

**THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE  
TO THE PHENOMENON OF VIOLENCE  
IN SOUTH ASIA**

**RISING FUNDAMENTALISM AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE  
AND THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE**

**A PASTORAL OVERVIEW**

**KATHMANDU, NEPAL**

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**I. THE FINAL STATEMENT OF THE CONSULTATION**

1. Between September 16-22, 1996, we, 26 bishops from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal, met in Kathmandu, Nepal, to study and reflect on the theme: "Christian Response to the Phenomenon of Violence in South Asia." Assisted by resource persons, we addressed questions related to the nature and varieties of violence in the South Asian context, the growing phenomenon of religious fundamentalism, and principles for a Christian response.

**2. Nature of Violence**

Violence is any encroachment on the fundamental rights of an individual or a group. It is the control and subjugation of one human person to the will of another, which diminishes both the dignity of the oppressed and the humanity of the oppressor. As such, violence is a transgression against the created order established by God.

**3. Kinds of Violence**

When referring to violence, we immediately think of physical violence against the body, including, in its most extreme form, murder. We recognise, however, that there are forms of moral and psychological violence which can be even more degrading than the purely physical. Moreover, violence is

not only a desecration of individuals, but also of whole groups in society. Among the forms of violence which we find around us, we note in particular:

a. Social violence, in which an individual or group is ostracised, demeaned, and made the object of discrimination.

b. Cultural violence, where a people's values and traditions are invaded, degraded, or destroyed by other groups.

c. Religious violence, when one is denied religious freedom and made to suffer for one's beliefs, and people are looked down upon or discriminated against in law because of their faith.

d. Economic violence, where people are denied, because of caste or social group, opportunities granted to others, given inadequate pay, and forced to take only the lowliest, most menial work.

e. Political violence, where persons are dismissed from their positions, arrested, tortured, and deprived of their rights because of their political beliefs.

f. Ethnic violence, when people are expelled from their lands or subject to discrimination because their ethnic group is considered threatening or inferior.

g. Gender violence, when the dignity and rights of women are violated, when they are paid less for the same work, sexually harassed, denied educational opportunities, or viewed as inferior to or of lesser status than men.

h. Violence against children, when they are forced into labour, often in subhuman conditions, or subjected to physical abuse at home or school, or to sexual abuse by paedophiles and sex tourists.

i. Violence to the unborn in abortion, particularly in the widespread modern practices of female foeticide and infanticide.

j. State violence of oppressive and discriminatory laws, ruthless or biased law enforcement, unrestricted police practices, summary arrests, long-delayed trials, the undue use of armed forces to deal with internal disturbances, the suppression of right to dissent and freedom of association, excessive militarisation, and the most pervasive of all, corruption in public life.

k. Violence to one's self-image and self-respect, which makes individuals and social groups feel themselves inferior, backward, and "dispensable."

l. Violence against the homeland, in uprooting and evicting a people from their lands and homes on the pretext of "progress" or the "common good."

m. Ecological violence, when nature and its resources are greedily exploited for personal profit, without concern for future generations, for contemporaries whose survival depends on a careful husbanding of the earth's resources, or for the beauty and variety of Creation.

#### 4. Victims of Violence

We chose the theme of violence because of the unhappy reality that individuals and social groups are increasingly becoming victims of various forms of violence. Among the groups who today are experiencing systematic violence used against them as a method of control are minorities, *dalits*, tribals, *adivasis*, women, children, the unborn, bonded labourers, domestic workers, refugees and migrants, prisoners, and all those in unorganised labour and in low income groups.

#### 5. Christian Response to Violence

Because so many are confronted by aggression on their traditional sources of livelihood and their basic human rights and dignity, guaranteed by numerous United Nations declarations on human rights and by the constitutions of their respective countries, we want to offer a Christian response.

The Old Testament permits violence in the defence of one's land, religion, and culture. Yet the prophets looked forward to a time when "swords would be beaten into plowshares." In the New Testament, Jesus states unequivocally that "those who live by the sword will perish by the sword," and blesses the peacemakers, "for they shall be called God's children." Yet Christ has not come to gloss over iniquity and injustice. He claims to bring not peace but fire and the sword, and he expels those who were profaning the Temple. The norm of "an eye for an eye" must, in the new dispensation, give way to the law of forgiveness, mercy and love.

A dominant characterisation of Christ is that of someone who is firmly and unshakeably rooted in truth -- come what may -- and for that reason he is also the true liberator of the downtrodden. Jesus, the Liberator, in order to overcome the evil of violence, does not inflict violence on others, but rather accepts and transforms it by personally undergoing suffering in the way of non-violence. In Jesus, God himself is in solidarity with the victims of violence, and his passion and death is a liberative suffering, liberating both aggressor and victim.

Over the centuries, a well-developed Christian response to violence has been formulated for concrete situations and in specific socio-cultural contexts. It has taken into account the principles of self-defence, the rights of the victim and society at large, the ineffectiveness of all other legitimate means to secure justice and equity, the just proportion to be observed in any response to violence, both in quality and intensity, and the real possibility of success which such a response may have. These, and other generally accepted contemporary guidelines in the field of ethics and morals, should form the basis for the formation of consciences in this matter, so that in

each concrete situation a mature response can be reached.

What seems clear from all this is that the proper Christian response to violence is neither that of further violence nor that of simple passive acquiescence. The Christian response sometimes will demand "strong actions" of non-violent protest, such as fasting and prayer vigils, hunger strikes, sit-ins, protest marches and rallies. If such are to be successful, actions of strong advocacy require careful preparation and organisation, deep commitment, self-discipline, and a readiness to suffer for one's principles. (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2306).

We admit that there are unresolved questions in the area of our Christian response to violence which require further study. We call upon the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) and upon our national theological associations and episcopal doctrinal commissions to pursue a profound research into the realm of violence.

## **6. Education.**

An education which provides moral and spiritual awakening is a key apostolate of the Church to bring about authentic personal and social transformation and the values of the Gospel among peoples. Given the widespread violence in our societies, we need to reorient our educational apostolate in order to form persons and societies in true moral and spiritual values to be able to serve life by opposing all forms of violence, and establishing peace, harmony and love. Special attention should be given to education for indigenous and other marginalised peoples.

We must promote literacy and primary education for all, and specific higher and specialised education, to prepare agents to build a just society and to serve the poor and oppressed. The larger communities of our educational institutions, namely students, teachers, administration, parents and guardians, well-wishers and former students, are to be brought into this arena of moral and spiritual formation, and become one in mind and heart among themselves through a process of interreligious, intercultural, and intersocial dialogue.

## **6. Formation of Lay Leaders**

Shared power -- political, economic, and social -- is one of the prerequisites for a genuine transformation of society. Men and women, especially from the oppressed classes, who show promise, should be motivated and helped to attain positions of influence where they can work with commitment for the common good of all citizens.

Political structures are not the only ones to bring about changes in society. Civic organisations, like citizens' committees, consumer welfare societies, co-operatives, human rights organisations, legal aid societies, and neighbourhood groups, are powerful means for promoting the common good. We encourage Christians to work with all persons of good will in such associations.

Christians should generously deploy their resources in order to uplift the underprivileged, who should be trained to become self-reliant. We view it as a genuine commitment of faith, a true vocation, when Christian laity choose to remain at the service of their own people to work for their uplift.

## **8. Media**

Many people, irrespective of their religious, political and social affiliations, have rightly shown concern at the incalculable harm that is being done by some media presentations. Violence, sex, and a consumerist mentality are being foisted upon the young and the old by television, films and the print media. Positive steps should be taken to stem this evil tide.

At the same time, it has to be admitted that a media-conscious society is here to stay. The enormous potential of the media for good has also to be recognised and rigorously pursued. We note with gratitude the presence of a large number of persons of good will in the secular media industry, and we acknowledge their good efforts to produce wholesome programs with humane values which could counteract the culture of violence.

Media education at the national, diocesan and parish level should be fostered. The vast potential of the pastoral media should be utilised well. Clergy, religious and lay leaders should be given suitable training in the media. The right use of media should be a regular feature in implementing the pastoral programs of the diocese. Various organisations, and even governments, are unquestionably influenced by world opinion. The international community can be an effective deterrent against dictators and oppressors. For this to be effective, the media should be used to highlight injustices, and world opinion should be harnessed to restrain unjust regimes. Church-related media structures are encouraged to work with the secular media to defend human rights and oppose violence and injustice.

## **9. Christian Commitment to a Just Society**

All our FABC documents have underlined the importance of promoting total human liberation. The Church in Asia is called to be on the side of all those who are oppressed and victims of violence. We are called to be in solidarity with them in their struggle to overcome the violence inflicted on

them, which condemns them to remain at the margin of life: famine, disease, illiteracy, poverty, displacement and other injustices.

Solidarity with the oppressed and marginalised, involvement in their struggle for justice and their rights, reawakening the consciences of society for their causes -- all these are means of expressing the integral salvation which God offers to humanity in Jesus Christ our Saviour. The Church in Asia must take the lead to help these peoples become an effective social force.

## **10. Reducing Tensions in the South Asia Region**

Coming as we do, from the five nations of South Asia, we are painfully aware of the suspicions, tensions and hostility that exist between some of the countries of our region. We Christians, who form one community in Christ that is not limited by national borders or inhibited by international politics, must work to reduce these tensions. A priority would seem to be the sharing of sound information so that our people need not depend on rumours and biased propaganda. A newsletter by the South Asian Bishops' Meeting (SABIM) might help us become better informed about our fellow Christians in neighbouring countries. We also feel the need that the SABIM Conference be held every 2-3 years, more often should the need arise.

Public opinion should be formed to oppose the regional arms race and military build-up that not only perpetuate and exacerbate tensions, but are a wasteful use of funds that should properly be used for education, health care, housing and economic infrastructure. The bishops' conferences might consider the possibility of a joint appeal to reduce military spending and demand total nuclear disarmament.

To the extent possible, we should encourage NGOs, private associations, and church organisations to undertake cultural, athletic, and academic exchanges between people of the countries of the region, so that by coming to know one another personally our people will be better prepared to overcome stereotypes, and so lay the basis for peace and joint action toward the integral human development of the region.

## **Conclusion**

Life-destroying violence is a grave sinfulness of our times from which humankind needs to be redeemed. We condemn violence of all kinds, especially its extreme forms of the killing of innocents, abortion and terrorism. We pray for the gift and power of God to lead us to that healing redemption. We pray that we become instruments and ministers of that healing for our brothers and sisters burdened with the grave suffering of violence. Through

a spirit of prayer and penance and sincere commitment to life-giving self-sacrifice may we become, in the likeness of Jesus our Saviour, suffering prophets and servants among our suffering peoples.

## II. THE PHENOMENON OF VIOLENCE AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSE\*

by  
T.K. John

### Introduction

South Asia is in a state of ferment. The ferment has been affecting the entire region. The violence that engulfs the subcontinent quite regularly in manifold ways is only an outward surge of what has been taking place deep in the heart of the socio-cultural processes of the region. Several powerful forces are at work.

We want to be in touch with what has been happening to our people at as deep a level as possible. We want to trace the sources of violence, assess its nature, its ferocity, and its manifestation. We have to see what their consequences are and how they affect our people. We are sure that it is God that is speaking in and through these happenings. We have to listen to the voice of God, in and through the voice of the people. This voice arises from their sufferings and afflictions due to the violence to which they are subjected. It is our pastoral responsibility to see whether we can organise our pastoral actions and reduce violence in our society; and even to eliminate violence, if that is at all possible; and to make life secure. This has to be in collaboration with all who are committed to its eradication.

### PART I: THE MEANING OF VIOLENCE

#### 1. Some Common Factors

The countries of the South Asia region share many common problems. There is widespread discontent in and disaffection towards the contemporary state of the society in which the people find themselves. The great majority of the people feel betrayed by the economic trends in planning. Benefits of political freedom from the colonial rulers have gone only to the elites and their allies. Minimum facilities -- drinking water, medical care, transport, literacy -- are still out of reach for the great majority of the rural poor. Since they have been silent and not vocal, no attention has been paid

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\* The paper is a synopsis of the original lecture, which appears in the consultation report: *Christian Response to the Phenomenon of Violence in South Asia* (Kathmandu, Assumption Church, 1997).

to these and their needs. Migration from the rural to the urban centres continues unabated. The urban slums swell with new arrivals.

There is disaffection towards the social system and processes. Inequality of a grotesque kind still prevails in society. People still live in walled-in situations of caste and class demarcation. In this situation, communal and fundamentalist forces are active and aggravate the situation.

Democratic culture is on trial. Tainted ministers and political leadership combine to bring disrepute on the democratic experiments underway in the region. They are in collusion with administrators, financial institutions, industrial houses and leading executives. Dictatorship, military rule, and corrupt oligarchy in some regions further threaten the democratic experiment. Not much consolation is derived when we look at the tensions and consequent militarization, maintained at enormous cost to the people, between the countries of the region. Neighbourly relationship is far from these nations. Hostility and antagonism still mark our relationships.

Ethnic, cultural and regional groups are restive, showing that they are uncomfortable with diversity and its demands upon individual or collective identity. Ethnic conflicts frequently erupt and worsen the fragile relationship that exists among groups.

In this rather fragile situation, natural calamities like drought, floods, epidemics, industrial disasters (Bhopal cyanide gas release and mass genocide) occur, and discontent is further aggravated.

## **2. The Ugly Face of Violence**

A brother beating a brother to submission, even to annihilation, is a part of the primal vision and reflection of the human tragedy, as shown and articulated in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Cain-Abel encounter still haunts the imagination of us all. Tales of brutal entry into the sanctuary of another human person, to control and desecrate the inner sanctuary called freedom, violating it irretrievably by forcing someone else's will and decision upon it, climaxing in the demonic act of destroying one's body, physical possessions, dwelling place or place of worship, have been heard with frightening frequency in our times. There is revulsion at such tales, yet the human species is incapable of ridding itself of the most puzzling and humiliating traits in the nature of our constitution.

Life instinctively flees destruction. Every living being runs away from pain, yet can inflict pain on other living creatures. How can we digest this ignoble phenomenon and explain the fact that we who are afraid of violence and pain and do not want to be destroyed can inflict pain upon others and



destroy others?

We live in a global culture that feeds violence into our consciousness. The press, cinema, radio, television and political arena nourish the culture of violence. Our economic order is built on a violent system of competition and brutal attacks on rivals. Urban life is marked by housebreaking, murder and looting. Endless reportings of scam and corruption, medical practices like abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, etc., further corrode culture's sensibilities for life.

In this paper, I will describe the phenomena of violence, followed by efforts at understanding violence, and finally, consider elements of a Christian response.

### 3. The Phenomena of Violence

How can one explain the terrible phenomenon of the human conscience blinded by the irrational, bestial, and cruel forces in the human person? Think of what is going on, for example, in the Delhi crowd, which poured kerosene on people and set fire to them. Before that, the victims' hair was pulled out, nails extracted, and eyes gouged! How can humans who strive to build and live in a "home" set afire the "homes" of others? People who lived for ages as friends, neighbours, and colleagues, suddenly give way "to the archaic rogue element in our consciousness which throws our whole moral being out of gear in extreme situations" (D.S. Meini, *Lokayan*, 3/4/5).

This happened in Delhi, Bombay and Bhagalpur, where people were killed and parts of their bodies displayed to public gaze to create fear. Similar occurrences happened in Sri Lanka in the days of the JVP-Government encounter.

It is difficult to conceive that an ethnic group that clings to its identity and promotes and fosters it can turn against another ethnic group and try to exterminate it. It defies our imagination to think that people devoted to God in a particular tradition can turn against those of another tradition and take up weapons to destroy them and their places of worship.

Throughout the sub-continent we find a pattern of violence: bloodshed and destruction of life in Sri Lanka, a bloody feud between Nagas and Kukis in Northeast India, Bodo-Santal bloodshed and arson in Assam, violence and forced migration from Bhutan. Karachi and Kashmir have seen months-long violence, bloodshed and arson. The bloody militancy, state repression, and prolonged trauma have just abated in the Punjab. We have seen attacks on *adivasi* hamlets by the police in Singbhum, communal riots and massive

killings in Bombay, Delhi, and Kanpur, the shooting of *dalit* Christians and the burning of their homes in Chundur in Andhra, the killing of landless agricultural villagers in Aurangabad in Bihar, the kidnapping of people and extraction of huge sums of money as ransom in Bihar, the stripping, parading and sexual assaults on women as acts of vengeance, the keeping of children as bonded labourers in Ghaziabad in Sivakashi, the recent shooting of innocent people as result of Shi'a-Sunni tensions in Pakistan. Modern metropolitan areas like Delhi, Bombay, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Bhagalpur, Moradabad, Jamshedpur, Ranchi, Meerat, Surat, and Ahmedabad have had bitter experiences of arson, looting and bloodshedding. Ayodhya was preceded and succeeded by bloodshed and arson in the footsteps of the rabid pro-Hindu nationalists.

Since this variety of violent episodes take place with frequency, a kind of classification might help us understand, analyse, and plan our pastoral actions.

## A. Social Violence

### a. Inter-Caste Violence

A major disgrace of the Indian society is the centuries-old caste system. It has fragmented Hindu society into four divisions, with the lowest caste, and those outside the caste structure, experiencing the most abominable suppression. Enough is enough, the "low-caste" *dalits* (oppressed classes) began to tell Indian society. Social reformers, and educators have contributed to an awakening among the *dalits*, and have generated a high degree of consciousness among the victims of the evil system. The growing consciousness and assertiveness by the *dalits* have been viewed with envy, jealousy, resentment and fear among the upper castes that for centuries kept them submissive, silent and inert. "For centuries, you enjoyed a superior social status," the upper caste people are being told, "and you wanted the continued benefit of being served by us. This we will no longer accept," say the *dalits*.

The upper caste people, accustomed to centuries of master-vassal relationship, reject this. Their immediate response is repression, and violent clashes follow when the *dalits* refuse to budge. The widespread retaliatory measures adopted by the upper castes include killing resisters, burning down their huts, dishonouring their women and similar violent acts. Chundur in the state of Andhra, and Arwal, Benji, Pipra, and Belchi in Bihar State are notorious for the criminal acts of violence perpetrated by the upper castes working with the police. Helpless and unarmed protesting *dalit* agricultural labourers have been shot down in large numbers.

Apart from such open violence, the institution of caste entails other forms

of violence:

- social violence: a group is forced out of the fourfold caste hierarchy by forces of self-interest;
- cultural violence: *dalit* culture is degraded and dismissed as inferior by the upper caste. The tribals of Central India stand to lose their languages and cultures because of the hidden strategies of non-tribals;
- religious violence: deliberate definition of caste as a religious value with scriptural foundation, so that practicing it becomes a meritorious religious act;
- economic violence: people are denied opportunities in many economic sectors and confined to only one profession, namely one of traditionally-held menial jobs.

The *dalit* awakening is a movement full of promise, but it went through difficult times. The powerful personality of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a symbol of the rising power of the *dalits*, as well as of the repression they had to face. For the beneficiaries of the monstrous system, it is inconceivable that their hold on the *dalits* could ever be weakened and cease to exist. Their anger explains much of the violence that has been unleashed on *dalits* and continues unabated.

#### **b. Communal Violence**

Central to the specifically South-Asian phenomenon of communal violence is the concept of religious identity used for political mobilisation, with a view to deriving economic and social benefits. Fundamentalism feeds on this brand of communalism.

The subcontinent has been experiencing this form of violence since the early days of the freedom struggle. Political and humanist awakening among the British-ruled Indians was channelled via the religious sphere both by Hindus and Muslims in the pre-freedom struggle days. In spite of Hindu-Muslim interaction for more than 400 years, the two religions kept their distance from each other.

It is thus understandable that some Muslim leaders began to be suspicious of the designs of the Congress leadership that grew abundantly from Hindu cultural-religious roots. Some Hindu leaders, in turn, viewed Muslim self-reform initiatives with suspicion. Eventually the Muslim group broke away, as did Hindus such as V.D. Savarkar and his followers. The two break-away groups moved toward their respective goals and the cleavage between them widened.

