

GOD'S JUSTICE IN AN UNJUST WORLD

The prayer, "God of Justice, Give us Your Peace" calls us to pray for us to have peace in the community, peace with the earth, peace in the market place and peace among peoples.



By the Revd. Jürgen Reichel, General Secretary Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)

In the mid-eighties of the last century, I used to visit friends in the German Democratic Republic, the then Socialist part of my country. I came from the West, travelling was mainly allowed only in this direction. We did, of course, never write what we thought; never spoke in public about political themes. We never ever mentioned something like "peace" or "justice" in closed rooms, except when we were rumbling or hiking in the woods.

"Peace" that was an impossible vision in the West like in the East. It was the time of the "cold war". The West and the East, especially NATO and the Warsaw Pact System, were packed with arms. In a certain period, the estimations run as high as being equipped for a hundredfold "overkill". Nuclear weapons were so abundant, that mankind could have easily been destroyed a hundred times. The militaristic thinking of both systems had come to identify "peace" with ultra-armament.

Speaking out for peace without weapons or less armament was understood in the West and in the East as an attempt either to favor the "godless" Soviet Union and

only truth. It's a life-vision. We believe in God, father and mother of all, whose loving will is no way reflected by overkilling-systems.

So it came, that some nice day in East-Berlin we met as young Christians with the same sticker on our jackets: "Swords into ploughshares". Protestant students' fellowships had adapted in both parts of our country the word of the prophet Micah: "God shall decide for strong nations. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3). They had individually decided to publically demonstrate their will for a different kind of peace than the then mighty were able to think of and were willing to take the risk to be under observation or, in other cases, be arrested.

You may know that in front of the United Nations headquarters in New York, a big bronze statue of a blacksmith illustrates that biblical word "swords into ploughshares" - most ironically a present of the Soviet Union. Therefore: Who would dare to deny young citizens

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the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe or the "aggressive militaristic policies of the capitalist system". Only jesters spoke about peace not founded on weapons but on mutual trust, naïve blockheads, and those under suspicion to be friends of the Soviet systems.

The Christians knew a different Prince of peace.

Young people in both parts of my country were tired about the official abuse of that little word "peace". They felt, that peace in Europe and the World demanded a different order. As long as overkill-systems threatened each other, the "peace" concepts of militaristic powers had obviously failed. It was mostly the Christians that doubted in both parts of the countries. They more than others knew a Prince of peace who was different: A God who had become weak in order to get close to the human beings, a ruler of the world who had died on the cross, a Kingdom to come where the lamb lay side by side with the lion.

That was neither the Eastern nor the Western way. But the longer the more people felt: That Christian approach not

from the Communist Germany to display a sticker that referred to an official gift of the Soviet Union? And at the same time, who in the West, that feigned to be based on Christian virtues, would interfere against a Biblical truth?

"Swords into ploughshares" (Micah 4:3) helped to tear the wall down without violence.

So we met happily in Berlin, excited to discover that we were driven by the same spirit: "swords into ploughshares", both relying on God's power, both dreaming of a peace much beyond the imagination of old men who counted weapons and armies. We could not know that some of us would be some years later in the streets of Leipzig or East-Berlin, having organized rallies in the churches and taught everybody to sing, to pray, to cry: "No violence". That hundreds of thousands were going to rally every week again in the streets, candles in their hands, repeating over and again: "no violence". That no shot was going to fall, that not one was going to be killed, that the

tanks were going to stay where they were prepared to overrun protestors, that the thousands of prison - cells that waited for the organizers would stay empty and that the Berlin Wall, which was in reality a 1000-km Wall between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea would crumple into pieces, followed by the destruction of more than 90% of the weapons meant to overkill whomever. "No violence" in a certain moment history changed because Christian blockheads had dreamt of peace, prayed for peace, chased after a peace that the powers were not willing to accept. The until then most dangerous potential to destroy human lives on our planet lost its justification, because the will to peace prevailed.

That is, of course, not the whole story. One should speak about growing weaknesses within the Soviet System and of a slowly growing misgiving in the East and in the West, that economies were not able to stand these exorbitant amounts that had to be reserved for military purposes. One must mention the then President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was not willing to support the expected violent suppression of the manifestations in Eastern Germany shortly after the massacres on the Place of heavenly Peace in Beijing. The Christian movement for peace was one of the deciding elements among others in that critical situation.

A new peace order could be achieved - but not based on justice.

Very quickly "peace" was replaced by "security".

But one should, most of all, not forget, that in one part of the world Europe, North-America, North- and Central Asia, a more sustainable kind of peace was achieved, but one without justice. It was peace and liberty - people had struggled for. They did not so much tackle the idea of how just societies could be achieved.

The fall of the Berlin Wall 1989 then released the full potential of a capitalist order which was unknown even in the West. The freedom achieved was applied to trade and commerce, financial markets and money movements and mainly to guarantee personal property. Instead of justice, the right to get as much as you can was being proclaimed, and "peace" very quickly was torn from its throne and replaced by "security": Security now ensures the liberty of markets, meaning the liberty of very few to enrich themselves in an somehow obscene manner. The blockheads, who were able to tear the Wall into pieces with burning candles in their hands, had had no idea of how to shape a just society. \

In the charter of the United Nations, alas, peace and justice are interwoven.

They we should have known better.

A look into the charter of the United Nations, ratified by almost all countries, would have sufficed:

-Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

-Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

-Article 13: Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

-Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

-Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

-Article 20: Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

-Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

-Article 23: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

-Article 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

-Article 26: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.

Driven after the 2nd World War by the will to create a peaceful society of Nations, the United Nations had declared political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights. They thought 1948, that peace without justice was unthinkable. They considered justice and peace as a multi-faceted project, based on the protection of the acknowledgement of the human dignity.

For Christians, human dignity is the starting point for peace and justice.

Both aspects are relevant for us as Christians:

a) Human dignity must not be touched. Dignity is inherent to everybody, independent of his or her social or political status. We know that some of the fathers and mothers of the UN declaration of Human Rights came from a Christian understanding of the human being, where Adam and Eve are created in the image of God. Christ, God's own Son, in eternity one with Him and the Holy Spirit, has embraced human nature and as a human being reverberated God's glory and grace. We are saved not because of our merits, but because God did the utmost for each and any of us: delivering His Son and letting him die on the cross. So valuable, so precious, so beloved are human beings. That is a fundamental part of our Christian belief. The UN Declaration of Human Rights reflects that Christian conviction by stating "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

b) The second most important aspect of the Human Rights

Bill can count with Christian assent: Justice is more than not being persecuted, not being offended, not being harmed by the state. Justice means a relation between many actors, the state being one of them. I might be allowed to remember St. Augustine, who developed in the 5th century the theory of the “two cities” the city of God, and the City of the World. Discerning between God’s justice and human justice, he opened the space for Christian thinkers how to deal with states and societies, the latter independently from being governed by “pagans” or “Christians”. Each human community has, according to him, the most eminent task of providing justice among their members even a band of pirates, which could not persist if they established not an acknowledged system of justice for those criminal and cruel individuals. Justice is the measure for communities, their inner tie which enables them to achieve what they aspire: peace.

“Justice and peace have kissed each other” (Ps 85:10): justice is the instrument, peace the goal.

Now we see how the correlation between peace and justice can be defined in the Christian theology: Justice is the instrument, peace the goal. We hear the voice of Psalm 85:10: “justice and peace have kissed each other”. The UN declaration of Human Rights reflects that understanding: The peace-project UN (neglecting here in how far they were and are able to achieve what they pretend) defines the rights of the citizens, and that in a wide sense. There is a right to education. A right to adequate health. A right to housing. There has something

There the inter-linkage of justice and peace was discussed by more than 1000 participants. The ethical discussions of the churches on peace and justice could enlighten each other. As we have remembered, setting peace as an absolute goal by those who suffered from the thread of an imminent apocalyptic war between the superpowers of the 70ths and 80ths of the last century had opened doors for a cynical egoistic capitalism. The ecumenical movement had become aware that also justice is not an end in itself if it will not lead to peace thus coming back to the 1500 year old teachings of the Christian church since St- Augustine and all the other mothers and fathers of the church.

What they proposed there in Jamaica, was the idea of “just peace”. The “Ecumenical Call to Just Peace” (ECJP) stipulates that “Just Peace may be comprehended as a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation” (ECJP #11). The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan (South-Korea) recently reconfirmed in their “Statement on the Way of Just Peace” (SWJP) that definition adding that “those who seek a just peace seek the common good”.

