bene realmente possibile, diventa decisivo per essere un uomo autentico. Essere compassionevoli, come lo è il Signore, per l'uomo-creatura è imprescindibile se si vuole proseguire sulla via dell'autentica umanità.

L'esempio specifico più eclatante della compassione di Dio per l'uomo è l'evento Esodo-Sinai che ha segnato il destino del Popolo eletto. La compassione per la condizione di un non-popolo che si era già abituato di vivere in una non-libertà si traduce in un'iniziativa gratuita di Dio compassionevole e misericordioso, perdonante e salvante: «Ho osservato la miseria del mio popolo [...] e ho udito il suo grido [...]; conosco infatti le sue sofferenze. Sono sceso per liberarlo» (Es 3,7-8). Intervento divino di liberazione dalla schiavitù esterna, aperta al graduale sprigionamento interiore, segna il dono gratuito e la promessa di Dio fatta all'umanità di camminare insieme verso la Terra, verso la pienezza della vita, provvedendo a tutte le necessità e i bisogni: «io ti ho posto davanti la vita e la morte, la benedizione e la maledizione; scegli dunque la

vita» (Dt 30, 19). La fedeltà di Dio, tradottasi inevitabilmente in un atteggiamento e un agire compassionevole verso l'uomo¹⁷, sua creatura, viene confermata anche nelle parole del profeta Isaia: «Si dimentica forse una donna del suo bambino, così da non commuoversi per il figlio delle sue viscere? Anche se queste donne si dimenticassero, io invece non ti dimenticherò mai» (Is 49,15). Di conseguenza, Dio cristiano, Uno e Trino, Dio di comunione e di amore, quindi, essenzialmente non può essere *apathos*. Egli è *sympathos* ed *empathos*: non solo capace di capire le sofferenze dell'altro, non solo atto di comprendere lo stato d'animo altrui immedesimandosi, ma è colui che “si sente dentro” fino a farsi Uomo grazie al Cristo Gesù, Verbo Incarnato¹⁸ per ricostituire la pienezza dell'umano *a immagine e somiglianza*.

La compassione fa parte dell'essenza di Dio stesso; essa però non è riservata solo a Dio: l'uomo autentico per la stessa indole creaturale e grazie all'essere *Imago*, è compassionevole. Egli vive la sua creaturalità *con passione* e si relaziona all'interno dell'umanità in una maniera accogliente dell'altro, rispondendo al suo bisogno. Nel processo del suo divenire soggetto etico, il dato evocato della natura creaturale, comunque, deve essere assunto con libertà responsabile, diventandone consapevoli e rendendolo operativo al livello esistenziale-vissuto. Tale dinamismo fa parte di una maturazione dell'interiorità morale del credente che, una volta iniziata, si struttura in quanto rapporto reciproco tra la profondità della coscienza fondamentale, qualificabile sempre più soddisfacentemente come onestà personale, e le sue corrispondenti incarnazioni negli atti compassione- voli concreti.

La compassione, quindi, una volta diventata la verifica e la via dell'essere credenti e dell'*humanum*, perché rispecchia Dio-compassionevole, è sempre attiva: non solo e

¹⁶ Cf. D. ABIGNENTE, *Conversione morale nella fede. Una riflessione etico-teologica a partire da figure di conversione del vangelo di Luca*, Collana Aloisiana 30, Gregorian University Press - Morcelliana, Roma - Brescia 2000, 219-226.

¹⁷ Cf. THOMASSET, *Un'etica teologica delle virtù sociali*, 143-145. Descrivendo il rivelarsi di Dio a Mosè come Dio compassionevole, l'Autore presenta la compassione divina come interazione delle tre dimensioni - cognitiva, affettiva e volitiva: il conoscere della condizione del popolo grazie al legame affettivo si trasforma in un agire risoluto in favore dell'indigente.

¹⁸ Fil 2,6-7: «il quale, pur essendo di natura divina, non considerò un tesoro geloso la sua uguaglianza con Dio; ma spogliò sé stesso, assumendo la condizione di servo e divenendo simile agli uomini».

non tanto in un semplice manifestarsi dei singoli atti di compassione ma prima di tutto e fondamentalmente come atteggiamento profondo operante nella logica di carità che porta e unisce tutto il decidere e l'agire della persona-soggetto credente. L'unità dinamica dell'interiorità personale moralmente qualificabile — onestà di vita vissuta nella fede — non permette allora di pensare il soggetto credente prescindendo dal suo essere qualificato come misericordioso: essere onesti indubbiamente rinvia all'essere compassionevoli. La vitalità della realtà interiore indicata in termini etici può essere descritta sia come acquisizione della virtù di compassione all'interno di una maturazione della persona caritatevole-virtuosa, sia come parte costitutiva della costruzione dell'opzione morale fondamentale cristiana di fede-carità-speranza¹⁹.

Come già ricordato, i dinamismi unificanti sopra evocati originano nel Dio-Amore, perdonante e salvante. Infatti, l'uomo-creatura plasmato in relazione e per la relazione, con la capacità necessitante di incontrare l'altro *con passione*, si fa carico anche dei tormenti, miserie, sofferenze altrui. Non si tratta però di una arrendevolezza — come se fosse condizione da subire in modo passivo-remissivo, rivestito di una certa “commiserazione” consigliata in vista del perfezionamento di sé stessi. E un riconoscimento nella compassione non di un semplice sentimento passeggero ma dell'atteggiamento verso il mondo dell'altro aprendosi alla logica di relazione dell'accoglienza gratuita, comprovata nella capacità di risposta ai bisogni altrui oggettivamente riconoscibili, di cui consapevolmente e liberamente si assume la

responsabilità²⁰. In un mondo segnato dalla condizione umana di indigenza²¹ è una via per ritrovare il valore della propria umanità.

2. Cristo compassione di Dio

È in Cristo Gesù, Figlio di Dio, che Patteggiamento compassionevole divino verso l'uomo raggiunge la sua massima concretezza superando ogni limite immaginabile, inclusa la morte. Come si esprime il Concilio Vaticano II nella Costituzione pastorale *Gaudium et Spes*, «Egli [Cristo] si è fatto veramente uno di noi, *in tutto simile a noi* fuorché il peccato» (GS 22). Dio in Cristo si china verso l'uomo assumendo la natura umana stessa: d'ora in poi nessuna realtà e fragilità dell'uomo rimane fuori dell'interesse e dell'azione salvifica di Dio. In Cristo, quindi, viene dischiuso l'essenza stessa e il senso fondamentale della compassione di Dio: «io sono venuto perché abbiano la vita e l'abbiano in abbondanza» (Gv 10,10).

Il chinarsi verso l'altro nel suo bisogno, offerto all'uomo come parte costitutiva della sua natura personale, viene riproposto nel racconto paradigmatico del Vangelo di Luca conosciuto come storia di *Buon Samaritano* (Lc 10, 30-37). Contro la logica prammatica e mondana, secondo la quale il rapporto con l'altro dipende sempre dal valore a lui attribuito in merito alla sua posizione sociale o utilità, Gesù propone un cambiamento di paradigma da operare offrendo la figura eticamente interpretante l'*humanum* autentico, in un contesto storico concreto che però lo oltrepassa diventando il valido “ricordo interpretante”²². Il racconto parte da una disputa fra il dottore della Legge e Gesù sul grande comandamento dell'amore, realtà ben conosciuta da entrambi. Pur riconoscendo il suo indiscutibile valore,

¹⁹ Per approfondire i dinamismi evocati nel rapporto reciproco fra i concetti cf. BALČIUS, *L'agire. Tra virtù e opzione fondamentale*, 57-64, 119-140, 153-178; S. BASTIANEL — V. BALČIUS, *La grammatica dell'opzione fondamentale*, “Dialoghi” VII (2007) 1, 18-25; J. PORTER, *Moral Language and the Language of Grace: The Fundamental Option and the Virtue of Charity*, “Philosophy & Theology” 10 (1997), 1, 169-198; ID., *The Fundamental Option, Grace, and Virtue of Charity*, in CH.E. CURRAN — L.E. FULLAM (eds.), *Virtue*, Readings in Moral Theology No 16, Paulist Press, New York, NY — Mahwah, NJ 2011, 159-187; M. VIDAL, *Moral de opción fundamental y de actitudes*, San Pablo, Cordoba (España) 1995.

²⁰ 34. M. NUSSBAUM, *Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion*, “Social Philosophy and Policy” 13 (1996), 1, 27-38; V. BALČIUS, *Relazionalità come paradigma etico*, in S. BASTIANEL, (ed.), *Tra possibilità e limiti. Una Teologia Morale in ricerca*, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, Trapani 2012, 145-155.

²¹ C. ZUCCARO, *Teologia morale fondamentale*, BTC 163, Queriniana, Brescia 2013, 28- 38; ID., *Il valore dell'essere per l'altro*, “Proposta educativa” 3 (2014), 27-33.

²² Cf. S. BASTIANEL, *Discernimento e formazione cristiana*, in D. ABIGNENTE - S. BASTIANEL, *Sulla formazione morale. Soggetti e itinerari*, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, Trapani 2013, 37- 44.

l'esperto della legge a livello dei rapporti umani concreti è preoccupato di sapere a quale tipo di persona la prescrizione “amerai” fosse applicabile. La domanda, quindi, è la seguente: «E chi è il mio prossimo?» (Lc 10,29). Per dire altrimenti, a quale delle persone che incontro devo la mia vicinanza, la compassione e l'aiuto²³? Dietro una tale logica si cela il modo di percepire la compassione come una delle possibilità di relazionarsi con l'altro, passando di seguito ai comportamenti esteriori corrispondenti, che diventa obbligante soltanto se la persona di fronte alla quale mi trovo si dimostra di essere il mio “prossimo”. Tale riconoscimento si opera secondo i criteri di appartenenza, di convenienza o dei “meriti” dell'altro, all'interno del modello della “virtuosità” intesa come uno *surplus* in rapporto alla qualifica personale: *se vuoi* presentarti più bravo, *se ritieni* conveniente, in alcune situazioni concrete *puoi* assumere anche una tale disposizione, accogliendo altro nella sua necessità, però in una maniera condizionata. In caso contrario “si passa oltre” (cf. Lc 10,31-32). Gesù non dà la risposta diretta ma traccia la trama di una storia esemplare. Per terra giace un uomo rapinato e ferito. Accanto passano tre persone: il sacerdote, il levita e il samaritano. I primi due vedono il ferito ma passano dall'altra parte della strada senza fermarsi. Solo il terzo, Samaritano, ne ha compassione²⁴, si avvicina, si

china verso il bisognoso, lo soccorre e provvede il necessario per la sua sopravvivenza nel futuro immediato. E in questo momento del racconto che Gesù si rivolge al dottore della Legge chiedendolo: «Chi di questi tre ti sembra sia stato il prossimo di colui che è incappato nei briganti?» (Lc 10,36). Il quesito precedentemente posto a Gesù viene capovolto cambiando il destinatario: è il conoscitore della Legge che deve ritrovare il senso e rispondere a sé stesso. La sua risposta è nota: «Chi ha avuto compassione di lui» (Lc 10,37).

La soluzione sicuramente è corretta. Essa però richiede attenzione perché può celare due momenti ambigui ed eticamente importanti: il fatto che la compassione sia intesa soltanto in termini di atti esteriori i quali, pur essendo corretti, non originano dall'onestà come qualifica morale del soggetto²⁵; inoltre, che il criterio assunto per la ricerca della soluzione giusta, cioè corrispondente al bisogno reale dell'altro-*prossimo*, nella sua determinazione possa essere applicato soltanto a una certa categoria di persone escludendone altre e trasformando la compassione in un dovere selettivo.