Mutual suspicion, competition, antagonism and mounting hostility eventually led to partition. The bloody violence that marked the process climaxed in the communal killing in which thousands perished. Killings, destruction

of homes, and forced migration across the newly demarcated border, all of which left bitter and hostile memories, characterized the partition. That memory, still fresh in the minds of those affected, is being fanned by political leaders for narrow, mean and questionable political advantages. Regular irruptions of communal flare-ups, even in unsuspected areas, have made communal violence a major problem. The political parties are unwilling to denounce the violence, or else they are determined to prosper on the ruins of burnt homes and destroyed lives.

A communal riot often begins over an insignificant issue like the teasing of a girl of one community by someone from the other, a criminal act, a procession with provocative slogans or songs, or even by deliberate incitement by goons. It soon becomes massive and uncontrollable. The communal virus has gone deep into our system to the extent that a small spark, or even a rumour, is sufficient to become a conflagration.

There are more immediate reasons for continued hostility towards Muslims by sections of Hindu society. Hinduism had for centuries enjoyed *rashtra-dharma-samucaya* -- an identification of state and religion. With the coming of Islam and later of the British, it lost its privileges. The "Hindu Renaissance" kindled hopes, and some leaders began to dream of a Hindu restoration. When freedom was about to be achieved, they aimed at a restoration of the former Hindu sovereignty. The trend towards a "secular society" upset them, as they found it unacceptable to be an equal among others.

Now they hold that if Pakistan has become an Islamic state, why should India not become a Hindu state? The secular character of the Constitution remains the main block to the realization of this dream. Beneath many communal and fundamentalist movements lies this hidden agenda. The Hindu agenda is kept alive by repeated efforts at the restoration of destroyed temples. Muslims feel that the intransigence of this section of the Hindu community can be met only with decisive "actions," and the result is communal irruptions in the region. Kashmir remains the symbol of this ever-alive problem.

### c. Agrarian Violence

Landlessness is a major cause of unrest that often leads to violence. There are historical and cultural reasons for this unhappy situation in which people born as Indians have no land as their own. Landlessness affects their identity. Even the few pieces of legislation enacted to correct this distortion have not been satisfactorily implemented. **Bonded labour**, a uniquely unjust institution, is a direct consequence of this malady. Leftist groups active among the landless agricultural labourers have insisted on the labourers' regaining lost land as well as social position. This awakening has led to a bold affirmation of the rights of the landless to regain the lands of which

they had been deprived. The fear, suspicion and anger of the landlords leads them to resort to violence. In Bihar, Andhra and West Bengal, agrarian violence has become endemic.

In some states, mild efforts have been made through court orders to allot government lands or those occupied by the upper castes to the landless. When the allottee comes to occupy the land, there is resistance and violence, and usually the police take the side of the landlords.

#### **d. Ethnic Violence**

Domestic conflicts in South Asia are largely due to the multiplicity of races. Ethnocentrism often generates feelings of superiority of one's own cultural group at the expense of others. Demands for autonomy and self-rule become increasingly vocal, and even violent. Groups that may have social structures and value systems that are not necessarily recognised by other such groups often take recourse, when resisted, to violence.

Such situations prevail in India in at least four regions: Assam, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and the states of the North East. In Assam, in spite of the administration being in the hands of locals, the large-scale presence of non-Assamese, especially of those from across the borders, adds to the conflict. In the Punjab, the increase of the non-Punjabi populations, and the government's failure to grant social, religious, cultural and political demands, created a situation in which violent methods appeared legitimate. Terrorism was born, and the Punjab experienced a decade of violence.

Striving towards nationhood presupposes managing and resolving conflicts among the many ethnic and cultural groups, as well as creating and maintaining healthy interaction among them. The countries of the sub-continent are experimenting with the concept of "nation state." Ethnicity is a decisive factor to be dealt with cautiously and justly. Ethnicity may be marked by a common, shared heritage. Historical, cultural and linguistic elements are to be profoundly respected.

An ethnic group may deem the relative autonomy it enjoyed before becoming part of the newly federated political and administrative system to be their non-negotiable right. This is not easily granted by any nation that abjures violence. Moreover, when a particular ethnic group enjoys a dominant position in the state administration, this can be interpreted as favoured treatment and a threat to other ethnic groups. Grievances surface when a particular ethnic group perceives that another is being favoured. The political analyst Professor Rajni Kothari states:

The most deep-rooted protests in any society are those born out of a threat to the cultural and social identity of a people.

History has shown that even the most timid communities, who might only mildly protest against economic oppression, rise up in arms if their cultural identity is threatened. For this identity is primordial and the basis of their own sense of belonging (R. Kothari, *Growing Amnesia*, p. 149).

The degree of community consciousness, cohesion, leadership, and behaviour of the dominant groups determine the nature of the conflict and ensuing forms of violence. Sri Lanka, Punjab, the Garo-Jaintia Hills, and the Bodo agitation in Assam are illustrations of this. As ethnic conflicts fester, separatist demands arise. There is always the danger that vested political or economic interests will take separatist movements in directions harmful to the ethnic groups and to the entire nation. Timely attention to grievances by committed and sincere political leadership can prevent the festering and consequent recourse to violence.

#### **e. Terrorism and Violence**

Open war, guerrilla war and terrorism are three vestiges of the bestial instinct in humans which is expressed in an anachronistic institution called war. Responding to a communications media enticed by the "news value" of terrorism, terrorists have fashioned a weapon that has been used increasingly at the international level. South Asia has been regularly exposed to this menace. As an organised system of intimidation, terrorism strikes at the most unexpected times and places, and employs its own particular stratagems. The desire to highlight grievances by intimidating the government, striking terror in the people, and alienating one section of the people from another, motivate such actions. Ethnic, religious or other groups desiring to seize power, to extort concessions, to have their demands met, to withdraw laws they find distasteful, or to release leaders from prison, gain public attention for their causes by employing such measures.

Shooting bus passengers, planting bombs in crowded places, subverting rail lines, and blowing up aeroplanes or oil pipelines, are among the acts committed by terrorists. Punjab, Jammu-Kashmir, and the North East have seen more than a decade of such violence. The growing Bodo agitation is marked by terrorist activity. The ULFA militancy has recourse to terrorist methods. Such methods demoralize society, and the state feels helpless and takes desperate steps. The state often reacts to terrorism with its own violent measures, which often result in many casualties.

#### **f. Elections and Violence**

Electoral maturity, a necessary component of sound democratic culture and tradition, has yet to characterize the electoral processes in the subcontinent. The picture is one of struggle and experimentation, the process marred by several unhealthy signs, the chief of which is violence. Agricultural feudal

lords and politicians with criminal records or links thwart sound electoral processes by instigating violence. Elimination of citizens' names from the electoral list, booth capturing, elimination of potential opponents, creating disturbances at the time of meetings or voting, and intimidation of candidates or workers of rival parties, are frequent forms of electoral violence. In some places, this has led to bloodshed; killing candidates of a rival party, chopping off arms or legs, or burning the homes of those suspected of not voting for one's candidates, have been reported. The promotion of sound democratic culture and growth in literacy and education that promotes civic consciousness and responsibility can help reduce electoral violence.

#### **g. Gender Violence**

In spite of the high place accorded to the female in the divine realm, with female deities venerated far more than male deities, the place of women in society is precarious. In the cultural practices of the subcontinent, discrimination begins at home, is reinforced at school, and is rampant in society, places of worship, bridal relationships, courts of law, the wage system and other employment practices, and civic and legislative bodies. The overall result is the degradation and devaluation of the woman in society. Against this background, the assaults on the very integrity of the woman must be understood. Women are beaten by authoritarian husbands, sexually assaulted, and even killed by sadistic perverts.

#### **B. State Violence**

Over the years, the identity of the state has been evolving. It has fluctuated from crude dictatorship to liberal democracy, bordering on anarchy, paving the way back of military dictatorship. Martial law replaces civilian self-government. The process of taking power is often bloody, the worst victim being the individual citizen. The individual, in spite of the assistance one gets from the state, has suffered much at its hands.

Because of the privileged position enjoyed by the state, it is but natural that political parties, citizens' groups, trade unions, grassroots movements, and elite-class caste groups all try to gain access to the state. Group interest is a major factor, often at the expense of the less vigilant and privileged. When the power-mongers reach the helm of state, dissenting groups are discriminated against, and a kind of violence is set in motion against all dissenters.

Some of these violent measures and tactics are:

- 1) Oppressive and draconian laws, enforced with violent methods. In India, we have had many of the so-called "black laws" (MISS, TADA are the most notorious). The nation's freedom fighters would be shocked to know the perversions perpetrated by their own progeny and successors.

2) Unrestricted police practices. Violent seizure of alleged offenders, torture practised with immunity in the police lock-up, custodial deaths, disappearance and rapes -- all these shock our sensibility and result in loss of faith in the system.

3) Under the guise of national security, use of the armed forces to deal with internal disturbances.

4) Suppression of the rights of citizens to dissent. Various methods, whether direct or indirect, are employed to discourage, terrorize, suppress or even eliminate dissenters.

5) Intimidation of those who go to the police to report cases of aggression or violence.

6) Militarization. Funds that should be used for the welfare of the people are diverted to the purchase and development of arms. Military buildup in one country provokes the same in its neighbours. South Asian cultures that have long advocated non-violence and the superiority of the spirit over the physical have succumbed to this culture of violence.

7) Under the cloak of emergency, the state assumes extraordinary powers. People are arrested without warrant and detained indefinitely without proper judicial process. Extra-judicial executions, disappearance of those arrested by the security forces, faked "encounter" deaths, attacks on family, members of the detained are among the steps taken by the state.

### **C. Cultural Violence**

Because of the close relationship that exists between the human community and its culture, the problem of cultural violence deserves attention. This includes both violence against a particular culture, and that of violence by a culture toward others.

Constitutive elements of a given culture, such as the beliefs, values, customs and institutions that give identity and solidarity to a people, need to be analysed in order to locate the violence ingrained in them. It can happen that in the process of the encounter of one culture with another, unavoidable at this juncture of history, anything that will eventually lead to the destruction of the home culture should be regarded as an act of aggression against that culture. Conquering cultures tread upon the integrity of conquered cultures. Territorial conquest is a clear case of violence, but cultural conquest is subtle, and the nature of its violence is not easily detected. For example, Baba Amte has stated that displacement of tribals from their natu-



ral habitat is a major form of violence, even genocide. "To remove tribal people from their natural habitat would be cultural genocide" (Lokayan, *ibid*, p.44).

#### **D. Economic Violence**

Closely allied to cultural violence is economic violence. Its worst form is the way in which wealth dominates poverty, with the rich working silently but effectively to keep the poor under their control. There is usually no bloodshed, but the life of the poor is diminished, and the poor remain as dry leaves on a tree.

Often socio-political conflict and violence are rooted in economic imbalance. Development is in vogue. Lack of development and underdevelopment are often due to an unbalanced distribution of economic goods and resources. Economic opportunities and services are unevenly distributed. Growth without equity creates discontent that develops into conflict. Economic planning and services are not guided by principles of social justice.

Participatory democracy and distributive justice should go hand in hand. Where there is discrimination or deprivation, the scales will tip and generate discontent.

In India, the vast majority of the people belong to the low income group, or those without any income at all. The regional, national and international elites have the economic and political power to set terms and dictate prices of essential commodities and raw materials. They control and regulate industrial processes and manipulate political power. They use the media to force the values and interests of the upper classes upon the minds of the poor. Advertising, couched in sophisticated and attractive forms, is a subtle form of violence against people's slender resources and inner sanctuary.

When this process reaches the international level, the damage is irreparable. India and other so-called Third World countries lie at the feet of the international financial institutions and their political allies. Currency values and economic policies are dictated by this new set of conquerors. This process of colonization without occupation is proving to be the most humiliating of relationships. It is a very subtle form of violence at the global and national level that will soon reach the smallest villages if it is not contained.

It is clear that we in the subcontinent are being invaded by the illusory values, interests and standards of a decadent Western culture, foisted upon all peoples as normative. It leads to an unchecked quest for profit at the expense of values, consumerism that kills the human spirit, hedonism that

degrades the human, breakup of family life, and corrupt transactions in public and private life, in other words, a serious decline in morality.

### **E. Structural and Institutional Violence**

Value systems beneficial to the oppressor, introduced into society and put into operation, produce structural violence. The caste system, with its consequent untouchability, is an example of structural violence that oppresses victims in a systematic way. Bonded labour is another form of institutionalised structural violence. Child labour, drug trafficking and traffic in human labour are forms of institutional violence that have been practised for ages. Gender discrimination is institutional violence against women. The unorganised labour sector is a widespread form of institutionalised injustice, as are different wage scales for various groups, with women or children earning less than men for the same kind of work, or one societal group paid more or less than another group for the same work. Money-lending, bribes and other scams are sophisticated forms of violence.

We can conclude this brief survey of the kinds of violence built into social structures, values and institutions by referring to the hidden consequences of violence noted by the political analyst Rajni Kothari:

Peace is not absence of war. The depressing reality is that millions of people are victims of malnutrition and starvation every year. Thus the opposite of peace is not war, but violence which includes structural deprivation on a massive scale, widespread atrocities against the landless and other poor, and genocidal acts of some governments against ethnic minorities (Rajni Kothari, *Liberative Peace*, p.21).

## **PART II: UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE**

What is at work in violence? The following elements appear to be central to violence: power, rights, and consciousness. I present here a brief explanation of each.

### **1. Power**

Power can be economic, political, cultural or religious. Power exerts influence and pressure on others who are incapable of resisting. Victims of violence yield to the forces of violence primarily because they are powerless. Because of the potential of wealth to put pressure on people and structures, economic power seems to be the most dangerous. We need not search far to notice how money power prevails over the state, religion, institutions, organisations, in fact, over every area of social and political life. Allied with economic power is political power. Democracy all over the world has

been experiencing the abuse of state and political power, both of which are ultimately sustained by economic power. Authoritarianism, dictatorship and militarisation of the state are supported and fed by the power of money.

## **2. Rights**

Violence often results when voices are raised against privation, denial, or suppression of rights. Violence can also result when there is a perceived clash of rights. The Ayodhya episode is an illustration of such violence.

## **3. Consciousness of Lost Rights**

Consciousness of lost or suppressed rights acts like a spark that ignites tension, conflict and violence. Consciousness of one's rights sheds new light on the areas of human society that deny or suppress the inalienable rights of individuals irrespective of gender, caste, race or religion.

The following steps are involved in the process of violence:

1) Experience of repression, subjugation, or deprivation. For instance, the institution and practice of bonded labour, child employment etc.

2) Birth and growth of consciousness as to the nature, intensity, source, consequences of exploitation. For example, non-formal education or literacy drives make people aware of oppression. This is crucial for the eventual encounter with and elimination of the unjust system or practice.

3) Preliminary steps to get rid of oppressive and enslaving customs or practices. For instance, bonded labourers, in the light of their new consciousness, refuse to oblige the "master." In order to succeed, mobilisation of the entire community is needed and symbols of injustice or oppression are essential. The affected groups must constantly keep before their eyes these symbols to accelerate the movement.

4) Politicization of the issue.

5) Resistance or reaction by the oppressor. It is not easy for the oppressor to give up the benefits and privileges enjoyed for centuries. For instance, they might issue threats, cut off the water supply, or ally themselves with the police to terrorize those who protest.

6) Decisive and determined actions, sustained by the entire community over a prolonged period are needed to put a end to the oppressive practice. This final step is often met with brutal violence. The landlords, in the case of "dalit awakening," frequently have recourse to Nazi-type responses: burning down entire villages, shooting fleeing dissenters, raping the women, etc. Often the police directly or indirectly support these acts. The state some-

times acts in a similar way when unjust laws are questioned or defied.

The survey above brings home to us the fact that violence has permeated practically every sector of human life. Hence the phrase "culture of violence" is appropriate to denote this human phenomenon. The all-pervasive violence needs to be noted and analysed, and strategy must be employed in order to counter it.

Shive Visvanathan has probed the unsuspected role of science in promoting a culture of violence. All agree that modern culture is, with some variations and modifications, essentially capitalist. Visvanathan argues that if today modern capitalism is intent on marginalizing large sections of humanity, by steadily and deftly pushing others out of the way and forging ahead, making them dispensable because of their having become obsolete, this is directly a result of the logic of modern science, its principal mode of operation being the use of living beings as scientific experiments. The concentration camps of Nazi Germany and the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima only reflect what is inherent in modern science.

Visvanathan notes four stages in this process:

1) A concept of society based on the scientific method (the Hobbesian project that man is wolf to man).

2) The concept of social engineering on all those "objects" defined as backward or retarded.

3) The concept that the infliction of pain and suffering on the victims can be justified in the name of science.

4) The concept of *triage* which combines notions of obsolescence and dispensability, whereby a society, subculture or species is condemned to death because rational judgement has deemed it as incurable and obsolete.

Modernisation via development is based on two pillars: technocracy and totalitarianism. Both endorse and promote vivisection, the infliction of pain for experimental purposes of understanding and control. Violation of the body in the search for scientific production and control soon leads to the vivisection of the body-politic in theories of scientific, industrial and developmental projects. Particularly victimized in this process are indigenous and tribal peoples who are forced off their land, with the consequent destruction of their cultures and identity. R. Kothair describes the devastation caused by such projects as follows:

The protests of groups and communities, of tribals, the rural

and urban poor, and women, have been increasingly ignored on the plea that their sacrifices are required in the "national interest," or the interests of the majority. Millions of people have been displaced by various government activities, on the justification that their displacement would benefit the nation. Real communities have been deprived of their forests, their grazing lands, even their water, on the plea that the majority, "the nation," needs them. Whole strata of society are being denied even the basic resources of survival, for these resources are required by the "nation," "in the public interest," to build cities, hotels, cars, and luxury houses (*Growing Amnesia*, p.150).

Shive Visvanathan touches upon the vital point in the following passage:

Underlying both the notion of the modern state and modern science is a monolithic world view. The tragedy of modernisation in the Third World is doubly *violent*. It has sprung not only from the violence of the West through colonisation and science but also from the modernist impulse of our elites, internalized without a clue to its doubts or its genealogy. Independence has thus turned out to be literally a celebration of science. It was a "tryst with destiny," as Nehru dubbed it. "Destiny" belonged to those who made friends with science. There was a Euclidean clarity about this commitment and a touch of innocence about the faith in the power of rationalist science and technocratic projects. As dam, laboratory, railway or hospital, it becomes a basic test of statist goals and scientific endeavour... Today one realizes that such innocence has become ironic. Science has failed to deliver. Yet science continues to be the pursuit of the State, the energy for the perpetual machine of statist endeavours (*Lokayan*, 3.4/5, p.40).

In brief, what we find is a culture of violence, of manifold nature, that debases and dehumanises. The result is a massive devaluation of the priceless being that is the human person. The dignity and value of the human person is concealed. The noble urge and instinct to be for the other, to be oriented to the other, to go to the help of the other, to be supportive of the other, is not found as a regular phenomenon. On the contrary, the urge is to be for the self at the expense of the other. Others are utility goods for the self, useful for the self and to be disposed of after use. To attain these goals, the wildest instincts are let loose and the powerful have recourse to every form of oppressive measures.

The values of the violent are idolized, internalized, and institutionalised,

and the victims themselves begin to accept the violence of the oppressors and allow themselves to be used as instruments of violence. This pattern of violence and counter-violence and the internalization of violence by its victims results in a situation where we support and promote the violence of the usurpers and oppose and suppress the liberative actions of the oppressed.

It is with this culture of violence that the Gospel has to encounter and interact. We are raising the question of cultural transformation under the impact of the Gospel. How can we attempt to transform this violent culture, this culture of violence? We now take up the task of Christian response to the problem of violence.