Saying so, the Ecumenical movement breaks with the concept of “just wars”. Ethics had tried for more than thousand years to define “just war faring” mainly in order

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to be done until each and everybody can enjoy their rights. The community, the society and the state - and the churches - do not only have to refrain from violating our rights; they will have to do something. They have, as the UN-jargon defines “to respect, to protect, to fulfill”.

Also that is not alien to us Christians. Justice is an active doing, not only a refraining from something: “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice” (Prov 21:3). The indicator if justice reigns are the poor: “Judge righteously and maintain the rights of the poor and needy” (Prov 31:9). Here again, the UN are quite close to the longstanding Christian interpretation of justice: The articles of the HR declaration must be read as “Magna Charta” of the unprotected, and the needy. If human dignity is protected can be seen when we have a look at the living conditions of the most vulnerable and of the weakest in a society. Only then the Prince of Peace is honored, when justice is done to the poor.

“Just peace” instead of “just war faring” the ecumenical movement has defined the path ahead.

The Ecumenical family had assembled 2011 for the so called “Peace Convocation” in Kingston, Jamaica.

to limit atrocities being committed by war faring parties. As a result, the idea that a “just war” could be waged had led to the overkill-thinking of the 80ths: It was “just” to be prepared against a threatening enemy. It was “just” to develop criminally deadly weapons even if the “just war” would have destroyed living conditions in most parts of the planet.

The most remarkable outcome of that language is a relatively clear understanding of where Christians should be engaged in our endeavor for just peace. We are prompted to not shying away from responsibilities in our societies. We shall strive for

- 1) Peace in the community so that all may live free from fear (ECJP #30-32);
- 2) Peace with the earth so that life is sustained (ECJP #33-35);
- 3) Peace in the Marketplace so that all may live with dignity (ECJP #36-38);
- 4) Peace among the Peoples so that human life is protected (ECJP #39-41).

As a worker in the vineyard of our EMS-community, I can underline that those 28 churches and mission societies who have come together in December

2012 to reshape EMS as an international ecumenical fellowship, can very well join hands for that endeavor.

1. Peace in the community

The gap between rich and poor is widening. The development is alarming. In most countries, a globalized middle-class is established. The lives of urban families in Jakarta, Boston, Cape Town, Bangalore or Chennai follow similar patterns: a struggle for good and better education, families with no more than two children, regular income, and participation in the virtual spaces. So far so good, if exactly that lifestyle would not prove to be unsustainable in the long run the average consumption of resources exceeds the possibilities of the planet. And we observe the formation of a very small group of extremely wealthy people. And their income is snowballing growing in an exponential way. That's no wonder: After the fall of the Berlin wall, transnational corporations and the financial markets and most governments had begun to write the blueprints for governmental policies and international bodies like the World Bank group or the IWF. The dogma of the decades was economic growth, liberalization of markets, reducing of taxes and welfare programs. Many poor, on the other hand, remained as poor as they had been. They live from Less than one USD per day, whereas the richest persons on that globe hold possessions bigger than entire national economies. This development is a war of the rich against the poor. It means new forms of dependency and bondage, and sometimes obscene forms of exploitation of migrant workers all over the world. The capital is much better protected by the states than the citizens. Instead of the growing implementation of the human rights, we are witnesses of a sanctification of property.

As Christians we may come to the conclusion: Instead of justice for the poor we observe the justification of greed.

2. Peace with the earth

I had the good or bad luck to attend several of the International Climate Conferences Bali, Copenhagen, Durban. One can be shocked about the degree of irresponsibility of states. To tell the truth, none of the governments and groups of countries are free from that. It is obvious that the role of the US, the EU or Canada is a shame. The dramatic changes of the climate are still mainly due to emissions of the "North". But the pollution-landscape is changing so rapidly, that a country like China has lastly exceeded the sustainable green-gas-output per capita and does accumulated as much damage as the US. The overall-picture is not different in Indonesia, South-Africa, Brazil or Egypt: Fewer and fewer countries stay below the threshold of sustainability. Almost all resources air, water, raw materials, minerals, and fish are over consumed by almost every nation. One comfort remains, in the words of a joke: "Two planets meet. How are you doing?", asks the one. O, bad, replies the other. Why? I have got homo sapiens. Don't worry, says the other planet. I had them. That goes quickly over."

As Christians we may say: Instead of peace with the earth, we have declared an aggressive war against the earth.

3. Peace in the marketplace

So far we have often referred to the Human Rights and the UN declaration which reflect, to a certain degree, the sense of mutual responsibility of nations, and of principles not alien to the Christian value system. They do not apply to corporations. The World Trade Organization, which recently held a finally successful meeting in Bali, repudiates stubbornly any responsibility for the compliance of Human Rights of the business sector. Most violations of HR, alas, are committed nowadays in an globalized economy: Authorities expel populations for mining companies, companies hold workers often migrants like slaves, transnational companies purchase lands or fishing grounds without any knowledge or control of parliaments or affected populations. For long, Codes of Conduct were elaborated in order to get social or ecological standards formulated. That was naïve. As long as globalized economies can so easily play country-hopping, they will always find a host where the maximization of profits is granted. Only very strong economic powers the US, China, the EU are still able to somehow formulate economic policies. But very often even there we can ask who is the dog and who the tail: government or economy.

As Christians we have to admit: Instead of peace in the international marketplace, we often observe the race for benefit.

4. Peace among peoples

Here I would like to address the growing antagonism between religious currents. History shows that religious and cultural differences are not per se a root for violent conflicts. On the contrary: religions pass inherent patterns and knowledge from one generation to the other of how to deal with the "other", of how to find peaceful solutions for conflicts because conflicts are a condition of the human togetherness. Not the conflict as such is the problem, but the strategy of how to solve them. In the very moment where religions themselves declare "holy war" on whatever or whomever, they step out of their role as conflict-managers and become driving forces for violence.

We are concerned about the growing repression on Christian churches in some parts of the World. From Indonesia over the Near East to Nigeria: Certain groups have declared their holy war against the modern world, against liberal education or directly against Christianity. Christians, on the other hand, are not always free from a language that may raise suspicions if mission is used as a weapon, even if Christians might only in rare cases preach violence. In some parts of the world, certain forms of secularism behave as if they were post-modern aggressive religions, mainly if they tend to oust any form of public religious manifestation.

As Christians we insist: There is nothing like "holy war", but the strife for "just peace".

EMS can make a difference for just peace

Within the EMS-community, we foster programs that contribute to "just peace". As a member of EMS, the Church of South India is invited not only to further develop her programs but also to contribute from the specific

Indian background not only to the spiritual growth and to the understanding of our joint mission, but also to programs and projects.

a. Peace in the community

We are aware of the contribution of CSI to live in good neighborhood with people of other communities, namely with people of other faiths. I am quite sure that other churches can learn from these experiences. Here, your contribution is most welcome.

In another social field, peace and justice are interwoven: CSI has taken responsibility for children of the poorest sector of society. Homes and vocational trainings are offered for those who otherwise had small chances, especially for girl children. That has been and is a blessing for many. Thus, the CSI is "light in the darkness" and "salt of the earth". Smaller congregations, alas, do have to struggle to maintain these shelters. With the need to get the income of the church guaranteed and being exposed to growing competition on the education-market, the Church might be seduced to concentrate on the middle-class oriented institutions. Those houses established for the poor, will never be financially sustainable. That is our general experience in Jordan, Indonesia, Ghana or Germany. As a Church of Christ, we will have to establish mechanisms that allow serving the middle class as well as the poor. The Basel Mission being a member of EMS has done wonderfully to reconstitute the dignity of the neediest. We can, of course, not repeat patterns of the 19th and 20th century. In the 21st century, new forms of shareholder-ship and fundraising are required. But without a concentrated effort to generate adapted systems, some or many of these institutions may be victimized by a globalization-effect within the churches.

b. Peace with the earth

For a certain period, it seemed that economical development must be given preference to ecological protection. That was perhaps never true. The environmental damages meanwhile threaten to question any development. To "keep the garden" (Gen2:15) is a Christian task. Most of the programs of a Church tackle with God's creation: How we read the Bible, what we preach, how we build, maintain, and renovate our real estates, what use we make of energy, water and resources in our institutions, how we eat and which food we offer, how we deal with garbage all that has direct impact on God's creation.

Sharpening ecological consciousness is not an added program, but something that is a facet of what we are already doing. Therefore, we appreciate that the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Ecological Concerns has been created. EMS supports their programs which have as an objective that all congregations become green parishes.

