

**ASIAN CONSULTATION ON HARMONY THROUGH
RECONCILIATION - FEISA VII**

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- I. INTRODUCTION** – *Bro. Anthony Rogers, FSC*
*A New Vision and Revitalised Mission: Background and Overview
of the Asian Colloquium*

This document contains some of the papers from the Asian Colloquium on Harmony through Reconciliation organised by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences - Office for Human Development that was held in January 2006. This was to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of the Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). This was to celebrate the birth of a new vision of life that was articulated by *Gaudium et Spes*.

It was at the heart of the Second Vatican Council to bring into focus the work of salvation initiated by the Incarnation of Christ and to forge a new and everlasting covenant with the plan of the Father for humanity. The “window” of the Church to a new “world Vision” is founded on the compassion and mercy of the Father for the growth of joy and hope and the removal of grief and anguish. This was a vision that had been nurtured by the Universal Church that had such a dramatic impact on the Church in Asia and for the life of our peoples. It was for this reason that we brought together Bishops, Clergy, Religious and Laity.

Our recollection of our history as a community in search of truth has been without doubt a journey as a Church with a vision moving us to a revitalised mission in the 21st century. We shared a common hope, seeking a fuller humanity born out of our ardent desire to make God’s divine plans for humanity. This was based on the sharing of our personal experience of the meaning of being truly human in a world experiencing the need of love, justice and peace.

The numerous papers from persons who have been involved for many years with the people of Asia and in touch with their profound religious-cultural heritage enabled us to have a deeper understanding of the ways in which the world of globalisation has affected both the workings of society and the ways of human persons. Our review of the past shows very clearly that it is our readiness to be in dialogue totally sensitive to the cries of our people of Asia taking into consideration the dramatic changes that were taking place in society and the transforming effects they had had on our very lives and being. This for us was a movement from the outside of our external realities to a return to the solitary confinement of our inner being with God and the sacred. It had to be an inner pilgrimage moving us away from looking at the superficial to discover the workings of the Spirit of God in our lives. We wanted to recall our past with a critical introspection, look at our present to recognise our growing differences but reaffirm our commitment to the vision that stand for the bonds of unity that we can offer as a path for the future of the whole of humanity.

We had the task in Part One of the Asian Colloquium on Harmony through Reconciliation to deepen our understanding of the World, 40 years after *Gaudium et Spes*. We searched together some meaningful answers to some basic and fundamental questions: How has the world changed? We wanted to describe the reality? **(Describe)** What are the forces that have changed humanity? We want to understand the forces

that are intruding in our nations and our peoples. (Analyse) What has been the impact on the lives of the people of today? We wanted to know what is happening to our lives and especially the lives of the poor in Asia (Sympathize) and search for compassionate responses deep within ourselves as followers of Jesus and as a Church in Communion. This process was to lead us to the basis for formulating the new foundational principles for unity and peace.

In Part Two of the Asian Colloquium, we made a commitment to tracing our Way Forward in the 21st Century. We are all fully aware that the transformation of the world today has to begin with the renewal of the inner being of persons. This restoration of the image of God as reflected in the human being, living with human dignity and with the freedom to exercise human rights is what will result in the common good of humanity. As Church in Asia, we recognise the urgent task to build a new Spirituality of Communion that will lead us to redefine the meaning of the fundamental task of the Church to be at the service of the Reign of God. We hope to share the rest of the papers in the FABC Papers to follow.

The papers that were presented and the dialogue and discussions that followed cannot be fully documented but we hope that this attempt to put in print some of these thoughts and reflections will be the starting point for a greater commitment to a renewed vision and a revitalised mission in the context of Asia.

II. KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Joy And Hope Amidst Grief And Anguish: The New Gospel For The 21st Century – Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino

1. I am most grateful to the Officers of the FABC for inviting me to offer the Keynote Address on the theme “*Joy and Hope amidst Grief and Anguish – The New Gospel for the 21st Century*”, and I congratulate them for this important initiative aimed at shedding light on the *Challenges to the Global Community in the 21st Century*. In dealing with the theme given to me, I shall draw upon the social teachings of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* from the Second Vatican Council; this year we are celebrating the fortieth anniversary of that document. I shall dwell in particular on that part of the Council document that can provide insights

for a better understanding of the needs connected with the proclamation of the Gospel in modern society. *Gaudium et Spes* represents the first time that Ecumenical Council, in a systematic manner and with great breadth, dealt with issues of social ethics, which include the broad themes of economic development and work, democracy and peace. Although these themes do not exhaust the teachings found in *Gaudium et Spes* — we must not forget the important passages on faith and on atheism, on the mission of believers in history, on the family — they do represent a fundamental point of reference.

2. Among the central themes taken up in *Gaudium et Spes* is that of *human activity in the universe*, which therefore means that the document speaks also of *work, the economy and development*. On one hand, the Council text affirms the importance of Christian involvement in the transformation of the world through work and emphasizes the important task — also in the perspective of salvation — of making the world more human and transforming it in view of the necessity of allowing men and women to express their creative potential, beyond the simple satisfaction of their fundamental needs. On the other hand, it shows very clearly the necessity of recognizing the centrality of work in the manner that society is structured and, therefore, the necessity of organizing human labour according to justice.

The lengthy section of the conciliar Constitution devoted to *social and economic life* (Nos. 63 and following) is to be placed in this context. Excluding all purely economic viewpoints with respect to questions concerning the acquisition and use of the goods of the earth, and without entering into technical questions that are not within its area of competence, the Council offers a series of *fundamental guidelines for an ethics of economics*. At the centre of the Council's reflection is the affirmation of the meaning and dignity of work (No. 67), the pre-eminence of which is confirmed with respect to other elements of economic life, including capital. In this perspective, the Council gives some essential indications of a practical nature.

(a) The first of these indications concerns *the right and duty to work*, which arises directly from the recognition of the

importance attributed to work for a person's self-realization and for fulfilling *God's command* with regard to the transformation and humanization of the world. Deliberately neglecting the duty to work means acting in opposition to God's plan and refusing to participate in the redemptive work of Christ, who shed light on the close connection existing between work and obedience to God "when at Nazareth he worked with his own hands" (No. 67). At the same time, if a society actually prevented people from working, it would be depriving them of a fundamental means for their self-realization and for using their creative potential, and this would appear to be a grave injustice. This is the context for the Council's indications regarding *economic development at the service of man* (No. 64).

(b) This perspective includes the strong emphasis given by the Council to the centrality of the common good in the general organization of the economy (No. 69), which is proposed in close connection with and according to the perspective found in the *principle of the universal destination of the goods of the earth*. From this there arises the duty, on the part of those responsible for guiding the economy, to be committed to putting this principle effectively into practice, a task that is intrinsic to the economy, *since social justice must also have as its goal a better division of the goods of the earth among all people*¹. Without embarking upon an in-depth analysis of the question, the Council clearly enunciates the *principle of global solidarity*, not out of simple philanthropic or humanitarian concerns, but in virtue of a precise *obligation of justice*. In the perspective of the *preferential option for the poor* formulated by the Council, there is an ethical duty to create structures that foster the promotion of all peoples.

(c) The Council moreover emphasizes the need to develop *institutions that are at the service of the family* (No. 69), so that the family is made to participate in the benefits of economic development². The Council appropriately places interventions

¹ We find here an anticipation of what will become a central theme of Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and afterwards of John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987).

² We find expressed here a principle that will undergo important developments in a series of successive interventions on the part of the Church, from *Familiaris Consortio* to the Charter of the Rights of the Family.

on family policy in the discussion of the *universal destination of the goods of the earth*. The family would in fact be seriously penalized by the implementation of a rigid criterion for distribution of resources based on the principle of a formal correspondence in relation only to individual utility, because the weakest members of the family — children, the elderly, the handicapped — cannot compete in the production of income nor contribute to the accumulation of resources. The task of a humanity-based economy consists in removing natural inequalities and allowing every member of the community, even the *non-productive* members, to have access to the goods that are necessary for their human development.

3. *The relationship between Christians and the political community* is the other great question of social ethics that *Gaudium et Spes* deals with, devoting a lengthy and articulated discussion to this. The principal areas of this complex text of the Council concern the relations between Church and State and the concept of political democracy.

(a) The Council sees the *relations between Church and State* in terms of a *reciprocal autonomy*. In the Council's perspective, this autonomy involves a *healthy cooperation between civil society and religious society*, without the Church being subjugated to the State, and without a manipulative use of the authority of the State for purposes of evangelization that are foreign to the State. In this regard, the great intuition of the Council was that of *religious freedom as a necessary condition if the Church is fully to carry out her spiritual mission*, to the point that, in this context, she must not hesitate to "give up the exercise of certain rights which have been legitimately acquired, if it becomes clear that their use will cast doubt on the sincerity of her witness or that new ways of life demand new methods" (No. 76).

It was thus that, thanks to the Council, a definitive shape was given to the genuine concept of the *secular State*, which for a long time had been lost in the shadows of nineteenth-century secularism. The Council considers the *State as the home of all people*, which means that the State respects the rights of individuals and of the different religious communities, and

that the State makes of no one religious community, however deeply rooted it may be in the history of the country, a "State religion", but respects the different legitimate expressions of religiosity and ensures an equitable space of freedom for all believers.

This does not mean, however, that the Council is in favour of the social invisibility or insignificance of faith. On the contrary, the Church feels that she is part of civic life and intends to place herself at its service, whether by expressing her judgment "in those matters that regard public order" (No. 76), or by making her moral magisterium — starting with her social doctrine — available to all and inserting into civic life men and women who are motivated and competent, and who are ready to practise the art of politics, something that is difficult but at the same time also noble (cf. No. 75).

(b) On the basis of recognizing the *genuine secular character of the State*, we can understand the choice that the Council makes in favour of a *political democracy as the best form of government*, even if the word "democracy" is not formally found in *Gaudium et Spes*. In fact, the definition for political community that is used in the text is substantially a definition of democracy, since a position is espoused that favours "juridico-political structures providing all citizens in an ever better fashion and without any discrimination the practical possibility of freely and actively taking part in the establishment of the juridical foundations of the political community and in the direction of public affairs, in fixing the terms of reference of the various public bodies and in the election of political leaders" (No. 75). Re-reading this *description* of the political community, it is not difficult to see the fundamental characteristics of political democracy: the participation of citizens in civic life and in the free election of those who govern; the exclusion of all discrimination between citizens and the acceptance of the principle of equality, even with regard to religion; the limitation and control of power and the distinction between legislative, judicial and executive powers. All the distinctive characteristics of what political philosophy and political science indicates as democracy are clearly found in this description given by the Council.