### **PART III: CHRISTIAN RESPONSE**

It is the person of Jesus Christ that is the model, source and inspiration for a Christian response to the problem of violence. Jesus was strong in the proclamation of the Father's message and even stronger in patience and endurance. He did not defend himself when attacked, and offered no resistance when humiliation was heaped on him. This extraordinary moral and spiritual power was based on love. Injury he never repaid by injury. When arrested, Peter came to his defence with a weapon he had, but Jesus rebuked him. The climax was Jesus' prayer on the cross to ask forgiveness for his enemies.

#### **1. The Question of Credibility**

Before we consider the kind of response violence in the subcontinent calls for, it is worth raising the problem of credibility. We begin by investigating how the terms "violence" and "non-violence" resonate in the Judeo-Christian religio-cultural landscape. The culture that one finds in the Old Testament is one of defence of one's culture and religion against hostile forces. We remember the conquest of land that belonged to others, the extermination of conquered races, the frequent recourse to armed action, even in religious affairs, the appropriation of the name of Yahweh to justify slaughter, and the punishment of violators of law or covenant by violent methods.

To a great extent, the Christian tradition continues this disedifying attitude. Despite Jesus' admonition of Peter and the disciples and his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about turning the other cheek, Christian history is steeped in violence. Granted, the early martyrs did not take to violence in resisting persecution. But after the establishment of the Christian religion, there was a return to the culture of coercion, compulsion and massive violence. Charlemagne established the Frankish Christian empire in Gaul-Saxony by force of arms and imperial edicts. Feudal times show theologians discussing the just war theory propounded by St Augustine. It was not

found incongruous that saints, not to speak of religious leaders, openly advocated recovery of the holy land in Palestine by force of arms. Crusaders cultivated the culture of religious violence. Religious leaders advocated and blessed the slaughter of Muslims in order to recover the "glory and honour" of Christ.

What followed was an era of colonial conquest and extermination of peoples. These practices were reconciled with the religious practices and belief systems of the times. There were also protests, for example, those of Bartholomeo de las Casas, but they were far too few and in the end ineffective and marginal.

### **Rights**

Basic to these unpleasant aspects of our history is the fact that the rights of peoples were not a prime consideration. Injustice arises when rights are violated or denied. Advocating peace will remain ineffective without attending to human rights. In *Church and Human Rights*, Jean-François Six examined the history of the human rights movement in Europe and in the Church. He acknowledges that even if the ideal of human rights has roots in the Judeo-Christian ethos, it developed outside that ethos and often found a convinced enemy in the authorities and practice of the Catholic Church.

First came the process of lawmaking, which was intended as a defence of the weak against the powerful. It took centuries for Christian Europe to condemn slavery. For centuries, the Church endorsed a non-egalitarian feudal society, softening the side-effects through works of charity. Individuals like de las Casas, Suarez and Grotius prepared the philosophy which took shape in America with the Bill of Rights (1778), and in France with the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789. The traditional alliance of Church and throne forced the Catholic Church to condemn the principles of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. There continued to be in the Church resistance to freedom of conscience and religion, probably because of the fear that they might undermine the coherence of a Christian society and threaten the primacy of God's will, as expressed through the Church. Even the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man by the United Nations in 1948 was not accepted until recently by the Catholic Church (*The Tablet*, 6 November, 1993, p.1452).

### **Justice**

It is encouraging to note that justice is becoming a dominant concern in the various Christian denominations. In the absence of that consciousness, it was not possible to deal effectively with the growing injustice that breeds violence. The oppressed and the deprived may sometimes take to violence. The oppressors have recourse to violence. In either case, the problem is injustice. Unless a clear stand is taken in favour of rights and justice, our

initiatives to respond to the problem will be futile.

The Church as an institution is perhaps ill-equipped or inadequate to respond effectively to the problem of universal violence. We are wont to express opposition in a general, theoretical way to any kind of violence and have advocated a kind of pacifism. Peace was a major Christian concern before justice emerged as the necessary response to present-day problems. One reason is that we have supported the status quo and undisturbed continuance of inherited systems.

To illustrate the silence of the Church before the culture of violence in our own times, I offer the example of Nazi plans to eliminate the "useless eaters" (i.e., madmen). Experimenting with these people began in 1939 in German psychiatric hospitals and gradually came to include "inferior materials" like Jews, Gypsies and Poles. The experiments moved from hospitals to concentration camps that had been operating as industrial research laboratories organised by doctors and scientists. One shudders at the feebleness of the Christian conscience in Christian Europe when this experimentation was going on for over six years. Perhaps the reason was that Hitler could serve Catholic interests. In any case, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the crown of modern scientific methods, were not far behind.

The Gospel will find its way in any culture, even the most secularized one, uncovering its internal contradictions, challenging its alienating and oppressive features, strengthening and encouraging its inherent life-enhancing energies and responding to the search for healing and wholeness, for reconciliation and liberation (Konrad Raiser, *International Review of Mission*, 331: 623-629, 1994.)

In the subcontinent of South Asia, the Christian community is sometimes spoken of as "peace-loving." How far does that go? Is it out of conviction that we are not associated with violence, or because of other factors, like our minority situation? Are we in a position to combat violence alone? To me the question is important because one has to establish one's credibility and identity before one can commit oneself to serious reflection on violence and to take appropriate steps to curb and eventually to eliminate it as far as possible.

## 2. Ways of Responding

The following steps should be considered in our effort to respond to the problem of growing violence in our region.

1) The cry from many sectors, especially from those who are victims of



various kinds of violence, is for a new way of being humans in society, for a humanized relationship with the other members of society. The ways of interacting with society that we have inherited, the tools we have at hand, and our perception of the way to exercise our ministries all belong to a bygone era and culture.

Victims of violence voice their concerns and protest the diminution of their person. They claim their right to have an equal share and place in the decision-making bodies of society, from the lowest to the highest levels they assert their right to have a say in the apportioning of the resources of the earth, in the employment of those tools and techniques by which these raw goods of the earth are processed and made useful sources for a full human life. Far too long have they remained suppressed, but now they are attaining a sound perception of what they are and what they have been denied. Therefore, they protest, but they are resisted when they do so. Violence and turbulence become unavoidable in this situation.

The Gospel seeks to transform all cultures, but Christian culture has yet to become that transforming power. Rather, what we have today is a Christian culture that is either ambiguous or neutral and not yet charged with transformative potential. It is ambiguous and neutral because it best suits the status quo in a given society. For example, why do the officials of the Ministry of Education seek our help in education? Because it helps them attain their own objectives: Education is the finest tool of today's consumer culture which breeds on capitalism. Capitalism looks at the good of the individual, and not that of the whole society. Individuals, groups and cultures seek their own advancement, rather than that of the whole society.

However, the victims of violence are shouting to have their voices heard and their rights recognised. They are demanding a social order in which attentive listening to grievances, and acting upon them, are done. Marginalised, silenced, deprived, individuals as well as groups are in need of securing equal rights. This requires a new culture, education and social engineering, quite different from those to which our culture has been accustomed.

Since all forms of violence centre around the rights of the individual or group, the Christian response to the problem of violence must begin at this foundational level. It is strongly recommended that Christians participate in the many human rights' and civil liberties' groups working in our countries. It is only by joining hands with secular groups that one can cross the cultural barriers created by religions in the subcontinent.

2) Struggling to secure the rights of every individual or group should be the most basic of all steps to initiate a more adequate response to the problem

of violence. When the people wake up to realize the distorted and oppressed nature of their basic rights, the denial of justice, and the privation of one's status as a human being, the spirit within will stir up and initiate those steps that will help them secure their lost identity. It may also often provoke violent reactions.

Therefore, it is proper that as a first step we take measures to inculcate esteem for the defence, attainment and restoration of the rights of every citizen. It is also important that the Gospel's entry into the cultures of the region be undertaken by the Church through these new avenues. The Church should take decisive steps to lead the liberative struggles of the deprived sections of the subcontinent: minorities, women, tribals, dalits, etc. It has been pointed out above that it is in these sectors that the irruption of violence is more frequent.

3) The Christian link between silent, submissive, suppressed situations and violence is reconciliation rooted in justice. Resentment, feelings of revenge, and the cry for justice need to be more quickly recognised and responded to. Only then will the ground be ready for efforts at reconciliation. But reconciliation that is not grounded in justice will be ineffective and will support the offender, and strengthen the structures of oppression.

4) Here a note on the historical dimension of the problem of violence is appropriate. The Buddhist and Jain traditions made unique contributions to Indian culture by introducing the value of non-violence. Out of supreme regard for life in all its aspects, non-violence as a moral value was introduced, practised and enjoined upon the adherents of these traditions. Life, even of the least creature, should be honoured and respected, and no one has right to destroy it. Asoka, the great statesman, made *ahimsa* a state policy. The killing of animals was restricted and he published a list of birds and animals that should not be killed or ill-treated on specified days of the year.

Gandhi, engaged in a campaign against the colonial conquerors, had recourse to non-violent methods of agitation. *Satyagraha* was that method. The power of truth generates and releases a moral-spiritual force capable of overcoming evil, without itself becoming an evil means. Respect for the opponent was central to Gandhi's non-violent campaign. He was prepared to undergo suffering himself in order to allow the truth to surface, and insisted that the opponent should in no way be ill-treated, dishonoured or belittled.

The culture that Gandhi sought to form was based on full recognition of the human person, be it victim or opponent. There was respect and reverence for the person but hatred for the evil advocated by the opponent. To free the

opponent from an entrenched evil position, he was prepared to suffer vicariously. These are unique cultural contributions in a country that both before and after has had recourse to violence. Do these antecedents offer us matter for reflection, and planned action to counter the surge of violence on the subcontinent? It is with a culture that, on the one hand, is given to growing violence and, on the other hand, has non-violence as a supreme value, that Christianity must enter into creative dialogue and make efforts to respond.

5. The Christian response to the problem of violence calls for a correct understanding, critique and just exercise of power. There exists a relationship between power, wealth and social status. Power is decisive in human relationships, and has been used to appropriate social positions and to acquire wealth. This combination is suitable to exploit and oppress others.

What we need is a critique of power, but it is here that the question of credibility is recalled. Authoritarianism is rampant in the Church at all levels and vitiates our efforts to critique power in society. It may be recalled that when the Pope intervened to plead for amnesty for those condemned to death by Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian religious leader retorted by asking where the Pope was when the people that resisted the dictatorship of the previous regime were tortured to death, maimed, and even mutilated?

6. Christian social teaching has been trying to catch up with the problems of industrialised and capitalist societies. The Church has to demand the rights of every individual to a just share in the goods of the earth, and a partnership in the organisation of self-governance. Profit is the major motivating factor in all economic activities. But to absolutise this and permit the reign of an economic policy that is neither ethical nor "human" is to create an atmosphere favourable to the growth of discontent and violence.

7. Such a demand has necessarily to rest on the foundation of justice in an unjust society. Our ministries should embody and articulate more and more these demands of justice. Our interpretation of the Bible, especially of the New Testament, has to be in the context of this basic issue. Our catechesis should embody this dimension, so that the entire Christian community be eventually imbued with this understanding of the Gospel.

8. For millennia, the subcontinent has nurtured a culture of inequality. The damage done by caste as a cultural element and as an institution perpetrating and perpetuating the unjust system has been pointed out above. What is needed is to condemn caste at all levels and to pursue a sound human fellowship based on equality. Educational institutions are expected to play a leading role in forming groups drawn from all castes and classes and creating interactions among them, accompanied by regular analyses and reflec-

tions on the basis of human fellowship in action.

9. Christian participation in the struggles of the deprived often does not go beyond appeals for prayer or ineffectual statements. We have no tradition of agitation or campaigning, no history of struggle. Without that experience, no amount of theorizing and resolutions will be of help. When one looks back at the history of the many movements in the subcontinent, including the freedom struggle, we see that Christian participation has been quite limited. Few trade union leaders have come from Christian educational institutions, where agitation for securing rights is not much tolerated. Training in strategies to secure lost rights and oppose injustice is not yet a part of our educational culture. The status quo is the normal atmosphere. There are large numbers of peoples' movements, but Christian initiative, presence and participation are quite limited. Without that experience, it is futile to dream of eliminating violence.

10. Closely linked with the experience of the struggles of the people is the need for systematic study and analysis of the structures of violence, of exposing these and making these materials available. We should be constantly monitoring the events in the society: their origin, causes, manifestations, implications etc. This also will help sharpen the understanding of the struggles of the people and their efforts to get rid of evil systems and structures. In other words, a healthy balance between involvement in the struggles of the afflicted and regular reflection with co-workers will give us proper perspectives to understand and take part with appropriate strategies.

11. The phrase "Christian response" can be narrow and connote sectarianism. It has been a pattern that the Christian community takes the initiative only when issues connected with church institutions, rights or personnel are threatened or are under attack. When members of other communities are attacked, the Christian response is meagre. This sectarian approach is unhealthy. A proper Christian response implies that the entire Christian community feels at one with those affected by the problems treated above and that it takes the necessary steps with people in general, because the Christian conscience does not permit anyone to suffer indignity or misfortune.

12. We need to promote a culture of listening. Violence irrupts when all other remedies are exhausted. The major revolutions of world history irrupted when generations of pent-up feelings suddenly gave way. This could be prevented if there were an inbuilt mechanism for listening to grievances, monitoring the aggrieved situation, and initiating appropriate remedial actions. The political-social apparatus begins to respond only when agitation reaches the flash point. Only when violence on a massive scale irrupts are efforts made to attend to the problem, but then it is too late. Pre-empting violence by attending to the grievances before the festering begins has yet

to become part of our democratic culture. The Church has the responsibility to help create this awareness in civil society through our ministry of education.

13. A major source of violence in the subcontinent is related to the particular understanding of the state. A nation is constituted of various ethnic, cultural, religious, economic and linguistic groups, each with its own understanding of its rights. What we need is fresh thinking about governance, citizenship, and the rights of people that belong to ethnic groups within the state. Similar rethinking about state boundaries, natural resources, like river waters, forests, ocean waters, etc., is needed. Legitimate rights of people, to whatever state or nation they belong, should have priority over human creations like state or national boundaries. In the name of the unity and integrity of the country and its boundaries, or of patriotism and territorial rights, the suppression of human rights has been a casualty that is already part of the history of the subcontinent.

In this context, no discussion of violence is realistic without recalling the "violent political situation" that has been created and maintained by the partition of the subcontinent. Political leadership has consistently shown insensitivity to the legitimate rights of the people and has maintained artificial tensions and hostilities. With the taking of initiatives to break the deadlock and to bring about greater understanding and communication across the peoples of these countries, the Church should support and contribute to current efforts towards a permanent removal of the sources of across-the-border tensions. We think of blood relatives separated indefinitely on both sides of the border in Punjab. We could initiate joint reflections by raising basic questions like: Do the cultures, histories, and ethico-moral values of the subcontinent provide us with resources that will enable the countries engaged in conflictual and competitive relationships to resolve them in a manner befitting an ancient civilization? Should bitter memories and wounded relationships be permitted to dominate over more humane and spiritual concerns and values?

14. The Christian contribution to relief and rehabilitation wherever society is struck by natural or man-made calamities is recognised. But often we stop with that. Information, knowledge and the exposition of truth is a necessary vitalising element in a growing democracy. Organised research into any particular episode could be undertaken in order to ascertain the nature and extent of the violent irruption, the immediate and the remote causes and factors involved, the attitudes of different agents like the local or the state government and voluntary agencies, and the effects on those affected. Assuring the quality of the methods employed in research and making their findings available to the state and public is another service. Publishing well-researched and documented reports can be a good way of preventing catas-

trophes in the future. Exposure is often an effective step towards the remedy.

15. Research into the sources of the Christian ethos and its possible contribution to a new cultural ethos in the land is a great need. The culture of violent action has become part of the current ethos. It is common to see a police constable, with the least provocation and exceeding his legal limits, mercilessly beat the suspected offender of a traffic rule. I have seen rickshaw pullers beaten by passengers after disputes over the fare. Ordinary disputes often slip into physical assaults. Bashing the disputant -- in the shop, at railway stations, on the street, etc. -- is a common experience. There are volcanoes in the hearts and psyches -- pent up feelings of hurt, rejection, humiliation, privation and social discontent. The subtle forms of violence to which practically everyone is subject suddenly irrupt and explode. We have to go to the roots of violence and rejection as they reside in each one and manifest themselves at the least provocation. Society in the subcontinent needs a socio-therapy. Society inflicts various forms of violence on its members, but the channels by which these can be attended to are rare. The hurts remain submerged, and the result is a distorted self-image. Much violence is due to such reserves of rejected and wounded feelings.

16. The Church has to take a firmer stand whenever violence occurs. No matter what the nature of the violence, we are convinced that some major ethical values are at stake, and ordinary people are usually the victims. This is demanded of the Church, even if what happens is beyond the borders of the Christian community. The Church has to create a tradition of openly, boldly and corporately standing not only against violence but also of being present in situations where violence is likely to irrupt. We cannot allow ourselves to be accused of "merely standing by."

17. For centuries the affairs of the people were controlled by the few who held all power in their hands. The economic, social, religious, and even political agenda were created and handled by these few, according to their needs and interests. There was no participation by the deprived. This has to be reversed. Empowering the poor and the powerless and promoting participation of all in the affairs of the social order are the only ways to remedy tensions and conflicts. We should notice that this is already taking place. Wherever resistance is felt, there is the temptation to act decisively. This decisive action can be along two broad lines of action, as we learn from history. We have the Marxian approach and the Gandhian experiment. The former was bent on making right, through violent action, what had been wrong for centuries. The latter was equally concerned about righting what was wrong, but took protracted, time-consuming and non-militant means in organisation and strategy. It was, however, deeply respectful of the human values which should guide human relationships. The wrong means to right

wrongs do violence to persons and values.

The Church must initiate, support and collaborate with movements aimed at restoring the right order, values and structures. But this should always be with sensitivity to the demands of non-negotiable values springing from the very nature of the human person as sharing in the very image and likeness of God. When this concern is accepted as normative, and efforts are made to rectify wrongs, discontent will give way to satisfaction, and violence to peace and right order, although this is a distant dream.

I conclude with two passages from Prof. Kothari:

It seems that almost the only way of empowering communities and social groups to transform themselves and their position in the larger social structure is by enhancing their abilities to comprehend the prevailing social and economic processes, to articulate their own perceptions, experiences and demands, and to manoeuvre effectively in the prevailing political ethos. An important, perhaps the most important, instrumentality for this is literacy and education.

A more lasting solution proposed by the same author is as follows:

As the state is found more and more to be abdicating its role in ensuring justice and providing social minima of welfare (even in things like education, health, housing and basic amenities), new institutional models will be needed, new self-help collectives in the form of a new genre of cooperatives and workers' control...leading to new structuring of spaces provided by civil society which were till now likely to get a new lease of life, a new "liberation" (*Growing Amnesia*, p.153, 170).

### III. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PHENOMENON OF FUNDAMENTALISM

by  
JOHN K. LOCKE

These are people who have no feel for the periphery of a problem, for light and shade and the nuances in between. That is the source of their energy and, in a queer way, their integrity. It is useful to realise this before one tries to produce a solution.<sup>1</sup>

In the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* by Nayantara Sahgal, the above comment is made by Vishal Dubey, the experienced ICS officer, as he contemplates his assignment to bring peace and order to Chandigarh out of the chaos and mistrust generated by the creation of the two states of Punjab and Hariyana. He highlights a problem which almost all countries and all cultures face: Fundamentalism. He sounds a warning that all of us who must live with this phenomenon and try to bring the peace of Christ to our societies must heed. Another character in the same novel points to the source of the trouble:

There are governments called people's governments that are really built on the destruction of a people's whole foundation. Not only have they overthrown a tyranny but a religion and a philosophy as well, and tossed away an accumulation of racial experience. Revolutions have to take place when living conditions become intolerable, but even a revolution should not destroy a people's framework. It should stop short of that. Tear that down and you will have a bewildered society, people who've lost their moorings and don't know where they're going.<sup>2</sup>

It is this situation of bewilderment and confusion that begets the fundamentalist. A culture is a complexus of symbols, myths and rituals which protect a people from what human nature fears most: chaos and confusion. A culture creates a protected area of meaning in the midst of vast meaninglessness, a small clearing in the jungle where one can feel at home and secure, an ordered society — where one may at times feel persecuted and marginalised — but whose rules and values one knows. One knows how the system works and learns how to manipulate it to provide for oneself and one's family a measure of security and the good things of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Nayantara Sahgal, *Storm in Chandigarh* (Delhi, Orient Paperbacks, n.d.), p.7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.