For the EMS community, I hope that we develop a growing understanding of our churches of how to learn one from the other. As an example, I can quote hear programs of Indonesian Churches, p. ex. on the overpopulated island of Bali: They grow woods on unproductive lands, thus helping to improve the ecological household and guaranteeing at the same time a stable income for the church based on forestry.

c. Peace in the marketplace

Greed is a sin. I began my work in EED (Church Development Service, Bonn) in the year 1999, with an international conference of the World Council of Churches in Delhi: "Christianity, poverty and wealth". There we found out, that we should not only draw poverty-bottom-lines, but also bottom-lines for wealth and that an economic system founded on greed is built upon an unchristian value. The forerunners of the Protestant reform had warned against indulgence, luxury and usury Luther and Calvin, even if some might assume that modern capitalism somehow is nurtured by Protestant culture. The Protestant Christian is a good steward only as long as he administrates what is committed to us for the best of the neighbor. Churches have therefore to foster a culture of humility. The ministers of the church - and among them the bishops - are servants: that is the meaning of the Latin word: He or she serves the community, like Jesus washed the feet of his disciples before he went to the cross. Whatever ministry the Church institutes, it is a ministry under the cross.

We are aware that discussions on the items of stewardship and responsibility of the leadership take place within CSI and we hope that they lead to good results. To initiate an interchange of our understanding of ministry within the EMS community with our Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Anglican, Lutheran and United members could be a meaningful undertaking to that end.

d. Peace among peoples

Secular societies, governments and international organizations tend more and more to the conclusion that religions were trouble-makers and sources of conflict. It cannot be overseen that many conflicts pertain religious facets. None of the countries where EMS-members are working is free from that, we may recall Indonesia, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany or Ghana and not exclude India. CSI offers her services to members of all religions and has under very special conditions proved that the mission of the Church goes beyond her membership. Nevertheless, fundamentalist tendencies can be observed in India like in almost every other society.

I think that a sane self-understanding of our role as Christians in pluralistic societies should be at the core of our mission under the given circumstances. Churches must be able to reject fundamentalist tendencies also in their constituencies without giving up the task of sharing our faith in bold humility. CSI inspires us because you live spiritual and theological diversity. Please help us within the EMS family to acknowledge the importance of such inclusive communities.

So may the God of peace and justice help you in your considerations in your Synod meeting and for our co-operation within EMS. "Stand therefore, fasten your belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:14-15). May the God of justice give you peace.

GOD OF JUSTICE GIVE US YOUR PEACE

God says: "You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right" - Deut.16:19.

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The Hebrew word for justice is MISPHAT. The word MISPHAT has several nuances such as justice, equal, fair, right, and good indicating holistic social well-being. YHWH is the embodiment of MISPHAT and also TSEDEQA (righteousness). YHWH requires administration of justice from all God's peoples in all areas of life.

We need to remember that just as we see the three cones in a triangle so also we are reminded of three elements one Righteousness (TSEDEQA) second Justice (MISPHAT) and the third Peace (SHALOM). There is no Justice without Righteousness and there is no peace without Justice!

Justice and righteous govern all relationships such as human's relationship with God, with their fellow human beings and with the whole creation. Righteousness is to be the undergirding principle in the administration of Justice.

When we seek justice we seek justice as God seeks

"For YHWH your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribes, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, who loves the stranger, providing them food and clothing..." (Deut. 10:19). (Emphasis mine)

This verse from the book of Deuteronomy spells out, who the poor are and for whom justice is required. The poor are the economically weak persons. The Hebrew words are EBEYON/ DAL. The word DAL reflects the meaning such as Dalit and of course we are not to lose track of the Tribals and Adivasis in our Indian context. The poor are also the widows, orphans and stangers.

There are several laws that make it amply clear that YHWH executes justice to the poor, the marginalized and the underprivileged. So also YHWH demands that the people of God ought to follow suit.

When we do justice we do justice as God does

We who seek to do justice need to understand God's direction for our lives. God says: "You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right" (Deut.16:19). (Emphasis mine).

God requires from God's people just the same what God does. God want God's people to dispense justice just as the way God dispenses justice. We do what God does. In pursuit of executing justice there are two prominent components that God avoids and God wants God's people to avoid the same, they are:

- (1) Not to show partiality
- (2) Not to take bribes.

This is the way of justice. When these two elements of partiality and bribes come into play in our dealings and administration then justice cannot be executed. Partiality and bribes are unrighteous elements that distort justice.

God requires justice in all aspects of our life:

God requires justice in all aspects of our life. Justice is required in day to day business transactions: "You shall not cheat in measuring, weight or quantity. You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin." (Lev.19:35-36). Right measurements are called for by YHWH in all business transactions, false scales and false balances and false measures are addressed by YHWH, for such unlawful means will have adverse effect on the lives of the poor people since their right to quantity and quality are distorted. YHWH indicates this is cheating and this is banned from the lives of those who belong to God.

Collecting interest on loan is not allowed: "If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them." (Exod.22:25).

Justice to women is the prime concern of God, justice to women in restoring the rights of inheritance is indicated in Numbers 27:6-7 "And the LORD spoke to Moses saying The daughters of Zelophehad are right in what they are saying; You shall indeed let them poses an inheritance among their father's brothers and pass the inheritance of their father on to them."

The Sabbath rest for all without any distinction and reservation is a justice factor: "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest so that your ox and your donkey may have relief and your home born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed." (Exod.23:12).

As a matter of social and economic justice the poor and the underprivileged are to have a share in the agricultural produce for their sustenance: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God." (Lev. 19:9-10) God caters justice to the whole creation regulated by law; God caters justice to land: "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a Sabbath for the lord" (Lev.25:2). God caters justice to trees: "If you besiege a town for a long

time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them..." (Deut.20:19). God caters justice to the animals: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading our the grain" (Deut.25:4). God caters justice to the birds: "If you come on a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground with fledglings or eggs, with the mother sitting on the fledglings or on the eggs, you shall let the mother bird go..." (Deut.22:6-7). All these and many other laws project God's concern for justice to the every segment of the created order.

Prophets remind God's people of their responsibility of doing justice

The prophets Amos, Isaiah and Micah of the 8th cen. BCE on the one hand exposed the injustice done to the poor and the marginalized, which was a sin committed by the elites of the Israelite society, and on the other hand reminded these rich of the Israelite community that they were not to neglect TSEDEQA righteousness and MISPHAT justice in their relationships as well as in their trade with the poor and neglected.

Remarkably the prophets noted and criticized that the Israelites were very fervent in their religious practices such worship, convocations, tithes, various kinds of offerings but not conscientious about the practice of justice in their day to day lives. This paradox is underlined by all the 8th century BCE prophets. For instance, as it was read to us, prophet Micah reminded the Israelites the God

introspect into the life and ministry and mission of our church and make sure that justice is the foundation of our every endeavor.

I would like to share with you that I was once invited to give a lecture at the CMS center in Oxford, UK and there I met a Bishop from Africa, who was staying at the center and was writing a book on the theme: "Corruption in the Church". Last year in my official trip to Germany while visiting EMW in Hamburg our partners gave me a book both in German and English on the same theme of corruption in the churches. Thereupon in my visit to EMS Stuttgart our partners have handed over a document to me which was about transparency. The global church is becoming sensitive to the issue of increasing corruption in the church. Every church seems to be struggling with this issue. This is the way of the world but not the way of the church.

God was also conscious of this corruption factor among the people of God hence God gave the law:

You must not distort justice
You must not show partiality
You must not accept bribe
For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and
Subverts the cause of those who are in the right.
(Deut.16:19)

Prophet Micah reminded the Israelites the God required justice: "What the Lord requires is this: To do justice, to show love and walk humbly with God."

required justice: "What the Lord requires is this: To do justice, to show love and walk humbly with God." Amos condemned the religious practices of the Israelites which were totally devoid of justice: "I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies, even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings I will not accept them.... Take away from me the noise of your songs.... I will not listen to the melody of your harps. Let justice roll down like waters and righteous like an ever flowing stream." (Amos 5:21-24).

The voice of the prophets could be heard extended into our midst. We who are busy all through the year conducting worship services, preaching, revival meetings, gospel campaigns, healing conventions, seminars, consultations, conferences and running for a cause, mega gatherings are called to evaluate our religious or spiritual practices in light of God's demand for justice to the poor and the needy. Many times we might realize that they are paradoxical and detrimental to the very life of the poor and the marginalized for whom we are called to do justice.

We who are here in this holy convocation of the 34th CSI Synod Sessions are called to have justice to be our vision, religiosity, spirituality, mission, ministry and in our way of life. We are called to administer justice at all levels in the church and in the society through the church. Being members of the CSI Synod we are called to lead this holy church with the principles of justice and continue to have justice as guidepost and pointer in dealing with every person and every created being in every situation.