4. A third problematic area to which *Gaudium et Spes* devotes special attention is that concerning the *crucial question of peace*. This text from the Council is at one and the same time both prophetic and realistic. In fact, there was a kind of confrontation between — on one hand — the prophetic concern of not just a few Council Fathers who would have liked a decisive and irreversible option for peace, and — on the other hand — the need to avoid abandoning the *principle of legitimate defense*. The attempt to reconcile these two tendencies can be seen in the famous passage from paragraph 79 of the conciliar Constitution, where it is affirmed that “as long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted”. For the Council Fathers, however, war was seen as scandalously unacceptable to the Christian conscience; only the principle of legitimate defense remains the sole possibility for recognizing it. The prevalent orientation of *Gaudium et Spes* is that of a *frank, systematic, consistent option for peace*.

The Council, however, does not limit itself to a condemnation of war and the inhumanity of war — an inhumanity owing above all to the terrible destructive potential of modern war — but works out a veritable *programme for peace*, articulated in three points: the strengthening of international agencies, to which are entrusted the task of safeguarding peace by the prevention of conflicts (cf. Nos. 83 and 84); the *overcoming of economic inequalities* between different areas of the world, in view of the great threat to peace that these represent (cf. No. 83); the condemnation of the arms race, held to be a reason for which war is often not truly a last resort (cf. No. 81).

In this context, the Council does not fail to make a heartfelt appeal calling believers to be peacemakers above all in the area of education: those who dedicate themselves to educational activities “should consider it their most weighty task to instruct all in fresh sentiments of peace” (No. 82). Peace arises first of all from the heart and from the spirit, even if it must then be incarnated within structures. It is therefore the task of believers to become peacemakers, above all providing to the younger generations formation in an authentic spirit of peace.

More than seeking — in a negative sense — to prevent or hinder war, *Gaudium et Spes* seeks to promote — in a positive sense — a culture of peace.

5. The extraordinary and demanding legacy of the social teachings contained in the conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* has been wholly taken up in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which has updated and integrated the content of these teachings to make them more readily applicable to the needs of humanity in the twenty-first century. The *Compendium* was presented to the press on 25 October 2004 and was put together by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace according to the will of the Servant of God John Paul II³.

The *Compendium* has a simple and straightforward structure. After an *Introduction*, there follow three parts: the first, composed of four chapters, deals with the fundamental presuppositions of social doctrine — God’s plan of love for humanity and for society, the Church’s mission and the nature of social doctrine, the human person and human rights, the principles and values of social doctrine; the second part, composed of seven chapters, deals with the contents and classical themes of social doctrine — the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment and peace; the third part — which is quite brief, being composed of one sole chapter — contains a series of indications for the use of social doctrine in the pastoral praxis of the Church and in the life of Christians, above all the lay faithful. The *Conclusion*, entitled “For a Civilization of Love”, is an expression of the underlying purpose of the entire document.

In No. 10 of the *Compendium*, we find the affirmation that the document “is presented as an instrument for the moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that mark our time; as a guide to inspire, at the individual and community

³ The *Compendium* offers a complete overview of the fundamental framework of the doctrinal corpus of Catholic social teaching, as requested by John Paul II in No. 54 of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (cf. *Compendium*, 8).

⁴ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 15.

levels, attitudes and choices that will permit all people to look to the future with greater trust and hope". It is moreover an instrument put together for the precise purpose of promoting 'new strategies suited to the demands of our time and in keeping with human needs and resources. But above all there can arise the motivation to rediscover the vocation proper to the different charisms within the Church that are destined to the evangelization of the social order, because *'all the members of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension'*" (Compendium, 10).

6. The *Compendium* forcefully emphasizes that social doctrine is placed at the heart of the Church's mission. It shows, above all in Chapter Two, the ecclesiological character of this social doctrine, that is, its relation with the Church's mission, with evangelization and the proclamation of Christian salvation in temporal realities. The subject that is most fitting to the nature of social doctrine is, in fact, the entire ecclesial community: *"The social doctrine belongs to the Church because the Church is the subject that formulates it, disseminates it and teaches it. It is not a prerogative of a certain component of the ecclesial body but of the entire community; it is the expression of the way that the Church understands society and of her position regarding social structures and changes. The whole of the Church community — priests, religious and laity — participates in the formulation of this social doctrine, each according to the different tasks, charisms and ministries found within her"* (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 79). The *Compendium* therefore concerns all Catholics: *"The first recipient of the Church's social doctrine is the Church community in its entire membership, because everyone has social responsibilities that must be fulfilled ... In the tasks of evangelization, that is to say, of teaching, catechesis and formation that the Church's social doctrine inspires, it is addressed to every Christian, each according to the competence, charisms, office and mission of proclamation that is proper to each one"* (*ibid.* No. 83). Social doctrine also implies responsibilities with respect to the building up, organizing and functioning of society: political, economic and administrative obligations, that is to say, obligations of a social nature that belong in a particular way to the lay faithful by reason of the secular condition of

their state of life and the secular nature of their vocation: by means of these responsibilities, the lay faithful put social teaching into practice and fulfil the secular mission of the Church. It is my ardent hope that the local Churches present on the Asian continent will be able to see to the translation and dissemination of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, so that it will become an indispensable instrument for the evangelization of social realities and for the formation of the clergy and of the lay faithful. In this context I am pleased to announce that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, after the first congress in America, is intending to hold its Second Continental Congress on the *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church* in Asia and for Asia before the end of this year in Bangkok. Arrangements to this end will be taken as soon as possible.

7. The *Compendium* is proposed as an *instrument for fostering the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue* of Catholics with all those who sincerely desire the good of mankind. This purpose, emphasized also in John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, is especially important for those involved in pastoral work on the immense continent of Asia. In fact, the *Compendium* affirms "this document is proposed also to the brethren of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, to the followers of other religions, as well as to all people of good will who are committed to serving the common good" (No. 12). In addition to being addressed primarily and specifically to the sons and daughters of the Church, *social doctrine has a universal destination*. The light of the Gospel, which social doctrine brings to shine on society, illuminates all people: every conscience and intellect is able to grasp the human depth of meanings and values expressed in it, and the burst of humanity and humanization contained in its guidelines for action.

⁵ It suffices to review the Addresses to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See given by John Paul II in his 26 years of pontificate to get an idea of how frequent and insistent his appeals are, calling for cooperation among world religions in working for peace in the spirit of Assisi.

⁶ John Paul II, "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness", Message for the 2002 World Day of Peace, 1 January 2002, 12.

Social doctrine invites Catholics to consider interreligious dialogue and cooperation as paths of strategic value for the future good of humanity. Looking at the events of the end of the twentieth century and of the start of the millennium just begun, we can identify at least two historical areas of primary importance for interreligious dialogue on social themes: these are the areas of peace and human rights. Everyone knows the many and heartfelt appeals of the great Pope John Paul II on these themes⁵. It is sufficient here to recall the Message for the 2002 World Day of Peace, where the Pope wrote: “The various Christian confessions, as well as the world’s great religions, need to work together to eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism. They can do this by teaching the greatness and dignity of the human person, and by spreading a clearer sense of the oneness of the human family. This is a specific area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, a pressing service which religion can offer to world peace”⁶. The Holy Father Benedict XVI too, in his first Message for the World Day of Peace (2006), turned once more to the need to promote and increase ecumenical and interreligious dialogue (cf. No. 11). The field of human rights, of peace, of social and economic justice, of development in the near future will always be more and more at the centre of interreligious dialogue, in which Catholics must participate with their social doctrine, understood as a “doctrinal corpus” that stimulates but is also nourished by “the fruitful activity of many millions of people, who ... have sought to make that teaching the inspiration for their involvement in the world”⁷.

8. I would like to conclude my remarks by responding to a question that is and outdated? Although the consequences of the passing of time and the subsequent changes in scenarios can be seen in certain passages, *Gaudium et Spes* remains a *fundamental point of reference for Christian social thought*. The Council’s words continue to show, at the distance of forty years, a surprising relevance, and certain necessary adjustments appear to be more a development rather than a sign of obsolescence in the Council’s message. From these words the faithful can in the future still draw certain fundamental criteria for action and the essential elements for understanding their commitment in history.

9. No obsolescence, then, but on the contrary a permanent need to make constantly relevant, a need that is answered in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which offers itself as the pastoral instrument for making ever present to the Christians of the twenty-first century the task of sharing in “the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1) of the men and women of the twenty-first century, enlightening them with the light of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. This sharing must find expression in the need for personal testimony on the one hand, and, on the other, in the need to come up with an authentic humanism that engages social structures. These two dimensions, the personal and the social, must never be separated. It is my ardent hope that the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* will help bring leading Christian men and women to a greater maturity and will inspire them to be credible witnesses, capable of changing the mechanisms of modern society by word and deed. *There is always a need for witnesses, martyrs and saints, even in the area of society.* Popes have constantly made reference to those who have lived their presence in society “bearing witness to Christ the Saviour”⁷. We are speaking here of all those whom *Rerum Novarum* considered “worthy of all praise”⁸ for their commitment to improving, in their day, the condition of workers; of those who, in the words of *Centesimus Annus*, “succeeded time after time in finding effective ways of bearing witness to the truth”⁹, of those who, “spurred on by the social Magisterium, have sought to make that teaching the inspiration for their involvement in the world. Acting either as individuals or joined together in various groups, associations and organizations, these people represent a *great movement for the defence of the human person and the safeguarding of human dignity*”¹⁰. We are speaking here of the countless Christians, many of them laymen and women, “who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life”¹¹. Personal witness, the fruit of an adult Christian life that is profound and mature, can only be firmly established

⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 3.

⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 5.

⁹ Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, 55.

¹⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 23.

¹¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 3.

¹² John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 31.

also on the building up of *a new civilization*, in dialogue with other religions and with all men and women of good will, in order to bring about an *integral humanism in solidarity*.

III. ASIAN CHRISTIANITY AND MODERNITY 40 YEARS AFTER *GAUDIUM ET SPES* - Fr. Felix Wilfred, University of Madras, India

Significant developments have taken place in Asia during the past forty years after the close of the Council Vatican II and the publication of its document *Gaudium et Spes*. The different parts of Asia have undergone rapid and amazing changes in the political, economic, cultural and social realms. Several Asian countries have moved from a situation of under-development to become fastest developing nations of the globe, and are competing in every sphere with the developed nations of the West. This process of modernization and globalisation has created also deep contradictions in the Asian societies.

On its part, Asian Christianity itself has made, if not giant steps, at least significant strides, towards *greater self-understanding about itself and its mission* in relation to the developing situations in the continent. We need to only think of the journey official bodies like the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) have made in this direction, not to speak of many grassroots Christian movements and initiatives in relation to the modernizing and globalising Asian situation.

It is from this current situation of an Asia in rapid transformation and an Asian Christianity in evolution that we want to revisit the Vatican document of *Gaudium et Spes*. We shall reflect on the significance of its spirit, content and orientation from the evolving Asian situation, and identify as well its limitations. In the second part of the article, we shall ask what are some of the pointers for the future in the encounter of Asian Christianity with modernity.