This is beautifully symbolised by the ancient and medieval walled city of Hindu India. In the centre of the city was the palace of the king surrounded by the dwellings of the high castes. Other castes lived in concentric circles of descending order as one moves toward the periphery. The low castes lived along the walls of the city, with the outcasts outside the walls. The low caste people were forbidden to wear ornaments; they were forbidden music at their weddings and other ceremonies (though they were often the ones who played the music for the upper castes). The roofs of the houses of the upper castes were tile, those of the lower castes of straw. A circle, or sometimes three concentric circles, of protective deities placed at the eight points of the compass protected the city and its inhabitants. Beyond this lay the *ghanghor*, jungle, the dense (and hence, chaotic – disordered) and terrifying jungle.

Even highly structured and closed cultures no longer have such vivid physical constructs, and this fact may lead us to ignore the still valid anthropological principle behind the structure. Symbols, myths and rituals still give life and security to modern man and modern societies as much as they did to our ancestors.<sup>3</sup>

To an anthropologist a symbol is any reality which has power to make us think of, get us into contact with, another deeper and often rather mysterious reality. Symbols speak primarily to the heart and the imagination. This gives them their emotional power, and they collect meanings around themselves often quite disparate, or even contradictory. A rosary may be a symbol of my faith and devotion to Our Lady. It may also be a rather nostalgic symbol of the piety and devotion I learned as a child, and which is missing from the practice of the faith today. If the rosary I have was a gift from my mother, it becomes a symbol of all that she meant to me, and perhaps also of her painful death, and the sense of loss it brought to me.

We all have our private symbols, but much more important to society are symbols we share with other members of our culture. Religious symbols such as the cross, the *trishul*, the crescent, the *stupa*. National symbols such as the flag, national monuments like Raj Ghat in Delhi, ideas, such as “the Nation,” Freedom, Liberation, God, become symbols. Language, and its use, is a symbol. The cultured and educated speak a “refined” language, such as “BBC English” or Sanskrit, the uneducated speak the Vernacular or

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<sup>3</sup> The reflections in this paper draw heavily on three articles written by Gerald A. Arbuckle, published in *Human Development*; “Communicating through Symbols (Vol. VIII, No. 1, pp. 7-12); “Appreciating the Power of Myths” (Vol. VIII, No. 4, pp. 20-24); “Communicating through Ritual (Vol. IX, No. 2, pp. 21-26). Fr. Arbuckle writes primarily for Christian educators and those who are trying to implement the teachings of Vatican II, but his insights are equally valid for an understanding of the phenomenon of fundamentalism.

“vulgar tongue” (*prakrit, apabhramsa*). Most Indian languages have polite or honorific forms that are used when speaking to certain categories of people. A culture has a host of body use and body control symbols — what is considered acceptable in one culture is considered vulgar, uncouth or obscene in another culture. Dress codes symbolise one’s place in the society as rich or poor, labourer or bureaucrat, secular or religious, young or old. Symbols permeate our life, and with their power to reach into the very core of our being, they give us a sense of security and belonging. Any disruption in the world of our symbols produces anxiety and discomfort.

A sense of security comes not just from the symbols of our culture but even more from the meaning they point to. Man needs a reason to exist, some satisfying explanation for why things exist. We need to know where we fit in an ordered cosmos that makes sense. We need some sort of social organisation which enables us to work together in some measure of harmony rather than chaos. And we need a vision or an overall view that gives us a sense of pride in our nation, our community. This meaning is provided by what the anthropologist calls the myths of society. Myth has a bad press today. It is usually equated with a legend or fairy tale. To an anthropologist it is any story which explains to a people the cosmos, the social reality and the relationships that should exist among people and between them and the transcendent. Like symbols, myths speak primarily to the heart and reflect the values of society. Like symbols, they exercise a tremendous power over our lives, giving us comfort and a sense of security. We ignore the power of the myth at the risk of disrupting the equilibrium of our own lives and of those with whom we live and work.

Myths may or may not have solid foundations in historical realities. The key for identifying a myth is not whether or not it reflects historical reality but whether or not it conveys meaning, values and moral significance. The life of Mahatma Gandhi may be told merely as a series of historical events. The same events may be recounted, with absolute historical accuracy, to highlight the moral significance of who he was and what he did. He is seen as a person embodying the virtue of renunciation for others, sacrificing oneself for the freedom of the nation, zeal for the rights of others, upliftment of the downtrodden, etc. This is a myth, and we live by myths, not by abstract theory.<sup>4</sup>

Society also engages in repeated symbolic behaviour called ritual. Ritual is not something confined to a religious context but is any repeated, stylised

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<sup>4</sup> Imagine the anthropologist’s dismay at a term one finds occasionally today in writings on Sacred Scripture which refer to “de-mythologising Scripture”! If one were to do this, the Bible would become merely an object of historical study and not a book to live by.

and symbolic use of bodily movement and gesture within a social context used to express and articulate meaning. Life is full of ambiguity; it has tensions, and at least potential conflicts. I may have a dear friend whom I trust implicitly and cherish, but I know the relationship must be maintained and fostered. So we meet at regular intervals, send greetings at Christmas or on birthdays. My relationship with God is fragile, I can disrupt it through sin and infidelity. So I pray regularly expressing my oneness with Him. Others have the same fear of drifting away from Him, so we gather in community to pray, worship and encourage one another. A nation is a fragile conglomerate of peoples. Hence, every nation engages in national rituals to reinforce this unity: Independence Day Celebrations, the King's Birthday, the birthday of the founder of the nation, feasts and festivals which have a national character, and may be religious if the nation shares the same religious culture. On such occasions the major myths of the nation are recounted in speeches, in song and in drama.

A culture then is a complexus of symbols, myths and rituals, which protect people from the dreadful insecurities of chaos. But culture is not static; it is a living entity ever changing and developing. The most conservative and static culture is still a restless, changing organism. In a stable society cultural changes take place gradually, with little disruption in the life and sense of security of the people. If a culture dramatically disintegrates, however, people experience a sense of meaninglessness and anxiety as they face that dreaded chaos.

At times we deliberately interfere with this cultural process by suspending the usual cultural structure of daily life for a definite purpose. At the beginning of every Mass we are all reminded that we gather as brothers and sisters of the Lord and as sinners — not as rich and poor, learned and illiterate, teachers and taught, government officials and the “people.” Such a suspension of the structures of daily life threatens people, and to offset the threat, the key myth of our faith is told once again: the Mass enacts the suffering/death/and resurrection story of Jesus Christ. A simple example of the same process of the deliberate breakdown of structures is the office or school picnic. For a day all — from the General Manager down to the youngest office clerk — go off for a day of fun and games to relate to each other just as people, in the hope that this period of shared community will make it easier for to people to relate to each other in their ordinary structured life. <sup>5</sup> A

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<sup>5</sup> When the symbols, myths or rituals of a culture are thus suspended, or when they break down, the anthropologist speaks of the people passing into a phase of anti-structure or liminality. Anti-structure has two characteristics. First, it is always a threatening experience. One can recall people who “hate” picnics, parlour games and other such exercises of anti-structure. They usually avoid them, saying that they are too busy or that such exercise are childish. Often they are too uncomfortable trying to function in a situation where the usual structures of society have been suspended. Second, a period of anti- struc-

more threatening, but usually not fatal, breakdown of culture occurs within our lives when we face the death of a loved one. The structure of our world is shattered when we lose someone who was so much a part of our life. A temporary breakdown of culture is experienced by people who travel and are confronted by cultures alien to their own. They become confused and ill at ease as they find their cultural symbols and their way of acting produce results quite contrary to what they have grown to expect. Some adjust with ease; others experience a severe "culture shock," producing malaise and paralysis. They are unable to function.

This breakdown of culture is ambiguous. It may lead to paralysis and emotional poverty; it may lead to growth in a process of death, resurrection and new life. We see this portrayed beautifully in the life of Our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, as he faces physical suffering, but much more the sense of abandonment by his people, his disciples, and even his Father. In his darkness he turns in fear and trust to the Father, from whom he draws the strength to continue his mission.

Sometimes, people experience a much more long-term disintegration of their culture which is totally unplanned and profoundly threatening. History gives us many examples of such disintegration resulting from foreign conquest, or resulting from the sudden contact of a simple people with a dominating culture which deliberately sets about to undermine the symbols of their culture. (See for example what happened to the Irish when they were overrun by the English, or what happened to *adivasis* in India when they were forced to submit to the dominant Hindu culture.) In the contemporary world this is not an isolated phenomenon, but something that every nation is facing. The pace of change in the modern world is frantic. With improved communications and the spiralling development of technology, society is in a constant state of flux. The pace of change in the developing world is perhaps faster, but the peoples of all nations of the world are experiencing the numbness, chaos and meaninglessness which results from the disintegration of their culture.

When this happens, some people withdraw into isolation and cultural poverty, deprived of any sense of hope or meaning (e.g., the American Indians). Others react in violence striking out to destroy those who pose the threat. Most frequently people react in two other ways which lead us to the

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ture or liminality is of its very nature limited. People cannot function without some structure. Structures can be changed and changed radically but must ultimately be replaced by new structures. The "Hippy movement" of the 1960s and 1970s was doomed to self-destruction because it was based on a premise of the removal of all structures. Some religious orders invited disintegration after Vatican II by understanding a call to change structures as a call to abolish all structures. Soon their members began to leave in large numbers, quite rightly feeling that "religious life has lost all meaning."

topic of our considerations here.

People may bind themselves together in new movements that seek to build a new cultural identity. In doing this they will receive inner strength by discovering their cultural roots, by returning to their mythology and drawing from it a new sense of identity in a changing and threatening world. From their roots they will receive nourishment for the new growth. In such a situation eschatological symbols become important, and prophetic leaders emerge to articulate the new visions and the new strategies for action. This is the process followed by Vatican II, and this is what Pope Paul VI asked the members of each religious order to do as they attempted to renew their religious life.<sup>6</sup>

Whenever there is a massive breakdown of culture, a certain percentage of the people take refuge in fundamentalism. Terrified by the chaos and meaninglessness which they experience encroaching upon their lives, they retreat into fundamentalist secular or religious cults or sects which give them a sense of belonging and self worth. Such movements always romanticise an imagined former golden age, and seek to restore that age with its symbols intact. In a South Asian context one might refer to this as the “*Kali Yug Syndrome*”—“We began with a golden age in the past when the gods walked amongst us and society was ordered. Since that time things have been going from bad to worse and they can only get worse.”

Psychologists describe the typical fundamentalists as “authoritarian personalities,” persons who feel threatened in a world of conspiring evil forces. They think in simplistic and stereotypical terms, and are attracted to au-

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<sup>6</sup> A study of what has happened to religious orders since Vatican II is an excellent illustration of the principles discussed here. Though all orders have suffered a trauma of adjustment, the adjustment has been successful where members have engaged in a renewal of spirit by returning to their roots. One could mention several truly charismatic individuals who have arisen within the orders to “re-found” them in the spirit of the founder. Where change was introduced for the sake of change without this inner renewal, or where a few superficial changes were introduced without the agony of renewal, the order has suffered either greater turmoil, resulting in the loss of a larger percentage of its membership, or the malaise of stagnation.

The experience of the Philippine Church offers an example of the eschatological symbol. As in all Churches with a South European (especially Spanish or Portuguese) heritage, the suffering of Christ was a powerful symbol. The figure on the crucifix was usually a graphic, sometimes gory, portrayal of the physical suffering of Christ. This expressed the lived experience of the local Church. Especially in the Philippines it expressed the experience of a long period of colonial subjugation. After Vatican II and, perhaps more importantly, after the successful “People’s Revolution,” Filipinos began to speak more of the Risen and Glorious Christ and to relate to a crucifix with Christ portrayed as Risen and Glorious.

The Philippines also offers a beautiful example of the spontaneous generation of a powerful symbol. When Aquino was murdered on the tarmac of Manila Airport, he was wearing a yellow shirt. Overnight yellow became the colour of the people’s struggle, a symbol so threatening to the establishment that the Marcos government forbade the wearing of yellow in all government offices.

thoritarian and moralistic answers. They are people who have “no feel for light and shade...and this is the source of their energy and, in a queer way, of their integrity.” This flight into the past, of course, solves nothing and at some stage these people must face the changed world out there. In the meantime they become a menace to society, but they also continue to suffer, and those who strive to bring about a reconciliation within society ensure the failure of their endeavours if they fail to address the pain.

Fundamentalism then is a reactionary emotional movement that develops within those cultures which are experiencing rapid disintegration. Uncritical and insensitive radical — liberal changes in the 1960s and 1970s, plus the rapid technological advances of the same period, created the conditions for a world-wide retreat into fundamentalism.

Perhaps the best example of this reaction can be found in Iran. Iran was a profoundly religious but isolated and very conservative society, when suddenly a surfeit of money introduced rapid technological changes. Thousands of young people were sent abroad, mostly to the West, for advanced studies to return as uncritical agents of rapid change. The oppressive regime of the Shah generated dissatisfaction at all levels of society, but the revolution was co-opted by the fundamentalists, who offered to the terrified and confused populace a return to a stable and familiar society.

The totalitarian religious dictatorship of Khomeini's Iran offers us examples of two characteristics of such fundamentalist movements. First is the witch hunt, an attempt to discover the “deviants” and to seek opportunities for revenge upon the agents of change. All of their emotions were projected onto “The Great Satan,” the United States and its allies, who became the symbols of the dreaded Westernisation which had created chaos in their society.

Secondly, those who arise as prophets within the community to question the political/academic/religious status quo are seen as “polluting agents,” and must be isolated or banished before they can contaminate others. Often this takes the form of mockery, social isolation, excommunication. In Iran it has taken a more violent form: the condemning to death of a fellow Muslim, the author Rushdie, for writing something that is at most a very indirect critique of the way Islam is lived and understood in certain quarters and which will not even be read or heard of by the people of Iran.

A less violent sort of fundamentalism can be seen in the United States, which suffered a widespread disintegration of its culture as a result of the revolution of the youth in the 1960s, but much more as a result of the disillusionment of the Vietnam War. The foundational mythology of the nation draws heavily on the story of the Exodus: America is the new promised

land of peace, plenty and justice. America stands for peace, justice and freedom for all men. Suddenly a wide variety of people was using the myth of the "American Dream" to justify contradictory choices. The government claimed that Americans were in Vietnam to bring freedom, democracy and prosperity to a people threatened by "The Great Satan" — international totalitarian, atheist communism. The youth and the "liberals" claimed that, in fact, Americans were doing just the opposite, and that Americans were dying to support an autocratic and repressive government subservient to American "Imperial" interests.<sup>7</sup> The greatest American national symbol, the flag, became an object of derision. The populace at large was bewildered and profoundly threatened. As they came to admit the failure of the war, they felt betrayed.

Out of this confusion arose a "religious revival," fed by the ravings of unthinking fundamentalist TV preachers of questionable morality, who stressed the religious underpinnings of the "American Dream." In the period of reconciliation Americans elected Ronald Reagan, "The Great Communicator," who with the consummate skill of the actor spent eight years rearticulating and rebuilding the national mythology by word and example (e.g., the invasion of Grenada). The economic prosperity of his era resulted not from his policies but from the policies of the Federal Reserve Bank, whose director he had not appointed and whose policies he disapproved of. He was unable to fulfil any of his other campaign promises, and his administration was as corrupt and devious as that of Richard Nixon. Yet few voices were raised against him. He was experienced as the man who restored Americans' faith in their nation. Richard Nixon was experienced as the man who had destroyed that faith. From this, one can sense the power of the myth to grip people, and what happens when people feel that the myth is being abused or wrongly interpreted.

South Asia has also seen the rise of Fundamentalism over the past ten years. Shiite and other fundamentalist sects have made their presence felt in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Sinhalese fundamentalists in Sri Lanka have threatened every attempt of the government to reach a fair and just settlement with the Tamil minority. In India the majority Hindu community feels threatened by socio-economic changes, and has projected their emotions onto the minority communities. Hindu fundamentalism is on the rise, and it is interesting to note the symbols and the myths which are being used to fire the imagination of the people. Every new shrine erected by the Fundamentalists includes an image of Hanuman, a deity whose popularity had long ago been eclipsed by the more popular objects of devotion. What does Hanuman

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<sup>7</sup> Notice that throughout this period of turmoil none of the protagonists ever questioned the validity of the myth. The struggle was over the understanding and application of the myth.

symbolise? The symbol par-excellence has become the Ram Janma Bhumi. Traffic comes to a standstill and shops and offices close when the Mahabharata and the Ramayana come on Doordarshan—the power of the symbol and the myth. This is what grips people; it makes no difference that a panel of India's most eminent historians have declared that there is no historical proof that the site is the birthplace of Ram, or that there was ever a Hindu shrine on the site of the present mosque.

Modern education, exposure to the outside world, and perhaps more important, the influx of non-Bhutanese into the lower hills and *tarai* of Bhutan, have threatened the establishment. Consequently, Bhutan has embarked upon a programme of government-enforced "nativism," prescribing dress codes, limiting the ingress of foreigners (especially Indians and Nepalis), reinforcing the official status of Lamaistic Buddhism, phasing out Christian missionaries working in the country, curtailing the people's access to the international media, and enacting laws which insure that people of Indian and Nepali origin do not acquire the rights of citizens. This has now resulted in a flood of some 80,000 refugees who have been forced to flee the country.

Just a few years ago, Nepal experienced a political convulsion. Political and administrative changes were introduced at a rapid rate. A new constitution which assures human rights, including religious freedom, was enacted. Some are still advocating a secular state—a direct attack on the mythology of the nation as the world's "Only Hindu Kingdom," of a Hindu nation by law, governed by a Hindu King, who rules by the Hindu scriptures, and who is the source of all rights and all power. The changes have produced confusion, and the current leadership is aware of the danger of a strong fundamentalist reaction and speaks of it. Whether they possess the wisdom and political skills to continue the process of change without destroying the fabric of society and without producing a "bewildered society of people who have lost their moorings and don't know where they're going" remains to be seen.

A final case which might shed some light on the phenomenon of fundamentalism is the experience of the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II. It is worth noting that every Council of the Church which has truly tried to adapt the Church to the changing times has produced a schism. The changes so threatened some people that they left the Church. From the time of the Council of Trent until Vatican II the Church operated from a mythology which supported a kind of defensive isolation, with highly visual and triumphalistic symbols of power, tradition and rock-hard stability. The Council returned to a much earlier mythology of mission to the world, a mythology of pilgrimage in which the visible symbols of power and social stability play a much smaller role. The Council saw the Church as the People of God, saved by the grace of Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit at



work within the Church, but like all mankind a people on a search, sinners groping in the dark, striving to make their faith relevant to the modern world. The old model offered a safe refuge from the ambiguities of the human condition; the new model called people to involve themselves in the threatening process of incarnating the Kingdom of God in the contemporary world. People became confused, benumbed and apathetic, as they lost their feeling of roots, belonging and identity.

Like Vatican I, which produced a schism known as the "Old Catholics," Vatican II has produced a schism under the leadership of the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Lefebvre himself had theological difficulties with some of the documents of Vatican II. Most of his followers could not tell you what these theological misgivings are, and they couldn't care less. What has attracted followers is his promotion of the Tridentine Latin Mass. Rapid liturgical change, often without proper catechism, was for these people a profoundly threatening experience. Suddenly, the old symbols and the old rituals were cast aside to be replaced by constant change and endless talk about the liturgy—a failure on the part of those introducing the changes to understand the power and function of symbol and ritual. Involvement of Catholic anthropologists and sociologists, who were appalled not by the changes but by the process, might have spared the Church much of the pain of the past thirty years.