Per le ragioni ricordate è molto importante far notare che nel preciso momento della risposta spronata dal racconto viene operato un cambiamento paradigmatico di doppia portata. Prima di tutto, la trasformazione dell'uditore in un soggetto attivo ed eticamente competente, rendendolo capace di cogliere il senso

²³ Per il senso di ricerca della risposta alla domanda partendo dal contesto storico-religioso cf. R THIBAUD, *L'autre et le prochain: Commentaire de la parabole du bon Samaritain*, “Esprit” 295 (2003), 6, 14-15; M. RYAN, *Revisiting the Parable of the Good Samaritan*, “Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations” 16 (2021), 1, 1-15. Invece, il testo sulla cura delle persone nelle ultime fasi della vita *Samaritanus bonus*, fra le altre questioni nel IV capitolo “Gli ostacoli culturali che oscurano il valore sacro di ogni vita umana” richiamata, come secondo ostacolo per la percezione del valore della vita umana, *una scorretta concezione della compassione*, con le ripercussioni concrete sulla ricerca dei modi di accompagnamento dei malati sofferenti e terminali. Cf. CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE, Lettera *Samaritanus bonus* sulla cura delle persone nelle fasi critiche e terminali della vita (il 14 luglio 2020).

²⁴ Il verbo greco adoperato in Lc 10,33 — *σπλαγχνίζομαι* — rinvia all'intimità più profonda della persona umana, a quel centro dell'essere uomo da dove scaturisce l'amore appassionato. Cf. THOMASSET, *La virtù della compassione: divenire prossimo*, 140-142. Per dire altrimenti l'urgenza della relazione con l'altro vissuta

in termini di accoglienza gratuita e imparziale operante nella logica di carità. In questo tipo relazione non solo si riconosce l'altro nella sua umanità, fragile e contrassegnata dalla condizione costitutiva del bisogno, non solo nella risposta corretta alla necessità dell'altro si realizza la moralità personale grazie all'attuazione del bene oggettivamente possibile, ma il soggetto agente si autorealizza nel suo essere autenticamente umano e, quindi, cristiano.

²⁵ Infatti, solo il rinvio verso l'interiorità senza soffermarsi puramente ai comportamenti esteriori, cioè verso un atteggiamento responsabilmente assunto come proprio e adeguatamente coltivato nelle sue espressioni operative, esprime la qualità morale e la verità del credere della persona. «Privarsi del possesso ha senso se ciò toma a vantaggio dei poveri e dei bisognosi (cf. Zaccheo, Lc 19,8; inoltre 11,41; 12,33). In sé il dono materiale non conta nulla; al di sopra delle “elemosine” sta aiuto personale, come illustra nel modo più incisivo la parabola del buon Samaritano (Lc 10, 30-35)», R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Il messaggio morale del Nuovo Testamento*, 2. *Primi predicatori cristiani*, Paideia, Brescia 1990, 186.

dell'avvenuta inversione, grazie al cambiamento dell'orizzonte di senso, di prospettiva riguardo alla domanda posta e alla risposta data ²⁶. Inoltre, il cambiamento dell'ottica morale apre verso la possibilità di cogliere il senso della compassione dal punto di vista *tipicamente* cristiano (e, come si vedrà in seguito, specificamente umano). Il nuovo orizzonte di senso dischiuse nella storia narrata non lascia dubbio. L'agire che corrisponde alla necessità dell'altro non nasce *in seguito* alla risposta alla domanda: «Chi è il mio prossimo?» - per decidere di mostrare la compassione soltanto a colui che viene riconosciuto *prossimo* secondo i criteri di merito o di utilità assunti. Tale agire, in quanto riposta al bisogno reale dell'altro, nasce per il fatto stesso della presenza dell'altro di fronte a cui ci si trova, insieme con la percezione dei suoi bisogni. Tale presenza, una volta riconosciuta, fa scaturire la risposta concreta sia al fatto di trovarsi di fronte a un altro, sia al suo bisogno oggettivamente riconoscibile, come tradursi assolutamente richiesto in coscienza dell'atteggiamento, interiorizzato e assunto come operante nella profondità e totalità della persona, di un'accoglienza gratuita e imparziale dell'altro. Questo è il senso vero della compassione, sottolineato dall'invito di Gesù «Va' e anche tu fa' lo stesso» (Lc 10, 37) e assunto dalla morale cristiana²⁷. Infatti, non è né la posizione socio-politica o religiosa ricoperta e neppure un presunto merito o utilità dell'altro, ma l'umanità stessa della persona a qualificarla come *prossimo*. Senza chiedersi chi è il mio prossimo per decidere di seguito ad aiutarlo o meno, si invita di *diventare prossimi* di qualsiasi altro in qualsiasi sua necessità. Questa è la logica di

amore gratuito, questa è la logica di misericordia/compassione cristiana. Certamente, per discernere ed assumere come verità di coscienza il senso indicato della compassione, il cristiano ha una motivazione specifica. Egli è motivato dalle parole e dall'esempio di Gesù in cui, *perfectus homo*, si riconosce la pienezza dell'umano. Per un cristiano «Cristo [...] svela anche pienamente l'uomo a sé stesso [...]». Nessuna meraviglia, quindi, che tutte le verità su esposte in lui trovino la loro sorgente e tocchino il loro vertice» (GS 22).

L'invito di Gesù è quindi una sollecitazione per ritrovare la nostra autenticità di persone umane e assumere, in libertà responsabile, l'atteggiamento di compassione: non come qualcosa di aggiunto al nostro modo di vedere l'altro e di relazionarsi con l'altro per raggiungere così un livello più elevato della moralità, ma come atteggiamento profondo e qualificante la nostra stessa umanità, illuminata dalla fede, compresa e liberamente assunta in coscienza. Essere compassionevoli quindi significa semplicemente vivere tutte le relazioni da persone umane. «Va' e anche tu fa' lo stesso» (Lc 10,37) — *sii compassionevole* — per il credente diventa imperativo della coscienza in quanto modo autentico di essere persona umana e di vivere da persona umana salvata in Cristo.

Nella prospettiva indicata, Gesù Cristo è *la compassione di Dio* perché è *il prossimo per eccellenza* di ogni uomo. Per questa ragione ogni cristiano nel suo modo d'essere e nel suo vivere ed agire si riconosce in Cristo. La sua coscienza morale si struttura solo nella fede in Dio fattosi Uomo e gli permette di identificarsi con Lui secondo le parole di San Paolo: «non sono più io che vivo, ma è Cristo che vive in me». (Gal 2,20) Il Cristiano ricorda che uno dei luoghi privilegiati dell'incontro con Dio in Cristo è l'Altro: «In verità vi dico che in quanto lo avete fatto a uno di questi miei minimi fratelli, l'avete fatto a me» (Mt 25,40).

A questo punto si apre la domanda sulla possibilità di estensione del senso cristiano della compassione. Per introdurre il tema sembra pertinente il pensiero di Donatella Abignente espresso nella sua ricerca sul Vangelo di Luca: «La moralità dell'uomo sembra non essere derivata, per Luca, né da una specifica riflessa visione di fede, né da una sistematizzata

²⁶ Cf. BALČIUS, *Relazionalità come paradigma etico*, 154; THOMASSET, *La virtù della compassione: divenire prossimo*, 156: «Attraverso la sua pedagogia maieutica, Gesù ha fatto capire al dottore della Legge che la nozione di prossimo non ha alcuna estensione visibile, ma deve essere considerata qualcosa di pratico: si tratta di divenire prossimo».

²⁷ Non per caso James F. Keenan afferma che la misericordia, di cui la compassione è costitutiva, sia «il distintivo della morale cattolica», in ID., *Le opere di misericordia cuore del cristianesimo*, EDB, Bologna 2010, 13. Infatti, il *discepolo* del Signore è colui che ha ricevuto il dono di sperimentare concretamente grazie all'umanità di Gesù l'*humanum* ultimato, di cui fa parte anche la compassione come modo di relazionarsi all'altro, diventando quest'ultima la qualifica *tipicamente* cristiana.

antropologia. Anzi, l'istanza etica, anziché esser dedotta, sembra essa stessa risultare decisiva per comprendere un senso alla vita e accorgersi del dono di Dio. Si ricorderà che è proprio Luca a fare di un samaritano la figura dell'ἑλεος ποιεῖν che si realizza *nel farsi πλησίον, cioè prossimo dell'altro, in una compassione che è solo autenticamente frutto di umana responsabilità gratuita*. Si tratta di prossimità verso uno a cui non si è legati se non in forza della sua oggettiva presenza e del suo concreto aver bisogno»²⁸.

3. Compassione e *humanum* autentico

Ripartendo dalla verità teologico-antropologica sull'uomo-creatura e sulla pienezza dell'umano rivelato in Cristo Gesù, incluso atteggiamento compassionevole operativo come qualifica tipicamente cristiana, la riflessione si concluderà con una breve analisi etico-assiologica evidenziando il senso della compassione nella sua dimensione specificamente umana.

Arrivando all'ultima parte del ragionamento sull'argomento scelto, ci si deve inevitabilmente chiedere se il senso allargato della compassione presentato dal punto di vista cristiano mantiene il suo valore come universalizzabile anche oltre i confini della fede esplicita in Dio, Padre di Gesù Cristo. In questo modo ritorna la domanda se la compassione, riconosciuta quale attitudine interiore tipicamente cristiana, fosse una categoria rinchiusa esclusivamente nello "specifico cristiano", rimanendo estranea e irraggiungibile per i non cristiani e i non credenti.

La ripresa di alcune verità della teologia sulla creazione e di redenzione in Cristo ha permesso di ritrovare il fondamento *comune* dell'umano: nella visione cristiana ogni essere umano è creato a immagine e somiglianza di Dio compassionevole ed è chiamato all'esistenza pienamente umana grazie al dono gratuito della pienezza della vita ricevuta in Cristo. Nessuno dunque è escluso dalla possibilità di cogliere il senso dell'umano e di viverlo. La Costituzione Pastorale sulla Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo, *Gaudium et spes* lo afferma esplicitamente: «E ciò vale non solamente per i cristiani, ma anche per tutti gli uomini di buona

volontà, nel cui cuore lavora invisibilmente la grazia. Cristo, infatti, è morto per tutti e la vocazione ultima dell'uomo è effettivamente una sola, quella divina; perciò dobbiamo ritenere che lo Spirito Santo dia a tutti la possibilità di venire associati, nel modo che Dio conosce, al mistero pasquale» (GS 22).

Anche la compassione, come parte costitutiva ed espressione dell'atteggiamento di fondo di carità, diventa, quindi, un valore umano qualificante la coscienza di ogni uomo, a prescindere dalla sua appartenenza religiosa. Lo conferma pure il senso svelato del racconto paradigmatico di *Buon Samaritano*. Non per caso colui che unico si avvicina al ferito e gli mostra la compassione è un samaritano, cioè colui che, pur appartenendo ad una religione abramitica, formalmente non fa parte del Popolo eletto ed è in un rapporto conflittuale con i Giudei. Nondimeno è in questo modo che la compassione viene evidenziata nella sua valenza di *humanum autentico* che va oltre l'appartenenza etnica o religiosa. Di conseguenza, si può affermare che tutti gli uomini sono i destinatari del messaggio preciso e annoverante: vi possono esistere le diversità al livello di appartenenza culturale e culturale, ma non può esserci differenza al livello dell'essere tutti membri della famiglia umana. Dunque, per tutti l'unico modo corretto di rapportarsi onestamente, e cioè umanamente dal punto di vista etico, con qualsiasi altro è quello dell'accoglienza incondizionata, di cui fa parte costitutiva la compassione: riconoscere la presenza dell'altro, accoglierlo per il fatto di essere un essere umano, chinarsi verso di lui nella sua necessità, rispondere al suo bisogno secondo il bene realmente possibile²⁹.