Part I: ASIA REVISITS *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

A Mission Document Par Excellence

In spite of all its historic limitations, *Gaudium et Spes* may be the most significant mission document for Asia, though mission is not its explicit theme. This is so even after forty years of its publication. Here

is a document that provides the basis to begin a serious dialogue with Asia.

First of all, the method, the spirit and vision of *Gaudium et Spes* find resonance among the Asians. For one thing, in *Gaudium et Spes*, absent is the triumphalism that is perceived by neighbours of other faiths as an expression of arrogance. The genuine spirit of dialogue and the sense of modesty in admitting that the Church has no solutions to all the problems of humanity, and the readiness to cooperate with others set the right tone for a proper approach to mission in the Asian continent. The fact that, serious mission engagement in the Asian continent has been pursued more in the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes* than, perhaps, any other document is only a confirmation of the validity it has even today for Asian Christianity.

Secondly, from a deeper theological perspective, the document provides a proper approach to mission, since it does not contrast “*the natural*” against “*the supernatural*”, the former identified with the temporal realities of life. To view the question of economy, politics, culture and other areas of life as interwoven into the process of salvation and emancipation, is to acknowledge at the same time the *theological and religious character* of all these realities of life. They are not simply extension of Christian faith or fields in which to practice one’s faith, as if they have nothing directly to do with faith itself. From this position it is possible to construct an *integralist approach*, meaning the subjugation of all temporal realities to the spiritual. That would be simply to revive political Augustinianism. *Gaudium et Spes* did not follow this line. What *Gaudium et Spes* did was to relate this religious and theological character of temporal realities with the affirmation of their *autonomy*. This has deep implications for the understanding and practice of mission in Asia.

A third significant aspect of *Gaudium et Spes* for Asia is its recognition of the *role of the subject and her agency*, departing unmistakably from some of the earlier orientations in the history of Christianity. The spirit of this new orientation can be discerned also in the document on Religious Freedom (*Nostra Aetate*). In earlier classical approaches (which are being followed even today in many Christian circles) what dominates is truth understood as an “objective” order completely dissociated from the subject – an order which one has only to adhere to. *In more basic terms Gaudium et Spes did not give in to an approach that divorces truth from freedom.* This has serious implications

for Asia, especially in our relationship with neighbours of other faiths, and our joint collaboration with them regarding the transformation of the Asian societies. An approach based simply on “objective” order will tend to be self-imposing, doctrinaire and even authoritarian, and not open to dialogue which is possible only where the pursuit of truth in freedom by the subject – individual and collective – is acknowledged. This latter kind of approach which *Gaudium et spes* pursues does not give up the quest for truth, but takes into account the important role of the subject and the fidelity to her conscience. In former times, this was ruled out on the plea that error has no right to exist.

We could see the seeds of a deep theology of religions in the orientations of *Gaudium et Spes*. *Nostra Aetate*, the document directly dealing with the relationship of Christianity to other religious traditions, treats the matter from a theological perspective. *But the anthropological basis and the presuppositions of such a theology of religions, it appears to me, are to be found in Gaudium et Spes and in Dignitatis Humanae which deals with religious freedom.* This is very significant for Asian Christianity at the present moment as well as for its future. By highlighting the role of freedom and the subject, *Gaudium et Spes* responds *both to the challenges of modernity as well as to the presuppositions of a theology of religion with which Asians could vibrate.* There can be no proper understanding of mission in Asia without drawing into the picture two important dimensions: modernity and religions.

A fourth area of significance of *Gaudium et Spes* concerns the affirmation of the *universal destiny of earthly goods*. Though this insight has been present in the Christian tradition and in the teachings of the Fathers, the fact that the Council highlighted this in the circumstances of today is something very noteworthy. Private possession itself is relativized vis-à-vis the universal destiny of the goods of the earth. It is an antidote to the growing individualism under the aegis of modernity and to the philosophy of competition and self-seeking nurtured by globalisation. In this connection we may recall here the reference the documents makes to the customs and traditions among certain peoples which have strong community orientation, and are expressive of solidarity.

In economically less developed societies it often happens that the common destination of goods is partly achieved by a system of community customs and traditions which guarantee a minimum of necessities to each one...[one] should not rashly do away with respectable customs..’ (GS 69).

We may think of the tribals and indigenous peoples of Asia who have such inbuilt system in their culture and society. They constitute an important resource for the Asian peoples to face the crass individualism of modernity, further reinforced through the process of globalisation.

Limitations of Gaudium et Spes – An Asian Perspective

The first major limitation of *Gaudium et Spes* relates to its understanding of modernity. This understanding goes back to the heritage of European Enlightenment, its world-view, and particularly its affirmation of *critical reason*. *Gaudium et Spes* was a response to the “adult world” that had come of age. It is the *modern* world. The adulthood and “coming of age” could be looked at in their historical and cultural implications. Historically it means that the modern world is no more an infant under the tutelage of the Church, but is freed from this stage of dependence and control. From a cultural and philosophical perspective it means that the modern world is one, which has come to be through the exercise of critical reason. Modern technology, science, and other marvelous developments are to be viewed as expressions of critical reason dominating and controlling the nature and its powers. In short, the defining and interpretative key for modernity was critical reason, which is also the driving principle for a linear human progress. It is to this understanding of modernity and human progress *Gaudium et Spes* responded.

Looking back from an Asian perspective we note that this interpretation of the modern world as progressing (Enlightenment optimism) is only partial. What is lacking is the exercise of moral *reason*. I think, as long as this is absent the modern world should not be considered as having come of age – a presupposition on which *Gaudium*

¹ Cf. David Couzens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994.

² We need to only think of the debates in the 1950’s regarding “political Catholicism”, “Catholic State” or the Spain of General Franco - not to speak of medieval Christendom. Cf. Yves Congar, “A Letter on Religious Liberty With Reference to the Position of Protestants in Spain”, in his *Dialogue Between Christians*, Geoffrey Chapman, London Dublin, 1966, pp. 312 –332.

et Spes operates. That the West had to respond to a modernity created by critical reason was a historical necessity. It is understandable against the background of the gulf between faith and the modern world. In the face of an incomplete rationality, what Asia seeks is a more complete “coming of age” by the exercise of moral reason expressing itself through ethical and humane quest.

In the West, there has been, of course, a tradition of critique on modernity. This critique has been associated with the so-called “critical theory”,¹ or in its more radical form by some versions of postmodern theorizing. Asian critique on the other hand is directed to the failure of modernity to respond to the moral demands of humanity, specially its vulnerable ones, and the absence of the spirit of solidarity and collective responsibility. Those who exercise the critique of modernity in Asia are not *theorists* in the first place, but the *victims* of modernity and globalisation. By their very situation of being exploited, marginalized and excluded, the poor of Asia are the most effective critiques who constantly challenge the ambiguities of modernity and globalisation built on science and technology without regard to moral responsibility and solidarity.

A second limitation is the absence of attention to the issues of conflicts, struggles and contradictions in understanding modernity. This is not surprising, since the predominant concern in the document was to bridge the gap between faith and the modern world. Approaching modernity from this perspective, the Council needed to affirm the secular realities of the world with a sense of optimism after a long period of negative attitudes towards modern developments. Further, the document was an attempt to overcome the “Augustinianism” which tends to subordinate the secular and temporal realities to the superior and supernatural reality of faith and bring them under the “City of God”.² This background also explains its concentration in affirming the autonomy of temporal realities, on the one hand, and the inattention to the incontrovertible fact of conflicts, struggles and contradictions, on the other. These latter aspects, which we do not find in the document, are important today for an Asian response to modernity. Besides, *Gaudium et Spes* does not address some crucial questions of significance for the life of Asia. These are, for example, of poverty, ethnicity, race, religious conflicts, minorities, gender issues, economic exploitation, and so on.³

³ Cf. Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century, Office for Human Development, FABC, Manila, n.d.

Thirdly, if we go deeper into the question, the approach to the society that transpires in *Gaudium et Spes* is one of “common good” the attainment of which is reached through deliberation, consensus-building, etc.⁴ The common good approach does not do justice to the experiences in Asia and in other parts of the developing world. The basic orientation of common good approach is harmony. It does not take into account the *asymmetry of power*, social conflicts and systematic exclusion of peoples and groups from participation and consensus building. This could be seen in the Asian experience of the marginalized peoples who are systemically excluded like the Dalits, the indigenous peoples and tribals. The point is that the pre-conditions for an approach to common good through participation and consensus-building is not yet present in most Asian societies. What we have are various expressions of centralization, hierarchal structures and exclusion, depending on the different Asian societies. The traditional Catholic understanding of state is related to the pursuit of common good. This traditional doctrine is repeated also in *Gaudium et Spes*.⁵ But the idea of common good is vague. It serves as a middle-point between individualism and collectivism. It does not, however, take into account the deep division and conflicts, which characterize the Asian societies – something that has been further aggravated by the process of globalisation. On these issues of Asia, *Gaudium et Spes* is of little help.

Finally, it is the merit of *Gaudium et Spes* to have brought the relationship to the world within the spirit of dialogue, acknowledging that the Church alone cannot solve all the problems of humanity. The background to such a spirit and affirmation was probably the realization about the role *secular movements and ideologies* – including atheistic ones – could contribute to the transformation of the world. Important as these are, what is lacking in the document, however, is the affirmation of *the role of religious traditions and collaboration with them for the creation of a transformed world*. This is an area to which Asian Christianity could contribute a lot from its actual experiences.

⁴ For the background of this concept, its history and its use in Christian theology and tradition, see David Hollenbach, *The Common Good*. Christian Ethics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.

⁵ “The political community, then, exists for that common good” (G.S. 74).

⁶ Cf. Stephen Neill, *A history of Christian Missions*, Penguin Books, London, 1990 (reprint), p. 160.

PART II : POINTERS TO THE FUTURE

The meeting of Asian Christianity with modernity took place earlier under different conditions and historical circumstances. The experiences of present-times, on their part, call for a new and different stage of this encounter. However, we will not fail to notice a certain *continuity of paradigm* underlying the relationship of Asian Christianity to modernity.

Christianity as Entry-point to Modernity

It may be strange but true that, whereas Christianity in the West dissociated itself from modernity for a long time, and was in conflict with it, in Asia it has been irrevocably associated with modernity. In simple terms, for *Asians to be Christians meant to be modern*. In general, Christianity as a culture and tradition has been welcomed in Asia as an entryway to modernity. I do not want to go at this point into the Western discussion whether there is continuity between Christianity and modernity, or whether modernity results from the obsolescence of Christianity, or whether modernity is the extrapolation of Christianity and its spirit in the secular realm.