This is a precious time that God has given to us to

While Deut. 10:19 as quoted above is our theological basis, Deut.16:19 is our Biblical basis for perpetual justice in all dealings in our holy church. We ought to be aware as Martin Luther King Jr. said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Injustice in any CSI congregation is a threat to justice in every CSI congregation. Injustice in any CSI institution is a threat to justice in every CSI institution. We are to ensure that justice is dispensed in every segment of our congregation; in Sunday school, among the youth, in women's fellowships, and in the church at large in all administration.

Allow me to share what happened once in my congregation. Our Sunday school teacher came to me and said that one mother was pestering her to have her child taken to be an angel in the Christmas drama. I spontaneously said, "What's wrong take her" and the teacher said, "But the girl is dark skinned", I replied, "God will only send dark skinned angels to the dark skinned people, hence take her". The teacher took the child and the child's performance was amazing. We inadvertently, unconsciously and instinctively tend to discriminate children with no reason and this is grave injustice to the children. This will have adverse repercussions in the life of the child, family, church and society in course of time. We ought to be conscious of the fact that being Just is being Righteous, for there is no righteousness without justice. Our ministry must make our Sunday school children to be in a corruption free church, our youth in a corruption free church, our women's fellowship in a corruption free church and all administration to be corruption free administration. God had used this principle of Justice in scrutinizing the

administration of those whom God called to be leaders in Israel. God is the author and guardian of justice in every age and all generations, even in our age and in our church here and now. We are called to lead the church in this generation and we lead with justice.

Justice as God's yardstick for evaluating leadership

Let us observe the history of the people of God and note how God acted in selecting leaders for establishing justice and scrutinized leadership with the yardstick of justice.

God called Samuel to administer justice in Israel. I Samuel 7:17 reads that Samuel lived in Ramah and administered justice in Israel. This is the testimony of God. Samuel had been faithful to his calling of being fair in dealing with every person and every situation and delivered impartial judgments. God had given him a whole life to be a judge in Israel. Samuel comes to be a prototype for every leader in the Church of South India. We are called to be like Samuel in being fair and just being worthy of God's testimony about our administration.

The story takes a new turn and the word of God tell us in I Samuel 8:1-5: "When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.... Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned after gain, they took bribes and perverted justice.... Then all the elders of Israel gathered

saying that he would not take bribe but he only receives gifts. This exactly was the case with the judges in Israel they received gifts. The Hebrew word for gift is SHACHAD. It is this gift that was the bribe money with which the judges delivered unjust judgments towards the poor. The Church of South India with thousands of institutions is much prone to this sort of danger where the economic forces given a chance could overthrow justice in our dealings and administration, which could become detrimental to the very lives of the poor and marginalized for whom the church exists. It is our common experience that when a tree dries up it begins to dry up from the top and not from the roots. So also corrupt practices many a time percolate from the top just as the saying goes Yada Raja Thada Praja (as the king so the people). Leaders have the responsibility of safeguarding the church by doing justice and arresting every unjust practice. This has been the mandate in the previous biennium and it is God's mandate for this biennium and it will continue to be a mandate for the Church of South India in the future. Seek justice and do justice! There were several bishops who were consecrated at the hands of our moderator The Most Rev. Daivakadaksam in this biennium and we praise God that corrupt practices have been contained and he has not allowed the economic forces to prevail upon justice. He thereby also developed a body language of showing his hands, clean hands, saying, "My hands are clean"!

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Injustice in any CSI congregation is a threat to justice in every CSI congregation. Injustice in any CSI institution is a threat to justice in every CSI institution.

together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, 'You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; Appoint to us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.'

It is clear that 'gain' was the motive of the sons of Samuel. 'Profit making' in the ministry was their aim. They have commercialized God's ministry. Services were being sold. Thereby they have introduced corrupt practices and one such practice was taking 'bribes'. We have seen above that God does not take bribe (Deut.10:19) and God also stipulated Israelite leaders not to take bribe (Deut.16:19) but here the sons of Samuel began to take bribes. God warned that bribe will blind the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right (Deut.16:19). The ill effect of taking bribe infiltrates partiality. God does not show partiality (Deut.10:19) and God does not want God's people to show partiality (Deut.16:19). Partiality perverts justice. God does justice (Deut.10:19) God wants God people to do justice (Deut.16:19) but the sons of Samuel have perverted justice. (I Sam.8:3).

We need to take time to introspect into the ministerial practices of our church. Once I visited a remote village deep in a forest. The village Christians told me that no pastor visited them for the last one year. I asked the evangelist, who was with me, of why it had been so. The evangelist frankly replied that the offerings in this congregation are not even enough to cover their travel costs. When money becomes the basis of our ministry we lose that part of the church for whom God stand for.

I often heard one reputed leader of the church

As far as the sons of Samuel were concerned God rejected them and with them the whole institution of judges itself and chose an alternative leader in the person of Saul to establish justice thereby inaugurating a new institution of monarchy or kingship. In I Sam. 10:1 we read: "Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him and said, 'The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people of Israel. Saul is now chosen to be the ruler to establish justice in Israel. He is supposed to do away with all the corrupt practices of the sons of Samuel.

Saul as the king of Israel very soon fell prey to power, as the British historian Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men". Saul began to act high handed in his administration; he began to follow the dictates of his instincts in fulfilling his own desires. This is something like the extra-constitutional-authority that some of our leaders exercise after being elected to the high offices of church administration. Just as Saul kept aside the Tora, so also our leaders ignore the constitution which needs to be followed and safeguarded, in and through which justice is dispensed.

Saul tried to kill David, whom Saul thought was his rival. Saul killed those who helped David. I Sam. 22:16 "The king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." Saul killed Ahimelech. Saul also killed the priests of YHWH who were helpful to David. I Sam. 22:18-19 "Then the king said to Doeg, 'you Doeg turn and attack the priests' Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests; on that day he killed 85 ... priests ... men and

women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he put to the sword." Saul took an anti-David stance and all his time, energy and administrative activities seem to be only anti-David oriented. Saul lost sight of his call to rule the people of Israel and establish justice but on the contrary he concentrated only on himself and his rivals about whom he felt threatened. Instead of dispensing justice to all people especially the poor, needy, marginalized, widows, orphans, strangers, and all created order, quite contrarily he began segregation and polarization. He developed his army with his own tribesmen promoting nepotism. He had his headquarters in his own town Gibeah promoting regionalism.

"Saul said to his servants who stood around him, 'hear now, you Benjaminites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?' (I Sam. 22:7) (Emphasis mine).

Saul also began to give costly gifts to his own people expecting them to be loyal to him in all his nefarious activities. The gifts he gave were no ordinary gifts. He promised them posts to high offices such as being commanders who could exercise authority. Saul had begun with much more corrupt practices than his predecessors.

Saul also began the Real Estate dealings. He made Real Estate as his prime weapon in wielding power and to maintain his own group comprising of his own tribesmen. This Real Estate gifts were fields and vineyards. This is the paradox in his administration, instead of safeguarding the rights of the poor and safeguarding their lands and safeguarding their sustenance he seems to have confiscated the lands, fields, and vineyards of the poor and powerless and given them to those who were always around him (I Sam. 22:7).

In the Church of South India some dioceses have taken a decision not to tamper with the church lands. There are other dioceses that have purchased lands in the recent times and established missions, constructed churches and continue to do so. There are some other dioceses who have worked hard with much risk in reclaiming lands that were in the clutches of big business magnets and turned them into service institutions for the church and society. We appreciate these dioceses for their commitment. On the other hand dioceses that struggle with this problem of land dealings and involved in Real Estate business must become aware of the factors that they are influencing them.

Allow me to share an event from my own diocese. There exists a school in a prime location. The parents association of the school has submitted a memorandum to the Education Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh. It was stated in the memorandum that the school was not functioning properly and that neither the teachers are regular or the students. The memorandum also stated

that the Government of AP was wasting finances on the school by way of giving financial grants and that the same may be withdrawn. There was an inspection from the education department and the school management realized that the parents association was a fake association and the members of the association were no parents of the school students. This was the work of the land mafia, who had an eye on the prime property and managed to closed down the school from there and then propose land dealings to the church authorities. Many times we are quite unaware of what is happening right behind us and how we are dragged into land dealings and Real Estate business even without our will and consent. When the school is closed imagine how many hundreds of poor children's lives are at stake. How many poor families are put to suffering and thereby the very transformation of the society is stalled. This is grave injustice to the lives of innocent and poor children, who otherwise cannot afford and compete in a world of costly private education.