In the sixties and seventies one seldom heard much from these threatened Catholics. The election of Pope John Paul II, whom they wrongly see as one of their own, brought the Catholic fundamentalists out of the woodwork.<sup>8</sup> In a number of countries, mainly in the West, new groups have grown up to "defend" the faith. Composed mainly of lay people, they engage in

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<sup>8</sup> It is important here to make a clear distinction between fundamentalism and conservatism. "Conservatism may be described broadly as a philosophy that values established, traditional ideas and practices and seeks to preserve a given community's historical heritage—especially in times of cultural change. As such, true conservatism is an absolute necessity in the modern Catholic Church. Conservative regard for the biblical and doctrinal roots of the Catholic Church is a valuable safeguard against adoption of modern ideas and practices that are merely trendy. The chief gift of Catholic conservatives to the Church is, therefore, the defense and preservation of the Church's lived experience against purely rational or emotional changes." Patrick M. Arnold, "The Rise of Catholic Fundamentalism," *America*, Vol. CLVI, no. 14, April 11, 1987, pp. 297-302.

Pope John Paul II is not a fundamentalist. Further, it is impossible to label him either "conservative" or "liberal." On questions of Church authority and discipline he is conservative, and it is this which the fundamentalist senses when he claims him as his own. What the fundamentalist, true to his type, cannot comprehend is the subtlety and complexity of the Pope's outlook. On questions of social justice and the Church's mission in the modern world he is far to the left of the general run of the hierarchy and laity of the Church of Western Europe and North America. Even his misgivings about Liberation Theology turn rather on questions of method and Church discipline (e.g., the involvement of priests and religious in the political process) and the preservation of two traditional values: Christ's refusal to turn to violence and the Church's mission to all -- rich and poor alike.

witch hunts to find deviants from their interpretation of the faith, and isolate them by reporting them to Rome, and by inviting disciplinary action — be they lay people, theologians, or bishops. One seldom hears them speak of the Bible except to cite it as proof for ecclesiastical authority or their favourite moral concerns. For them the ultimate norm consists of official written statements of the Roman *magisterium*. Yet even here, they are highly selective in their use of Roman documents, seizing upon anything that stresses centralised authority or traditional morality but ignoring the social encyclicals of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. If bishops speak out on social or economic issues, they are ignored or their utterances dismissed as interference in politics.<sup>9</sup> They are one-issue-people. In the U.S. the one issue is abortion, and when Cardinal Bernadin spoke of a “seamless robe” of issues, including not only abortion, but concern for the rights of women, the blacks, the poor, etc., they ridiculed him.

Catholic fundamentalist movements in these countries have crippled the rest of Catholicism by inhibiting its response to social problems, by obscuring its former image of hope and outreach, and by setting sectors of the Church against each other. Many prophets — progressive theologians and bishops — are intimidated and unwilling to risk their careers on behalf of the causes which annoy the fundamentalists: women’s rights in the Church, civil rights, support for Third World Churches and their struggles for liberation.

How does one fight fundamentalism? One doesn’t. A frontal attack on fundamentalists merely confirms their anxiety. One must begin from reflection on the shared experience of living in a threatening world of constant change. We have all experienced this. How has it affected us personally? How has it affected our local Catholic Church? What has been our personal response and that of our people? From such reflections one can move on to consider other fundamentalists in our society. What threatens them and how might we work with other people of good will to bring solace to them, and peace to our communities and nations?

Perhaps, we have something to share in the vision given to us by Vatican II of a return to roots to draw nourishment and build a new society. We share the national ethos with people of all religions. Can we not join with them in

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<sup>9</sup> This experience highlights another characteristic of fundamentalist movements: they tend to divide societies and turn members of society on each other. Before 1960 Catholics in the United States experienced a strong sense of solidarity as a community looked down upon by the dominant white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. Those who spoke out did so to defend Catholicism or to engage in controversy with Protestants. Those who speak out today speak against Catholic theologians, Catholic bishops and contemporary Catholic movements. National rulers often understand the dynamics of this very well and foment trouble with neighbours in times of internal turmoil to unite the people against a common enemy.

rancy of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, his virgin birth, the doctrine of vicarious expiation, and the bodily resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ. (The resurrection of the body and the Second Coming of Christ are sometimes counted as two distinct fundamentals, giving a total of six.) These theses were developed in a series of tracts which popularized and systematized their views in American Protestant circles. Their strong missionary thrust (it is estimated that between 70-80% of missionaries are evangelicals) brought their particular understanding of Christianity to many parts of the world, so that today, evangelical Christianity is a world-wide phenomenon, growing quickly throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Christian fundamentalism is not a united movement, but rather an outlook on modern life formed by a distinctive reading of Scripture and the role of Christians in world history. Some reject all denominations and have no ties to any ecclesial organization. Others form fellowships of independent local congregations that recognize no higher authority. Still others are members of recognized "historical" churches. The characteristic features of Christian fundamentalism can be viewed under four headings: 1) their understanding of Scripture, its inspiration, interpretation, and authority; 2) a unique history of salvation; 3) eschatology, 4) critique of modernity.

### **1. Scripture: Its Inspiration Interpretation, and Authority**

The 1993 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, with a preface by Cardinal Ratzinger, surveys various aspects of the historical-critical approach to the Bible. It treats textual criticism, literary genre, tradition and redaction criticism, rhetorical, narrative and semiotic analyses, canonical criticism, and Jewish methods of interpretation, aspects of sociological, anthropological, psychological, and psychoanalytic approaches to Scripture. The document examines both the strengths and limitations of liberationist and feminist uses of Scripture. Of all the varied approaches to the Word of God, only the fundamentalist use is described as "dangerous."

Fundamentalists might state their position as follows: Scripture is inerrant because it is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3: 16), who is Truth. Thus, Scripture cannot contradict itself. The inerrancy of Scripture flows from the truthfulness of God; to challenge one is to challenge both. Because Scripture is inerrant, its authority cannot be contested. There is only one correct interpretation of Scripture, that which comes from a literal reading of the text.

The fundamentalist understanding of inspiration not only presumes divine authorship but denies any role to human reflection and creativity. The Bible, they hold, is not a product of the human community. It originates, rather, from God and was transmitted to the community by chosen agents such as

the search? In South Asia, though, this will not be enough. We live in multi-religious societies, and in all countries of South Asia Christians are a small minority. Religion becomes a lightning rod for fundamentalism. Can we not share with other religious leaders our vision of a return to roots and help them to draw nourishment from their own roots?

#### IV. CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALISM

by

THOMAS MICHEL

##### A. CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

In speaking about Christian and Muslim fundamentalism, we should note at the beginning that we are using a derogatory term, one that today no religious group claims for itself. In the first half of this century, there were Christians who proudly referred to themselves as "fundamentalists," but as the term came to carry connotations of narrow-mindedness, an intolerance of all those outside their group, and a rejection of science, rational thought, and modern life, erstwhile fundamentalists came to refer to themselves as "evangelicals."

Muslims reject the term even more strongly, which they see as part of a media and political campaign to denigrate and isolate Muslims in the modern world. There are Islamic terms, as we shall see, by which Muslims themselves refer to phenomena and attitudes within the Islamic community that are often dubbed "fundamentalist" by the news media. Thus, we should be aware at the outset that we are using a term which, although it has become so current as to be inescapable, is not respectful of the beliefs and perspectives of those to whom it is applied.

In order to bring this very broad topic into sharper focus, I will attempt to answer the following questions? What are the characteristics that distinguish Christian and Muslim "fundamentalists" from other Muslims and Christians? On what points might we as Catholics find ourselves in agreement with such groups? Where do we differ? What makes fundamentalist religious attitudes attractive in the modern world and result in fundamentalism as a growing phenomenon in the world today? Finally, what pastoral responses might be proposed to this reality?

##### CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

The origins of the term are well-known. At the American Biblical Congress held in Niagara, New York, in 1895, a group of conservative Protestant churchmen who were disturbed by trends in Biblical scholarship and liberal theology, drew up a list of "fundamentals" that they affirmed: verbal iner-

prophets and apostles. Some subscribe to the "dictation theory," by which God takes possession of the imagination and faculties of the individual authors, dictating words and ideas and preserving them from errors that could arise from ignorance or deception. The inspired authors are regarded as passive, receptive secretaries of God's Word.

God moved the Biblical authors to write and inspired every detail of the original text. Many hold that God also preserved from error those who prepared "official" translations (such as the King James' Version in English) from Hebrew and Greek. There are no tales or myths to distort the revelation, no need for later reinterpretation or further theological development. In contrast to the Catholic and Orthodox position that the Bible is to be interpreted by ecclesiastical officials in the light of church tradition, and the liberal Protestant view that Biblical teaching must be evaluated in the light of Christian reason, fundamentalists hold that the Bible is self-contained and self-interpreting. The Biblical word is complete and comprehensive, providing all that needs to be known for salvation, and containing within itself the principles of its own interpretation.

This appeal to the self-authenticating nature of the Scripture also distinguishes Scripturalist Evangelicals from Pentecostals, who claim that the individual Christian believer will be guided by the direct action of the Holy Spirit to interpret the Scripture. Throughout most of this century there have been mutual suspicions and antagonisms between Evangelicals and Pentecostals, with the Scripturalists holding that the fullness of salvific knowledge contained in the Bible renders superfluous all private revelations that arise from Spirit possession. Pentecostals, on the other hand, hold that the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, including that of interpretation, were meant to be ongoing blessings in the Christian community. By repudiating them, the Scripturalists lack the fullness of the apostolic experience. However, in the last 25 years, there has been a cross-fertilization between Evangelicals and Pentecostals, and the formerly sharp distinctions between the two interpretations are blurred.

Because the Bible is inspired, it is not subject to any historical limitations. Thus, fundamentalists oppose all critical Biblical interpretation and reject the conclusions that arise from critical-historical methods. This view, which the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission describes as "naive literalism," is opposed to the Catholic position, which holds that "the historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of the ancient texts."

The difference between the two views would seem to lie in understanding the meaning of the term "literal." Fundamentalists contend that "the Bible says what it means and means what it says," thus making no distinction

between what the words say and what they mean. Since the revealed Word is not limited by historical expression, they do not take into account the change of meaning in words that occurs in the course of time. They presume that words and ideas today have exactly the same significance they had for the original authors.

Historical-critical scholars also seek to affirm the literal meaning of Scripture, by which they mean the way these words were understood by the Biblical authors, editors, and communities. They do not presume that this meaning has remained unchanged over the centuries. Thus, critical scholars do not question the God-given and authoritative character of the Bible, but they insist that Scripture is neither comprehensive, self-contained or self-interpreting.

Finally, it must be recognized that Catholics and Evangelicals share many of the same Biblical concerns and interests. Both regard the Biblical teachings as normative and seek to live their lives in accord with them. Both hold that the Holy Spirit has been with the church since the beginning and guides its understanding of revealed truth. Both agree that church tradition is important and offers invaluable assistance and insight in explaining Biblical teaching. It is on the Incarnational implications of the role of the human author in the production of Scripture that they differ.

## **2. History of Salvation: Dispensationalism**

One of the most distinctive features of the fundamentalist reading of the Bible is the doctrine of the seven dispensations. This scheme, which dates from the 19th century, was set forth in the notes to the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) which, through its many reprintings, translation into many languages, and study in Bible colleges, has been one of the main vehicles for the spread of dispensationalist doctrine. Dispensationalist theory divides the world into seven epochs, each of which is characterized by a specific way in which God brings about human salvation. The seven epochs are:

- 1) innocence (the Garden of Eden). Adam and Eve were sinless while in the Garden.
- 2) conscience (the Fall to Noah). People were saved by following their conscience.
- 3) human government (Noah to Abraham). Obedience to human rulers.
- 4) promise (Abraham to Moses). Salvation through the promise.
- 5) law (Moses to Christ). Salvation by perfect adherence to the Law.
- 6) grace (the death of Christ to the present; "the Church Age").
- 7) millennium (begins with Christ's Second Coming; "the Kingdom Age").

Of particular interest is the relationship between the last three dispensa-

tions. The “70 weeks of years” (Daniel 9: 20-27) are divided into four periods. The 69th “week” ended with the death of Christ and the destruction of the Temple in the year 70. With the death of Jesus there came into being two peoples: the “worldly” people of God, the Jews, and the “heavenly” people of God, the Church. The Church Age, in which we live, is a hiatus during which the Gospel is preached to the Gentiles. When this has been accomplished, the world will enter the 70th week, at which time the fulfillment of all the prophecies will occur.

A peculiar feature of dispensationalism is the belief that the Gospel preaching of Jesus took place under the dispensation of the law, while the epistles are addressed to the Church and are fully applicable to the dispensation of grace. The Scofield Reference Bible states that “the doctrines of grace are to be sought in the epistles, not in the gospels.” Jesus’ earthly preaching, including the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord’s Prayer, etc., is seen as calling people to enter the dispensation of grace. It does not contain the full teaching of the Church Age. For example, in the Lord’s Prayer, forgiveness is dependent on forgiving others, but under grace, God’s forgiveness is unconditional. Jesus, under the dispensation of the law, teaches: “Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Mt 7: 21); but Paul, in the time of grace, teaches: “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

There is no contradiction between Jesus and Paul, since Jesus taught under the law, while Paul wrote in the dispensation of grace. What is important in dispensationalist thought is not the earthly teaching of Jesus but rather his death which expiated for all sins committed by humankind and ushered in the new dispensation, the age of grace. This, they claim, is faithful to the approach of Paul himself, who admittedly refers, but rarely, to Gospel teachings and parables, and is more concerned with the effects of Christ’s death and resurrection as the inauguration of the “new and eternal covenant” and God’s unconditional free gift of salvation.

### **3. Eschatology: the Final Days**

The doctrine of divine dispensations sets the stage for one of the best-known elements of fundamentalist thought, the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Until the 1920s, most fundamentalist Protestants accepted the historical optimism of the time, that Christians would be successful in transforming the world through evangelical values, overcoming ignorance, poverty, and injustice through scientific advances. Christian missionaries from technologically advanced countries saw themselves as bringing the benefits of Christian civilization to all peoples. Their efforts were to be ultimately crowned with the Christian millennium, a 1000-year reign of peace and

prosperity on earth. At the end of this period, Christ would return and set the divine seal of approval on the Christian transformation of the world. The technical term for this view in which Christ returns after the millennium is called *postmillennialism*. In the early part of this century, most fundamentalists were postmillennialists.

The experience of World War I, with Christian armies using modern scientific weapons to annihilate one another, brought a profound disillusionment with modernity and technology. More and more, they began to turn to a *premillennialist* schema which presumes that the world is headed inexorably to disaster. The signs are all around, "for those who have eyes to see." At the point when things cannot get any worse, Christ will return and inaugurate the millennium. Thus, in the premillennial schema, Christ returns before the millennium.

Relying on obscure passages in the prophecies of Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse), fundamentalist thinkers attempt to predict the coming eschatological crisis. The Antichrist, an ecclesiastical and political tyrant supported by the apostate Christian churches, will appear and lead many astray. World history will degenerate to a seven-year period called the Great Tribulation (Mt 24: 21-29). However, before the beginning of the Tribulation, Christ will return to take those who have been "born again" and call upon the name of Jesus out of this world so they will escape the coming sorrows. This is called the Rapture (cf 1 Thess 4: 16-17), and it is expected quite literally. The Tribulation will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon, after which Christ will come to establish the millennium.

The broad outlines of this worldly eschatology were already sketched in the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909, but were given wide diffusion and concrete application with the publication in 1970 of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which has sold over 20 million copies in over 40 languages. This work attempts to apply the fundamentalist eschatology to current events. The first sign of the imminent approach of the Last Days is the establishment of the State of Israel (Dn 9: 20-27). The Antichrist's appearance is seen in the appearance of the Beast, which Lindsey identifies with the European Union. A Russian-led Arab coalition is expected to attack Israel, which will be defended by the European Union led by the Antichrist. The Antichrist will enter the Temple in Jerusalem and demand to be worshiped. This is the beginning of the Great Persecution, followed by "the greatest battle of all time," Armageddon. At this point the Rapture will occur, and those who have remained faithful and accept Jesus as their personal Savior will not have to suffer the terrible events to follow.

China will invade Israel, and the whole world will be caught up in a nuclear



war. After much suffering, sickness and famine, Christ will return with an army of angels and saints, defeat the Antichrist and all Gentile powers, and usher in his 1000-year millennial reign. At the end of this final dispensation, God will free Satan from his bonds, and he will make a final effort to overthrow the Reign of Christ. Christ will totally defeat Satan, who will be hurled into the lake of fire, and the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven.

There are, of course, religious and political implications to this fanciful scenario, which might be amusing were it not for the fact that so many Christians take it as a literal prediction of coming events. Much of the zeal of evangelical missionaries in all corners of the globe is motivated by the belief that the Final Cataclysm cannot take place until the Gospel has been preached to all the Gentiles. With the fall of the Soviet Union, evangelicals lost no time in sending specially trained missionaries into Russia and neighboring republics. At the political level, rather than fearing a nuclear holocaust, dispensationalists look forward to it. They themselves will not suffer the consequences, since they will have been raptured into heaven. Thus, they tend to support excessive military budgets and oppose nuclear-arms limitation treaties. There are no stronger supporters of the State of Israel than fundamentalist Christians, because they see its existence is a necessary prerequisite for the Final World Crisis. Every year at the Jewish feast of Succoth, thousands of evangelicals visit Jerusalem and pledge their support for the State of Israel.

#### **4. Anti-Modernist Social Critique**

Perhaps the key element which unites Christian fundamentalists of various Churches and ecclesial communities is their opposition to "modernism." By modernism is not meant modernity. Fundamentalists are not opposed to advances in technology, health and education. They are often skillful and innovative in the use of media, including its most advanced applications, such as satellites, e-mail and internet, to promote and disseminate their message. What they object to, strongly and angrily, is the modernist philosophy of life which, in their view, offers an anti-religious understanding of the human person, the universe and society, and proposes a system of values meant to replace a religious "theocentric" outlook with an anthropocentric humanism.

The element of anger in the fundamentalist rejection of modernist values stems from what they consider to be a "liberal hegemony" which controls decisions and public opinion on a global scale. They hold that all centers of power, from government ministries and international organizations, like the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank, to university faculties, NGOs, research centers, family planning and development programs, the arts, popular entertainment, and communications media are con-

trolled by “liberals” and “secular humanists,” who have substituted human values for those revealed by God. Fundamentalists feel that their own views are ignored by this international liberal establishment, that their concerns are dismissed as devoid of serious consideration, and their religious outlook caricatured as “fanatic” and “obscurantist.”

## **5. Modernist Values in Fundamentalist Perspective**

Fundamentalists often preach and write against secular humanism, a line of thought they trace from the European philosophers of the Enlightenment. It introduces a religious relativism founded on the invalidity of metaphysics and theology (Kant). Religion is reduced to an ethic (e.g., in Asia, many countries have replaced religious instruction with “moral education.”) Religiosity is seen as a characteristic of primitive man. In mature, modern societies it should be superseded (Comte). For mature people in mature societies, reason, not revelation, is the sound basis for arriving at truth. Secularism is presumed as the basis of social life. Religion is a private affair and has no place in the public life of politics, economy and social affairs.

A scientific, rational attitude is one of objectivity and affective disinterest, an indifference to the consequences of truth. Scientific research does not treat ultimate questions but is oriented, rather, towards solving problems. Primacy is given to the individual over and against society. This leads to self-fulfillment being regarded as the highest of human goals and to a burning concern for human rights. The social values of the French revolution — liberty, fraternity, equality — are societal ideals to be striven for with “religious” fervor.

Finally, modernism proposes an historical optimism, an evolutionary vision of history, with a firm conviction of the inevitable victory of the forces of reason, progress, and liberty over those of superstition, obscurantism, and slavery. The downside of this optimism in social, political, and economic life is a Darwinian “survival of the fittest” that divides the world into “winners” and “losers.” It provides a philosophical underpinning for “the New World Order” in which success validates ideology; Gold Cards are the sign of ultimate achievement; and the losers get what they deserve. While the winners are rewarded with wealth, power, and prestige, the losers are left to enjoy the destructive and self-destructive pleasures of alcohol, drugs and sex.