Let me instead pointed out that the perception of Asian Christians both in the past and in present times is one in terms of *continuity* rather than a *caesura* between Christianity and modernity. It is this that has evoked their interest. When Matteo Ricci paid his homage to the Chinese Emperor and presented him with two clocks, the interest was more in the clocks than in anything else. When the clock stopped, they found in Ricci a fantastic clock repairer (!), and that interested them most, rather than all the doctrines of heaven that he came to proclaim. So also the maps of Ricci was object of much curiosity. We also note

⁷ The roots of this phenomenon of "cultural Christians" may go back to the experience of the persecuted intellectuals at the time of the Cultural Revolution. There was on the one hand disappointment with the Marxist-Communist ideology, and on the other hand, serious doubts about the capacity of the traditional Chinese heritage to respond to the crisis in Chinese society. This particular cultural and intellectual situation made them turn to Christianity and its theological and philosophical traditions as more suited to answer to the basic questions of human life in a technological and scientific world. Cf. George Evers, *Kirche und Katholizismus seit 1945*. Die Laender Asiens, Ferdinand Schoeningh, Paderborn, 2003, pp. 125 ff.

⁸ The position of Ambedkar, the foremost Dalit leader of modern times, went along these lines. He welcomed modernity and its institutions (democracy, educational and legal systems, etc.) as important means for the liberation of the outcastes of India from the longstanding yoke of oppression by the traditional high castes. Many Dalits viewed Christianity as the mediator of modernity. Cf. Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1994.

how the Chinese were in praise of the astronomer-missionary Johann Adam Schall von Bell when he predicted the eclipse in 1623 & 1624, which the Chinese experts could not do.⁶ From history we also learn how when Emperor *Yongzheng* expelled all Christian missionaries, he saw to it that those of them who were astronomers and scientists were allowed to stay. This basic matrix of an association of Christianity as long as it serves the scientific and technological purpose seems to be at work today with the '*cultural Christians*' in some parts of Asia who avidly read and study Christianity, if the sign of the many proliferating literature on Christianity is any indication. Besides ideological background for this trend,⁷ there are also pragmatic considerations of the affinity of Christianity with the Western science and technology.

If we shift our attention to India, the mass conversion of the *Dalits* ("*the untouchables*") and other lower caste groups signified stepping into the world of modernity and its institutions (education, health-care, mobility, equality before law, etc), and thus get liberated from the traditional yoke of caste hierarchy and its oppression. This aspiration for fulfillment of the material needs of life and Christianity in the view of the marginalized groups, facilitated entry into the world of modernity.⁸ It is not so much through the preaching of the Gospel as through *indirect means* that Christianity has been able to make a dent on the society. Numerous educational institutions, medical services, the legal reforms, etc. stand as example of this.

But we stand today in a fresh encounter with modernity and its advanced form of globalisation, with all their ambiguities and contradictions as well as the prospects they offer. We need to reflect deeply on this new stage of encounter. Here let me highlight some aspects of the new stage of encounter in the vastly changed situation.

Civil Society – The Meeting Ground

In most Asian countries, the situation of Christianity is one of isolation. This could derive from the prejudice, discrimination and opposition Christian communities experience from the larger society on account of its 'foreign' origin and colonial connections. But there are

⁹ Cf. Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2003.

¹⁰ Cf. Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992; Jean L. Cohen – Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1999 (fifth printing); Neera Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society. Explorations in Political Theory*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1995; Sudipta Kaviraj – Sunil Khilnani (eds), *Civil Society. History and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

also intrinsic reasons, turning isolation into *self-isolation*. It is a fact that Christianity has not made any significant effort to reach out to the larger society and dialogue with it. The manner of engagement by the Christian communities has given the impression that they act parallel with other institutions like the state. There is the unexpressed message that the Church can do all by itself without needing others, and indeed better than others. We may cite here the examples of educational, welfare and health sectors in which traditionally Christianity has been involved. Christian Churches do not really read the “signs of the times” if they continue basically with their strong institutionalisation, with some marginal adaptations. Christianity could do more to meet the challenges of modernity and globalisation. Opting for the poor in this age of modernity and globalisation calls for new means, strategies and mediation.⁹ It is here we realize the importance of civil society and its mediation for an effective response.

Civil society is the space that is open for citizens to meet together, to discuss, debate, voice their views, and also to critique and make their contestations.¹⁰ The civil society or the public sphere is so very crucial today for the democratisation of the society at all levels, to make the voices of the poor and the marginalized heard, and to check the excesses of the state. The contours of civil society and its mode of functioning will differ from country to country, depending upon the nature of the society and its composition, past history and so on. Participation and dialogue in the sphere of civil society can help individual Christians and Christian communities to make important contributions and thus affect the society and its transformation.

The picture of civil society in Asia is very diverse. In some countries it is vibrant; in others dormant; and in still others it is practically absent because of centralization and totalitarian tendencies. The basic task of committed Christians would be to contribute to the creation of civil society where there is none, and make alive and vibrant where they exist, by their participation and involvement. Through engagement in civil society, Christians could contribute in such important areas as the practice of democracy, defence of the dignity and rights of persons and groups. They could create discourses, form opinions and make these available through modern social media of communication. All this is truly required in a situation in which, as a result of modernity and globalisation, the poor of Asia are being more and more exploited and displaced as migrants and refugees. Such an involvement in civil society

¹¹ Cf. Felix Wilfred, *The Sling of Utopia. Struggles for a Different Society*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2005.

would, in effect, be an exercise in prophetism, and indeed, with other citizens across religious borders and boundaries. The negotiation in the terrain of civil society is the surest means also to break the persisting general isolation of the Christian communities in Asia.

Civil society is also an opportunity for Christianity to be a *critical voice in the political realm*. Given the minority position of Asian Christian communities, the confrontation with the state in matters of justice could have serious practical consequences, if it is exercised in the name of religion. On the contrary, if it is done in civil society along with other citizens, especially the poor and the marginalized, it will have the important effect of holding the state under check and challenging it to fulfil its obligations. *After all, the totality of the good of the society is not identified with the state and its role*. Here is not a question of direct interference with the state (given the autonomy of temporal realities, including the political order), but a matter of involvement for the good of the *society*, which goes beyond the sphere of the state. Asian Christianity needs to seize the opportunity the civil society offers to contribute to the transformation of the modern political order.

Engagement with the civil society can help Asian Christianity to overcome some of the vulnerabilities it is subjected to as a result of its minority position.¹¹ Minority situation need not mean lesser capability to contribute to the society. On the other hand, the issue of minorities and the claims of minority rights themselves need the mediating role of the civil society. Civil society can also help project a proper self-image of Christianity in these modern times. As it is, there is a yawning gap between the actual realities in the Christian communities and the public image of Christianity. Except for a token appreciation of the works of Christians in the educational, medical and other humanitarian fields, the public image is that of a Christianity associated with colonialism and imperialism. To be active participants in the civil society is the way to bring to public awareness the new image of Asian Christianity. It offers the opportunity also to clear many misunderstandings, especially in what concerns mission and conversion.

Joint Asian Critical Response to Modernity and Globalisation

Christianity with its immense spiritual heritage and long historical experiences will be an important actor and force in responding critically to modernity – a response already being given by the victims. This

¹² Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalisation*, Sage Publications, London, 2000 (reprint), p. 80.

would be more in tune with Vatican II, and not a conservative option, which, in the face of the challenges of Asian modernity, may isolate Christianity from the stream of actual realities. In other words, instead of adopting what could be a Church-centred approach, Christianity needs to adopt a collaborative approach. It is more important to be on the way with others, than try to reach the goal before others, which could be an expression of selfishness. It is more important to work with others, even though things are not done perfectly, than try to do everything perfectly all by oneself. If the Christian praxis in Asia adopts this kind of attitude, it will never suffer isolation, nor will it be exposed to the temptation of triumphal and "holier than thou" attitude. In short, in the face of the crisis modernity and globalisation have triggered, Christianity should respond jointly with others to a commonly shared historical situation.

What I have said would receive further confirmation if we look at the matter in more basic terms as an issue of the *relationship of religion to modernity and globalisation*. Peter Beyer in an interesting study notes that in present times of growing specialization religions, which concern themselves with wholeness and totality, are left with no space of operation. Of course, they could continue to function with their traditional roles (rituals, worship, devotion, etc), but with no effective influence in other social systems or in public sphere. He contrasts "function" of religion with "performance".

In the present context, function refers to 'pure' religious communication. Religious performance by contrast, occurs when religion is 'applied' to problems generated in other systems but not solved there, or simply not addressed elsewhere. Examples of such problems are economic poverty, political oppression, familial estrangement, environmental degradation, and personal identity. Through performance relations, religion establishes its importance for the 'profane' aspects of life.¹²

A viable option for an effective presence of religion is to ally itself with critical social forces and movements. In light of this, the approach that is most indicated would be one which focuses on the ethical and moral implications of modernity studied and analysed *jointly* with all those new social forces which move towards greater humanization of

¹² Franz Wolfinger, "Niedergang der Missionen in der Zeit der Aufklärung: Toleranz kontra Mission?", in *Warum Mission?* EOS Verlag Erzabtei St. Ottilien, Munich, 1984, pp. 63 – 94.

the Asian continent. In fact, in Asia the most effective responses to modernity and globalisation are not institutional ones, but provided by the many grassroots movements, which take up local issues that affect the people. The quality of the response of Asian Christianity to modernity and globalisation will, then, depend very much on the intensity of its collaboration with the Asian grassroots movements, which embody the aspirations of the victims.

Asian Theology of Religions as a Response to Modernity

The pursuit of an Asian theology of religions is not merely a theological issue. It is an issue of modernity, and indeed a response to some of the characteristics of modernity impacting on religion and its practice. One such major characteristic is relativity (which is not the same thing as relativism) understood as a dynamic principle of mutual interaction, which includes as well the religious realm. What the Asian theology of religions could do is to contribute to harmonious living, peace and tolerance today. A wrong theology of religion is a dangerous source of fundamentalism, religious bigotry and obscurantism (anti-modern or pre-modern) that is not respectful of the religious sentiments and expressions of peoples of other faiths. An insensitive theology of religion is ammunition for communal conflicts, and social dissension in an Asia where there are already convulsions on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion, and so on.

Hence Asian theology of religions will be critical of any theological position that is based on the “dogma of intolerance” In fact in the West, the birth of modernity coincided with the Enlightenment attempt to overcome religious conflicts by bringing to the fore the idea of tolerance and peace.¹³ The idea of tolerance and peace were further deepened by the application of modern scientific methods of study as was evident in the field of comparative religion. When Vatican II came out with a document on Religious Freedom (*Dignitaries Humanae*), it was a belated response to one of the challenges of the Enlightenment and modernity. In the present times, the spirit of religious freedom and scientific enquiry should characterize Asian theology of religions. This has important consequences for the social and political life in different Asian countries. If all theologies are answerable and ought to be socially responsible, this should be so all the more in the case of theology of religions.