Just as the repercussions of the unjust practices of the administrators are borne by the poor so also the corruption of king Saul left people in distress, debt and discontent (I Sam. 22: 1-2).

Justice is God's yardstick in evaluating leadership. God had to discard the unjust Saul and opt for David to redress the injustices.

God is looking at the leaders of the Church of South India. There is one thing that a leader could be doing in the sight of God, either perpetuating justice or perverting justice. Samuel was the perfect model of catering justice to people in his administration.

God of justice calls us to permeate justice to the poor, powerless, weak, neglected and marginalized in the church and the society.

Are you a leader in the manner of Samuel dispensing justice?

Are you a leader after gain and profit engaged in bribe/gift initiating corrupt practices and promoting partiality and distorting justice as the sons of Samuel?

Are you a leader like Saul making groups, wowing people with posts/offices and real estate dealings enhancing corruption and perverting justice?

God who has called you to leadership called you to perpetuate justice and not to pervert justice.

May the God of justice empower us with God's Spirit and use us as God's instruments and channels of justice for the establishment of God reign in and through the life, mission and ministry of this holy Church of South India. Amen!

CSI LIFE : THEME FOR MARCH 2014

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GOD OF JUSTICE, GIVE US YOUR PEACE

Invocation for an Egalitarian Society



Can the Church of South India become a channel of justice which is inclusive and contextual?

By the Rev. Dr. G. Stephen Lionel, CSI Presbyterian, Diocese of Tirunelveli.

God is a God of justice. God's justice is high and above the justice of human beings. Unlike Justice of human beings which is self serving, God's justice is always good and right and self sacrificing. Justice has to be done at any cost even to a criminal who is against human life and liberty. In Nazareth manifesto, Jesus clearly shows that establishing social justice is one of the main requirements of the spirit of the Lord for which Jesus is anointed for. Jesus identified Himself with the hungry, the homeless, the stranger and the naked (Matthew 25 : 34-46).

In the present day world, rich countries spent crores of rupees on luxuries, while millions of people, on the other hand, lack even basic amenities. In this way injustice prevails in every arena of the world. True peace can be made possible only when there is justice. But, the

Just-Peace for Egalitarianism: a Scriptural Point of View

Justice and peace are profoundly biblical themes. It is evident in Pentateuch, the prophetic books and in one of the poetical books, Job. In the Hebrew Scriptures, justice stands as a unifying factor of all human relationships. The Israelites related themselves with God because His covenant had bound them. Therefore, the people of God as members of God's covenant are related to one another. The primary mission of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures was to lead people to justice and righteousness. The task of the prophets was not only to speak God's word but also to speak on behalf of the voiceless. In prophet Jeremiah's exhortation to people of God in exile in seventh century BC, he gives a strong hope to them that from the house of David a future ruler will rise

The Church must be the channel of peace by maintaining justice and peace even in small things. For example, if we employ people for less than what they ought to get and we can afford and tax them beyond their limit, we will be doing injustice through exploitation. In all our Church related institutions and homes, dignity of labour and remuneration for work done must be ensured.

state of peacefulness is consistently continuous. However, exploitation, suppression and oppression of people is avoided, peace will be possible in any context. Rev. Dr. Israel Selvanayagam, a leading theologian of the Indian Church defines just-peace as "a shared relationship with mutual sustenance and equal partnership, when this does not happen there is tension and even protest".

The purpose of this article is to focus on an Egalitarian Society and to pray for action oriented programme of Just Peace. The world council of Churches in its 10th assembly held at Busan Republic of Korea from 30th October to 8th November 2013, had pondered over a theme "God of Life, lead us to Justice and Peace" and the Church of South India pleads "God of Justice, Give us Peace". It is a Prayer which reveals God's concern on others' welfare and His desire for an Egalitarian Society. Justice of God is always connected with His righteousness. He acts in righteousness (Psalm 89: 4, Jeremiah 9: 24). He always has a right relationship with all people and He wants people to maintain that relationship with each other. As God acts in righteousness so he called Israel to be righteous as His chosen people. They were placed in His covenant, in right relationship with Him through faith and with others (Gene 15 : 6, Hab 2 : 4).

to do what is right and just in the land. It is a prediction of Jesus' incarnation (Jeremiah 33: 15). The book of Job suggests that the righteous do not always triumph in life and the wicked do not always fall. If the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked contradict each other in doctrine, God is not unjust. God allows the righteous to suffer. The righteous life of Job deepens his faith to achieve glory at the end.

Just-Peace for Egalitarianism: Feminist Perspective

A few notable women leaders stood for human rights, for just-peace in places which are different from their own nation, class and faith. Mother Teresa is a set model in India to cultivate an Egalitarian Society. At the age of twelve, she had felt the call to help the poor and decided to work in India. At the age of eighteen, she joined the Irish order Loreta and went to teach in their girls' school in Kolkata. After sixteen years, she felt a new call to work in Kolkata slums. There she started a new order the Missionaries of Charity, committed to serve the poorest of the poor which soon spread in many other countries. Prof. John Sonness who chaired the Noble Prize for Peace committee said, "She promotes peace in the most fundamental manner by her confirmation of the inviolability of human dignity".

Aung San Suuky in Myanmar (Burma) took part in the struggle for liberation against Military dictatorship. Even though she was in abroad for her higher studies, her homeland Burma was always in her mind and heart. It is said the sources of her inspiration were Mahatma Gandhi about whom she had learned when her mother was the ambassador to India. She headed political party in the elections and won by great majority while her fellow leaders were failed. God helped this woman to be an instrument to make her land His kingdom where love, peace and joy reign.

Irom Sharmila Chanu, known as Iron lady of Manipur is a civil rights and political activist cum poet. She has been called the world's longest hunger striker for twelve years. She started her fasting against the Malom massacre in November 2000. The Government of India only responded to this act of peaceful protest by arresting several time on charges of attempted suicide under section 309 of the Indian penal code. Yet, she believed in the serenity to accept things and kind words. Consequently, she received many awards for her struggle for Peace She is a fitting example of silent protest against discrimination and violence. "Consider the blameless, observe the upright, there is a future for the man of peace" (Psalm 37:37).

Just-Peace for Egalitarianism: Church in the Pluralistic Context

The Church offers Peace not only in its catholicity

every one's need, not for anyone's greed" Lord's favour and justice to poor in Leviticus 25 emphasize a just society. The people of Israel were asked to remove all unjust inequalities by restoring to every person his /her ancestral property. Jesus reaffirms that vision in the Lord's Prayer: the petition for the coming of the Kingdom of God is an affirmation of commitment for just world order in which all unjust social, political and economic inequalities are removed and all people live and work together for the well being of all. The Church's mission has the radical goal of re-distribution of the World's resources among the nations and among people within the nations, so that no one can live in de-humanized conditions. All will live enjoying fullness of life. There is also a cry from the ordinary citizens of our country to make judicial system more impartial to deliver justice quick and without any bias. Here, the Church of God should join hands with people of other faiths to fight the institutional sins. (Dent 16: 18 20). It is easy to practice our Christian life within the boundaries of the Church but that is not what God wants. If we are righteous, God's justice demands that we manifest our righteousness outside the boundaries of the Church.

Justice and Peace Building: A Challenge towards Egalitarian Society

Christian, peace building establishes "Shalom" where every Christian is enabled and empowered to live a holistic life of spiritual well being. Working for justice is no longer an option in Christian Service but is an imperative. True Justice is the way the harvest is reaped by peace

The Church must empower the marginalized Christians and remember the Canaanite woman's prayer "Yes Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table" and share its resources with the underprivileged. Let the Church resurrect the crucified poor, empower it with just peace and make the earth a fitting place for His Kingdom.

but also in its 'evangelical-ness'. The genius of the Protestant Churches is in their evangelicalism and in their placing concern for individuals above all organizational structures. Generally, Church is often steeped in the status quo of caste ridden, gender biased, and money respecting congregation. It is difficult to change the mind set of people who have grown up in an environment that takes for granted such inequalities in society. As an individual member of Church, it is his/ her duty to point out the side lined things by the hierarchy and to take conscious effort to eradicate evils of ignored things. The Church must be the channel of peace by maintaining justice and peace even in small things. For example, if we employ people for less than what they ought to get and we can afford and tax them beyond their limit, we will be doing injustice through exploitation. In all our Church related institutions and homes, dignity of labour and remuneration for work done must be ensured.