## **6. The Fundamentalist Vision of Society**

The vision of the fundamentalists is quite different. There is one God, one moral universe, one Scripture. Truth is not founded on human reason, but has been revealed in the Scripture, which offers a clear, comprehensive,

incontrovertible guide by which societies and individuals can order their lives according to God's will. Success in life is not based on a university education, a high salary and traveling first class, but on accepting Christ as one's personal savior and being preserved from the tribulation to come.

Fundamentalists hold that modern progress has been achieved at the cost of religious and moral values, and results in dehumanization, the breakdown of families, and promiscuity. The modernist plan of society they compare to a plant fed with supernutrients that is growing too fast, wildly, directionless, out of control, into a monstrous being, devouring everything within its grasp. As a result, modern society values quantity more than quality, pragmatism more than truth, efficiency more than beauty.

## 7. Pastoral Challenges

Catholics must admit that the fundamentalist critique is not entirely without basis. Serious Christians, of whatever tendency, cannot accept uncritically the modernist value system proposed by such diverse sources as *Time*, *Asiaweek*, CNN, popular films, family planning agencies, business schools, and the advertising industry. Fundamentalists challenge Catholics to be aware that secular principles of society and humanist causes are not value-free.

Fundamentalists often accuse the main-line Churches, including the Catholic Church, of having sold out to modernist ideals and allowed themselves to become the servants of society's "winners." It cannot be denied that one of the reasons for the fundamentalists' rapid growth in the world today is their appeal to society's "losers." The fundamentalist outlook meets the felt needs of people on the bottom end of the social and economic scale. It helps them overcome immediate suffering due to human failure, frustration, and sin, by enabling people to deal with alcoholism, family discord, and mental anguish. The close-knit, mutually supportive communities of evangelicals provide havens of faith and encouragement in environments that are felt to be impersonal and hostile. The values of honesty, frugality and discipline instilled through sermons and popular religious literature enable people to survive amidst a rapidly disintegrating social order. Finally, their religious experience is fervent and emotionally satisfying and allows for an enthusiastic release of tension in ecstatic prayer gatherings.

In addition to the ways in which fundamentalists challenge Catholics today, we must also be conscious of the weak points in their system. Fundamentalists tend to idealize or romanticize the past, and do not face up to the contradictions and cruelties of every period of human history. Some evangelicals want to have it both ways and preach "the Prosperity Gospel," with born-again Christians bearing witness how once they had given their lives to Jesus they were rewarded with jobs, windfalls, good health, and

peace of mind, Fundamentalists employ a selective and often fanciful reading of Scripture. Not all Scripture is equally cited and meditated upon. The most difficult element of fundamentalist belief to accept is the bloodthirsty image of God presented in their eschatological scenario, one which is willing to allow millions to suffer and die in a nuclear catastrophe, and then suffer eternal damnation because they did not accept Christ as their savior. This is an appalling departure from the message of Christ.

## B. MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALISM

The similarities of outlook between Muslim revivalists and Christian fundamentalists are most apparent in their understanding of Scriptural inspiration and authority, and in their social critique. The correspondence is most acute in their common rejection of secular humanism, although the Muslim critique has its own history, emphases and concerns.

The concept of Islamic fundamentalism is more problematic than its Christian counterpart. As we have seen, fundamentalism is a part of Christian history in the last century. It was the invention of certain Christians who saw the term as properly descriptive of their views. By contrast, when one speaks of fundamentalism among Muslims, one is using a term that has no proper origin or history within the Islamic tradition, but is applied pejoratively to Muslims by others. Moreover, it is not careful scholars who refer to Muslims as fundamentalists, but rather journalists, politicians, and casual observers. Thus, the term "Islamic fundamentalism" does not have the same precision as when it is applied to Christians, but is rather a catch-all for many diverse and often contradictory movements and interpretations of Islam.

Muslims and other observers often use the term "fundamentalism" to indicate movements based on the principle of *salafiyya* (following the interpretations of the earliest generations of Muslims), or *usûliyya* (purifying religion according to its original roots.) These terms indicate a different emphasis from that of Christian fundamentalists. The emphasis of Muslim revivalists is on "beginnings," "return," and "purifying" religion. The basic supposition is that Islam has moved away from its origins, and in doing so has lost its pristine purity, which can be regained by returning to the original interpretation of the "Fathers" (*salaf*).

This explains one type of fundamentalist movement, for example, that of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia or the Jamiati Islami in the Indian subcontinent, but other so-called fundamentalist movements, such as the revolutionary ideology of Iran, are diametrically opposed to those movements. If we were to single out elements that characterize the many diverse and often incompatible movements of Islamic fundamentalism, three would stand out:

1) desecularization (anti-secularism); 2) the priority of divine law over human law; 3) sectarian protest (alternative Islam.)

### 1. Origins of Islamic Fundamentalism

Whereas the origins of Christian fundamentalism may be traced to a 19th century reaction in conservative Protestant circles in America, Islamic fundamentalism finds its roots in a religious response to the loss of sovereignty. When Muslims looked around the world at the beginning of the 19th Century, they were forced to ask, "What went wrong?" From having possessed, in previous centuries, the world's most powerful, advanced and prosperous states, in the Ottoman, Safavid and Moghul empires, Muslims had by 1800 succumbed almost everywhere to the rule of others.

In South and Southeast Asia it was Christian European powers—first the Portuguese, then Dutch, British, Spaniards, Russians, and Americans—who came to dominate Muslim regions. In the same period, Chinese, Thai, and Burmese Buddhists incorporated Muslim regions into their domains. In Asia, only Afghanistan was able to remain independent, due to its topological isolation and a skillful playing off of Russian designs against those of England. In the Middle East and North Africa, the British and French were locked in a power struggle over regions inhabited by Muslims, with the other European powers holding on to whatever enclaves they could. Iran and Turkey, while remaining nominally independent, had to accept humiliating capitulations which gave European powers rights to intervene, interfere, and impose their will.

How did the Muslim world fall so far so fast? A radical response was provided by M. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia, who held that Muslim peoples were reduced to their low state because they had deviated from the true Islamic path. When Muslims abandoned Islam in its original purity, God left them to the consequences. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab felt that nothing less than a return to the pure, original Islam would permit Muslims to achieve their past glory. In his analysis, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was not devising a new theory, but drawing upon a minority strain of thought (Khariji, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya) that had been present in the Islamic community from the beginning as a protest against secularizing tendencies.

Those who took up his views were called Wahhabis. They wanted not only to purify Islam of all accretions and novelties that had wrongly been accepted as Islamic in the course of time; but they held that the Sufi preoccupation with Islam as a personal, spiritual path to God was in itself a distortion of the original intent of the religion. They claimed that Islam was meant to be a program for building a humane society whose every aspect was to be lived in accord with the will of God. Many hajjis making the pilgrimage to

Mecca encountered Wahhabi ideas in Arabia and brought these views back with them to their homelands in Asia.

The Wahhabi analysis had political implications. If God intended the Islamization of society in all its social, economic and political aspects, this could only be accomplished if Muslims themselves were in control of the political systems. Their political theory held that the state existed to permit Muslims to foster the Islamization process, to forbid deviations and to punish wrongdoing. They felt that the Sufis, in their efforts to draw up interior spiritual paths aimed at mystical union with God, ignored political realities and held Muslims back from the task of forming society according to God's will. In this way, the Muslim revival linked religious and political concerns. In order to pursue their societal ends, they sought to create a state that would favor and implement these goals. The first objective, therefore, was to achieve liberation from non-Muslim rule. Wahhabi-inspired movements, such as that of Sayyid Ahmad Barelavi (d. 1831) in north India, worked for the overthrow of colonial regimes in order to create an Islamic state that would implement the aims of Islamization of society.

## 2. Geopolitical Factors Influencing Islamic Revival

After 1945, two organizations emerged to articulate the concept of the Islamic state in modern societies. In Egypt and other Arab countries, the Muslim Brotherhood, insisting that rule by Muslims did not ensure the creation of an Islamic state, worked to counter nationalist feelings that they felt divided rather than united the Islamic *umma*. The harsh repression of the Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria convinced many that the new regimes were as opposed to the creation of an Islamic state as the colonial powers had been. In South Asia, the Jamiati Islami held that Islam offered the world an Islamic solution to every modern problem. There were already an Islamic science, economics, politics, legal system, and educational program. Muslims had only to search in their own early tradition to find the ingredients necessary to develop Islamic alternatives to these secular fields.

As one Muslim nation after another achieved independence in the years after World War II, the revivalists hoped that Islamic states would be set up. What actually happened was quite different. Muslim rule replaced the colonial regimes, but the ideals of the Islamic state were far from being implemented. The new ruling class throughout the Muslim world generally created nation states on a European nationalist model. Legal codes were based on those of Western nations and were often merely revisions of colonial law. On the grounds that it was more egalitarian and would prevent the abuses of uncontrolled capitalism, socialist policies of a one-party state, state ownership of industries, and centrally planned economies were adopted. Cultural mores, as well as development concepts, were borrowed from the

West.

In the first years after World War II, many Muslims were enthusiastic about the creation of Pakistan, which they considered a model for the modern Islamic democracy. When it gradually became clear that Pakistan's Islamic identity did not enable the country to overcome ethnic clashes, economic mismanagement and corruption, military takeovers, and equitable distribution of wealth, many Muslims claimed that the Pakistan model was a failed experiment. A truly Islamic state would have to undergo a more revolutionary societal restructuring.

The emergence of the state of Israel in 1949 had great influence on the thinking of militant Muslims. Seen as a stage for non-Muslim Europeans created in the Arab heartland by Western powers to assuage their guilt for Europe's treatment of its Jews, Israel, in expelling and oppressing the Palestinians, provided the imagery of oppressed Muslims achieving liberation through armed rebellion. The Palestinian cause engendered a conviction that the West, despite its professions of concern for the development of Muslim countries, was in fact opposed to Islam, and that Arabs and Muslims generally were victims of injustice perpetrated by inimical Western powers.

The disastrous 1967 war was a watershed in modern Muslim thought. Egypt, the cultural capital of the Arab world, led by the charismatic Gamal Abd al-Nasser, sustained by alliances and financial backing from other Arab countries, went down to quick and ignominious defeat by tiny Israel. Not only were Nasser and the ideology of pan-Arab nationalism discredited, but also the military. Corrupt and ineffective in its role of defending the nation, the military was seen as a costly expenditure which existed mainly to preserve the internal status quo, and enable the ruling elite to govern by force, in many cases, against the will of the people.

The lingering hopes that the Western powers would provide the assistance needed in Muslim regions were dashed when those states supported Israel both financially and in international diplomatic fora, such as the United Nations. In response to these reversals, many began to question the efficacy of nationalist thought and turned to religion to furnish more effective means to govern Muslim peoples.

The 1979 Iranian revolution gave concrete shape to these grievances. The world was amazed when religious solidarity enabled Iranian Muslims to overthrow with apparent ease a wealthy and unpopular Muslim regime, one which had been presumed to be of unassailable stability. The facts that the Shah's regime was a strong proponent of secularization and closely allied to the West were not lost on Muslims. The Islamic Republic of Iran re-

placed, in the thoughts of many, the failed Pakistan as the model of an Islamic state. All observers, whether sympathetic or not, agreed that the government of Ayatollah Khomeini was truly revolutionary in rethinking and reorganizing every aspect of social life according to the principles of Islam.

Later events in the Muslim world encouraged the growth and spread of revivalist ideals. The 1991 Gulf War and the continuing blockade against Iraq, along with economic and diplomatic measures taken against other outspoken Muslim nations, confirmed for many that the West, particularly the U.S.A., intended to isolate Muslim countries much as communist states had previously been isolated. For others, the electoral victory of the Front Islamique du Salut in Algeria in 1992 showed that a grass-roots Islamic political movement could succeed through democratic processes. The uncritical welcome given to the military coup and dictatorship in Algeria confirmed for many Muslims the hollowness of European rhetoric about democracy and its implacable enmity towards Islam.

### 3. Critique of Traditional Islam in Asia

Muslim fundamentalists reserve some of their harshest criticism for the way that Islam has developed and been expressed in traditional Islamic societies. While this is a universal phenomenon, I will focus my remarks on Islam in Asian societies. Islam was brought to Asia, not by religious scholars, but rather by traders and Sufi holy men. The main exceptions to this pattern are Central Asia and the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, where Muslim armies, led by a Turkish-Mongol warrior caste, were decisive in spreading Islamic rule. Even there, the eventual conversions of local peoples to Islam were mainly due to Sufi itinerant preachers.

Although Muslims had been present in Asian coastal cities as foreign trading colonies almost since the first century of Islam, the great age of the spread of Islam in Asia was the 14-16th centuries, which saw widespread conversions of local peoples across northern India, Bangladesh, western China, and the mainland and islands of southeast Asia. The Sufi orders and their mystical interpretation of Islam represented the most dynamic force in Islam at the time; and it was the collaboration between Sufi and merchants—in the Indian Ocean, and on the Silk Road between Iran and China—that was responsible for the dramatic spread of Islam.

The point relevant for understanding traditional Islam in Asia is that neither the Arab and Persian businessmen, nor the Turkish military conquerors, nor the Sufi saints were deeply knowledgeable about Islam, nor extensively read in orthodox Islamic thought. They were often devout and zealous Muslims, but their understanding of Islam did not often have a strong doctrinal basis. The Sufis, who occasionally were well versed in Islamic litera-



ture, reemphasized religious experience as the basis of an interior union of love with God, and viewed the practices of the *shari'a* and the study of Islamic law as either peripheral or preliminary to the real project of Islam, which was the path to union of love and will with God.

All of this made Muslims flexible in tolerating pre-Islamic Asian religiosity, expressed in visits to local shrines and holy sites such as the tombs of holy persons, banyan trees, caves, mountains, and cemeteries, accompanied by an offering of flowers, incense, rice and fruit to the local spirit who dwelt in the place. Once Islam was established in a region and began to have its own holy men and women — in many cases the missionary who brought Islam to the region — the tomb of the holy person either replaced or was joined to the already existing pilgrimage site. Islamic practice distinguished Muslims from the non-Muslims with whom they lived in basic ways — one God, the prohibition of pork and alcohol, the Ramadan fast. But in other matters — dress, marriage customs, village organization, even religious architecture — Muslims followed local norms.

Given their desire to arrive at a personal, loving union with God, the Sufis tended to focus on individualized interior religious practice, and they correspondingly deemphasized the social and political aspect of religion. Islam was seen as a way of life that could be lived in any form of government, in any culture or nation. Even when Muslim regions came to be governed in the colonial period by non-Muslim rulers, traditional Islam was politically quietist and found a workable, if uncomfortable, *modus vivendi* with the new realities. In the creation of Pakistan and in independence movements in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, it was not the traditional Muslim scholars who were in the forefront, but rather the reformist lay leaders, usually trained not in the religious sciences but in secular disciplines.

The easy accommodation of traditional Islam with Asian cultures was challenged by some Muslims. They understood the purpose of Islam to be the construction of a society in accord with God's will, rather than one based on human likes and dislikes. The Islamic community was to be distinguished from others not simply by a certain number of specific injunctions (e.g., the five prayers, fasting during Ramadan), or prohibitions (e.g., from alcohol or pork), but by a way of life that embraces every aspect of personal behavior and social relations.

To the reformers, it was not simply a matter of correcting the accommodations that traditional Muslims had made with pre-Islamic Asian cultures. What was needed was nothing less than a reorientation of understanding the nature of Islam. For the reformers, Islam was a social program aimed at building a certain kind of society, not, as many Sufis had seen it, a spiritual path to union with God. The guidelines for what society should be like, the

reformers held, are found in a careful study of the *shari'a*. The Islamic way of life is not limited to spiritual personal perfection, but extends to societal relations, economic affairs and political systems.

The earliest reform movements in Asia were undertaken by the Sufi orders themselves, particularly the Naqshbandi. These Sufis envisioned the Islamization of society as a lengthy but irreversible historical process. Islamization was not achieved at the moment that most of the people in a given region became Muslims. It was rather an evolutionary process that began with the first preaching of Islam and would go on for centuries.

The role of the state was to “enforce good, prohibit evil.” This meant, negatively, that the state must not put any obstacles in the way of the project of Islamization. It must not command that which is forbidden, nor prevent Muslims from carrying out the social and ritual prescriptions of Islam. Many reformers added that the role of governments included positive promotion of Islam.

In the colonial period, this understanding of the role of the state brought Muslims regularly into conflict with colonial administrators, and reformist Muslims played a prominent role in the struggle for independence. They believed that, until Muslims were themselves in control of the political apparatus and government of their own nations, the state could not play its proper role in Islamizing society. After independence, reformist movements discovered that the new rulers, liberal fellow-Muslims, were not interested in promoting Islam.

#### 4. Muslim Reformist Critique of Modernity

Many factors underlie the emergence of militant Muslim movements. There is a criticism of the Sufi roots of Islam in Asia, and a desire to reorient the inner-directed thrust of Sufism towards an activist program of social reform. The political philosophy of Muslim militants holds that the state should be an instrument in the promotion of an Islamic way of life. In many countries, a revivalist approach to Islam is an attractive alternative that promises to resolve the crises in existing institutions: the lack of effective and representative government, the wasteful yet ambiguous role of the military, the failure of socialist central planning and management of the economy, and the institutionalization of the traditional *ulama*, which made them servants of the governments rather than spokesmen for the people.

This is accompanied by a harsh critique of modernity. Militant Muslim objections to modernity are similar to those of Christian fundamentalists but have their own slant. Among Muslims, the focus of protest is secularism, and their social program could be called “desecularization” or “the

sacralization (or Islamization) of society.” Like their Christian counterparts, Muslims are ready to accept and use modern technology of communications, transportation, and consumer goods to promote their cause. In Western secular humanism, they perceive a post-religious ideology that seeks to overturn a God-centered, community-based understanding of human life. They see modernity as an egoistic, individualist approach to life that relativizes religion, exalts the individual, and divides the world into masters and subjects, advanced and underdeveloped. Ethics is reduced to market expediency, while family values and moral choices are left to the private decision of the individual. The natural world is simply raw material to be economically exploited. Muslim reformers claims that modern societies have abandoned God, and view a religious outlook as an outmoded relic from former times. In this secular age, the need for God has been superseded, and religion is seen as typical of “primitive, immature, backward, superstitious” societies. This is symptomatic, the reformers hold, of human arrogance, of the view that man is capable of all things, sufficient unto himself, the measure of good and bad, right and wrong. Domination, power, wealth, sex-appeal and conspicuous consumption are signs of success, evidence that someone is an “achiever.”

In the highly individualistic modernist outlook, it is not society or the social group, not even the family, that counts. It is the individual person who makes his or her own morality, autonomous in moral code and decisions. Human rights are equated with “the rights of the individual.” Muslim revivalists stress the prior “rights of God” to determine proper societal relations. God’s revealed Word gives precedence to “the rights of society,” to the overriding prerogatives of the collectivity over the desires of the individual.

Another characteristic, which the Muslim reformers share with Christian fundamentalists, is the harsh anger of the outsider, of those who are excluded from the elite “in-group” who both promote and profit from modernity. The Muslim reformers perceive this liberal elite to be occupying the seats of power — the great international bureaucracies at the U.N., W.H.O., and I.M.F., government ministries, even in Muslim countries, the universities, schools and departments of education, think tanks and consultancy boards, who are the owners, promoters and personalities of the mass media. In short, they hold that the “liberal consensus” has created an environment in which the only viewpoint to be taken seriously is their own, while other points of view are simply dismissed as unenlightened, backward, or fanatic. In the view of the reformers, the liberal elite not only express public opinion, they create it and dictate it.

According to Muslim reformers, what is at stake is a fundamental conflict of values. On the one hand, in a secular value system, the individual person is conceived as the center of the universe. Fulfilling to the utmost one’s

potential, capabilities, and legitimate desires is considered the highest human goal, and individuals must be free to achieve these aspirations. The only limitation on human freedom is that in pursuing one's personal objectives, no one must violate the rights of others to pursue and achieve their own goals.