¹⁴ There has been growing interest in the study of Christianity in China. See Zhuo Xinping, “The Study of Christianity by Chinese Scholars in the Twentieth Century and its Significance for the Future”, in *Quest. An Interdisciplinary Journal for Asian Christian Scholars*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 2003), pp. 49 - 61

Awareness of *diversity and plurality* (of world-views, ways of life, religious expressions, practices, and so on) is another important characteristic of modernity. But interestingly this has been the millennial tradition of Asian cultures and civilizations. In that sense, through its unambiguous affirmation of plurality and diversity, Asia has been in the age of modernity and post modernity since millennia! What came about through many struggles and conflicts in the West has been so naturally imprinted in the Asian civilizations. Thus we can speak of *a convergence of modernity and Asian tradition in the issue of diversity and tolerance, understood as a positive and proactive reality*. Asian theology of religions should be so developed as to respond to the exigencies of modernity and in the spirit of Asian heritage.

There is a second aspect to the relationship of theology of religion to modernity. The question about modernity is something in which all the religious traditions can and should collaborate. In *Gaudium et Spes*, it is viewed mainly from the perspective of the Church. The very title of the document reads: "Pastoral Constitution of the *Church* in the Modern World". It does not fall within the purview of this document that the relationship to the modern world is something to which all religions bear responsibility. We realize in Asia that the Church could make greater contribution, if it does it in collaboration with peoples of other faiths. Facing of modernity jointly calls for a theology of religion that is attuned to this urgent need of the times. This may not be possible without a basic rethinking also on the traditional Christian soteriology and the understanding of mission, conversion, and so on.

Christian Studies – the Twilight Discipline

I think today we need a new and distinct discipline of study called Christian Studies to be a twilight discipline – meeting point of many issues and concerns relating to Asian Christianity and modernity. It appears to me that such a discipline is the need of the hour. It will take different contours in different regions and continents in relation to the

¹⁵ This sort of approach is well meant, and it has its advantages, given the cultural estrangement of Christianity in the Asian continent. However, what I am suggesting is that in so doing Christianity has been following the Western trajectory, which studies the non-Western societies as cultural entities. This is contrasted with the study of the West in terms of society. This could be seen in the reservation of "anthropology" for the developing societies, whereas sociology was for the developed Western societies! The underlying assumption is that whereas the societies of Asia and other developing world are stagnant and static (hence object of the study of a de-historicized anthropology), the study of the dynamic societies of the West is studied through sociology.

situation of Christianity and its relationship with the wider society in specific contexts. However, we could already think of some broad lines of general orientation in our Asian context.

The questions and issues Christian Studies will respond to may not be adequately met neither by theology, phenomenology or sociology of religion. Christian studies will not be a discipline, which will pursue a purely *confessional approach* to the study of Christianity. Christian Studies will include the study of world-Christianity from a historical, cultural, theological, sociological and phenomenological perspectives. But it will be more than that. In multireligious and pluralistic societies more and more people would like to have an understanding of Christianity that is developed in intense conversation with the broader society as well as the religious experiences of peoples of other faiths.¹⁴ This discipline will take up issues that should engage Christianity in relation to modernity, globalisation, civil society and public sphere. A discipline that develops through such a practice of interaction with the society will be able, on the one hand, help the Christians to develop the art of negotiating the boundaries, and on the other hand, make people of other religious traditions feel comfortable by vibrating with their questions, issues and concerns.

In this regard, one of the important functions of Christian Studies, as I envisage, would be to focus attention on the interpretation of Christianity, and Christian truths and spirituality by people belonging to other religious traditions. This discipline will take into account also their critical reflections regarding Christianity and its mode of presence in the modernizing Asian societies. Ultimately, this will help to develop, from an academic point of view, a deeper and more critical understanding of Christianity, while from a practical perspective, it will encourage interreligious understanding and harmony. In this sense, it will also be doing a great service by stimulating theological reflections in the wider horizon of a fast modernizing and globalising Asia.

Conclusion

The stimulus from Vatican II was developed in Asia predominantly *in terms of culture*. Consequently, the issue of “inculturation” took a very important place during the past forty years of the post-conciliar period. The challenge of Vatican II for Asia is much larger than the issue of culture, which could – in spite of all good intentions to the contrary – make Christianity recoil on itself and get engrossed on its

own survival. Relating Asian Christianity with modernity is a call to overcome the approach of Christianity in terms of culture, and see Asian societies as dynamic and historically evolving with new questions, problems, and prospects.¹⁵ Such an approach is, evidently, much larger and closer to the actual experiences in Asia and the understanding of mission in this continent.

We need to respond critically to the challenges of modernity and globalisation, which is not happening unfortunately in the required measure and degree. However, it is a heartening to see this taking place in a small but in an intense way at the grassroots level with engaged Christians and Christian groups. Their experiences also provide important clues and leads to develop a proper understanding and theorizing regarding the relationship of Asian Christianity and modernity, going in new directions and avenues, not contemplated in *Gaudium et Spes*, while affirming its achievements.

It is interesting to note that, whereas in the West modernity led to a process of alienation from Christianity and secularisation, in Asia, modernity is bringing many Asians closer to Christianity. There is an increasing search for ethical values and even “transcendence” in the context of the crisis caused by modernity in the personal lives of many people. In some countries, especially in East Asia, people turn to Christianity since, in their view, modernity is closely associated with Christianity, and may also have elements for overcoming the crisis resulting from modernity and globalisation. They look for resources within Christianity to surmount the crisis. This may not be interpreted in the traditional sense of a confessional belonging to Christianity. That will be a complete misunderstanding of the phenomenon. What is happening is *an attempt by Asians to discover for themselves in Christianity a system of values, ethics, and orientations, which may help them in their encounter with modernity*. The growing interest among the “cultural Christians” in China and other parts of Asia could be considered an important expression of this search.

Finally, one of the great things about *Gaudium et Spes* is that here we have an understanding of a Christianity that wants to learn from the world and society. In fact this document as well as the one on Religious Freedom are examples of the influence the secular developments and history have exerted on the thought of the Church. We could state that today only a Christianity that learns from the Asian realities, its secular traditions and sacred history will draw the attention of Asians.

The significance of Christianity in Asia of the future will depend upon the ethical and moral perspectives it could bring into the institutional structures and ways of life in Asian societies. For this to happen, there needs to be attentive listening to the voices of Asia and its distinct languages. Only a learning Christianity will be able to make its contribution to the developing modern societies of the Asian continent.

IV. SEARCHING FOR WAYS OF PEACE

– Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, SDB, Archdiocese of Guwahati, India

*Whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout,
“violence and destruction”! (Jer 20:8)*

During the last century an estimated 130 million were killed (Arbuckle xi)

- One estimate says that, in the 70 years after 1917, the Soviet regime killed 61,911,000 people, of which 20 million were in the Stalinist period alone (Glover 237)
- Between 1958 and 1962, the Great Leap Forward in China killed 20 –30 million people (Glover 284). The cultural revolution launched by Mao Zedong in 1966 killed 15-70 million people
- 2 million died in the Vietnam War
- 3 million in the Korean War
- In the Iran-Iraq War between 1980-1988 a million people were killed
- Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge killed 2 out of the 8 million of Cambodia (Glover 309)
- Between 1900 and 1989 wars all over the world carried away 86 million people (Glover 47)
- In the Hutu-Tutsi clash in the 1990's at least one million were killed (Glover 120)
- Since World War II, 25 million people have been killed by their own governments (Arbuckle 182).
- No less than 10 million people have died since World War II in civic violence.

This list does not include dozens of other international and inter-community conflicts during the last century, more especially recent years, e.g. the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965, 1971, Israeli wars on the Palestinians in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982; the Turkish invasion of Cyprus; revolutions in Egypt 1952, Iraq

and Syria in the 1950's and 1960's, in South Arabia in the 1960's and 1970's, in Iran 1979.

We are getting used to news of violence. Milan Kundera wrote in 1982, "The bloody massacre in Bangladesh quickly covered the memory of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the assassination of Allende drowned the groans of Bangladesh, the war in the Sinai desert made people forget Allende, the Cambodian massacre made people forget Sinai, and so and so forth until ultimately everyone lets everything forgotten2.

Scientists point out that animals fight, but they do not wage wars. Humans are the only species who pursue enthusiastically mass killings of their own kind in a planned way. It might even seem that war belongs to the most important of human inventions! Is it possible that the ability to make peace is a later achievement? The oldest traditions of humanity, its myths and epic poetry, speak primarily of killings. And in our own times, hatred has mounted, and people go the furthest limits of harshness using suicide bombs and killing even of non-combatants, including women and children.

War is not the only form of violence. It takes various forms: ideological conflicts, terrorism, pathological forms of nationalism, racial violence, ethnic cleansing, famine, domestic violence, workplace abuse, football hooliganism, cyberspace violence, intercultural violence... and finally, **accepting violence as normal**. Violence is both action and lack of action that is insensitive to human suffering and oppressive of human persons. Violence in every form keeps growing. Indeed, as St. Paul says, presently "...all of creation groans with pain" (Romans 8:22).

People like Konrad Lorenz have written at length about the innate aggressiveness of man, concluding from animal behaviour that human beings are programmed to be violent in war, crime, personal quarrels and destructive and sadistic behaviour, as though there is an innate instinct to aggressiveness (Fromm 22). This point of view we are unable to accept. For, once we accept that violence is normal for human beings, that an ethnic clash or nuclear war is due to biological factors beyond our control, we do nothing to prevent war or violence. But the fact is that our aggressive behaviour is created by social, political and economic circumstances of our own making. We can prevent it.

That is why it is good for us to study our inner weaknesses more

carefully. For example, since 'tribalism' (fierce loyalty to one's own community including exaggerated forms of nationalism and other collective self-identities) runs so deep in our nature, it looks impossible to eliminate these dispositions in us. However, when we know more about the monsters within us, we learn to cage them and tame them (Glover 7). The greater our individual and collective self-consciousness about our inner makeup, the easier it becomes for us to handle ourselves. History can teach us many lessons.

Forms of Violence

*"Non violence is not for power but for truth.
It is not pragmatic but prophetic." (Thomas Merton).*

Violence is not about war only, but about abusing people, reducing their self-esteem and their self-confidence, or self-wroth, leading them to an experience of powerlessness and subjugation, e.g. due to poverty (Arbuckle xii). Violence can be physical, emotional, verbal, theological, cognitive, sexual, visual, institutional, structural, economic, political, social and ecological.

Violence also includes condoning violence, inaction during violence, passive acceptance of violence, considering violence as useful. We all contribute to violence when we take refuge in any of these forms of escapism. For example, when governments defend their military and law-enforcing personnel and prevent international scrutiny of reported physical tortures (like in Iraq or Chechnya), they condone violence. When men of the police force stand with each other in mutual defence despite their inhuman treatment of prisoners, they condone violence. The same is true of members of a gang that defend each other though they know that their companions have gone to excesses, of political leaders that overlook the violence of supporters, of ideologies that consider violence as self-defence, professionals who tolerate colleagues in their dishonest and exploitative ways.