Certamente, nella riflessione sull'essere uomo, per dischiudere il senso della compassione in

²⁹ L'universalità dell'amore, di cui fa parte la compassione come atteggiamento autenticamente umano, è avvalorata anche dal papa Francesco nella sua Lettera enciclica sulla fraternità e l'amicizia sociale, *Fratelli tutti* (3 ottobre 2020). Il secondo capitolo, intitolato "Estraneo sulla strada" (cf. FT 56-86), si conclude con l'affermazione del *prossimo senza frontiere* (FT 80-83) in quanto risposta all' *appello incondizionato del forestiero* (cf. FT 84- 86) percepito in coscienza di ognuno come presenza da accogliere gratuitamente. Il fondamento di tale istanza universale non lascia dubbio: «Cristo ha versato il suo sangue per tutti e per ciascuno, e quindi nessuno resta fuori dal suo amore universale» (FT 85).

²⁸ ABIGNENTE, *Conversione morale nella fede*, 185 [il corsivo è aggiunto].

quanto dimensione costitutiva dell'umano, l'etica cristiana si ispira necessariamente alla persona di Cristo e alla pienezza dell'umano rivelata in Lui. La riflessione teologica ed etico-antropologica a riguardo, tuttavia, è esclusiva ma non escludente. Essa apre verso il comune umano condivisibile, abbracciando ogni persona concreta e l'umanità intera. La compassione, dunque, pur essendo un valore *tipicamente* cristiano in quanto riconoscibile come parte costitutiva della pienezza dell'umano rivelato in Cristo, vero Uomo e vero Dio, si profila necessariamente come valore autenticamente, e cioè *specificamente* umano, come atteggiamento profondo che caratterizza ogni uomo nel suo essere e agire in quanto essere personale³⁰.

Come ultimo riferimento si vuole riprendere brevemente una peculiarità importante della compassione che, se non precisata, può essere percepita come esclusivamente cristiana. Si tratta della capacità di compattare anche coloro che, a causa della volontà malevole dovuta ad ignoranza profonda riguardo alla comprensione dell'autenticamente umano, sembrano non solo non avere nessuna empatia per gli altri ma neppure percepire il bisogno della misericordia da parte degli altri. Oltre tutti i limiti indicati, la veritiera compassione nei loro confronti si manifesta come capacità di perdono. In realtà, la persona per la quale l'onestà è un valore assoluto ed incondizionato non può essere impedita nella sua capacità di *per-donare*, cioè di donare la possibilità all'altro di essere partecipe al dono della vita anche quando quest'altro sceglie di imporre la morte. «Padre, perdona loro perché non sanno quello che fanno» (Lc 23, 34). Sono le parole di Gesù sulla

croce. Parole del Signore che ancora una volta rivela la Compassione di Dio. *Perdonare* — somma ed estremamente tangibile espressione della compassione — tuttavia, fa parte anche esso dell'invito “Va’ e anche tu fa’ così” (Lc 10,37). La risposta all'invito rivolto a *ogni uomo*, se riuscita, qualifica la persona come onesta.

Il richiamo esplicito al pensiero di un teologo morale, il gesuita Alain Thomasset, può servire come un invito a ripercorrere il senso dell'itinerario proposto: «La compassione di Cristo non si limita alla guarigione degli individui afflitti, ma rimette anche in questione le credenze e i valori che li hanno relegati ai margini di società. [...] Lungi da essere una semplice passività nel mondo, questo atteggiamento invita i compassionevoli a cercare le cause dell'afflizione e a interrogare i valori e le strutture che derivano dalla logica abituale e che perpetuano le pratiche ingiuste. La compassione cristiana è potenzialmente sovversiva di ogni ordine sociale, poiché essa esprime la visione di Dio sulla sua creazione: la concezione del Regno in cui i peccatori sono perdonati, in cui si dà la preferenza ai più piccoli, in cui tutti sono benvenuti al banchetto e “il Signore Dio asciugherà le lacrime su ogni volto” (Is 25,8). La compassione significa vedere, giudicare, sentire e agire nel mondo in una maniera nuova, alla maniera dei figli di Dio»³¹.

(Ref : UUI – Urbaniana University Journal, Nova Series 2/2022 LXXV, pp. 87 – 102)

³⁰ «*Il farsi prossimi* diventa dunque il modo autentico di riconoscersi e di manifestare il nostro essere *persone* umane in quanto essenzialmente costituite in relazione. In tale prospettiva continuare a chiedersi se un embrione umano, un neonato malformato, un adulto con un forte disturbo psichico oppure in stato vegetativo, sia o non sia persona non ha più un'importanza determinante. Diventa invece fondamentale chiedersi *in che modo* la presenza stessa dell'altro, dell'altro riconosciuto nella sua debolezza, aiuta a capire chi sono io, *persona umana* in quanto mi rapporto all'altro che è *persona*, oppure se, al contrario, il mio impegno è teso a contestare tale proprietà dell'altro; l'irresponsabilità etica in questo senso produrrebbe un effetto insolito e inaspettato: la mia propria *de-personalizzazione* fino a rendermi *a-personale*», BALČIUS, *Relazionalità come paradigma etico*, 155.

³¹ THOMASSET, La virtù della compassione: divenire prossimo, 165.

T. K. John

‘Ahimsa’ in a Violent Society

“Ahimsa, Vegetarian Nutrition and Kindness for Global Peace”

Dear Friends,

As one walks over a snowy terrain one finds white snow everywhere. Snow, snow, and more snow everywhere! Suddenly a sudden splash of red colour over the white snow and one begins to notice the contrast. Violence and bloodshed on the living beings give the picture of this abhorrent contrast. For violence is a disastrous disruption of the major project of LIFE. Building up tissues upon tissues is the project of life. Violence and bloodshed are a major disruption which dishonours the Creator whose gift is life.

A major contribution of India to the common heritage of humanity is *ahimsa*. Highlighting *ahimsa's* nature and role these days when violence has become once again a global phenomenon can be compared with red splash on snow-white terrain being deleted.

Ahimsa humanises whereas *himsa* debases humanity. Violence that leads to shedding of blood and untimely death of those born to live their life to its full round, creates revulsion in us. Bitter still remains the memory of India's partition that was accompanied by fratricidal blood shedding and loss of homes and belongings. The sudden appearance of a line of demarcation in the life of villagers that for millennia lived as one village community was a sort of mutilation of centuries-long fraternity and sisterhood. On one side became another country, Pakistan, and this side India. It was another form violence that was inflicted on community's warm sentiments. The sudden appearance of two 'distant' countries that were once one well-knit village communities was shocking to everyone.

Blooding bodies burning houses are unsightly. The blood, sanctuary of life, should remain in the body and preserve the life within it, as is enjoined by the Creator of all. It is destined not to be forced out. To all who came to reflect on 'Ahimsa' (*non-violence*) the theme of the seminar, *himsa* (violence) appeared indeed an

abominable phenomenon.

It is for deep and serious reflection on such precious theme as *ahimsa* that the participants to the convention in such large number have assembled. We should take special note of the fact that it is a value most befitting to every form of life. We should be proud of the fact that already from ancient times, through the contribution of Jain- Buddhist traditions, profound respect for life was insisted upon as a most grave responsibility. The theme is set in the context of the search for peace in the mind/heart, *at home*, in the village, in our country, *in the world*, *in brief*, at the global level.

The theme *ahimsa* both challenges and *disturbs*. It disturbs hard-hearted tyrants, disarms violent aggressors, all authoritarian regimes prone to aggression and violence. It disturbs aggressors who trifle with LIFE. It encourages those who struggle for a peaceful life. The combined moral force involved in renouncing and abjuring violence can enforce law even in a disorderly crowd. It has high ethical-moral value potential for civilising present-day culture beset with frequent violence and blood-shed. I thank especially Dr. D. C. Jain, General Secretary of this National Seminar for this great venture. I am much beholden to the organizations that have taken the laudable initiative.

Callousness in Inflicting Pain on Living Beings

The flowing picture is for the rulers of nations that engage in war. Promoters of violence and blood normally escape the direct consequences of the violence of the disastrous step of war. A boy took a kerosene bottle and poured quite a bit of kerosene into the small container in which a crab was kept. Then he took the kerosene-smeared crab out, lit the match box and set fire to the crab. One could see a ball of fire moving fast, then slowing down, and then stopping. It was pain that gave momentum to the rush for

escape by the crab. The boy did not know. When the flames were over only smoke and finally only a small heap of ashes were left! The burning crab was in agony but the two boys are seen clapping and jumping up and down and enjoying the scene! The experiment was successful!! An experiment in callousness!

The irony is the pain of a living being and the thrill of the hilarious boys in contrast. It is virtually the theme of the seminar, so to speak. Because reality of violence and pain everywhere is undeniable. But it needs universal recognition.

The Vital Question: Can we minimise the existing scheme of things that leads to frequent irruption of violence?

The human person, endowed with freedom, rights and dignity can be compared to a well-developed and protected walled city. The constituents of the citizen are enshrined in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution: justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. A person therefore is a full identity, almost like a walled city enjoying its unique security protection and autonomy. None is expected encroach into its autonomous existence. For, according to the Biblical tradition, a human person is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). Sacredness is writ into the very make up of created realities primarily because the Creator is holy.

Any encroachment on the sanctity of the human person will be tantamount to aggression on a sovereign country. It is violence. It is *himsa* on a free citizen. It is unjust and unmerited. Our millennium, unfortunately, will be known in history as the most stained because the earth globally is smeared with blood. Lamentations rise up in the sky like fumes rise up from the furnace of a factory. Mass killing to avenge a defeat or gain victory for the land is the reality of the times. Adolph Hitler was a corporal in the imperial German army in the First World War. Germany lost. Hitler wanted to avenge the defeat. History knows the result. It almost destroyed Europe.

The Mother Earth is unique among the planetary systems because it alone is endowed with the rare treasure: Life. No other planet is, as far as we know, credited with life. The French philosopher Henry Bergson has dealt *with elan*

vital extensively.

Himsa (violence) is counter to *ahimsa*, like night and day. It is opposed to the phenomenon of life. It is another major force almost co-existing with vigour. *Himsa* is ever ready to strike at life. Violence in any form degrades the perpetrator. It is irrational and in need of control and disciplining. This beautiful message we have to deal with today and disseminate far and wide. Vociferously and hilariously, we have to share the message with other nations. This, I understand, is the message to humanity the convention sends. The beautiful theme is an honour to the human species, and can become the distinguishing mark of an advanced phase of civilization

The core principle behind is: a human being is a member, a most significant constituent, of the living beings. We should honour every living being, especially the humans. Common to all living beings is the unique and precious gift of God to this planet: LIFE. Every living being should accept, respect and promote the other living beings, from the tiniest to the most developed.