God's justice is inclusive, plural and contextual. Justice can never be exclusive but to the entire creation and whole humanity. In contributing the delivery of Justice, the Christians are expected to create an impartial attitude without religious fanaticism. The Church of God should work for an equitable distribution of resources for all people and other living beings. This is called the food justice. It was Gandhi who said, that "India has enough for

makers from seeds sown in a spirit of Peace (James 3: 18). Amidst numerous challenges to create a Just-Peace Society the cause empowerment of downtrodden takes primary role at the moment particularly in the Indian Church. The Church must empower the marginalized Christians and remember the Canaanite woman's prayer "Yes Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table" and share its resources with the underprivileged. Let the Church resurrect the crucified poor, empower it with just peace and make the earth a fitting place for His Kingdom.

God of Justice, make us instruments of Just Peace in our Nation. Amen.

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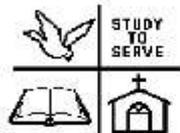
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TOWARDS AN 'EMPIRE' OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

The Republic of India has celebrated another 'Republic Day' but the question remains how far the Church in India could contribute towards the building of a nation, founded on the Kingdom values of justice and peace.

By the Rev. S. Chandra Mohan, Hon.Presbyter, Trichy-Tanjore Diocese and Former Staff, CSI Synod Diaconal Ministry, Trainer in Local Capacities for Peace



But one thought keeps running through my heart, How sweet these moments are. Though there are those who may concoct tyranny's poisons,, they will have no victories, not today or tomorrow. So what if they douse the candles in rooms where lovers meet? If they are so mighty, let them snuff out the moon”

-An Urdu Poem from Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Translated by Dr Kurshid Anwar

As India enters into her 65th Year as a Republic, it is important that the Church of South India, which was very much involved in the Nationalist Movement of the 20th Century, re-vision the possibility to making our nation abounding in the values of justice and peace, in a context of violence and turmoil. Particularly, as a Church that prays together, “God of Justice, Give us Your Peace”, this urge becomes more relevant and pertinent to her identity. This would be possible if we could understand the depth and meaning of this prayer more clearly.

Context of Violence and Peacelessness:

“We live in a world characterized by conflicts, tensions, violence, and peacelessness. Peace is widely spoken about. But it is violence and hatred which are prevalent and continue to grow in several parts of the world and in India as well. Hegemonization of power, dominance, or authority is sought to be established over others on the basis of ideology, gender, politics, community, caste, sub-caste, religion, or race. Some such human induced conflicts, and related discriminations are met with resistance, could become open, and also turn violent. Some remain simmering as undercurrents, while some others are meekly accepted by those who are oppressed as part of life”.

India has violence within its borders, and at our cross borders. How do we understand this context of violence? How are they concocted, and who concoct? And for whose benefit? What ideologies and actions bring violence? How do we look at the Caste Conflicts and its connected Caste violence that haunt India? How we do look at the religious conflicts and related violence? Will the Bill against Communal Violence suffice to arrest violence related to religious fundamentalism? How do we look at the retaliatory measures of Tribal who wage war against Government forces in many northern states? What ideologies are necessary in India to bring peace? Does the

ideology of Jesus suffice? Or do we have ideologies given by committed people who struggled for liberation of India? We have conflicts within the Church and outside the Church. We have conflicts in the institutions where we work. Our families have conflict. How do we address the domestic violence in Christian homes? How as an ecumenical church we can respond?

India has both positive conflicts and negative conflicts in the last 66 years of its independence. Negative conflicts are originating from caste, fundamentalism, and economic policy practices, problems related to governance, patriarchy, and gender insensitivity etc. But positive conflicts are either Laws or Acts or Schemes from the Governments that ensure peace in India. For example, one such positive conflict is the introduction of Prevention of Atrocities on Dalits Act. This Act is not welcomed by those who use Caste for their dominance. Hence they are requesting Governments to repeal this Act. Hence to build peace, we need positive conflicts. These positive conflicts are aspirations, or organizations that emerge from the suffering experiences of the victims, and such conflicts both the Government and the Church should support. But, we must be reminded that powers that dominate will continue to use negative conflicts, and their hegemony, so that without any impunity, they will continue to perpetrate corruption, sexual corruption, nepotism, war and greed. World over history is seeing Cain and more Ananias. But world is remembering not these hegemony perpetrators but writers, preachers, and those who are martyred for people's cause. Church is called to be a martyr, so that peace emerges.

Now turning to these conflicts, and related violence, volumes can be written about it, to me the worst one that disturbs Indian peace is Poverty and the System and Institution of Caste. Poverty in India is the biggest violence and crime. When Confucius was asked how to end the poverty in the world, he replied to distribute the world wealth among the world people. No Government in the world has distributed the nation wealth to its citizens. I am told that Norway does. I heard that Norway distributes its income fairly among its citizens. But we need to look at Norway, considered as one of the best peace loving country. Existence of Poverty means that some where some one's food is stolen away by someone. To me therefore, to end poverty and bring peace, people should be

loved. Then the systems and governance should be oriented towards the poor, with the business focusing on ending poverty. I am not happy with food security act, because it addresses the effects, not the cause. Poet Thiruvalluvar says to address the root cause of decess. We need operation to end the cancer menace, but not a Vicks Balm. Thiruvalluvar also said to share the food and feed the mass, as he is convinced of reading all books.

The System of Caste not only disturbs India, but disturbs world over wherever Indians have gone to work. The baptism of each one to their caste haunts them mercilessly, yet but they would like to hang with it. Dr DW Jesudoss explains very well about this haunted mansion in his article on Violence-Non Violence, a Lutheran perspective. To him, the System of Caste is a hard unbeatable enemy. It is the Satan of Selfishness, which has sneakily entered into the life of the local congregation of the Indian Church due to historic reasons. It brings violence in the business of the church, and tries to divide people from people, preventing to live as one community, one faith, and one family. In principle, and in ethics, Caste out caste is the slogan of Church of South India, which affirms and signs its affirmation with the National Churches of India, and with global associates.

But Caste exists. It takes different forms in

are matters which the Indian Church needs more deep thinking.

Worth mentioning here are the sentences that the writer Rajendra Cholan writes in Theeranathi in December Issue "A Hindu will live in harmony with every other people of other religion (however his baptism to his caste identity he would carry always). But a Muslim or Christian would not seek such harmony. Even if he seeks that harmony, he would be so vigilant to protect his identity". What he says is true to the Indian Church. As per Felix Wilfred word, we have yet to get away from our attitudes of Narcissism and ghetto group. We should also introspect as how much our local congregations are fundamentalism oriented. To build peace we need to promote solidarity with Hindu and Islam brothers who work for Secularism and Democracy, and should work in harmony with all religions to oppose all forms of fundamentalism.

The other one which has disturbed peace in India is the successive economic policies in India which killed the agriculture in the country. It started around 1970 and as a result, millions migrate each day to small and bigger cities for employment, for life. The desire of the MNCs to go richer, well supported by the rich and powerful in the world, have used our Debt Crisis in the 1990, and are

It is heartening to note that CSI is part of the global effort with the National Churches to bring equal status to Dalit Christian, and to abolish the discriminatory 1950 Presidential Order. We need justice actions, with knowledge of laws, rules, and partnership with democratic movements, and with other ecumenical churches in combating caste, a disturbing enemy against Peace. Human Rights Education in Diocesan Schools, Programme of Girl Child, and Programs of Diakonia of Communal Harmony are movements which address the issue of Caste, and are components which facilitate peace.

different circumstances. The origin of Caste is from Hindutva, which wants to divide people as its Dharma; it preaches many kinds of Dharma. Dharma means duty to a caste group. "When Arjuna sank into his chariot with the thought of waging a great and violent war, Krishna advised him that it is his dharma to fight. However, not everyone has the same dharma. There are different dharma for different castes. The dharma of one caste is to rule, of another to wage war, of another is to deal with economics, and of another to serfdom". Indian Church life is also stung by this venomous decess of Caste, which needs cure from the Gilead Balm. The other portion of the venom of the System of Caste is the religious fundamentalism of Hindutva. It is creating its counterparts of religious fundamentalism in other religions too. Christianity in India did not escape from its tentacle. Fundamentalism is fascism, which disrespect plurality and diversity. The present existing anti-conversion laws in several states and the continued hate-campaign by the Hindutva elements

successful in opening the market of India to them to market their products, and use the resources in India at cheap rates. They are able to leverage the Parties in their favour. They have inserted the New Economic Policy in the economic lines of India. This economic policy advocates accumulation of wealth, consumerism, and individualism, and merciless robbing of our forests, minerals, coast etc. Governments have caught the tiger tail, and are perplexed as to whether to leave the tail or not. They try to use their power to subdue the uprising of those who lost their traditional living habitats.