While secular liberalism does not deny the existence of God or reject religion as such, it is skeptical of the ability of any religious system to attain truth; and it is opposed to the role of religion in public life. Religion can be admitted as the personal choice of some individuals who feel they need some moral direction in their private and familial lives, but it has no place in public affairs. The marketplace, social interaction and, above all, government are autonomous spheres that must exist and operate outside the influence of religious thought.

Against secular values, Muslim revivalists propose their own theocentric value system. For them, God has revealed a proper way for humans to live, and has laid down the principles on which society is to be built. They take the moral will of God very seriously and view as enemies those who would propose incompatible ethical values. They are called upon to struggle (the root meaning of *jihād*) against secular, i.e., anti-God, anti-religion, anti-morality forces propagated first and foremost by American and European societies.

## **5. The Direction of History**

In their reading of recent historical events, Muslim revivalists find points of agreement with Christian fundamentalists, but also their own distinctive vision. They hold that the modernist ideology, with its anti-religious component, scored its first successes in intellectual circles in Europe, and was then taken up and spread throughout the world by America. Having got its start in predominantly Christian regions, the first victim to modernist philosophy was Christianity, which Muslim reformers are convinced is dead in its medieval homeland.

Muslim activists are convinced that the goals of secular advocates are ambitious and inimical to Islam. They believe that the West is out to destroy Islam as the last bastion of the religious worldview, and perceive the onslaught to be carried out on many fronts. The campaign is political, in the sense that the Western alliance intends to isolate Islamic countries much in the way that the communist bloc had been isolated before 1989. It is military, in that tactics of war—blockades, frozen assets, recourse to air attacks, and other coercive actions—are more often directed against Muslim nations than against others. It is economic, in that the former colonial domination has been replaced by economic globalization, markets manipulated from

the outside, political leaders bought off by international industry, and military action threatened or taken to ensure control of resources. The attack is religious, in the constant presentation of Islam—in film, global television networks, newsmagazine, and spy novels—as a fanatic, violent, xenophobic faith that is difficult for all others to live with. The attack is cultural, in that all things Western—education, clothing, law, manners, music, film, house furnishing, relations between sexes—are presented as superior and to be admired and imitated. They see the alleged cultural superiority of the West, which presents itself as the unique font of truth, liberty and progress, as an implicit attack on their faith, culture and traditions.

If all this seems overstated, and even somewhat paranoid, it reflects a widespread perception in the Muslim world. The conviction that Islamic faith and Muslim culture are imperiled explains many of the reactions among Muslims, of political, intellectual, and religious leaders, as well as of the man and woman in the street, to recent events such as the Gulf War, the Algerian coup d'état, and to the continuing dramas in Palestine and Bosnia. Each of these tragedies is interpreted in the light of the preceding critique of modernity. The Gulf War was seen as a war for control of “Muslim” oil fields, waged by a Western-assembled and controlled coalition attacking a predominantly Muslim people with vastly superior technological weaponry. Israel is seen as the unilateral implantation of a Western people and ideology in the heart of the Islamic world. Bosnia is taken as evidence that the European powers will never permit a Muslim-dominated nation, no matter how progressive, to exist in Europe.

Like Christian evangelicals, Muslim revivalists regard the direction that history has taken in this century as the temporary triumph of the forces of evil. When Ayatollah Khomeini referred to the United States as the “Great Satan,” he was not simply engaging in invective, but making a theological statement. The course of current history, they feel, is a threat to morality and a God-centered life. Unlike dispensationalists, Muslims foresee no scenario of imminent eschatological crisis. They are optimistic that they will be successful in withstanding and eventually overcoming anti-God forces, although it will require struggle, sacrifice and suffering on their part. Many claim that the God-given task of Islam today is to save the world from the onslaught of Western liberal hegemony.

## **6. Bases for Dialogue**

The Muslim critique of modern secularism is a challenge to Christians. For Muslims, it is God who is the center of the universe, at the heart of human life and every human activity. Any way of life that reduces faith to private morality and ritual is unacceptable, an affront to God's majesty and holiness. They regard modern Christians' easy acceptance of secular society

and humanist ethics as a compromise with the essence of religious faith. Muslims repeatedly affirm that they have no argument with "true" Christians, to whom they look as natural allies in the struggle against modern secularity, but they feel that Christians have too often "sold their birthright" in order to present themselves as modern and progressive. It is tempting for Christians to feel complacently that we have been successful in reconciling our religious faith with the demands of modern life. We can even be tempted to boast that we are "modern," while Muslims are "backward." Yet we may not be conscious of the extent to which we have compromised our faith with incompatible elements of modern or Western culture. We may be unaware of the ways in which the Christian churches have been wounded in the course of their encounter with liberal values.

Yet it is precisely on these grounds that we must engage in dialogue with Muslims on the question of modernity. We accept the challenges posed by modern values, such as the liberal critique of religion as often being a factor of oppression, inequality, and patriarchy in human societies. We uphold a commitment to the legitimate human and civil rights of all, a commitment that does not entail a blind acceptance of everything that is claimed to be a human right. In dialogue, we must challenge Muslims to engage, with us, in a constructive and critical encounter with modern liberal philosophy, in order to disentangle its positive humane values which are confirmed by religious faith from the destructive, divisive, and egoistic elements, which are by-products of secular and modernist thinking and policy.

## V. OUR RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE

by  
BISHOP JOHN JOSEPH

### INTRODUCTION

Let me first of all thank FABC for having this workshop on a topic that is very important for the people of our region, as well for our very survival as a meaningful Church in the region. Our Church will be as vibrant as the response we give to this basic issue of violence. We cannot close our eyes to facts. When speaking at MISSIO's function to present signatures to the Pakistani government for the withdrawal of the black blasphemy law, at Aachen, Germany, on 14 December 1995, I said: "Some people close their eyes and think the blood-thirsty cat is no longer present, they think all is well. They are living in a dream world. Violence is a reality of today, and whether we like it or not, we have to give our response to it. Everybody is giving a response, even if they are not doing anything, and stopping their priests and religious from taking part in activities for justice. This is a negative response but it is a response."

At our request our German friends collected over 88,000 signatures asking for the repeal of the death sentence in the Blasphemy Law, which had come in 1991, and, among others, a Christian boy of 12 years was given the death sentence by the Sessions Court in Lahore. The Church in Japan and in some other countries also started a signatures' campaign. The Justice and Peace Commissions of 18 European countries declared their willingness to join this struggle, but the higher ecclesiastical authorities told me to stop this campaign. I thought of Bishop Belo of East Timor who had received a similar order, when he protested against the military violence to his people. The thought that consoled me most was the fact that the cousins of the Lord Jesus also tried to stop Him from His mission. These higher ecclesiastics are our brothers and mean well and wish to protect us. But then, who will protect those who are daily victims of violence and injustices? By staying away from this struggle we may try to save our skins, but the Bible says that in this way we shall not save our skins at all (Mt 10:38).

The teaching of the Universal Church, under the inspired guidance and authority of the Holy Father, John Paul II, is clear and strong on this issue. Here I will give only two examples:

All FABC documents from Taipei to Manila have underlined the importance of human liberation and promotion in the evangelizing activity of the Church in Asia. The Church in Asia is called to be on the side of the poor, who struggle, to overcome everything which condemns them to remain at the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustice...situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism...solidarity with the poor, involvement in their struggle for justice, reawakening the consciences of society to the needs of the poor and works of charity are all means of expressing the integral salvation which God offers to humanity in Jesus Christ the Saviour (*Lineamenta*, Vatican City, 1996, p.51).

The second example is from the Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1984: "The message that I send to you is both simple and demanding, for it concerns each of you personally. It invites each one to do his or her share in the establishment of peace in the world without passing this duty on to others." Later, the Holy Father writes: "If Christ's law of love is our law, shall we remain silent and inert while the wounded world looks to us to join the front ranks of those who are building peace?"

Giving a positive response is important, so congratulations to the organizers, and thanks to each one who has helped organize this workshop and

made this get-together worthwhile.

There has been some discussion at this FABC workshop on this topic. I will still make some basic observations, even though I might be repeating some facts that we have already talked about here in Kathmandu.

### **PAKISTAN BACKGROUND -- SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS**

#### **An Islamic Country**

First I want to make it clear that Pakistan is an Islamic country. It was created in 1947, when the Muslims under the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims, and the British agreed to give them East and West Pakistan. The Eastern part separated, and in a baptism of blood was named Bangladesh. Over the years, Pakistan's being an Islamic country has been stressed in different ways, and the religious minorities have been more and more marginalised. The religious minorities are about 5% of the total population of about 130 million. We do not have a proper census, but we have been demanding one, because we feel that our numbers are much larger than indicated in the 1981 census. However, taking the 1981 census as a yardstick, we are about 3 million Christians in Pakistan.

#### **Alienation of Minorities**

Another fact in Pakistan is that continuous alienation has led to the political isolation of all religious minorities, because they cannot vote in the general elections for the Muslims, and not even for the candidates of other religious denominations. This system is called the separate electorate. What is more, they do not have political wards, and the first four leading vote-capturing candidates are declared elected. It is never clear how and when that result is declared. It depends, it seems, more and more on the whims and fancies of the winning party to manipulate the religious minority election. That alienation has played havoc with the minorities in more ways than one.

#### **Islamic Fundamentalistic Parties**

Another basic fact is that Islamic fundamentalistic political parties have been rejected by the voters in every election. There are many Islamic parties, and they have not won elections. However, they have shown street-power strength, or rather, the government has bowed down to their street-power threats. For the first time, the government recently had the courage to take the Jamaat-I-Islami, the largest organised Islamic party head on, and fundamentalist reaction has not been significant.

#### **Islamists' Reponse to Christians**

In recent years, fearing our strength and strong response on some issues, all the Islamic parties have formed, for the past 15 months, the Milli Yekjeheti



Council, i.e., National Solidarity Council. It has shown signs of responding to challenges posed by us, but otherwise, they have been a divided force. Not much solidarity there!

Among the Christians, the Catholics are the largest force in the area of justice. Some others may be strong when it comes to evening prayer sessions and night vigils, but the leadership in response to violence has been with the Catholics. The others, realising that the people are much in favour of our actions, have rallied around, and have become part of the united Christian response to violence.

We have experience of facing and challenging violence in different forms. I shall begin with State violence. Strange as it may sound, the first form of violence forced upon us is by the State itself. This has taken on mainly the form of law. One law after another has been enacted. Until 1992, we took these laws lying down and did not react in any significant way. We have approached the government in delegation and received verbal promises; but beyond that, we did not have any result. On the contrary, we have been marginalised and trampled upon over the years. In 1992, the government wanted to bring in religious apartheid by introducing a religion column in the national identity card. Our response was strong, well-organised, efficient and successful, because it was based on and continuously accompanied by prayer. In our hunger strike camp, in front of the government offices, Holy Mass was held daily and prayers, Bible reading and religious hymns were sung round the clock.

### **Pakistan's History.**

There has been religious and ethnic discrimination right from the beginning. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, in his first speech to the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947, said, "You are free to go to your temple. You are free to go to your mosque, or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed — that has nothing to do with the business of the State."

Soon after independence, things became more and more difficult for the religious minorities. However, the religious minorities had still some force. Hence, when the Objectives Resolution was presented in Parliament on 7 March 1949, after the death of the Quaid-e-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, it did not go through the Constituent Assembly easily. The fears of the minorities had to be allayed, and substantial changes had to be made to reassure the minorities that their rights were safe.

Later, when the Basic Principles Report was being discussed, the Catholic Association of Sind and Baluchistan and the Pakistan Christian Union of

the Punjab raised their voices with suggestions of their own, through C.E. Gibbons, Member of the Assembly. At that time the minorities were hopeful that the first speech of the Quaid and his promises of 11 August 1947 would be kept. Nothing like that happened. However, the Christians did not react openly.

### **Islamyat Made Compulsory.**

When the teaching of Islamyat was made compulsory in 1960 by President Ayub Khan, the Christians were fearful of the change because the Islamisation process had begun in earnest. Christians and other minorities were not given the opportunity to teach their own religions to their students for public examinations. Discrimination had grown in a significant way.

### **Nationalization of Institutions.**

In 1972, under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, came the nationalisation of most Christian educational and health institutions. That move was protested by some. Christians were divided. Catholics handed over the institutions on the promise of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that the Christian character of the institutions would be maintained. That nationalisation was introduced in order to break the backbone of the Christian community—or “cut their throat,” as one Federal Minister at that time said publicly.

### **Islamization.**

The Zia regime intensified Islamisation, and Islamic legislation went strongly against women, children and minorities. This was the time when the separate electorate system was forced upon the minorities, the Hudood Ordinance. Qisas an Dayat came into force, and the dastardly blasphemy law was promulgated. It is violence by the State through legislation in its extreme form.

Christians were slowly getting determined to face the government and other forces. We no longer accepted subjugation through violence. The best proof of our resistance to an unjust law came in 1992.

### **The National Card Issue.**

We were being told again and again that there would be no change in the National Identity Card (NIC), when suddenly came the announcement from the Religious Affairs Department, on 13 October 1992, that a religion column would be added to the NIC. It would mention the religion of each person. Christian reaction was strong and spontaneous. Much more needs to be written on this response of the Christians and others who joined us in fighting this discrimination. It gives you some idea of the immense size and variety of the active non-violent protest. It was not without pains. I know, because I was involved personally. This was particularly true of the Hunger Strike and No Work Strike called by us, in full unison with various labour

organisations of Faisalabad Division.

One thing became clear to all. Christians had become champions of freedom and of human rights. We were now ready to agitate. We were no longer going merely to make statements, write letters, sign signature campaigns, negotiate around the table. Now we were fully prepared to come down the streets in full force, without fear of our own lives. We were willing to sit in front of government offices in a peaceful sit-in. We were willing to organise no-work strikes. We were ready to sit in long hunger strikes. These were all peaceful and prayerful responses to State violence, or violence perpetrated by others with the covert support of the State. However, note it is mainly the poor who are willing to protest strongly, and a few from the others who have made a clear option to be with the poor in their just struggles.

The Christian response to the announcement of the addition of the column of religion in the NIC was really a classical response. It came from all levels, and even some Muslims joined in. The Catholic Bishops' Conference had already told the President in writing that it would be apartheid in the name of religion. Catholic and other Church leaders gathered together on one platform, and wrote strong letters of protest to the government. The Catholic National Commission for Justice and Peace tried its best keep the protest unified, and give it clear direction and goal.

In the press conferences, rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, no-work strikes, all the responses were strong and came from all over the country. Name the place, and there was a protest. The no-work strike call came after many calculations. It was tense, but our response to violence was peaceful. In the end, the government, almost as a Christmas gift, announced that there would be no change in the NIC. It came at a time when we were preparing for a more organised showdown by courting arrests. Christian jubilation knew no bounds. We had struck our first major victory on a national issue, and that with completely non-violent tactics and against the might of the State. We struggled not only for Christians but for Hindu and Ahmadi minorities, who cannot open their mouths in Pakistan.

### **The Blasphemy Law.**

It is a more complicated issue, because it deals with an already existing law. Hence, getting it repealed has been more difficult. Section 295A existed from 1925. It is Section 295B and C that were added by Zia-ul-Haq at the behest of the extremist elements in the country. However, our struggle continues in one form or the other. We have struggled to save every citizen accused of blasphemy, even if they were sentenced to death by the Sessions' Court. Those judgements were odd, and the High Court did not uphold their judgements.

I will give an example. Gul Masih, although completely innocent, was condemned to death for blasphemy. The first witness against him did not turn up in court. The second witness said, "I was present at the time. No such incident took place." There was no other witness and yet the Session Court judge wrote: "Since the complainant is a graduate student and has a beard, and the true look of a Muslim, I have no reason to doubt him. Hence, I sentence Gul Masih to death." The only punishment for blasphemy is death. Either the judge was afraid of the militant Islamists, or he was biased. But his verdict could not stand in any court. The famous cases of the 12-year-old boy Salamat Masih and others are similar: death sentence by the Sessions Court and release by the High Court.

The extremist elements have not always allowed the law to take its course. They have killed a number of Christians before they were even tried. This included Bantu Masih, Iqbal Tahir, Nemat Ahmar, Manzoor Masih. When I was preaching at the funeral of the martyr Manzoor Masih who was killed during trial, outside the High Court in Lahore, I said, "Manzoor, we are sorry for what has happened to you. We shall not allow any more of these murders." His funeral in Lahore was one of the biggest funerals Lahore has ever seen. We had decided not to allow any political speeches during his funeral. However, our prayerful protest was evident from the size of the funeral, and we stopped to pray along the way to the graveyard on the main Mall Road of Lahore.

We want the blasphemy law repealed in toto. We cannot agree to the unjust law. We want it repealed—especially the death sentence attached to it.

### **Abuse of Women.**

Then there is rape and abuse of women. We are trying our best to deal with this problem. However, whenever forces involved in such crimes belong to the powerful, it is hard to get medical certificates, and hard to lodge complaints with the police. In these cases, we as a commission use all the contacts that we have at our command; but more importantly, we try to organise the people to protest strongly but non-violently. It is surprising to see how afraid the administration is in front of a well-organised people. The secret of success is people's organisations. The more organised they are, the better informed they are, the more contacts they form, and the stronger their force is, the more afraid the official powers will be. Even the local powerful landlords realise the people's strength and are afraid of them.

### **Evictions.**

Another form of violence the State has taken against the poor has been their eviction from Katchi Abadis, illegal settlements. This is a great injustice against the poor. If they try to get their proprietary rights, those are denied

to them through difficult processes of the administration. If they are without the documents, they are evicted. My own position is clear to the administration. I do not agree with this law. It is a law that favours the rich. The dice are always loaded against the poor. Secret deals are made by the officers, and the land that the poor occupy for years is sold at exorbitant prices, and they are evicted. To make matters worse, more often than not, no alternative developed site is given to them; no arrangement is made for their transfer to their new residence, etc. The whole apparatus of the State violently acts against the poor. The National Commission for Justice and Peace has stood up, successfully in many cases, against these injustices.

### **Land Rights**

The poor never seem to get land rights easily, be it land for housing or agriculture. It is the right of the locals, but the State keeps depriving the local cultivators, and then uses State force to evict them. We do not agree with these evictions, and there are numerous examples when we have challenged the machinery of the State to drive their bulldozers over our bodies before evicting the poor. At other times, we have helped them get settled on new lands which we have purchased, and given them on easy instalments.

### **Bonded Labour**

Saving poor people from bondage has meant threats to life, property and security. In Hyderabad, Sind, human rights activists recently recovered agricultural bonded labourers from the private jail of big land owners. They threatened to kill both the activists as well as the bonded labourers. Bishop Joseph Coutts of Hyderabad, Sind, took courage and gave them a place to hide, and work to do, and had the courage to face the wrath of the land-owners. It has not been easy, but standing up to violence is never easy.

### **“Dacoity” or Armed Robbery**

There are others who are involved in large scale dacoity. It is the belief of people that the police are hand-in-glove with the dacoits, and therefore it is difficult to end this menace. In order to fight this, the people have formed their own defence systems. As a bishop, I have supported the people when they fight police excesses. It cannot be denied that the police have been involved in torture; and since the minorities are the poorest of the poor, and are alienated in all sorts of ways, it becomes imperative to tackle the problems of police torture. It is State violence in another form. Many members of the Parliament keep their own robbers. They rob and kill without any fear of being caught and punished. It is difficult to make distinctions between the police and the armed robbers. According to the newspapers, people today are more afraid of the police, because they shoot and kill in the name of law.

### **Court Cases**

In some cases, in order to get our rights we have had recourse to courts. Not always are we satisfied with their verdicts, but we have tried that avenue too as a non-violent response. To mention a few cases: denationalisation of educational institutions, and the right to teach minority religions to religious minorities. Some judges are touts of the government, some take bribes, and some are honest, but they have too long a list of the cases to decide, so that justice is delayed, if not denied.