Jesus Christ and Ahimsa

The most precious stone on the planet earth is known as KOHINOOR, It adorns now the crown of a monarch. More precious than Kohinoor is another treasure, the treasure possessed only by planet earth, that is LIFE. To treasure that treasure befitting its unique value in promoting peace, is the concern of this gathering. Jesus emphatically proclaimed: "I came that they may have life and have and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10).

The Context of our Times

Auschwitz-Birkenau is one of the Concentration Camps in Poland where 6 million European Jews were killed by Nazi Germany. The very sight of the dark campus with smoke-smeared high walls with barbed-wires atop creates tremor in the body. It benumbs the senses and frightens you. Remember Adolph Hitler was a human being! He contrived to have it done!

We know that 20 million army personnel and 40 million civilians were killed at the World War II. Nazi Germany killed 6 million Jews in the notorious extermination chambers. These recent examples could help us to imagine what could

be the aggregate of every form of violence and cruelty inflicted on living beings, especially on the human persons. Therefore, the question should be put to ourselves: how does mankind treasure life! That means lined up against life is violence that destroys life.

Proneness to Violence in the Humans

We take note of the almost innate nature of the conflict in human nature that imperils life. It implies the human person seems to contain seeds of conflict and violence. To gain insight into this mystery was the desire of that physically blind but mentally alert elderly statesman Dhritarashtra as we have in Bhagavad Gita' (Gita 1:1). Kurukshetra was the scene of the battle between two forces, of Pandava and of Kaurava. *Himsa* the opposite of *ahimsa*, was at work in that epic battle.

The theme points to the dual-forces within every human being that seems engaged in perpetual conflict. This conflict unfolds itself in various forms. Apparently negative in form is the term *ahimsa*. The term *ahimsa* connotes abstaining from *himsa* (violence, injury). Positive and forward-looking is the content: pricing it, treasuring it and promoting it are the privilege and responsibilities of our generation. For that task we have to go to the roots of the problem of *himsa* (violence) to tame it and to promote *ahimsa*. Proneness to violence seems endemic to our species right from its origin. At the dawn of humankind Cain lays hands on his own brother Abel and smashes him. The first blood-shed reported in salvation history! The evil continues to co-exist with our history.

The anthropologist Charles Darwin touched upon *survival of the fittest* as central to the dynamics of the theory of evolution. Survival implies that there is a struggle going on. An inherent struggle to preserve life is going on. Lion feeds on small animals which have to struggle to survive. Big fish live on small fishes. This irony is part of the life system. It is a form of violence in nature. Although nature in itself is promoter of life, there are species like carnivorous plants! Its leaf slowly envelopes any small fly or worm or butterfly by emitting some kind of vapour that is benumbing, encircles and smothers it gradually in order to feed upon it!

Human beings can kill and destroy other human beings and achieve what they want to gain.

Similarly, the humans can cause damage to other living beings. From tiny creatures like ants and to the biggest like elephants, every living being is subject to the onslaught of human beings. That is why the ancient adage '*homo homini lupus*' (refers to the 'wolfish' tendency) in man. Humans can exploit other humans. Humans can commit violence upon another human being for its ends.

The psychologist Sigmund Freud had advanced the sexist origin of violence (cfr). (*Civilization and its Discontent*): all human conflicts originate from unfulfilled sexual needs. It is an alternate category to explain violence.

Kinds of Violence

Varied forms of violence had been operative from ancient times.

I. Racial Violence

Race is one of the subdivisions of the human species each having specific physical features. The distinct features give certain identity to each race. The effort to preserve each race's identity can lead to tensions and conflicts other units. Racial violence had been regular from early times as a global phenomenon. Native-Aryan- Dravidian conflicts often led to armed encounters. In India there live at least six or more anthropological races from early times. Of course, one race, to preserve its identity, colliding with other races, had been quite a normal phenomenon everywhere in the world, even so in India. Here we have the source of racial violence. The 'foreign-culture' 'native-culture' tag is still operative in India once a colonial sub-continent.

II. Caste violence

India's majority population belongs to Hinduism. Hindu society is hierarchically structured. This hierarchical structure and culture had been influencing other societies too. The tribal societies or more community oriented. The hierarchical structure was subject to caste violence from quite early times in India. Such structures generate in members of the society various forms submissive-dominant cultural values, leading to subtle forms of structural violence. The main architect of India's Constitution, B. R. Ambedkar, has in his autobiography, described the appalling practice of caste violence. It is reported periodically of

bridegrooms of Dalit stock riding on horse-back after the wedding being attacked by the upper caste people! The so-called *Dalits* may not ride on horses, which is the privilege of the upper caste! Although 'untouchability' has been legally abolished the practice still prevails in various forms.

III. Cultural Violence

Cultural violence is almost a universal phenomenon. There had been cultural violence when native and foreign cultures or dominant and dominated cultures got embattled for supremacy. Every culture deems it superior to other cultures. Apartheid in South Africa, black-white conflict in the United States etc. is well known. Gandhi reports how he with a first-class ticket was thrown out of the first-class compartment by a so-called white passenger at Maritzburg railway station in South Africa!

Cultural violence irrupts whenever conflicts between the dominant and dominated cultures experience tension leading to violence. Native cultures were held in disdain in India when the British ruled the country. The white-the dark-the brown-yellow complexions very often provided basis for these superficial categorizations. But these had their way.

IV. Gender Violence

It is ironical that the male, born of the female womb, considers itself superior to the female! This almost universal and perennial gender violence is another bane of human society. The male domination over female section of the society often led to tensions and conflicts. Gender violence disturbed social equality in many ways. Volumes have been written about this issue. The current feminist movement in response to this social phenomenon is gaining in strength.

V. Religious Violence

One God every religion believes in but religion born of this belief has been a source of endless violence. Unfortunately, religious violence had always been there. History can give us horrific accounts of violence among religions in the world. Catholic-Protestant conflicts during the reign of the Tudors, Catholic-Huguenots and Catholic-Calvinists struggle in Geneva region are recorded in European history.

Communal violence, quite a regular phenomenon, is a form of religious violence. For supreme example we have the series of

Crusades in early Middle Ages. The superiority-claim of each belief system negates and vitiates, and dishonours the same God. Newton's third law of dynamics may be recalled in conclusion: '*for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction*'. Violence begets more violence, and communal violence is the worst form of religious violence.

Ahimsa is Love

The positive content of *ahimsa* means love. Gandhi has stated that in its positive form ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. 'If I am a follower of *ahimsa* I must love.'

Contradictions inbuilt into Life and Organization of Governance!

- A. Some countries have compulsory military training for every citizen. But there seems to be no compulsory training on ahimsa! The implication is that already seeds of violence are sown in the minds of the child by compulsory military training. One can say it is for defence of the country. That is the ground reality today. We have to create an alternate culture.
- B. Every country has a defence budget that is to sustain the three *ARMED* forces: the army, the navy and the air force. These forces need deadliest weapons, good training, and skilful strategy, for the defence of the country. That means these forces are there not to play games with marbles but fight with weapons meant to kill the enemy and win the war. But the so-called 'enemy' is another human being!
- C. The word 'enemy' has to be probed. When in military uniform a soldier is 'enemy' to the opposing forces, but in reality, he is 'dear father, dear brother, dear friend, benign neighbour, nurse/doctor and struggling to maintain his family by the salary he gets from the State's exchequer. It is important we stress and highlight the contradiction in the organisation of human society.
- D. Next, we take note of the items in the armouries of the world. We make a list of the arms, personal and State-owned. We assess the varieties of the arms: nuclear, thermo-

nuclear, rocket-mounted bombs, fighter planes, bombers, tanks, armoured vehicles, etc. We should know their target: the 'enemies'. We look at their hands that will detonate them. We consider the target of each weapon: men/women that constitute the armed forces, military installations, selected industrial complexes that support the army, bridges, rail tracks and such that maintain the 'enemy country'.

- E. Next, we must be aware of the list of soldiers killed in the Second World War alone. We visit the families from which these men and women came from. We survey the homes damaged, bridges, schools and hospitals destroyed.
- F. We contemplate the total quantity of blood that fell on the earth, bodies burned, homes made desolate, money spent. We listen to the unceasing wail of the bereaved homes, the wounded in the hospitals, and the buried in the cemeteries. We visit a cemetery and read the names on the sepulchre. We try to imagine the total number of men, women and children that died in wars from the earliest history.
- G. Having done a cursory survey of the armed men/women and the war machine we recall the definition of man/woman: *rational animal, jivatma* created by *paramatma*. Next, we ask ourselves: do the actions of killing/destroying other living beings, especially humans, befit the rationality that we the humans are endowed with? Any religion will say NO. My religion will say NO. All religions will declare: violence on life is illegal, irrational and immoral. In the language of Mark Antony in Julius Caesar it is the *unkindest cut of all* (Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, III, ii).
- H. Further questions are appropriate. If we humans are learners, we ask ourselves: Do we sufficiently learn from the past? What has humans gained from the enterprise of WAR? Has anyone gained anything worth gaining from the use of weapons? Is oppression, torture, deception, betrayal, violence worthy of humans? Has retaliation or revenge brought any benefit to the avenger? It is worth listening to the doleful reflections of

Bhishma after the disastrous fratricidal war at Kurukshetra. Some of these epistemological exercises can bring us benefit when we deal with a theme like *Ahimsa*.

Instinct prevails over reason in most disputes that precede wars. Consequently, unchecked ambition aggression and violence disturb individual and social amity, necessary for development of the society. The questions need to be raised: Is not war an anachronistic institution?

The task requires a correct scientific knowledge of the human person and of the society constituted of such humans: its origin, structures and the meaning system that helped it sustain in the midst of changes. There are different models of society like tribal, agricultural, feudal and capitalist societies. Society has its economic, social and political dimensions.

Depending upon the economic and political processes the dynamics also will be active. These two vital processes do constantly impact upon the society, and even relationship with the wider world. And consequently, society is always in change. Conflicts and tensions in the society are caused primarily by the economic forces which affect in their turn neighbouring countries.

The social system and economic activities are all maintained by human freedom based on the ethical-moral principles and values emanating from the human nature enjoined upon it by the Creator.

We notice the face of the earth. It is blood-stained, forced out of the body by violence. So are the hands of the humans. Disarming the human family of all life-destroying weapons is needed for that. That force has to come from the human spirit. The soul-force or moral force proper of the human spirit needs to be detonated, to borrow a military jargon, and its civilizing power released, in order to counter brute force, we humans are capable of. Arms will drop from the hands when the mind of man/woman is emptied of violence and re-filled with humanising values, especially fraternal love for the humankind. These values are generated by the most precious treasure humans can generate: love. Love for everyone and love for every living being. All the religions of the world have to come together for that task of restoration. And a global ethics has to emerge to

join forces with the religions. Alignment of the best in religions and sound ethics has to take place, could take place. Reasonableness of Ahimsa does not rely on arguments but is evident.

Such a task has to be guided and propelled by a new vision for rejuvenating the deeply disturbed and confused and confusing world order. Just as the stars from the east attracted the Magi to set on an adventurous undertaking of pursuing it (Mt 2:1-2), so restoration of the world order needs to be motivated and propelled by a new vision, of a new guiding star.

Role of a proper Vision for the Society

There has been many a vision at work. Of course, Marx had the vision of a classless society. In Christian literature there has been the vision of the Kingdom of God. There is much in common to all these perspectives. These have sprung up in three distinct *world views*: Indie, Semitic and Hellenist. Before all these there was the tribal world view as well which is communitarian in general. Though distinct are these visions or dreams one can detect a convergence and that needs to be sustained and developed further. There is also the tribal world-view. The tribes have a system of self-preservation by strong community consciousness.