This economic policy has made many middle class upper classes, and the rich more rich. Cars with style, added with technology advanced phones are considered necessity. But contrarily, this economic growth continue to fail the middle class and poor who suffer with problems of increasing price rise, the inability to pay more to education and to health. Many of our local congregation,

especially the rural, face now shortage of permanent jobs. Their business people face competitions because of the free import licence given to small and medium industries. There is a huge shortage of investment in the agriculture, and subsequently there is the increasing need for manual labour for the works of irrigation, and agriculture. The threat created by the entry of Multinationals, has created fear and suspicion in the native commerce sector. It appears that the practiced economic policy is favourable to India, but in reality it favours the rich companies who use our labour and minerals at a reduced price. Governments give them land, water, electricity at low rates, and also favour a labour policy which allows contract labour system, which never help permanency of jobs. A deep outlook at the demands for secessionism of states, cross border violence are all linked with use of resources of land and wealth, hence retaliations.

There are other conflicts originating from patriarchy and gender insensitivity. Much can be said voluminously about them. However, let me quote from a media worker whose article got published in the Hindu Tamil Edition from Chennai recently. She says, "Our

is the inauguration of God's rule. New Testament says that all peace makers are children of God. It loves our enemies, like the heavenly father. It is to protect them and affirm their life. It is reconciliation of communities and unites Humanity as one. Eph. 4 says that Christ is our peace and by reconciling Jew and gentiles, He created New Humanity. It is the harmonious interaction of many ministries in the church, the body of Christ. And it is an effective reconciliation between conflicting groups (Mtt.18:15-17, and 1 Cor.6.5-6).

The first preaching assignment of Jesus started like this. "Repent and the Empire of Heaven at hand" (Mt.4). Yes, Jesus' saying to repent and return to the Empire of God is to be understood in the context of His living on earth surrounded by an Empire of Greek Wisdom, and by the Empire of Roman Imperial Power. In the context that human wisdom and imperial military power was expected to bring peace, the preaching of Jesus to return to the Empire of God is highly understandable and is alternative. The Empire of Heaven lies in the words of Apostle Paul who says in Galatians to walk by the Spirit. "Now the works of the flesh is evident: sexual immorality,

It is time that we strengthen our strife to rebuild the original Liberative Kingdom Values, a new Heaven and a New Earth through sensitizing the various sections both in the society and in the Churches, its current and future leaders, and its neighbours through programs which are alternative in character. It should engage in a high profile capacitating of alternate ideological-sociological frameworks to both the theological community and laity to today's context and should involve in action praxis anti-Hindutva initiatives. It should promote network and alliances with all democratic forces to strengthen and build the secular fabric of India.

media, both TV and News paper sell sex to make money. They market the victims at prime times. People debate over the victims, make judgments as per their desires, almost do a rape and kill the victim. There is no impunity. The media survives by selling the victim to the lust of upper middle class and the rich". Increasingly India is becoming negative to women; we see daily atrocities and exploitation on women, especially on young girls that disturb peace.

God of Justice and Peace:

Our Theological understanding Our base for Justice and Peace originate in the activation of the Hebrew word 'shalom', which is not only reduction of conflict, but rightness and wholeness; it is not only peace but includes justice. When Cain asked God "Am I my brother's keeper?" the book of Genesis ends its chapter saying, yes, it is Joseph proved to be brother's keeper. Jesus died on the cross as brother's keeper. I came to lay down my life to my sheep, said he. The vision of Isa.2 and Mic. 4 promises 'no longer learning war', because the Oracle of Yahweh will go out from Jerusalem. This shalom is fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ. Peace on Earth is promised by the angels. It

impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, orgies and thinks like that...do such things will not inherit the kingdom (Empire) of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 4.16-24)

Jesus also said that He came to the world to bring peace. He also said that He had come with the sword (It means positive conflict. Powers of His times viewed His attitude and actions as detrimental to their hegemony, as negative, but Jesus viewed his attitudes and actions as positive; as an operation on a doctor's table; Power abusers therefore sent Jesus to a political death on the cross).

Our Responsibility in India as Indian Church

Violence in India is human made. The class reading will tell that it is the rich and powerful have selfish motives, and it is rooted in the accumulation of wealth, which Jesus condemned. The outward sign of acts of selfishness is violence, and it is seen in the act of twisting

truth. And they manifest as enemies to the Indian Church working cleverly in the forms of caste, fundamentalism, and gender insensitivity, etc; and they prevent us from a witnessing church. More so, they subtly seek to enter the arena of theological education, and in the business of the church. These manifestations are a snake with several heads but with one body, are deeply rooted in one soil called the selfishness. To counter them, we need contextual understanding of the Scripture, sound theological base, and strategies of peace building within Church and outside the Church.

The early missionaries, like us have clear understanding of this selfishness. They found Hindutva and Caste ideologies as arch enemies. Hence they involved in liberative activities such as the movement to get Breast Cloth, and movement to get education to the downtrodden such as the one done by the Scottish Missionaries etc. We need similar urge in the CSI to end all deceases. It is heartening to note that CSI is part of the global effort with the National Churches to bring equal status to Dalit Christian, and to abolish the discriminatory 1950 Presidential Order. We need justice actions, with knowledge of laws, rules, and partnership with democratic movements, and with other ecumenical churches in combating caste, a disturbing enemy against Peace. Human Rights Education in Diocesan Schools, Programme of Girl Child, and Programs of Diakonia of Communal Harmony are movements which address the issue of Caste, and are components which facilitate peace.

In 1940s our missions, in general, supported the then Governments so that they protect the growing Church of India, also gain support to liberative activities. Now we are in 2014. We have great institutions, we have properties, intellectuals, and we have human potential which have everything to guide our country, to ensure life to all. What we need is our Cooperation and Partnership with Governments to build our nation. We must protect the media to bring unbiased news, and protect the freedom of speech of all. By doing so, we shall be able to protect the poor. In this context, we need to ensure that our local congregations are doing away from all forms and practices of prosperity theology.

The other area is the use of existing or new ideologies that build peace. Over history India is with several life building ideologies, and their related movements who work either as movements or as parties. These ideologies originate from Jesus (Love your enemies), Marx (Annihilation of class), Ambedkar (Annihilation of Caste), Mahatma Gandhi (Self Reliance of Economy), and Nehru (Secularism). People like Martin Luther King Jr, Mandela and Marcus Carve also do offer ideologies that construct peace in India. They mostly advocated not the just war principle but pacifism.

Violence can be prevented by the just business of our institutions, in the way we handle the governance of our Government, our institutions, and our homes. We need strategies to work peace from the perspective of the

landless, and discriminated poor. Church which speaks about the preferential option to poor should work programmes and strategies to materialize this preference to the poor. We do need to cross our borders. Our cottage meetings, house prayers should go beyond the attitude of "our groups", but work like Jesus in crossing border to heal the daughter of the Canaanite woman. She declared that Jesus is not only the God of Jews but the God of all. It is the faith which made her part of the movement of Jesus. In the crossing of border, we have the Diakonia Services which goes beyond our traditional activities of educational, medical and relief, into exploring with congregations to involve in practices of solidarity in their struggles. Peace is possible within Indian Church provided we go to rural from urban and make the Urban Churches sensitized to human struggles for dignity for life.

I am reminded of Bonhoeffer, who fought for freedom of man/woman. 'He looked forward for a peaceful revolution that will change the kingdoms of the world to Kingdom of God. It is recorded that God's people were captured by his sermons and writings and acted accordingly as he was speaking out of true faith in the Gospel of Christ'. He resisted violence. Violence is not only physical, but also psychic. Moses the meekest man also turned violence to beat the rock when he confronted with situation so. It is true, at circumstances, individual or organization, that all of us will turn to our original primal nature. Let all of us be reminded that we are a Church journeying with the humanity into the Empire of Heaven (Peace) both here in this world and in the world to come.

It is time that we strengthen our strife to rebuild the original Liberative Kingdom Values, a new Heaven and a New Earth through sensitizing the various sections both in the society and in the Churches, its current and future leaders, and its neighbours through Programs which are Alternative in Character. It should engage in a high profile Capacitating of alternate ideological-sociological frameworks to both the theological community and laity to today's context and should involve in action praxis anti-Hindutva initiatives. It should promote network and alliances with all democratic forces to strengthen and build the secular fabric of India.