Modern man, who claims to have set himself free from every form of oppression from political and religious authorities or social conventions, is today even more exploited than ever before in a hidden manner; he has become a slave to the business interests of mighty impersonal corporations. As a consumer, he/she is compelled to be satisfied with second rate mass produced goods, and third rate entertainment; he is deceived by advertisements, illusory hopes, unsatisfiable, unrealisable

goals, personality-degrading and mind-fragmenting concepts. As a worker too he/she is abused and exploited, and often he becomes addicted to work.

Gerald Arbuckle puts the following activities on the list of violence: maligning others, calumniating, spreading negative rumours, and character-assassination, deceptive strategies used by corporate magnates, e.g. using euphemisms like 'downsizing' to mean plain sacking; political manipulations, e.g. offering bribes, making unrealistic promises, using deceptive flattery, gossiping, hurting people with cynical humour, taunting, sneering, scorning, "scape-goating" vandalism, projecting onto others one's own faults, football hooliganism (greatly aggravated by commercial sports), political witch-hunting and oppression of minorities. He considers also political patronage, cronyism, family-rule over society (Marcos, Suharto), new forms of colonialism, imbalance in trade and economic relationships, placing unbearable burdens of international debts on weaker nations... all as forms of violence.

Furthermore, there is the violence done to future generations when the present generation leaves debts behind, exhaust natural resources, damage nature, etc. By doing so, the present generation violates an unwritten contract of justice it has made with the coming generations. There is violence planted also into those unhelpful philosophies that educate the rising generation to collective anger, cynicism, exaggerated pragmatism, narcissism, and nihilism.

Then there are the local variations of violence: caste unfairness in India, communal clashes in South Asia, gender inequality in many parts of the continent, unequal class structures in West Asia and elsewhere, insidious consumer and media cultures in developed countries, violence sanctioned or sponsored by government, drug deals, street gang violence in urban centres, insurgency and secessionism, ethnic hatred, militant politics; mafia in Sicily and the US. (Arbuckle 174).

Arbuckle sees a tinge of human aggressiveness even in the recent legal and the media harshness against paedophile clergy. When we notice that the Olympic Games which were meant to bring nations together, have often been marred by aggressive competitiveness and nationalistic pride, we realize how deeply violence has planted itself into our public life.

Civilization has not Civilized us

*“Nuclear weapons have changed everything,
except our modes of thought” (Einstein)*

Eric Fromm says that, contrary to what people usually think, primitive man was the least warlike, and that it was the growth of civilization that changed this (Fromm 206). “The history of civilization from the destruction of Carthage and Jerusalem to the destruction of Dresden, Hiroshima, and the people, soil, and trees in Vietnam, is a tragic record of sadism and destructiveness” (Fromm 227). Fromm sees the degree of **destructiveness increasing with the increased development of civilization**. Man is the only species that kills and tortures members of his own kind without any reason, either biological or economic, and feels satisfaction in doing so (Fromm 25).

Technology gives the aggressor an advantage, and accentuates the impersonality of killing. One does not realise the damage one is causing. In fact, it looks as though the killer is not killing, but operating a machine. A human person comes to be doing the very opposite of what he/she is made for.

The Nazi killing of the Jews was organized as a production process. Those who could not do useful work were led into the gas chambers and gas let in. Useful objects like clothes, hair, gold teeth were sorted out and recycled. The reply of the Allies to the German-Japanese military harshness was equally terrible. The attack on Hamburg wiped out a city of 2 million in three nights (Glover 81). The 2 atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed over 340,000 people in the course of 5 years.(Glover 897-9). All sensitivity had disappeared on both sides.

The impersonality of an industrialised society, with the poverty, squalor and disorder it gives rise to, is prone to producing an atmosphere conducive to violence: common values and personal relationships begin to disappear; consequently, **modern man is isolated and lonely**; he/she becomes part of a crowd, not of a community. Margaret Thatcher asked cynically, “Is there such a thing as a civil society?”

Psychologists tell us that human organism needs both stimulation and rest. In industrial societies, the human person is continuously under stimuli: greed, sex, violence, narcissism through movies, TV, radio, magazines, and the market (Fromm 323)

We see that man's aggressiveness is due to those aggression producing conditions that he himself creates: physical conditions, mental attitudes, intellectual convictions, acquired beliefs. It is up to him/her to create conditions that will contribute to peace and harmony.

Providing a Philosophy for Violence

"The imagination and the spiritual strength of Shakespeare's evildoers stopped short at a dozen corpses, because they had no ideology. On the contrary, people armed with an ideology of aggressiveness kill millions."

(Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago)

Many modern ideologies have justified violence. Marx believed in violent struggle, Darwin taught that the fittest would eliminate the rest. Young people for a few generations have been fed on the thoughts of thinkers like Marx, Lenin, Mao, Camus, Marcuse, Sartre, Che Guevara, Fanon, Arendt and Gramsci. For them, struggle is the sole path towards progress. They look at every human being as a wolf to every other human being. But a more careful study of human history will reveal that every struggle was in the larger context of 'Collaboration', and that those who reconcile and motivate others for collaboration make the greatest contribution to human growth. Not 'either us or them', but 'both us and them' = we.

Indeed, Collaboration is the Law of Human History, not conflict taken in its isolation. According to Nietzsche, every higher culture began with the conquest by barbarians who had an "unbroken strength and lust for power". The nobles came from the barbarians. Their superiority lay in psychical strength, which also meant 'more complete beasts'. Nietzsche saw in Christian compassion the triumph of Judeo-Christian slave morality. He laments that the Jewish ideology (morality) developed in Egypt where the Jews were slaves, and was further developed by Christians when they were also slaves. He was alarmed at the spread of this kind of morality in the world (Glover 12). In his thinking, the concept of struggle predominates (Glover 13). He says, half the world is weak, sick, and inconstant; that is the half that glories in being weak, compassionate, and humble. And that is the conspiracy of women and priests against men, against the 'strong'.

Nietzsche despised altruism. Loving your neighbour is a disguise for mediocrity (Glover 14). Egoism is essential to the noble soul, the belief

that others are subordinate by nature to us (Glover 15). In advocating hardness, he rejects pity as unmanly. "To see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more... Without cruelty there is no festival" (Glover 16).

It is this type of conviction that makes leaders brainwash their people about the need to fight. What surprises us is the ease with which people go for philosophies of violence and fall under the spell of irrational doctrines, political or religious. The reason, however, is simple: human beings need a cohesive frame of orientation. The more an ideology pretends to give answers to all questions, the more attractive it is (Fromm 311). Ultimately it becomes, as Albert Camus said of Communism, a **metaphysical justification for organized murder**.

The Nazi ideology of wanting to preserve the unmixed Aryan identity of the German people led to the excesses of World War II. Many Germans thought Nazism gave their lives meaning and purpose (Glover 362). People became 'mono-cerebral', whose feelings had withered. For them, the only form of sin was failing to take advantage of others when opportunities offered themselves.

In the same way, for Stalin, violence was a necessary part of his revolutionary goal. He believed that individual victims were unimportant, that in the longer historical perspective they would be forgotten (Glover 256). Mao thought he could afford to lose 300 million people in a nuclear war, since the other 300 million Chinese would emerge strong.

Even today, theories of violence are propagated continuously on the TV, on the internet and through comic books: the belief that violence solves problems, that the more power the better, that threats do help. The media entertains people with violence. It is calculated that children in the US see 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before they leave elementary school.

As there are conflict-promoting ideologies, there are responsibility-shifting ideologies. Zygmunt Bauman has argued that modernity is "prominent for the tendency to shift moral responsibilities away from the moral self either toward constructed and managed supra-individual agencies, or through floating responsibility inside a bureaucratic 'rule of nobody'" (Bauman 1995, 99). In a manner of speaking, post-modernity today has created a climate in which evasion of moral responsibilities

is a way of life. By rendering relationships 'fragmentary' and 'discontinuous', it fosters 'disengagement and commitment-avoidance'". Post-modern thinkers believe that every account of justice that purports to be universal is inherently oppressive.

Many ideologies are continuously proving to be incomplete explanations, and even to be deceptive. Turning back to Marxist ideology, we are today able to see that class analysis alone does not explain all the diverse dimensions of corporate reality and conflict. Time has come for us to develop complementary systems of thought ... and a **philosophy for peace.**

Working on Emotions

"If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold"
(Gen 4:24).

When myths replace history, societies are in danger. Slobodan Milosevic's creation of a Serbian national mythology proved disastrous to the populations of the Balkans. Croats and Muslims had to pay heavily for it. Myths are kept alive by commemorative events and public display. Symbols stir human hearts. It is said, men possess thoughts, but symbols possess men (Arbuckle 18).

Little angers get accumulated, or get linked with bigger angers, and explode; local issues are permeated with regional and national issues, the combination of personal quarrel with communal anger or political grievance often aggravate tensions.

Emotions can be worked up out of proportion to the grievance. At times it happens that more serious emotions are being roused over lesser issues, while people who are suffering under far greater hardships remain silent. While some fight for fulfilment, others have to fight for existence. Some struggle for greater amenities, others for basic necessities. Some press for privileges, others for most elementary and greatly reduced rights; some for exaggerated forms of self-expressions, other for essential freedoms. Some deafen the world with their greatly magnified claims, others whisper their basic needs below their breath.

There is a big difference between the expectations of people in the developed worlds and those in the less developed ones.

Using Aggressive Language

*The motto of the Red Guards,
"Mercy to the enemy is cruelty to people"
(Glover 291)*

Aggressive language has gone into many ideologies and theologies that have developed during the last few decades. Justice issues have been often universalised, sometimes trivialised, not rarely personalised. In fact, justice-fighters need to look at their issues more holistically. From a distance, the world may appear neatly divided into guilty perpetrators and innocent victims. The closer we get, however, the more the line between the guilty and the innocent blurs and we see an intractable maze of small and large hatreds, manipulations, and brutalities, each reinforcing the other. The victim from one point of view is an oppressor from another point of view, and in another context. "To break the world cleanly into victims and violators ignores the depths of each person's participation in cultural sin. There simply are no innocents", Marjorie Suchocki (quoted in Volf 80).

Working for peace is not a popular mission in our times. The fighter is the hero today - fighting for justice, for human rights, for the environment, for women's rights, for one's people. However, what happens when justice as perceived by one, fights against justice as perceived by another? What happens when principles collide: e.g. the rights of the individual and the rights of indigenous people, one person's right to property and another person's right to existence, one person's right to success and another person's right to survival?

One person's justice is another person's injustice; one therefore seeks 'just' revenge, and the other 'just' counter-revenge (Volf 121). No wonder then that "the world's injustices, the most bloody and unjustifiable transgressions of justice are committed daily in the name of justice, under the protection of the name of justice". That is why while we struggle for justice we should approach the entire endeavour in a peaceful way, and make it clear at every stage like Mahatma Gandhi that our intentions are peaceful, and that we can be self-critical as well, and that we are capable of repenting for our own injustice.

Cultivating Memory of Historic Injuries

“Memory is not what happened, but what people felt had happened” (E. Hobsbawm).