The *Utopia* of St Thomas More and the order and character of the *Just City* by Plato in his *The Republic* are further dreams. There was the *Ram Raj* of Ramayana.

It is to be hoped that keeping this exigency in view contributing to the convention on *ahimsa* can enhance the quality of human endeavours for universal peace and harmony. Genuine appreciation and integration of these visions can be beneficial to a war-ravaged human civilization. And observance of *ahimsa* can facilitate the realization of the above vision. Many a national leader led by men and women like Jothirao and Savitri Phule have in our times revived this vision and solicited collaboration from every citizen of the world. It has shed light on the way towards realization of the vision of a better concrete human historical situation.

The times and reign of Maveli (Kerala tradition) or Bali Raja of Jothirao Phule are described as the golden age when ideal rulers reigned over the people. It is envisaged as a time of all-round

welfare and an era of peace. Weapons were not in need, conflict did not arise and peace reigned supreme.

The first line of a childhood rhyme ran like this:

‘If all the trees of the world were one tree what a great tree that would be’!! This image could be taken further for applying to the human society from the first man/woman in history onwards, like:

‘If all the human blood shed from Abel - Cane onwards to this day were put together what a huge red horrific river that would d be’!

‘If all the killed bodies from Abel onwards to that last lynched in India were put together what a horrible sight that would be!

Again, ‘If the total cost of making the weapons of destruction, including nuclear bombs, were added together what a colossal sum that would be’!

Again, ‘If all the hatred generated and entertained in the human hearts were put together what a colossal dark gas/cloud that would be’!

Yet again, ‘If all the enslaved and abused humans as beasts of burden were brought together in one large field what an unsightly scene that would be’!

And if all the roars (*akrosh*) shrieks and laments of the oppressed, the tortured in torture chambers were bought together what an eruption of the roars and yelling of the oppressed that would be!

And, finally, if all the Nazi gas chambers, torture chambers in police stations, with torture tools used were put together what a horrific ghastly sight that would be!

We do not see the other side of the moon on full moon nights. Similarly, we do not deeply perceive the other side of human actions: cruelties, exploitation, enslavements, acts of injustice being recalled make us tremble and humble. Questions like these are due when themes like *ahimsa*, *karuna* (kindness) are treated.

Some Contrasting and Comforting Insights imparted by Jesus Christ

In contrast, we focus now on the words of the prophet Isaiah Jesus referred to. A time when neither violence nor blood-shed will stain the soil, nor injustice disfigure the society and disrupt the plans of the State. It is a depiction of a nation or situation of peace in the land. People then will live in peace. Harmony will prevail all over. It is from prophet Isaiah the ascetic and prophetic sage in Israel:

*Wolves and sheep will live together in peace,
Calves and leopards will lie down with young goats.
Calves and lion cubs will feed together,
And little children will take care of them
Cows and bears will eat together
And their calves and cubs will lie down together in peace
Lions will eat straw as cattle do” (Isaiah 29:18).*

Beautiful soothing and enlivening contrast!

Jesus Christ claimed that he came to cast fire on earth. That fire was the fire of love (*ahimsa*). It was destined to burn away every form of hatred, injustice, violence, deprivation in the world. I have placed some aspects of the new situation. Let me point out the vision of Jesus, prefigured by his predecessors and his interpreters and disciples after him.

The Mind and the Heart of Jesus Christ

We recall a local call: ‘Swaraj is my birth right’ roared the fearless Bal Gangadhar Tilak. That was the categorical declaration of non-violent war on the British administration and demand of freedom for the country. Justice, equality, liberty, fraternity, guaranteed in the Preamble of Indian Constitution, are non-negotiable. These are further dimensions of that freedom. Any incursion into or suppression or deprivation or subordination of these golden values is assault on the citizen of the country. It is violence (*himsa*) inflicted on the citizen. It is against *ahimsa*, love for others.

Declaration of Freedom in Christ

Two millennia ago, there echoed on earth the joyful *declaration of freedom in Christ*. It was made by a disciple of Christ who had deep

knowledge and close experience of Jesus Christ. It resounded universally and continues to echo even today:

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Gal 5:1).

That is the assertion of Paul, the great interpreter of Christ his person and his mission. Further on:

“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment:

“You shall love your neighbour as yourself”. (Gal.5:13-14).

If this injunction is followed, there will be no violence (*himsa*) on others in the society.

The great interpreter of Jesus Christ St Paul has sublime views on love (*ahimsa*). For St Paul:

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, endures all things. Love never ends...And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of all is love.” (1 Cor. 13:4-13).

The teaching of the great Teacher of teachers has reached far and wide. The western world had been largely shaped by it. The humanising potential of this ethical formula continues to inspire generations of adherents.

Why *Himsa* in Human Society?

Then why *Himsa* (violence) is rampant and universal in the Society? It is almost a case of *globalization of violence*. There is violence in the individual, in the family, in the neighbourhood. There is violence and conflict between members of the society: inter-racial, inter-religious, inter-caste, inter gender.

To deal with that question one has to take oneself to the origin of humanity to trace the origin of evil.

The human family was ‘created in the image and likeness of God’. That means the human person was perfect in structure and function.

But the great fall (Gen 3:1-19) and consequent loss of Grace were responsible for the negative in the humankind, according to the Semitic version of evils.

Besides, 'rational animal' is man/woman according to the philosopher, Aristotle. The rational in woman/man is the key factor responsible for the birth of cultures and civilizations, philosophies, sciences, religions. The rational in her/him produced art, architecture, music, painting, sculpture - all of which are the product of the creative human mind. No wonder, the Kashmiri literary critic, Mammata in his *Kavyaprakash*, attempts to rate *kavisristi* (literary creation) almost equal to *Brahma sristi* (*God's creative power*). According to Bible, the man/woman was created in the image and likeness of God. And, God is absolute spirit. Further, according to St John, God is love. It is to the spiritual and the rational in the human person that all creative thinking and articulation are traced. It is to it are traced the demands that the dignity, the nature, the rights and the freedoms are honoured.

But the 'rational' human person is also 'animal' in structure and constitution. It is agreed that this other dimension of the human, namely *animality*, has ambiguity as well as potentiality, to be worthy of the human or to descend to the oddities of the animal: wolf, lion, jackal, and serpent. Rapaciousness and cruelty are part of the world of animals. In short, the beastly in the human comes from the animal instinct in the human. Just think of the killers of history: Cain, Attila, Chenghis Khan, Timur, Hitler, and Stalin. Putin seems a stronger contender! Just think of the system of human slavery when the humans were seized, sold, bought and used as animals! Just recall to mind the horrors of Hitler's concentration camps, gas chambers, and the World War II.

The evolutionists' view of life proposes the hypothesis that survival of the fittest is contributing to the dynamics of change in the living species. The strong will try to dominate the weak. The big fish lives on the small fish. Accordingly, a sort of violence is inherent to the evolutionary process of life system. In the hands of Nazis and Marxists the theory will create havoc and disturbances continually. Social turbulence will continue along with the urge to live.

But there had been the great teachers of history. The Teacher of teachers, Jesus Christ, dealing with a most civilising and peace- generating theme, *ahimsa*, is my humble privilege to deal with. *Ahimsa* should be the hallmark of a culture to merit the title 'human'. For this my task I draw insights from both the Semitic and Indie sources.

Nature of Ahimsa: Respect, Protection and Promotion of Life

The following considerations are due here:

1) There is consensus among scientists, philosophers, social activists, administrators, doctors and nurses, founders of religions, peasants and traders that the most esteemed treasure on earth is LIFE. The value of life cannot in any way be compared with gold or even with precious pearls like Kohinoor. The French philosopher Henri Bergson called it *elan vital* -vital impulse. This precious treasure on earth, Life, should be protected, preserved and promoted by everyone, everywhere at any cost. That is the existing and operative demand of LIFE. It is an exigency all should accept.

2) It is significant to note that the major economic security organisation, the Life Insurance Corporation of India, has the emblem of two palms protecting Life!

3) Life has alert bodyguards that always stand on vigil. To protect this precious pearl the Creator of *life* has placed an ever-accompanying angel. It is called INSTINCT. This bodyguard always acts promptly, infallibly when any threat to *life* is sensed. Take for instance the example how the finger reacts when boiling water is to be handled. Also recall the reaction of the hand when burning candle is being handled and when one drop of warm wax falls on the hand that holds the candle!

4) Life is a most precious treasure. The entire world of medicines along with millions of doctors and nurses and the auxiliary staff is testifying day and night to the truth that *life* is precious. Life has to be preserved, protected and promoted as a treasure of inestimable value.

5) God, the Creator and Father of the world, has blessed nature with an endless variety of food items: rice, wheat, pulses, several kinds of

fruits and roots. These life promoting items can be completed by the list of life healing and restoring herbs endowed with medicinal potentialities.

It is taking into account such rating and esteem for life that strict injunctions are instilled into the mind of the people. Yahweh instructed the people with strict orders, like:

“Do not kill” (Ex 20: 13).

To enforce this law Jesus demanded withdrawal of life-destroying weapons from the armoury of humanity and make it rich with 'the milk of human kindness' (Macbeth):

“Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Mt 26:52).

Jesus placed before the world the foundation for the supreme care he enjoins upon his disciples: to practice *love* for everyone, including those who are opposed to you:

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you” (Mt 5: 44).

Of course, the Sermon on the Mount stands out even today as a major contribution to the ethics of humanity. Its humanising and civilising potential is beyond estimation. It is as part of the Sermon that we have the above pearls of redeeming wisdom. Violence inflicted on you should on no count be repaid with counter-violence. Overcome evil by good, not evil by evil. The Christian community has to honour the great heritage Jesus has bequeathed to it. So, the 'heritage contains, among other treasures, teaching like: 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 an evil doer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also” (Mt 5: 38).

Ahimsa, apparently a negative concept, positively connotes love, as has been stated above. Still to emphasise the truth, Jesus placed before the crowd a most difficult part of his teaching:

“You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” (Mt 5:43- 44).

The comforting blessing Jesus Christ bestowed on his disciples after his resurrection from the dead was: “Peace be with you” (Lk 24:36). The best testimony of *ahimsa* is a community that lives in *peace*, has created an atmosphere favourable for enduring *peace*. And *peace* will inhere if every grievance is attended to.

The person, way of life, especially teaching of Jesus Christ had terrific impact on the people who flocked to wherever he came.

Sometimes the crowd that hanged on to his lips swelled and followed him irrespective of the needs of the stomach.

On one such day Jesus Christ noticed this and proposed to the disciples to serve them some food because they may collapse on their way back. They were with Jesus for hours. And such a large crowd! And the place was far removed from a street where some vendors might be engaged in sale of food on a small scale. Jesus' goodwill negotiation with the helpless disciples did not work. So, he himself took the initiative. That is what we have in Chapter 14 (13-21) of Mathew: multiplication of the few loaves to feed a crowd of over five thousand.

Ahimsa and Non-aligned Movement

During the Second World War what was then known as 'British India', decided to join the Allied forces and fight against Japan. Freedom struggle was going on. The British India declared war against Japan. Japanese forces, having taken over countries like 'Burma', were on the border of India in Nagaland. When questioned by some journalists about collaborating with the British to fight against Japan, Gandhi stood his ground. To those who questioned Gandhi about the relevance of non-violence when the marching enemy had reached the border, Gandhi said that if the Japanese forces actually entered and established their regime in India, Gandhi said that by our non-cooperation with them we will show them that they are not wanted in India. How will a conqueror rule if the conquered showed complete non-co-operation?