### **Religious Militancy and Violence**

As in many other Muslim countries, in Pakistan too, this is the most feared form of terrorism. In January of this year, a report prepared by the special branch of the police sent out a chilling warning to the government. The report focused on the activities of a number of extremists religious groups who espouse virulently sectarian views. These organisations can turn into the biggest crime mafias that Pakistan has ever known. With criminal elements and hidden patrons backing these groups, fears are rising that their unchecked growth could well plunge Pakistan into a bout of fratricidal violence on a massive scale.

To this police report I would add that that is what is already happening in Pakistan: the unchecked growth of religious terrorism. The government is afraid of them or has ulterior motives for not checking them. One reason, for example, for government's fear to act is its narrow support base in the Parliament. In their blind compulsion to stay in power, they are very vulnerable to blackmail from their supporters. The government closes its eyes to schools where male children are taken from age five and are trained in religious hatred and in handling weapons. These little children roam about with turbans tied tightly round their heads, a symbol that they will never progress intellectually. In some of these schools the children are kept in iron chains. The first fruit of these terrorists' training centres is visible and evident. A Christian teacher, Nemat Ahmar, was killed brutally with a knife, after being accused of blasphemy by a 24-year-old student. Another Christian, Gul Masih, who got the death sentence for blasphemy, was accused by a 25-year-old student. A bearded and turbaned 24-year-old student entered our church on 3 April 1996, and shouted, "The Bible is not a Holy Book. Christ is not a prophet."

The general public is afraid to react, because if some one talks or acts against them, the punishment from the religious terrorists comes fast, and it is terrible. Sometimes, the whole family is brutally slaughtered. It creates terror. Even we priests and religious are cowed and prefer to close our eyes, hoping that the horror will pass away.

To give just one example. A few years ago in Karachi, the terrorists shot Fr. Cyprian, OFM. Shortly after that, in another city, they killed Sr. Susan,

O.P. That was too much for us, and we announced a huge protest rally with press releases and big posters. Some ecclesiastical and religious superiors of Karachi tried their level best to stop me. They said, "John, if you undertake this protest procession, more dead bodies will fall." My answer was, "Very Reverend Fathers, dead bodies have already fallen. Even one body is too many for us and two have already fallen."

Our response to the terrorists should be clear, peaceful and prayerful. The protest rally started with the celebration of the Holy Mass in Faisalabad cathedral. At the head of procession was a Bible and a Cross (that we do in all our protest marches). Throughout the streets of Faisalabad we kept singing psalms and hymns. Here and there, we stopped and gave our messages on loudspeakers. The protest march ended in the cathedral, where it had begun. Was it the prayer? Or the courage of the Christians? The fact is that "no dead body of a priest or a nun" fell after that. The terrorists got our peaceful message and respected it. What the Lord Jesus has said is very true: some evils can be driven away only by prayer and fasting. Many of us fast during our protest marches.

Prayers and fastings are our basic means of strength and perseverance. Because the struggle for justice, peace and unity takes us to Calvary and the Cross, we must be ready to face Herod and Pontius Pilate. Last year on 11 August we had a huge rally in front of the national Parliament building in Islamabad. The occasion was the anniversary of the promise of justice and equality made to the minorities of Pakistan by its founder on 11 August 1947. We announced there that we do not accept a Pakistan that discriminates among its citizens on basis of religion. We reject all discriminatory laws. We demand immediate withdrawal of the death sentence from the blasphemy law. We condemn all laws against women (a woman's witness is considered only half of a man's in court), children and minorities.

I and six of my companions of that rally were booked for treason. We had to spend time in the Islamabad police station and appear before a judge three times. But we were happy and content. Another part of our response is that we must not become bitter or sad. We are Christians and must sing while in police custody too. Saints Peter and Paul did that. While standing before the judge, I understood how the apostles and early Christians must have felt when they were dragged to the courts for the sake of Jesus' name. This experience is sublime and spiritually intoxicating.

With courage based on prayers and fasting we must speak out against violence, but with love we must try to influence the terrorists to change. That is what Jesus meant when he said to turn the other cheek, when they hit you on one. In Pakistan, not only Muslim religious fundamentalist extremist groups are spreading violence and injustice, but even the government is

oppressing us mercilessly with laws, like the death sentence for blasphemy and many unjust regulations. What is our answer? We care for the Muslim lepers and other patients in our hospitals. We provide the best education for them in our schools. We open medical centres for the drug addicts. When Muslims are in need due to floods, we help them by building houses for them and providing them with agricultural aid. Their girls are welcome in our sewing schools. We join them in celebrating national days.

We struggle together against local, regional and national problems. That is how Christians must turn the other cheek. And the same time denounce violence and terrorism loudly and clearly. Non-Christians appreciate it. More and more Muslims and Muslim organisations are joining us openly or secretly in our struggle for justice, peace and unity. With many *maulvis* we have good but private friendships. We have some health and agricultural projects in common with Muslims all over Pakistan. Our struggle against drugs and AIDS is common.

We tell our people that in order to combat violence, be it from religious parties or from the government in the form of unjust laws, please:

### **1. Get Involved**

Each one of us has this obligation. Each Christian, be he or she a simple lay person or a high ranking Cardinal, is told by Lord Jesus not to pass by a wounded (physically, morally, psychologically, socially or financially) person, like that Jewish priest or levite. Get involved even if it may be dangerous. How often has our Lord Jesus told us not to be afraid. Cowards, according to the Sacred Scriptures, shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Rev 21:8).

After my arrest warrants were issued by the Islamabad police, one of my ecclesiastical big brothers told me that this happened due to my own fault. We must be grateful for the liberty that we enjoy in Pakistan. Look at some of the other Muslim countries, like Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, etc. The fundamentalistic extremists are very strong and well organised internationally. We cannot challenge them. It is too dangerous. The Christian minority in Pakistan is too small and too weak. I said in answer, "I may be very weak, but united in the name of our Lord Jesus, we are very strong." "We live in the flesh, of course, but the muscles that we fight with are not flesh. Our war is not fought with weapons of flesh, yet they are strong enough, in God's cause, to demolish fortresses" (2 Cor 10:3,4). To this his answer (in the presence of five persons) was, "Oh, that is only in theory."

### **2. Get Organised**



a) Our answer to violence must be interdenominational and interreligious. Although we Catholics are a majority among the Christians in Pakistan, we would never dream of holding a rally or organising a protest without the official and full participation of the other Christian denominations in Pakistan. The representatives of all the denominations plan together, decide together, and act together. It is beautiful to see the majors and brigadiers of Salvation Army marching along in uniforms and standing guard when we are lying down on the ground in a hunger strike. It was wonderful to hear what a Protestant pastor said after my arrest warrants were issued, "Bishop, if you are in prison, part of us will be in prison too, because all of us together form the body of Christ."

There are many Muslims who are convinced that each human being must contribute personally towards combating and eradicating violence and terrorism. These are individual Muslims, like lawyers, professors, doctors and some journalists. We must welcome them with full confidence. Then there are Muslim human rights' groups. We must approach them and work in close co-operation with them. This is one of the secrets of the success that we have had in our struggle so far.

b) We must not forget any section of the society, the local leaders, called the head men, the women and the youth. Before starting a major action against an injustice, we consult not only the church leaders but also the lay people with full seriousness.

c) Organization must be not only at local, regional and national levels, but it must have strong links with international agencies which are committed to fight against all kinds of violence. We Christians of Pakistan have close ties with Amnesty International, BBC London, Media Watch New York, Human Rights commissions of Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, with Missio, Misereor, etc. The Third World governments may not listen to the cries of their citizens, but they are extremely sensitive to the opinion of the First World countries.

On 5 April 1994, four Christians accused of blasphemy were shot at. One of them was killed on the spot, the others were critically wounded, a boy of 12 years among them. The Catholic and Protestant bishops wanted time from the President or the Prime Minister of Pakistan, but neither of them had time for us. Then we held a huge procession of clergy, laity, women and youth. We were fired at, several times, but we went through the streets of Faisalabad. The BBC London took it up and only then the President of Pakistan found time for us. The foreign embassies provide tremendous help, sometimes openly, but mostly in a hidden way.

### **3. Our Response Must Be Absolutely Non-Violent**

If even one stone is thrown from our procession at a window, we are not Christians, and we lose every right to demonstrate against violence.

Abuses are publicly hurled at us by name in the public get-togethers of the fundamentalists. Our people come to tell us. We calm them down by telling them that these abuses that we get while working for peace and basic human rights are like gold medals for us. Jesus said, "Blessed are you, if you are reviled for my name's sake." Under no circumstances do we permit retaliation or revenge.

The evening before a procession or a rally is to be held, we gather all the organisers of the rally, and in a Bible service we all promise to the Lord Jesus Christ that we ourselves will remain peaceful and keep others in the rally also peaceful. This promise in the Church is important for the youth, who have a tendency to retaliate. This tendency must be entirely subdued through motivation, long training and Christian commitment. We take photographs of the ceremony where with hands raised up, the organisers promise to remain orderly themselves and see to the discipline of the entire rally.

#### **4. Keep The Political Zealots Out**

They are committed more to making propaganda for their own parties than to the problem at hand. We have learnt this lesson through experience. In earlier times, whenever we allowed a political figure to address our rally or a hunger strike camp, he would try to manipulate the feelings of the crowd towards the policies of his party, and would try to discredit the other political parties. A person working for justice can never have a deep friendship with a professional politician. Now we have this very strict rule: One must speak on the present issue with no reference to other individuals or parties. The government and the international agencies know that we are subservient to no political party at all, and hence we are free to champion the cause of the people, without counting the cost, or without wondering about who will be happy, or who will be angry with us. Let the chips fall where they will.

On the other hand, the NGOs can be very helpful to our apostolate for peace, especially those which work for the rights of children, women, bonded labourers, brick kiln workers, workers for the landlords, etc. Also the groups are helpful which are working against police torture, custodial death, imprisoning without any charge or process.

#### **CONCLUSION**

To begin concluding this paper, I quote the strong and encouraging words of the Holy Father, John Paul II. I am a great admirer of the courage of the

Pontiff, with which he announces the true doctrine of the Church and the real message of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. He is not afraid of what the First World nations will think, because he requires strict adherence to the Christian moral precepts in this age; and he is not afraid what the Third World nations will think about the social teachings of the Catholic Church. No president in the world has the guts to visit the Holy Father in uniform! The dictators of this world are scared of this man of peace and equality.

If we, the bishops of the world, were even half as courageous as the Holy Father, the salvation of the Saviour would reach many more people and nations of the world today. In his 1985 message of peace, addressed to the youth but equally valid for each one of us, the Holy Father writes:

The first appeal I want to address to you, young men and women of today, is this: "Do not be afraid! When I look at you, I feel great gratitude and hope...The future of peace lies in your hearts. To construct history, as you can and must, you must free history from the false paths it is pursuing. To do this, you must be people with a deep trust in man and a deep trust in the grandeur of the human vocation — a vocation to be pursued with respect for truth and for dignity and inviolable rights of the human person...In this situation, some of you may be tempted to take flight from responsibility. (Message for the Day of Peace, 1 January 1985, p. 8-9).

At the end, I appeal to all my brother bishops, please, let us leave our places and positions of safety and comfort and go to the people. Recently, we as a Christian community in Pakistan had to fight an unjust law being introduced against the minorities. I, as a bishop of the Catholic, Universal Church, with many Christians, in many cities, all over Pakistan, lay down on a footpath in hunger strike in front of the government offices in Faisalabad — and what is one of the most beautiful events of our national history happened then: almost all the bishops of Pakistan came and sat with us for a few hours on that footpath to show their solidarity, the Catholic bishops in white cassocks and Protestant bishops in violet cassocks. The press was impressed, and the government was awed, and, naturally, this solidarity won the day. The government announced that they would not introduce that law (religion column in the national identity card, which would make religious discrimination, not only actual, but official, and the minorities second-class citizens). The government's announcement came on Christmas, 1992. Jesus, our Saviour, broke the wall of enmity and discrimination by offering his own body (Eph 2:13-17). He is our Peace, by his crucifixion, death and resurrection. He accomplished the MISSION he came for, "That all may be one" (Jn 17:21).

I shall count myself extremely fortunate, if in this mission of breaking the barriers (Eph 2:14), Our Lord accepts the sacrifice of my blood for the benefit of his people. As St. Paul wrote, "It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church" (Col 1:24).

This is the only effective response to the ever growing phenomena of violence around us. Are we ready to take up this challenge and follow him, carrying this cross on our own shoulders (Mt 16:24)? Are we ready to drink the cup of suffering to the bitter end, as Jesus did (Mt 20:22)? Each one of us has to formulate his own personal response. May the crucified and the risen Lord give us the courage to do so. Amen.

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## VII. 198 METHODS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

“The Christian response sometimes will demand 'strong actions' of non-violent protest...” (The Final Statement of the Kathmandu Consultation)

Practitioners of nonviolent struggle have an entire arsenal of “nonviolent weapons” at their disposal. Listed below are 198 of them, classified into three broad categories: non-violent protest and persuasion, noncooperation (social, economic, and political), and nonviolent intervention. A description and historical examples of each can be found in volume two of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, by Gene Sharp.\*

### THE METHODS OF NONVIOLENT PROTEST AND PERSUASION

#### Formal Statements

1. Public Speeches
2. Letters of opposition or support
3. Declarations by organizations and institutions
4. Signed public statements
5. Declarations of indictment and intention
6. Group or mass petitions

#### Communications with a Wider Audience

7. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
8. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
9. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
10. Newspapers and journals
11. Records, radio, and television
12. Skywriting and earthwriting

#### Group Representations

13. Deputations
14. Mock awards
15. Group lobbying
16. Picketing
17. Mock elections

#### Symbolic Public Acts

18. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
19. Wearing of symbols
20. Prayer and worship

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21. Delivering symbolic objects
22. Protest disrobings
23. Destruction of own property
24. Symbolic lights
25. Displays of portraits
26. Paint as protest
27. New signs and names
28. Symbolic sounds
29. Symbolic reclamations
30. Rude gestures

#### **Pressures on Individuals**

31. "Haunting" officials
32. Taunting officials
33. Fraternization
34. Vigils

#### **Drama and Music**

35. Humorous skits and pranks
36. Performances of plays and music
37. Singing

#### **Processions**

38. Marches
39. Parades
40. Religious processions
41. Pilgrimages
42. Motorcades

#### **Honoring the Dead**

43. Political mourning
44. Mock funerals
45. Demonstrative funerals
46. Homage at burial places

#### **Public Assemblies**

47. Assemblies of protest or support
48. Protest meetings
49. Camouflaged meetings of protest
50. Teach-ins

#### **Withdrawal and Renunciation**

51. Walk-outs
52. Silence
53. Renouncing honors

54. Turning one's back

#### THE METHODS OF SOCIAL NONCOOPERATION

##### Ostracism of Persons

55. Social boycott
56. Selective social boycott
57. Lysistratic nonaction
58. Excommunication
59. Interdict

##### Noncooperation with Social Events, Customs, and Institutions

60. Suspension of social and sports activities
61. Boycott of social affairs
62. Student strike
63. Social disobedience
64. Withdrawal from social institutions

##### Withdrawal from the Social System

65. Stay-at-home
66. Total personal noncooperation
67. "Flight" of workers
68. Sanctuary
69. Collective disappearance
70. Protest emigration (*hijrat*)

#### THE METHODS OF ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS

##### Actions by Consumers

71. Consumers' boycott
72. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods
73. Policy of austerity
74. Rent withholding
75. Refusal to rent
76. National consumers' boycott
77. International consumers' boycott

##### Action by Workers and Producers

78. Workmen's boycott
79. Producers' boycott

##### Action by Middlemen

80. Suppliers' and handlers' boycott

##### Action by Owners and Management

81. Traders' boycott
82. Refusal to let or sell property

83. Lockout
84. Refusal of industrial assistance
85. Merchants' "general strike"

#### **Action by Holders of Financial Resources**

86. Withdrawal of bank deposits
87. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
88. Refusal to pay debts or interest
89. Severance of funds and credit
90. Revenue refusal
91. Refusal of a government's money

#### **Action by Governments**

92. Domestic embargo
93. Blacklisting of traders
94. International sellers' embargo
95. International buyers' embargo
96. International trade embargo

### **THE METHODS OF ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: THE STRIKE**

#### **Symbolic Strikes**

97. Protest strike
98. Quickie walkout (lightning strike)

#### **Agricultural Strikes**

99. Peasant strike
100. Farm Workers' strike

#### **Strikes by Special Groups**

101. Refusal of impressed labor
102. Prisoners' strike
103. Craft strike
104. Professional strike

#### **Ordinary Industrial Strikes**

105. Establishment strike
106. Industry strike
107. Sympathetic strike

#### **Restricted Strikes**

108. Detailed strike
109. Bumper strike
110. Slowdown strike
111. Working-to-rule strike
112. Reporting "sick" (sick-in)



- 113. Strike by resignation
- 114. Limited strike
- 115. Selective strike

### **Multi-Industry Strikes**

- 116. Generalized strike
- 117. General strike

### **Combination of Strikes and Economic Closures**

- 118. Hartal
- 119. Economic shutdown

## **THE METHODS OF POLITICAL NONCOOPERATION**

### **Rejection of Authority**

- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

### **Citizens' Noncooperation with Government**

- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 124. Boycott of elections
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions
- 126. Boycott of government depts., agencies, and other bodies
- 127. Withdrawal from government educational institutions
- 128. Boycott of government-supported organizations
- 129. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents
- 130. Removal of own signs and placemarks
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 132. Refusal to dissolve existing institutions

### **Citizens' Alternatives to Obedience**

- 133. Reluctant and slow compliance
- 134. Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision
- 135. Popular nonobedience
- 136. Disguised disobedience
- 137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
- 138. Sitdown
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws

### **Action by Government Personnel**

- 142. Selective refusal of assistance by government aides
- 143. Blocking of lines of command and information
- 144. Stalling and obstruction

145. General administrative noncooperation
146. Judicial noncooperation
147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
148. Mutiny

#### **Domestic Government Action**

149. Quasi-legal evasions and delays
150. Noncooperation by constituent governmental units

#### **International Governmental Action**

151. Changes in diplomatic and other representations
152. Delay and cancellation of diplomatic events
153. Withholding of diplomatic recognition
154. Severance of diplomatic relations
155. Withdrawal from international organizations
156. Refusal of membership in international bodies
157. Expulsion from international organizations

### **THE METHODS OF NONVIOLENT INTERVENTION**

#### **Psychological Intervention**

158. Self-exposure to the elements
159. The fast
  - a) Fast of moral pressure
  - b) Hunger strike
  - c) Satyagrahic fast
160. Reverse trial
161. Nonviolent harassment

#### **Physical Intervention**

162. Sit-in
163. Stand-in
164. Ride-in
165. Wade-in
166. Mill-in
167. Pray-in
168. Nonviolent raids
169. Nonviolent air raids
170. Nonviolent invasion
171. Nonviolent interjection
172. Nonviolent obstruction
173. Nonviolent occupation

### **Social Intervention**

- 174. Establishing new social patterns
- 175. Overloading of facilities
- 176. Stall-in
- 177. Speak-in
- 178. Guerrilla theater
- 179. Alternative social institutions
- 180. Alternative communications system

### **Economic Intervention**

- 181. Reverse strike
- 182. Stay-in strike
- 183. Nonviolent land seizure
- 184. Defiance of blockades
- 185. Politically motivated counterfeiting
- 186. Preclusive purchasing
- 187. Seizure of assets
- 188. Dumping
- 189. Selective patronage
- 190. Alternative markets
- 191. Alternative transportation systems
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

### **Political Intervention**

- 193. Overloading of administrative systems
- 194. Disclosing identities of secret agents
- 195. Seeking imprisonment
- 196. Civil disobedience of "neutral" laws
- 197. Work-on without collaboration
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

(Source: Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Actions* (3 Vols.), Boston: Poster Sargent, 1973.)

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