To closing, although it appears negative, the quote from WCC: "The present system of cooperating and competing confessional bureaucracies cannot adequately channel the energies and the shared commitments which such a restored vision of the wholeness shalom demands". Over history, the global church out of passion for Christ did wars. Time has come now to realize that wars will not bring peace, but on peace talks, negotiations, and dialogue and on the affirmation of human rights of all people of the oikos. Peace will not come from above, but by the incarnation (become flesh of the flesh with people of the world) of the church from below. Can the Church in India become an alternative community, becoming the paradigm of a community that promotes justice and peace, thus building of nation based on these values?

Church Music - Keyboard Lesson 74

By Mr. S. John Barathi

The following is one the popular Thamilz song which has translations a few other south Indian languages is mostly sung from memory during prayer meetings. As we have already discussed, the probable reasons for a song Hymn or a melody to be "catchy" is such as the uniqueness in terms of pitches used (as that of a Raga) or a rhythmic recurrence. If you notice measures, 2,

4, 6, which have the same rhythmic pulse but starting on different pitches starting with A, F# and then E. Measures 7,9 10 and 12 moves in Quavers. You could add this to what we have discussed regard to composing a melody, hope you will try to compose simple melodies, so try with Psalm texts before you try with a poem.

We will Praise You Lord

Refrain: We will praise you Lord, Our Sav - iour
 1. Son of Mo - ther Ma - ry, who slept on
 2. An - gels from Heav'n a - dored, O Lord you are

we will praise you Lord, re - dee - mer
 1. dry grass hay rags and of rags, who slept mer
 2. praised by the hosts of heaven, a - dored on by the

we will thank you Lord, re - dee - mer,
 1. dry grass hay rags and great joy, who slept on
 2. she - pherds they brought great joy, a - dored by Fine

we will praise you Lord.
 1. dry grass hay rags you and a - dored.
 2. hosts from hea - ven a - dored. bove.

Grace full and mer - cy ful - ly, till now you have kept us safe - ly
 1. In the man - ger so low - ly and hum - led your - self
 2. she - pherds were filled with great joy, heav'n - ly hosts a - do - ring you

won - der - ful Lord Je - sus King of the world you are
 1. you came down from hea - ven a - cor - ding to the scrip - tures O Lord,
 2. Lord of the heavens you are Lord of com - pas - sion,

Words & Music Anon Translation Transcription S. John Barathi Feb 2011 © CSI Synod Sjb

As usual it is hoped that you will learn sing and then play this cute interesting song with your friends and family in your family prayer.

Disclaimer

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PLEASE NOTE

Due to late posting of CSI Life January Issue, answers for CWP 144 and the name list with points will be appearing in our March Issue along with CWP 145 Answers and results.

Rush
in your
answers
before
15th
Feb'
2014

Crossword Puzzle # 145 10- 14 (GNB)

1	2	4				13		15	11
5							7		
3			9		12				
	6								
	10								
			14						
8									
	16				17				
18									

- Clues Across: No 145
- 1 Descendants of Gomer (8)
 - 3 southwards to ___(5)
 - 5 Kings valley ? (6)
 - 6 city of Ur in ___(9)
 - 8 land, your ___(9)
 - 10 Chedorlaomer of ___(4)
 - 12 built an ___(5)
 - 14 ..out from ___(5)
 - 16 trees of ___(5)
 - 17 attacked the ___(5)
 - 18 lived in ___(7)

- Clues Down: No 145
- 2 ..were the people of ___(5)
 - 3 Sodom and ___(8)
 - 4 Father of Lot (5)
 - 7 ..land of ___(6)
 - 9 Son of Terah (7)
 - 11 One of the four kings ? (8)
 - 13 One of the four kings ? (6)
 - 15 let my ___(6)

You can send answers by
Email <csilife2012@gmail.com>

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA CELEBRATES CENTENARY

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), the ecumenical expression of all the Protestant and Orthodox churches in India, will inaugurate its centenary celebration in India on the 2nd February 2014 at Kolkata, where it was formed one hundred years ago. Year-long programmes will get underway with a public thanksgiving worship service on 2nd February, 2014 in St. Paul's Cathedral in which Bishop Dr. Taranath S. Sagar, the President of NCCI will bring the message. After the worship service on 3rd of February, an international symposium on 'Emerging Geopolitical Issues in South Asia: Ecumenical Responses and Challenges' is scheduled to be held. Cultural and ecclesial ecumenical programmes will take place at Calcutta Boys' School in the evening. In the morning of 4th February, a worship service will be held in YWCA building on S. N. Banerjee Road, Kolkata, where the NCCI was formed one hundred years ago. Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM) will bring the message at this service. A documentary video film on the history and activities of NCCI is planned. Glimpses of history will be followed by the greetings from dignitaries. An international conference discussing human rights issues will be also part of the inaugural programme. Rev Dr Augustine Jayakumar, the Treasurer of NCCI, Rev Dr Mar Atsongchanger, Ms Pearly Jos, Mr Suman Biswas (Vice- Presidents of NCCI) and Rev Dr Roger Gaikwad (General Secretary, NCCI) will facilitate the programmes at various levels.

The celebrations, which will go on till November, will include national and international seminars on the theme 'Towards Integral Mission and Grass Root Ecumenism' in cities such as Delhi, Aizawl Hyderabad and Mumbai. Study and training programmes, cultural events, National Ecumenical Youth Assembly (NEYA), Ecumenical Rally in Nagpur, Centenary souvenir, Regional programmes by Regional Councils, Bible study groups, International seminar on 'No one can serve Christ and caste', instituting a special biennial award for contribution to ecumenism in India and the Education for Empowerment project including the construction of Mathai Zachariah People's Library and an Ecumenical Resource Centre that will fund the scholarship for Dalit and Adivasi students, are also part of the centenary programme.

The National Council of Churches in India stands as an ecumenical body which has journeyed alongside India, sharing its joy and distress. The world saw an era of mission work in the early 1900s and India was one great benefactor of the same. The World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910 had a profound influence on Christendom. It gave a marked impetus for the cause of Christian cooperation and unity. In 1912, Rev. John R. Mott visited India on behalf of the Edinburgh Conference to set up bodies that would strengthen and widen the cooperation between missions. He stirred up the entire Christian academic student world which led to the formation of Student Christian Movement.

To enable wider reach with more efficiency, the Statement on Comity was adopted by National Missionary Council in 1916. It emphasized cooperative efforts for the common purpose giving expression to the gospel in India. It laid down specific rules for arbitration and conciliation,

territorial arrangements, transfer of mission workers and Church members etc. a guide to basic inter-mission and inter-church relationship. The principle of comity proved to be an excellent form of fostering mutual respect and value for sister denominations, and cooperation in mission work. Bishop V.S. Azariah, the first Indian President of the National Council was of the view that if the church had to establish itself in its context, it needs to be indigenous. In January 1923, the Council which met at Ranchi, renamed itself as the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon.

The National Conference in 1925 reiterated the duty of the Church and the individual Christian to present the gospel in the country, but emphasized that Christians, in doing evangelism, should recognize that 'evangelism in word' should be substantiated by 'evangelism in deed', i.e. with social service. In a society burdened by great economic and social problems, and ridden by communalism, the NCC now saw that the duty of the Church was to contribute all it could to communal peace.

In the beginning of the 1940s important changes took place in the NCC, and it became what it had never really been before a 'National' Council. Up till then the executive secretaries had all been foreign missionaries; now the administrative leadership was taken over by Indians. As India became independent, the NCCI emphasised the role of the church in nation building. During that period, The Presidential Order of August 1950 was passed, which included an article to the effect that, 'no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be member of a Scheduled Caste', in other words, not be eligible for educational help and other grants. Since then NCC has had to fight for this right of Dalit Christians and Muslims for getting their due. Time and again, the NCCI had to bring up the matter of persecution of Christians and communal attacks on Christian mission work.

As time passed on, while some departments of NCCI attained selfhood and became Related Agencies, more All India Organizations were also becoming part of the NCCI. At the same time, the importance of the role of Indian churches in the ecumenical movement was needed to be emphasized. Hence the name of the society was changed to 'National Council of Churches in India' in 1979.

The NCCI through its constituent members serves the church and society in the country in the areas of worship, Christian education, fellowship, bearing witness to the gospel, school and college education, medicine, technical training, orphanages, old people's homes, meditation, counselling and rehabilitation centres, relief and development, human rights, inter-religious relationships, justice, peace and creation. The NCCI's emblem symbolizes the Church with doors open and lit by an Indian lamp placed in the National flower, Lotus, inviting all people of God into the ecumenical fellowship. NCCI's membership now stands at 30 Church families, 17 All-India Christian Organizations, 17 Regional Councils and 7 Related Agencies. We thank God for a century of ecumenical enablement.