In and through these and other texts we have the fundamentals of the biblical approach to the right of every nation to one's life as sovereign and non- negotiable. One may be born

handicapped physically or mentally (blind, deaf, deformed, penniless, landless...) but one's right to life is a God-given natural endowment. It is non-negotiable. No power on earth can deprive one of her/his life. Closely linked with the right to life are one's natural right to the freedom, dignity and rights which are equally non-negotiable.

Forces and Ideologies opposed to ahimsa

The German philosopher Hegel introduced the thesis-antithesis-synthesis category to explain his philosophy of being. The dynamics operative here also can help us grasp the significance of ahimsa. One could understand the strange phenomenon of *himsa* militating against *ahimsa* in action. Howsoever much ahimsa is prized there happens to be forces opposed to ahimsa. This counter trend has been running even through nature from the very beginning of creation. *Himsa* is operating as counter force to ahimsa.

The anthropologist Charles Darwin has been studying the phenomenon of life at various levels and has formulated a law governing the species: *survival of the fittest*. The big fish lives at the expense of the small fish. Lion lives on other animals.

This trait can be verified even in the world of plants! We recall the behaviour of certain plants like carnivorous plants, a species of plants that consumes other plants or even small living creatures.

This and other historical data might have prompted the French sociologist Hobbes to make his pinching observation on humans where one exploits the other, one lives on another: *homo homini lupus*: 'Just as wolves' prey upon animals so do humans use other humans as prey'.

Karl Marx drew his own conclusion and evolved his interpretation of human history. He noticed the plight of the workers being exploited by the factory owners and the landlords. Hours of hard labour in the factory or land and wages that are minimum, because the owner is supposed to have invested his money and so the profit goes to the owner.

Callous and cruel appear often human behaviour. 75 million was the total men and women that were killed during World War II. Of this total 20 million were army personnel and 40 million civil populations. Six million

Jews were killed by Nazi forces. Nanking massacre had 300 thousand civilian population perished. Nazi German concentration camps and the slow death through starvation had been well documented. Bhishma was a part of the Mahabharata war. His laments and reflections after the war are full of pathos.

Law of the Forest, the anti-dote?

On the contrary there is the law of the forest as alternative: allow everyone to grow but each according to its inherent biological traits. Both the huge trees and the smallest trees do have their inherent potentials. Eucalyptus tree grows tall almost sky-high, as do coconut and areca nut trees. But bushes do not grow tall. But every tree has its right to life. And they maintain their life system.

How to Promote Ahimsa?

Aerial spray of water to control flaming forest fire is quite an exciting and effective sight! When global peace is the desirable objective, global dissemination of the role and value of peace as befitting a civilisation could be considered. Ahimsa could be that value for global dissemination and practice.

Nuclear warheads, missiles with transcontinental range, ultramodern battle tanks, millions of citizens in the army, inter-state belligerency, army hospitals for the wounded soldiers, war cemetery for those who laid down their lives for the cause, widows with their small children, pension for the retired and the deceased and the retired - is a world that calls for serious reflection. Can it be changed? If all that is good and ethical in all the religions in India are brought together, can it become a force capable of bringing about a change in the scene drawn above?

Yes, it can. Light overcomes darkness, none needs to be pessimistic. Goodness can and does overcome evil. "If winter comes can spring be far behind" (P. B. Shelley).

In a social situation where aggression, violence, injustice and exploitation of the weak keep disturbing life and pursuit of the necessities of life, restoring peace and maintaining a healthy living situation is the responsibility of all.

Mosaic Re-ordering of Life

That was one of the mandatory codes of conduct Moses the prophet had enjoined upon the

Jewish community. The community of Israel is just out of the royal claws of the monarchy in Egypt and is on its way to settle down in a free land. The Commandment is one among the many concrete steps taken for organising the disgruntled group just free from slavery. Since the gulf between theory and practice, as well as law and compliance, is always part of the human struggle, here too fighting and killing of the people of the neighbouring countries, regarded as threat to their existence, had been part of Israel's history'. It is in this context that the Ten Commandments, directive principles of organising the lives of individuals and community, were given to the Jewish community.

The Indian scientist J. C. Bose won laurels for his research on life system. He disclosed the findings of his research that plants have not only life but also sensation like pain and joy. This discovery is of supreme significance since violence on nature is rampant. If so, how much more for the world of animals and especially humans!

Kiths and Kins, Pandavas and Kauravas, were engaged in the bitterly fought Mahabharata wars. Destruction and bloodshed were everywhere.

Most advocates of a share in the wealth of the family lay dead in Kurukshetra. Some were left, Bhishma was one among them. He sank into a mood of doleful introspection. The war was fought vigorously for days but none gained anything; the great grandsire had one lesson drawn out of it for the posterity, at last: *ahimsa* paramo *dharma* (non-violence is the highest *dharma* (duty, ethics, and religiosity)).

The precept had been inspiring teachers and instructors, as well as heads of families with a new generation at their hands through the centuries. It was revived in our times by the great grandsire of our times, Gandhiji. The phrase began to gain currency. He led the enslaved Indian nation to freedom from the hands of the colonisers by hoisting the flag of non-violent campaign known as *satyagraha*. Both *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* remained as the flagship for the march of the freedom movement. These twin forces of a new irruption of ethical-moral synergising campaign in our times, produced a new culture. It was known as the non-violent freedom *non-alignment movement*.

India from say, from 1920 to 1947, can be considered as a land where *ahimsa* was experimented on a colossal level. Hence India can even be regarded rightly and proudly as an *ahimsa-workshop-in-action*, or just a laboratory where most of the resources for the origin, development or experiment with *ahimsa* are found in some of the ancient as well a medieval Indian tradition.

What *ahimsa* safeguards and honours is the reality of Life.

Life seems to have appeared over the surface of the earth at least 3.5 billion years ago according to scientists. Only earth as far as we have knowledge of it, is crowned with life.

But A Contradiction! *Ahimsa* is appreciated as Value and Proneness to *Himsa* Prevails!

One of the yet unsolved puzzles in human history is that along with life came forces antagonistic to the *vital* force. Along with the origin of Life came forces antagonistic and destructive of Life. Yet Life has mostly prevailed over forces inimical to life. Even when a tree is cut new shoots in large numbers sprout. That phenomenon continues even now. History of humanity is almost a history of this warfare. *Deva-asura* conflict, Rome-Carthage conflict, the Trojan wars, Athens-Sparta conflict, Jews-Philistines conflicts - are at the historical level. In India we have the *Pandava - Kaurava* conflict and war at *Kurukshetra*.

Increase and growth are indicators of the phenomenon of life. These are the natural traits of living beings. Affirmation and collaboration facilitate growth and development. These are elicited by hearts and minds that are benign and well-disposed to those wishing the maximum good or wellness of all. These are expressed by gestures of collaboration, service and such life-promoting schemes.

Mother earth is blood-soaked. Bloodshed of World Wars I and II, the bone melting Atom Bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, continuation of the wild flame through the Korean War, Vietnam War and communal irruptions in our own country, the record is quite puzzling. When exhausted let us invoke the agonising request of the Queen in Hamlet:

“...upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
sprinkle cool patience” (Hamlet the Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare, Act III

Sc.4).

Similarly, to our bruised wounded and lacerated society in which we live and struggle let us disseminate the spirit of healing, elevating, soothing message through values contained in *AHIMSA* (non-violence).

How to go about

If I am an admirer of *ahimsa* I must accept and love my enemy and deal with him/her as a citizen. This love does not restrict itself to the love of humans only, but includes the whole of creation. *Bhutadaya* is a reflection of this all-comprehensive understanding of the depth and dimensions of love. It implies feelings of affinity with everyone and everything, not antagonism and alienation but alliance with all, the feeling of oneness and solidarity with all. These sentiments will diminish feelings of suspicion and hostility to others; especially towards those who oppose you, fight against you, ignore you threaten your very existence. 'Love never claims, but it ever gives. Love suffers, never resents, and never avenges itself'. Hence Gandhiji would not hesitate to call *ahimsa* as 'the law of love' or 'the supreme law' of being, and the highest *dharma*. Love, the very essence of *ahimsa* in Gandhian ethics, is an ontological thrust.

Recommended: Clinical Approach

A clinical approach can be the most appropriate method to be adhered to in order to derive practical benefit for oneself, especially for social peace and harmony. We cannot treat a disease without the clinical approach. Accordingly, getting the details of the ailment through analysis, searching for the cause, finding proper remedy, application of the remedy, and walking with the affected etc. are the desired steps in dealing with the theme of *ahimsa*-love in action.

Ahimsa (non-violence) can be promoted by several steps.

First is grasping the range of violence.

We should be familiar with areas affected by violence. *Himsa* (violence) is the opposite: there is economic violence, genetic violence, sociological violence, religious or communal violence, cultural violence, racial violence, psychological violence, sexual violence.

Secondly the causes of violence must be studied. A doctor first applies the method of diagnosing the nature and spread of the disease. Then he finds out the causes of the disease before proceeding to prescription. Similarly, one has to search for the causes of violence in these areas.

Thirdly, one has to apply appropriate remedial steps for preventing violence, and close observation of the entire process.

One of the disciples of Jesus Christ, who observed him closely, listened to his words attentively and remained as a witness to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ till the very end, has concluded at the end as follows:

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, FOR GOD IS LOVE" (1 John 4:7-8).

There had been heated arguments sometimes among disciples about some of the radical assertions of Jesus like forgiving the enemies etc. On one occasion Jesus carefully observed one such scene. One of the listeners, a scribe, came near and put the following question to Jesus". 'Which commandment is the first of all? And Jesus appreciating this quite relevant question gave the following answer:

"The first is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love you; neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mk 12:30). All regulatory laws, customs, injunctions, safeguards art contained in this supreme value: love for others, love for oneself.

The foundation for this supreme treasure is God. All religions do affirm this basic principle.

God is our Father and we all are brothers and sisters, children of the one Father. All creation has been sharing in that gift of love. We recall here that St Francis of Assisi could address the birds and animals, sun and moon and stars, trees plants, as 'brothers and sisters'. If so then none should inflict upon 'the other' any kind of

injury.

St Francis was only re-echoing what Jesus Christ was found doing. For Jesus said that His Father, God, cares for the ravens, and the sparrows of the sky. He spoke appreciatively of the delicate lilies of the field; He brings down rains on the just as well as on the unjust alike, without any discrimination. He makes the sun rise over the just and the unjust, equally, without caring for differences. He cared diligently, truthfully for the infant and the weak, the abandoned and the rejected.

Jesus Christ healed and restored to health those afflicted with leprosy. He gave sight to the blind and health to the lame, the deaf and the dumb.

He restored to life by raising up the dead and restoring them to the mother because she was a widow and in need of daily support. He could benignly accept and deal with women who were in disgrace in society, and forgave them. All these are acts of love, expressions of ahimsa in daily action.

He told them:

“Treat others as you would like them to treat you” (Mt 7: 12). He said, “Happy the merciful for they shall have mercy shown to them” (Mt 5:7). Jesus admonished His disciples who tried to react violently when the foes tried to arrest him; “put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Mt. 26:52). That is the law of violence.

He exhorted them: “I say this to you; Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of the father in heaven” (Mt 5:44).

His disciple Paul suggested that the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God are: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, self- control” (Gal. 5:22).