In the Balkans, the Serbs, Croatsians, Muslims... all had their own negative memories. Mothers taught the children words like Jihad, war, crusade, revenge with deep emotion. The Turks had defeated the Serbs in 1389 in Kosovo on the Field of Blackbirds. The Croatsians had taken advantage of Serbs during World War II. It was not easy for the Serbs to forget these hurts and humiliations. Slobodan Milosevic’s “this is your land” speech aroused their wounded memories. The Serb media whipped up anger among the Serbs. So did the Croatian media among their own people. The media war ultimately led to actual conflict.

History is often written in such a manner as to keep alive negative memories and promote prejudices. The B.J.P. Government wanted to re-write Indian history highlighting Islamic excesses and showing the minorities in bad light. It is reported that Pakistani textbooks describe Jews as tight-fisted moneylenders, Christians as vengeful conquerors, Hindus as devious and cowardly people. China and Japan have serious differences of opinion about their recording of World War II events. Protestants in Northern Ireland go further: they keep alive their anger by the solemn celebration of the Orange parade in which the defeat of the Catholics by William of Orange in 1691 is celebrated. And Catholics respond in similar fashion.

Anger against one’s own traditional culture is even more tragic. During the Cultural Revolution in China, the Red Guards attacked traditional Chinese cultures. They wanted to eliminate the influence of Confucius on Chinese society. They destroyed most of the temples in China. In people’s houses, books and works of art were destroyed. Libraries were wrecked and books burnt (Glover 288).

There is a general human weakness that when we revive our memories we tend to be selective, prejudiced and lost in self-pity. Only a healing of memories can bring a less destructive world into existence.

In recent years, prayer-services and commemoration of the dead are being conducted on sites associated with wars, with unhealed or unacknowledged collective wounds: Verdun, Gettysburg, Auschwitz, Hiroshima (Parker 57). **We cannot change our past, but we can change**

our response to the past.

Since memories shape present identities, neither 'I' nor 'the other' can be redeemed without the redemption of the remembered past. When we entertain profound hurt feelings over the memories of our colonial past, we are doing more hurt to ourselves than to others. We attain true freedom only when we have redeemed our past and got rid of all rancour and ill feeling. We must dig up the anger that is buried in our hearts and transmute it by the power of genuine forgiveness into re-invigorating spiritual energies.

Working on Prejudice-Reduction

"For he who does reverence to his own sect, in reality, inflicts, by such conduct, the severest injury on his own sect".

Edict XII of Asoka (c. 261 B.C.)

History records any number of instances of mutual prejudice. All communities had a negative word to refer to the outsider: for the Greeks barbaroi, for the Romans barbari, for the Jews gentiles, for the Indians mleccas, for believers infidels. People had negative images of each other, they stereotyped each other; their memories of events differed.; communities deliberately cultivated prejudices. Where there is actual prejudice, nothing else matters— you are just a stereotype of your community (Glover 152).

Ideological prejudices can lead to grave injustices. But the education of the public against these prejudices is not easy. People always want to tag responsibility onto someone. Kati Adie of the BBC reportedly said in 1993 about Yugoslavia, 'if you take the stand that nobody is totally good or totally bad, the viewers are not pleased'. And yet that is the truth. Things need to be explained. John Dawson says, "Paradoxically, the greatest wounds in history ... have not happened through the acts of some individual perpetrator; rather through institutions, systems, philosophies, cultures, religions and governments". That is why no one seems responsible and everyone is happy to disclaim responsibility. **However, all are responsible in varying ways.**

Since all disown responsibility, the situation turns out to be like a blind man leading the blind. When we propagate ideologies that condone violence, when we support a conflict for the achievement of some immediate goal forgetful of vaster consequences, when we over-insist

on one set of rights deliberately remaining blind to a comprehensive network of rights and relationships in true Asian style, we do not know what we are supporting. We cease to be promoters of life. A cold legal view of all reality, not a human vision of life, begins to reign.

Eric Fromm said that emphasis on law and order only without worrying about life and structure, stricter punishment for criminals, love of destructive violence – do not contribute to the growth of man, do not promote love for life (Fromm 33). One person's justice is another person's barbarity. Even the concept of Human Rights has different connotations in different parts of the world, and in different cultural contexts. Carter said, for, the Americans human rights are about freedom of religion, press, rule of law, etc. Soviet concern is about a decent home, right to have a job, family, medical care (Runyon 6). In the Asian context, they may be further different. But when people try to impose 'mono-civilizational' answers on humanity as a whole, tensions are bound to rise.

If, after World War I, the winners had held some of their pretended rights in suspense and thought of forgiveness and reconstruction, they would not have alienated Germany altogether.

We can learn from history. A new beginning can be attempted even after a long period of mutual alienation. Prophetic gestures can reduce tensions. Forgiveness can lead to better times. When Tony Blair took over as the British Prime Minister, he issued an apology on behalf of the British for their contribution to the infamous Irish Potato famine. This gesture met with the universal approval of the Irish political leaders. The fact, of course, is that there is a myth around the Irish famine of 1847 as though it was caused only by the neglect of British Protestants. But Irish Catholic middlemen also would have to be held responsible (Arbuckle 10). There is a myth around the Bengal famine in India, which happened during World War II, as though it was caused solely by the indifference of the British Government. But the insensitivity of the Hindu business community and Muslim administrators, who at that time, shared responsibility with the British for ruling Bengal, was equally a cause for the disaster. In the 1980's Mikhail Gorbachev withdrew his forces from Eastern Europe, and told the West that he had deprived them of an enemy (Glover 232). The Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's bus trip to Lahore thrilled millions of Indians and Pakistanis.

Suffering can lead to vindictiveness or to redemption. "Suffering can also lead to the belief that, having suffered, one has acquired a right to impose suffering upon others. It is the special task of the survivors of violence to show us how such suffering may be transformed into redemption" (Veena Das 33).

Redeeming the past... .. that is what forgiveness is. Extremely hard as it may sound, forgiveness is the only reliable strategy for ending the self-repeating phenomenon of unfairness in human history. Forgiveness alone can break the cycle of violence. It holds the ultimate key to that treasury which can pay all historic debts.

Oppressors and Oppressed are just Ordinary People

Dean Rusk speaking about the Cuban crisis said, "I've met and worked with a good many people whose names are in the history books or in the headlines. I have never met a demigod or a superman. I have only seen relatively ordinary men and women groping to deal with the problems with which they are faced"

It is ordinary men that contribute to war or to peace. One can grow into a monster, another into an amazing peacemaker.

It is the ideology-creators, idea-givers that are behind mighty forms of violence but they could have built up an ideology for peace too.

Both the authors of violence and victims are just ordinary people. Dividing the good and the evil is not as simple as some would like to make out. Alexander Solzhenitsyn says in his book *Gulag Archipelago*, "If only it were all so simple!! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But **the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being...** it is after all only because of the way things worked out that they were the executioners and we weren't" (Glover 401).

The slide into complicity with what is evil in our culture would not be nearly as easy if the cultures did not so profoundly shape us. In times of crisis, we find it difficult to distance ourselves from our culture and raise our voices in protest. In fact, we find ourselves almost helpless if the prevalent culture itself has already surrendered to an ideology of violence. We join in the violence ourselves, or seek escape in merely

‘denouncing the other’. We act as though a self-righteous denunciation of ‘the other’ sets all things right.

When we limit ourselves to moralistic denunciations of injustice, we do not fulfil our mission. We must proceed on to historically and socially informed ground breaking efforts.

Experience abundantly shows that the categories ‘oppression/ liberation’ seem ill suited to bring about reconciliation and sustain peace between people and people groups. This is the firm conviction of persons who have lived a full life in the midst of ideology-driven conflict. Ultimately what is required is reconciliation between the oppressors and the oppressed, or else it will merely lead to injustice-with-role-reversal.

The Healing of Collective Memories

*“..all men have hearts. And each heart has its own leanings.
Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong”
(Prince Shotuka of Japan)*

Edward said in his ‘Culture and Imperialism’ points out that during the colonial period, intellectuals who should have been the guardians of the conscience of their own nation and culture were no more than echoes of their community’s prejudices, their noble ideals notwithstanding. Slave trade, world conquest, and unfair commerce were all part of the “civilizing, modernizing, and ‘Christianizing course’... ..a form of civilization that led to holocaust, apartheid and ethnic cleansing”!!

It is the task of today’s intellectuals to heal such memories in their own communities ...those communities that suffered this colonial injury, restore them to health and help them to look positively to the future. That is the only way they may **transform their wounded cultures** and the disturbed social situation in which they live, bringing health and wholeness. They have a vocation to be healers and not to be a depository of grievances.

We need a ‘healing of collective memories’. When you happily meet the other and forgive, the demon in the other disappears. In fact, you begin discovering yourself in the other and are filled with compassion even for his future. You discover that they are also human, just like you!

In a dealing with East-West historic injuries and negative memories, two kinds of conclusions are not helpful: a) conclusions that arise from an exaggerated sense of guilt of the West for its colonial past, or those that presently reflect its attitude of dominance, b) equally, those conclusions that arise from the **unhealed memories of people in ex-colonies**, i.e. of those who suffer excessively from **post-colonial complexes** and live on grievances. Their conclusions are not likely to correspond to precise reality or to lead to anything very useful. There is bound to be a blind spot somewhere. They can only be partially objective. Their conclusions need to be sifted and re-interpreted before they can be useful for actual life. Objectivity can spring only from serene reflection, with an enormous amount of confidence in one's own heritage with no grudge towards anyone, with no guilt feelings on the one hand, nor grievance or anger on the other.

Prince Shotoku of Japan introduced a liberal constitution in 604 A.D. He said, "nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong" (Aston 128-33). In the light of this marvellous insight coming from a great prince who lived on our ancient continent, could we decide to bring a **non-confrontational approach** to our problems? Can we be true Asians, living in the tradition of Buddha, Asoka, prince Shotoku and the Dalai Lama? The mission of peace calls for a new thinking. It lays on us the compulsion of awakening a new consciousness in ourselves. It demands that we bring new themes for discussion, create a new public opinion, build up new philosophical and theological bases for peace.

To begin with, we ought to search for the roots of aggressiveness in ourselves. We must canalise and tap that hidden energy for new purposes. Only when we have unmasked injustice and evil in our own inner world and have subjected ourselves to a spiritual surgery, shall we be able to discover the forces of evil in the society that surrounds us and commit ourselves to working on them. Or else, even as we work for peace, we may find in ourselves a striving for unfair superiority, eagerness to manipulate others; we may discover traces of individual and collective selfishness, unwillingness to share power and material means.

The Koreans have a word '*Han*' to refer to the experience of pain, bitterness, helplessness and eagerness for revenge imposed by injustice and oppression...at times accumulated over centuries. The result is a self-image of victim hood. We need to be liberated from it.

Young people in particular have to be helped out of self-imprisonment in bitterness, lest they retreat into themselves in a permanent manner. Listening, affirming, appreciating, questioning, searching together, leading people to **creative dialogue with even opponents...** these are some of the steps that the healer of memories takes in the fulfilment of his/her ministry.

It is a Higher Motive that can Persuade

*“What should I do with that,
by which I do not become immortal?” (Upanishads)*

Human beings come fully alive only when they share with others those values and ideas, which they consider precious and true. These satisfy them more than anything else. Martin Luther King said, “If you haven’t found something that you’re willing to die for, you’re probably not fit to live any way”. Self-interest is a reality of life, but creative and sensitive people will learn to combine it with concern for others, sensitive leaders will combine it with national interests and with those of humanity.

Persons like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela were inspired by a higher motive, when they adopted an approach of **refusal to retaliate to injuries**. They entertained a vision of love as an agent of change, and communicated this message with demonstrative action. It did not exclude the dimension protest, e.g. when they deliberately broke the law for conscience sake (civil disobedience). They acted out of conviction.

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winner, said that he was deeply impressed by a question raised in the Upanishads, one of India’s ancient classics. He was referring to the question of the learned wife of Yajnavalkya when she asked “What should I do with that, by which I do not become immortal?” This profound question in the Upanishads inspired him in his efforts to propose an economic theory which gave central importance to the human side of economic development, and which won him the Nobel Prize. Pope Benedict XVI was right when he expressed his conviction that wherever and whenever men and women were enlightened by the splendour of truth, they naturally set out on the path of peace (World Day of Peace, ‘In truth, peace’, 1.1.06).

Human beings need an object of total devotion as a focal point of all their strivings and a basis for all their effective values (Fromm 311); material possessions alone does not satisfy the human heart. When

relationships and adequate self-expressions will be considered more important than consumption and retaliation, human society will be reborn.

War and peace are not things that depend on fate or instinct, but on human choices and community-set goals (Fromm 156). If it is the path of peace that people choose, coming generations shall be blessed. E.F.M. Durbin and J. Bowlby (1939) have argued with great skill that **peaceful cooperation, not merciless competition**, is the most natural and fundamental tendency in human beings (Fromm 283). Only if we decide to follow this tendency, so gently planted into us by our Creator, can we move from confusion to community, war to peace, propaganda to respectful conversation, enmity to amity.

In cultural chaos people are left without familiar symbols, myths, rituals, convictions (Arbuckle 23). Humanity, in consequence is weakened in the human person and gradually culture goes dead, society withers. St. Iranaeus said that the glory of God was the human person fully alive. Eric Fromm calls such a person a "biophilous" person. He/she loves life and everything alive, furthers growth, wonders, loves the adventure of living. He/she sees the whole not merely the parts of the human person, of human society, of history. He/she influences others through love, reason, example, and inspiration, not through authoritarian ways; promotes the culture of life, and culture comes alive through him/her and society prospers.

For Marx, moral laws were a disguise for class interests. And yet we cannot deny that there is an inner voice that speaks to us. "The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it has gained a hearing. Ultimately, after endlessly repeated rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points in which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind" (Segismund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, quoted in Glvoer 224).

Building on the Asian concept of Compassion

Ancient epics like Illiad, Odessey, Mahabharata and Ramayana were about the heroic deeds of the strong against the weak. Modern epics have been about the courageous struggles of the weak and oppressed against the strong, like the struggle for political independence and economic fairness. A time is coming, and it is here, when we shall enact and write together the grand epics of 'Reconciliation and Peace', bringing the weak and the strong together...until all are strong.

We shall be locked in inextricable struggles with each other, with no visible progress in any direction if the concept of justice is not tempered by that of **compassion**, a central value in Asian tradition.

The Confucian emphasis on justice, for example, is softened by many **humanistic ideals** and the cultivation of self-discipline. It is completed by moral education that strengthens affective ties in society and promotes the common good. Virtues like solidarity, dedication to the community, family values, social harmony and exercise of benevolence are fully in Confucian tradition, softening a crude understanding social justice.

If we do not make place for love in our hearts and in the heart of our struggles, our life will not fructify and all our efforts will lead to endless self-defeating and self-perpetuating struggles! "Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous. Love is never boastful or conceited... It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes" (1 Cor 13:4-7).

We need peace makers today, people who esteem others, even their enemies; those who win sympathies and support by the uprightness of their conduct and truthfulness of their argument; those who transform hearts by human touch with which they handle even the most vitiated situations; who have the ability to identify and separate real issues from their own ego-requirements, the rigid ideologies they have appropriated, the irrelevant theologies and predetermined positions they have accepted.

The work for peace often begins with one person who is convinced and committed. It is a work that calls for courage, even greater courage than waging war. It seeks no glamour. It is an effort that needs to sustain itself even when every pointer to success seems to vanish. It is a work that seeks to tap every form of good will buried in the deepest recesses of the opponent's heart.

Building one's Concern for Humanity on the foundation of 'Inner Group Loyalty'

As we have already seen, inter-community conflicts are daily on the increase. The world today is being torn apart by the politics of differences. As a consequence, some have come to consider the inner loyalty within an ethnic group as a negative force, describing it as 'tribal loyalty'. But, in fact, it is an eminently positive force. Anthropologists look at identity affirmation of communities as something healthy, even necessary. It is the energy that any community needs for its own self-preservation and self-enhancement. It serves as psycho-social purpose

ensuring solidarity within the community in times of danger. (Glover 142). It is on this solid foundation that we can build our commitment to the whole of humanity as well. The inner loyalty we speak of has gradually to be widened to include an ever-widening circle of friends until it embraces the whole human family.

In India the joint family used to give a sense of security and well being to its members, especially in moments of crisis. Japanese hold by peer group loyalty at school or employment. This group acts like an extended family. To think of one's group as very special is normal. This understanding of one's group as unique, however, must combine with the recognition of every other community too as unique, each in its own way, and include respect for other groups and their rights. Loyalty to one's own community is a resource. When it opens out to the rest of humanity in benevolence, it becomes fruitful. Most world religions have proposed transcending the confining boundaries of one's own community. Christian concern reaches out to the ends of the earth.

Solidarity in evil can only be countered by solidarity in good. Soon after World War II Carl Jung wrote, "It is a fact that cannot be denied: the wickedness of others becomes our own wickedness because it kindles something evil in our hearts" (Jung 1964a, 168). The same would be true of the goodness of people. It kindles goodness in others.

Tapping the Resource of Asian Cultures

Though the FABC had invited the Asian Churches decades ago to plan their mission in dialogue with the 'Cultures of Asia', we have done too little reflection in this line. While we have given considerable attention to the socio-economic problems of Asia, we have done too little to tap the resources of the sturdy cultures and civilizations of our ancient continent. Our pride in the rich heritage of our great civilizations and stimulating cultures would have little substance, unless we searched for greater rooted-ness in our own inherited values and traditions.

Asian values of religiosity, community cohesion, family loyalty, love, compassion, concern for every sentient being, absolute respect for life, choice of the middle path, moderation, balance, renunciation for a higher goal... ..these and many other values in our tradition elude the scrutiny of technological and scientific research. They are not considered relevant to current economic theories. But our society lives by them, except small sections that have become alienated from their original identity.

These values can be understood only through profound reflection in the context of a living community in which they are rooted. If we have become uprooted individuals, we shall miss depth and the sustaining power that comes from our community. Cohesion within the community and concern for the larger good of humanity, the measure of self-renouncing generosity and radical commitment that such a challenge elicits ...these do not figure in the market place. And yet these determine the destinies of societies, nations and civilizations; so many of us unfortunately look at ourselves and our cultural heritage 'with borrowed glasses' – like uprooted people. So it happens that our self-understanding itself is not sufficiently Asian.

If Asian values do not find a place in defining the future of Asian societies, we can only see a 'black hole' ahead. Structural changes or legal reforms alone cannot ensure good conduct. Laws are interpreted and observed in a particular context and with its own traditional values. If, for example, respect for life is not an absolute value, and what is important is the smartness to evade the law-enforcing machinery, then violence will thrive. It is doing so already in many situations.

We often take values for granted. We think that they are 'the given' in any society. We can no longer think so. Communities that are alienated from the core of their inner selves have become rootless, and their traditional values miss the sustaining strength derived from their cultures. Modern society has been striving hard to propagate a sort of 'secular humanism' to replace centuries old cultures and civilizations, and even religions. It has met with limited success. Mahatma Gandhi and Dalai Lama have shown that a peaceable approach, rooted in our ancient civilizations and religions, can be brought to the mightiest problems of the day. Did not Jesus teach, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5:9)? It is this assurance that has to be developed into a theology that can guarantee a future for us.

The Strength of Religion

*"He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to heal the broken-hearted" (Is 61:1)*

Speaking of the need for peace, Kurt Biedenkopf, MP of West German Parliament, said some years ago, "We will have to rely on the strength of religion...to make the kind of sacrifices and exercise

the self-disciple that will be demanded (Runyon x). It is true that the human person is often ruled by self-interest. But he/she is also subject to the law of mutual interest in the other and in the common good. It is religion that can impose this law from within. Religion seeks to reconcile differing people. Issues may be irreconcilable, but if people who can love and trust and forgive can be reconciled, issues speedily become reconcilable.

The Church may not have always succeeded in her effort to bring peace to human society, but she has kept trying in spite of her own limitations. People would like the Church to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. But the problems remain. Over the years, the Church has to become an agent of healing for individuals, families, institutions, nations, communities and cultures struggling with the memory of a wounded history. In this, Pope John Paul II has set us a marvellous example.

“He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted” (Is 61:1). Every Christian believer, every citizen, ought to take on this responsibility. No one needs to be afraid he/she will fail. Jesus said: “...forgive seventy times seven times (Mt 18:21). And we learn to identify with the victims of violence, as Christ did on the cross.

F.W. de Klerk of South Africa was asked whether it was international sanctions that brought apartheid to an end. His reply was quick, “It was not sanctions, but a deep analysis on our knees before God”. Mandela knew how to forget injuries. He was like Joseph of old who knew how to forgive, forget, and to begin all over again (Gen 45:14-15; 46:1ff). God keeps forgetting evil (Is 43:18-19; 25; 65:17; Jer 31:34; Rev 31:4). When we think of it, forgiveness is double suffering: accepting the original injury, and forgoing the claims of justice. But it ushers in a new spring. It lays the foundation of a new future. And a new heaven and a new earth are in store for us.

When we grow conscious of the shadow side of our being and make up our mind to work on it, we begin to discover the inner resources for healing hidden within us. Then only shall we be empowered to shed the sunshine of joy, love, gentleness and happy relationships around us. Then only shall we develop the spiritual strength to be effective in the healing ministry and tap the restorative power of peace and non-violence. Only the strength of an inner peacefulness, which we

have painstakingly acquired through prayer and closeness to God can give a peace-giving quality to our words and deeds. May we make a worthwhile contribution to the great cause of peace, reconciliation and healing in these troubled times.

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