Social relationship should actually be operating on the valuable principle of *ahimsa*, as far as we can. Communities of humans should be organised and structured befitting humans. Equality of all is recognised as a consequence. However, we should remember hierarchically organising a society is structural violence; it is a kind of *himsa* (violence); but Indian society is based on the same.

Why? Because Life is precious

Our task is promotion of Life. For that elimination of life-destroying forces, practices, projects, thinking, and mind-sets need to be removed. For a moment we turn to Japan; Let us for a moment turn our attention eastwards, towards Japan.

Moved by the bluish-yellow flash followed by the thunder of the explosion caused by the detonation of the Atom Bomb the late Fr. Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Society of Jesus looked out of his clinic in Hiroshima on August 6, 1944. What he saw to the bodies of the living and the dead was horrendous. A living and vibrant city was devastated. Children, young boys and girls, workers, doctors, teachers, peasants, were busy as usual when the fire from the blast roasted and even melted them alive! Do we want it happen anywhere in the world again in more cruel ways?

In this situation how do we understand atom bombs, missiles of the most destructive kind, factories that manufacture them, the State and society that are committed and sold to weapon-culture, brains that are committed to research in these mortal devices? Are all these worthy of the name perspired and civilization?

Arjuna at Kurukshetra became speechless when he reflected upon the contradiction of a human person having to kill another human person who is a blood relation. What gain in such folly, he asked. The question should haunt every defence ministry in every nation.

“I do not want to kill them...” (Gita 1:35).

We need a spiritual vision of the human person prevailing over weapon-force and belligerency. Asiatic vision of Ahimsa was able to raise question before a world engaged in armed confrontation. Armed confrontation is, according to Arnold Joseph Toynbee, historian and philosopher of history, a sign of a disintegrating or moribund culture. “Skill, capital and labour which should have been devoted to extending control over the physical environment in the interests of the whole society were misdirected into this idolatrous channel” (P 322, A Study of History, Ed D. C. Somerville).

Jesus said if one strikes you on your cheek, don't strike back but show the other cheek too. It is disarming the assailant.

In a world that is becoming increasingly prone to violence and destruction the role of ahimsa is supremely important and highly relevant. Our honoured Father of the Nation showed to the world that it is possible to solve even the most contentious issue by applying the power of *ahimsa* (non-violence).

“Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe, that such a man as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth”, lamented Albert Einstein at Gandhi's forced demise by an Indian assailant!

The above statement by the scientist Einstein about Gandhi on the occasion of his martyrdom was based primarily on his unique contribution to humanisation through ethical moral force of a culture that had got deviated and wounded from what is authentic human living. World peace became an achievable goal because of the reviving and animating force in *ahimsa*. Gandhi reintroduced *ahimsa* on the world scene as a new teaching and a pedagogy that announces that our actions have to be always human and humane. He also demonstrated to the world the mode of practicing *ahimsa* (non-violence). It is love for the other that compels us to deal with man/woman in spite estranged relationship.

Look at the history of human species: from the murder of Abel by Cain till the shooting down of pro-democracy crowd in Myanmar recently, no one has any record of the total number of humans killed by other humans! This certainly is the dark side of human history.

Another scholar, Karl Marx, economist and sociologist, has introduced his interpretation. He has put all humans in two blocks: the working class and capitalists. He has proposed that that *class struggle* is the key to an understanding of the human social processes. Economic activity of the society is marked by exploitation of the working class by the capitalist farmers and industrialists.

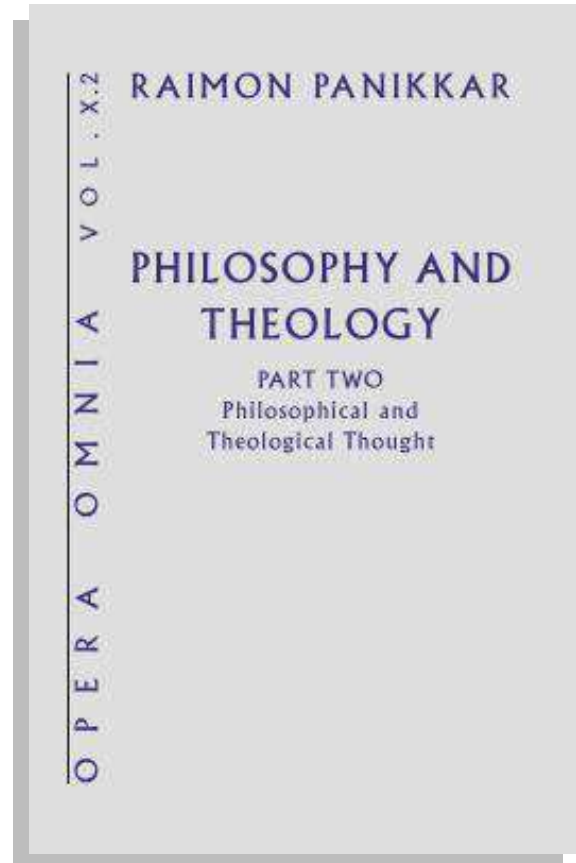
Both the survival of the fittest by Charles Darwin and the Marxian category of class struggle contain subtle forms of violence. The seminar theme is: *ahimsa*.

The whole of the human family collectively has to turn its attention to this unacceptable situation and endeavour to diminish and eliminate violence from the human from the

face of the earth. It is a collective responsibility and a noble and worthwhile service.

(Guest lecture delivered by the author at Vigyan Bhavan, Delhi, at the National Seminar organized by Ahimsa Foundation and Digambar Jain Mahasabha on 18th April 1984.)

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Frances Fister-Stoga

Virtus and Peace

Synthesis in 'The Moral Equivalent of War'

by William James

Delineating Peace and War

Epidemics and wars are similar—to paraphrase Georges Bernanos: they have no beginning nor end. But although war has been cyclical throughout history, unlike epidemics and natural disasters, war is based on intentional human choice. And unlike catastrophes that can be defined scientifically, war and its counterpart—peace—have evaded conclusive definitions. Of the two, describing peace has been especially elusive, so much so that it has been called ‘an eschatological endeavor—a final version to come at the end of time’ (James, 15).

While there are many definitions of peace, perhaps the one most fitting for an analysis of James’s essay ‘The Moral Equivalent of War’ is the work of Johan Galtung, the founder of modern peace and conflict studies and of the Oslo Peace Research Institute. In brief, Galtung conceives of a typology of four human needs (‘The Basic Needs Approach’). One is the need for security or freedom from violence. This results in the first level of peace, which Galtung terms ‘negative peace,’ that is, ‘the absence of direct violence between states engaged in by military and others in general, and of massive killing of categories of human in particular’ (‘Positive and Negative Peace,’ 173). Or as he more simply notes in *Peace by Peaceful Means*, at this first level ‘peace is the absence/reduction of violence of all kinds’ (9).

However, Galtung also states in the same work that another layer of peace exists: non-violent and creative conflict transformation (9). This layer is ‘positive peace’ and addresses the need of freedom from structural violence. That is: freedom from repression; freedom from economic misery; and freedom from alienation. (It is interesting to note that the root meaning of ‘freedom’ is from the Old English *freod*

‘affection, friendship, peace,’ *friga* ‘love,’ *frìðu* ‘peace.’) ‘Positive peace’ is based on ‘reciprocity, equal rights, benefits and dignity’ (‘Positive and Negative Peace,’ 173). Peace theory is intimately connected not only with conflict theory, but equally with developmental theory (Galtung, ‘Violence and Peace,’ 13). Reducing peace to the simple cessation of violence, without social justice, will never result in lasting peace:

War reduction theories appeal to most people because they deal directly with the use of force and weapons. They are, however, limited because they focus on immediately observable symptoms rather than on deeper underlying causes. Theories of peace creation go beyond buffering existing international relations. They focus on balancing and restructuring of the world system. (Beer, 16)

Galtung’s configuration of peace is unlike many definitions because it ultimately considers the root impediments to lasting peace. In this respect it resonates with the earlier Universal Charter of Human Rights (1948) and the papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963). Though written almost a century before Galtung’s work, it will be seen that James’ ‘The Moral Equivalent of War’ is also about peace as *a social goal* with a direct method to achieve elements of ‘positive peace.’

War: Violence and Virtus

Definitions of war vary and often directly or indirectly reflect the political or philosophical background of the author. Nevertheless, most descriptions of war include the concept of violence. A classic example is von Clausewitz, who goes beyond his well-known aphorism that war ‘is the continuation of policy with other means’: ‘War is nothing but a duel on an

extensive scale... an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will, directed by political motives and morality.... War is an act of violence pushed to its utmost bounds' (Bk I, 101, 103). While the technology of war has changed, peace theorist Robert Holmes affirms that 'war by its nature is organized violence, the deliberate, systematic causing of death and destruction... whether the means employed are nuclear bombs or bows and arrows' (*On War and Morality*, 180).

If the presence of violence constitutes the base line of war (i.e., 'negative war')—much as the absence of violence constitutes Galtung's 'negative peace'—would it be possible to speak of 'positive war' and what connection it might have with James's work? Such a war matrix may be explored visually if one compares two very different renditions of actual combat, the first battle of Tannenberg (1410), by Alphonse Mucha and Jan Matejko respectively. Despite differences in style (Art Nouveau and 19th century Polish historicism), both artists portray features of the war in which Polish, Lithuanian, and Ruthenian forces successfully fought the German Teutonic Knights, who attempted to convert the mainly Slavic pagan tribes to Christianity through Catholic colonization.

Mucha's 1924 painting, number 10 of his monumental 20-panel *Slavic Epic*, depicts the morning after the battle. In somber tones, the scene consists of the dead on the battlefield, not only the ethnically-diverse Slavic soldiers, but the Teutonic Knights as well. The Polish King Wladyslaw surveys the aftermath of violence not as a hero, but with horror at the cost of freedom. Victory is not the major theme here; rather, aspects of 'negative war' are more prominent.

Matejko, in contrast, presents the battle in turbulent action. While his 1878 painting shows violent confrontation, it also brings out certain positive personal effects of warfare: courage, self-reliance, confidence, leadership, comradeship, organization—among others. Unlike Mucha's work, Matejko shows both the Polish King and the Lithuanian Grand Duke in partnership together. The notion of chivalry is also present due to the number of knights included in the painting. Victory is the overriding emotion of the work with the central triumphant figure of Witold (Vytautas) the

Grand Duke enrobed in red.

Traditionally, theorists have looked at the positive *after-effects* of war: the elimination of repressive governments and injustices, among others. One may, as in the Matejko work, examine positive characteristics *in bello* that were historically termed *virtus*. For the Romans, *virtus* was originally associated with the battlefield (Schrader, 87). However, Roman society saw the four cardinal virtues of a military commander (prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude) as mainly external virtues to serve the state, a position James will take. The original four qualities have often been expanded to an imposing list of 'military virtues': justice, obedience, loyalty, courage, wisdom, honesty, integrity, perseverance, temperance, patience, humility, compassion, discipline, professionalism (Skerker et al. 2019). Instead of a strong emphasis on individual heroic action in the Greek tradition, these martial *virtus* qualities were seen to lead to civic duty—a focus essential to 'The Moral Equivalent of War.'

Genesis and Context of 'The Moral Equivalent to War'

James was a pacifist living in the aftermath of the American Civil War and much opposed to the jingoism he saw in United States foreign policy. He was also, a member of the Anti-Imperialist League. He firmly believed that 'negative war' was anachronistic and would eventually disappear. It is important to remember that during James's lifetime many domestic and international peace organizations were founded along with the establishment of the Geneva and Hague conventions, and in 1904 James was invited to address the 13th Universal Peace Congress in Boston. Among the 500 members attending were such peace advocates as Jane Addams and Baroness von Suttner, William Dean Howells, and Booker T. Washington. Both Addams and James 'tried to articulate an alternative to the *psychological* allure of war' (Schott, 241; italics mine). In fact, James had planned to work more on the subject of military psychology before his death in 1910 and thought he might one day write a book called *A Psychology of Jingoism and Varieties of Military Experience* (Myers, 601).

In terms of context, one should also remember

the general male attitude towards women at the time, since both the 1904 speech and the 1910 'The Moral Equivalent' center on male initiatives— 'Let the soldiers dream of killing, as the old maids dream of marrying' ('Address', 268). (The Congress had a separate venue for most women to present and discuss.) James's speech appeared two months later in *The Atlantic* and was later published as 'Remarks at the Peace Banquet' in *Memories and Studies* (1911).

The 'Address' contains two major themes that will inform 'The Moral Equivalent.' The first of these is that the psychological inclination to war will always be with us:

Our permanent enemy is the noted bellicosity of human nature. Man, biologically considered, and whatever else he may be in the bargain, is simply the most formidable of all beasts of prey, and, indeed, the only one that preys systematically on its own species. We are once for all adapted to the military *status*. A millennium of peace would not breed the fighting disposition out of our bone and marrow, and a function so ingrained and vital will never consent to die without resistance, and will always find impassioned apologists and idealizers. (267)

Long periods of peace cannot eliminate this war 'DNA' in humans. And the chief reason is that 'war has an omnipotent support in the form of our imagination' (267), which is thrilled by war.

The plain truth is that people want war. They want it any how; for itself, and apart from each and every possible consequence. It is the final bouquet of life's fireworks. The born soldiers want it hot and actual. The non-combatants want it in the background, and always as an open possibility, to feed imagination on and keep excitement going. Its clerical and historical defenders fool themselves when they talk as they do about it. What moves them is not the blessings it has won for us, but a vague religious exaltation. (268)

The second theme that James briefly introduces (but only develops thoroughly in 'The Moral Equivalent') is the solution—to channel this war inclination:

But organize in every conceivable way the

practical machinery for making each successive chance of war abortive. Put peace men in power; educate the editors and statesmen to responsibility.... Seize every pretext, however small, for arbitration methods, and multiply the precedents; foster rival excitements, and *invent new outlets for heroic energy*, and from one generation to another the chances are that irritation will grow less acute and states of strain less dangerous among the nations. (268, italics mine)

Virtus: Joining the 'War Party' and the 'Peace Party'

'The Moral Equivalent of War' was originally given in 1906 as a speech at Stanford University. It was later published in 1910. As a realist and pragmatist, James begins 'The Moral Equivalent of War' by echoing his belief that the need for war is inherent in humans, thus giving the position of his opponents, the 'war party.' However, he then proceeds to give the history of Greek and Roman warfare and their atrocities, making it clear that he condemns 'negative war' and its violence: 'History is a bath of blood. The *Iliad* is one long recital of how Diomedes and Ajax, Sarpedon and Hector *killed*. No detail of the wounds they made is spared us, and the Greek mind fed upon the story' (*Memories and Studies*, 269). Believing in a progressive evolution of society, James felt that 'negative war' was no longer acceptable to modern rational nations: 'At the present day, civilized opinion is a curious mental mixture. The military instincts and ideals are as strong as ever, but they are confronted by reflective criticisms.... Innumerable writers are showing up the bestial side of military service' (273). (Part of this 'reflective criticism' was directed at Japan and Germany.)

Again, in a conciliatory fashion, James notes that the search for lasting peace has often been hindered by the 'peace party' itself: 'I see how desperately hard it is to bring the peace-party and the war-party together, and I believe that the difficulty is due to certain deficiencies in the program of pacifism which set the military imagination... strongly against it' (274). Pacifists 'ought to enter more deeply into the aesthetical and ethical point of view of their opponent' (283). James continues to point out that the 'war-party' fears a world in which the

military values of *virtus* would be absent.

Instead, James concludes that 'war is, in short, a permanent human *obligation* (277). This is because the military virtues (the military character) preserve 'hardihood.' A world without *virtus* would fall into stagnation, a 'pleasure economy,' and 'degeneration.' It might well see war as no more than relief from boredom: 'Man lives by habits indeed, but what he lives for is thrills and excitements. The only relief from habit's tediousness is periodical excitement. From time immemorial wars have been, especially for non-combatants, the supremely thrilling excitement. There is not a man in this room, I suppose, who doesn't buy both an evening and a morning paper, and first of all pounce on the war column' ('Address,' 303). Indeed, 'martial virtues must be the enduring cement; intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of private interest, obedience to command, must still remain the rock upon which states are built' (288). Thus, James suggests a compromise in which 'the martial type of character can be bred without war' (292), without the horrors of 'negative war.' James predicts that peace will not be permanent 'unless the states, pacifically organized, preserve some of the old elements of army-discipline' (287).

How will the military *virtus* be utilized? James holds that civic duty is the solution as 'all the qualities of a man acquire dignity when he knows that the service of the collectivity that owns him needs him' (285). The solution that James proposes is not a military conscription, but 'a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against *Nature*' (290):

To coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to dishwashing, clothes washing, and window washing, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stoke-holes, and to the frames of skyscrapers, would our gilded youth be drafted off, according to their choice, to get the childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas. (291)

James ends 'The Moral Equivalent of War' by declaring, with a reference to H. G. Wells, that

'the conceptions of order and discipline, the tradition of service and devotion, of physical fitness, unstinted exertion, and universal responsibility, which universal military duty is now teaching European nations, will remain a permanent acquisition when the last ammunition has been used in the fireworks that celebrate the final peace' (295).

Utopia or Relevancy

'The Moral Equivalent of War' is one of the more widely read works of William James. It provided the catalyst for creating in the United States alone the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression, the Peace Corps, Job Corps, VISTA, Americorps, and other civic organizations. The same title was used by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 in a speech to address national issues of energy. It can be asked if Galtung himself was influenced by the essay:

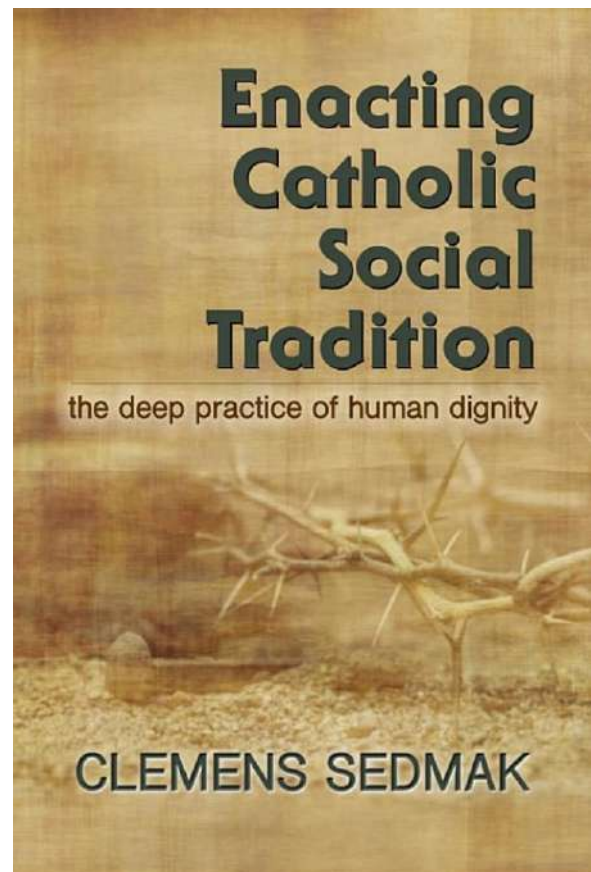
The argument made here is not to abolish the military but to give it new tasks. That institution has had very bad habits in the past, such as attacking other countries and nations, and other classes, usually at the behest of the ruling elites, killing and devastating through external and internal wars. But there have also been virtues: good organization, courage, willingness to sacrifice. The bad habits have to go; not necessarily the military, and certainly not the virtues. (*Peace by Peaceful Means*, 5)

Criticism of James's essay usually centers on his relegating women to the private sphere and proposing conscription primarily to affluent white males (Schott, 253). His solution has been called 'incredibly daft' in respect to the fight against nature: 'This proto-Ayn Randian line of thought means taking the human will and pouring it into Industry in order to build monuments such as railroads and skyscrapers celebrating human achievement to the detriment of the biosphere' (Taggart, 15). Of course, instead of damaging the planet, activists today follow James's civic advice and work for the world's betterment. His solution for 'positive peace' has also been termed 'naïve' as 'a social program intended for national utilization' (Myers, 444). Nevertheless, 'what survives is the notion that there may be a moral equivalent

for the pugnacious impulse' and that for those who continue to hope that war can be avoided, James' conviction that there are ways of sublimating aggressive emotions is supportive' (ib.).

Although set in a particular time frame, 'The Moral Equivalent of War' is unique in that it strives for compromise and conciliation, uniting the values of 'positive war' along with those of 'positive peace,' presented in what is known today as Rogerian argumentation. James' work also looks at the psychological impetus to war. Generally, thinkers have emphasized the cause of war as 'necessity,' Livy's '*iustum enim est helium quihus necessarium*' (war is just for those for whom it is necessary). But as Arendt maintains: 'Conquest, expansion, defense of vested interests, conservation of power in view of the rise of new and threatening powers, or support of a given power equilibrium—all these well-known realities of power politics were not only actually the causes of the outbreak of most wars in history, they were also recognized as 'necessities'' (3). Unfortunately, Arendt, unlike James, fails to add the psychological aspect of war which may act independently from 'power politics.' Finally, 'The Moral Equivalent of War' considers 'one of the classic problems of politics: *how to sustain political unity and civic virtue in the absence of war or a credible threat* (Roland 2015). His work is obsolete only if we concur with Bernanos, that 'the modern state no longer has anything but rights; it does not recognize duties anymore.'

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SEDOS SPRING SEMINAR ON THURSDAY, 30TH MARCH 2023

At UISG Piazza di Ponte Sant'Angelo, 28, 00186, Rome

PROGRAM

Thursday, 30th March 2023

9.30	Registration (Tea/Coffee)
10:00 - 10:15	Prayer and Welcome
10:15 - 10:45	Introductory talk by Sr. Marry Barron, OLA
10:45 - 11:30	Talk by Sr. Nadia COPPA, ASC on the theme, “Collaboration Between Congregations in Mission and Formation.”
11:30 - 12:15	Talk by Fr. Adelson Araújo, SJ on the theme, “Laity: Co-partners in Mission and the involvement in the Local Church.”
12:15 - 13:00	Interaction with Speakers
13:00 - 14:30	LUNCH BREAK
14:30 - 16:30	Panel Discussion (Moderator Fr. Chris Chaplin, MSC) Fr. Francis Rozario, SMA and Sr. Juliana, MSOLA (Combined Presentation), Fr. Jim Greene, Solidarity with South Sudan (Online), Br. Alberto Lamana, MCCJ and Sr. Azucena Correa, MIC
16:30	Vote of thanks Tea/coffee and departure



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*If everyone is moving forward together
then success takes of itself"*

- Henry Ford