

CHRISTIANITY AND PEACE BUILDING: RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE AS PEACE

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*"How can we say that there is peace when thousands are made to work in dehumanizing conditions? How can we say that there is peace when we build more prisons and fewer schools? How can we say that there is peace when so many go hungry? Today I challenge you to think about peace in a new way. When we demand peace, it must not only be a peace of national security ... It must also be a peace of human security, one concerned with the welfare and health of humanity."*¹

Introduction

On 23rd May 2015 in El Salvador, thousands of people gathered to honour the memory of a great man who died 35 years ago, viz. Archbishop Oscar Romero. That was the beatification² day of Romero who was shot dead while celebrating Holy Mass in the small chapel of the cancer hospital where he lived. He was a traditionalist priest, who maintained the *status quo* of the church-state/society relationship. He was inspired by his friend, Rutilio Grande, a Jesuit priest, who was already actively engaged in the liberation struggle of the people of El Salvador. The assassination of Grande was the antecedent of his own death as he too took keen interest in the plight of the people. He became the voice of Salvadorians till his death. Before, during and after his death, there was ceaseless conflict in El Salvador. In fact it was aggravated when more and more people realised that they were being oppressed and were in need of liberation. On 21 December 2010, in Romero's memory the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 March (day of his death) as the 'International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims'. (<http://www.un.org/en/events/righttotruthday> accessed on 25.05.15).

¹ 'Cited in Ross Kinsler & Gloria Kinsler, "The New Struggle for Peace: Biblical Perspective", in Church & Society, 96 No 2 N-D 2005, p. 45.

² In the Catholic Church to proclaim (a deceased person) to be one of the blessed and thus worthy of public religious veneration in a particular region or a religious congregation, is known as beatification.

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This leads us to a lot of introspective questions on the nature of the struggle and consequent lack of peace in that land. What was the role of the Church and how did Archbishop Romero, as a religious leader, handle it? Why did the Church involve itself with the struggles of the people and what inspired it? What was the nature of peace there or how was the government trying to create peace? Can there be peace without justice? Can justice lead to lasting peace? If justice leads to further confrontation, how can reconciliation fill that gap and help in building lasting peace? How did religion and, in this context, Christianity play a role in bringing about a just and peaceful society through reconciliation?

As we grapple with these questions, the Salvadorian context, juxtaposed with the South African Truth and Reconciliation commission context, gives us an excellent opportunity to grasp the Christian way of understanding peacebuilding as ‘reconciliation and justice as peace’. The issue of peace and peacebuilding is addressed in all religions. Here I would like to restrict myself only to Christianity with special reference to the Bible and the encyclical³ of the Catholic Church.

Meaning of peace and its relation to Religion

Peace, according to the dictionary, is the absence of war or other hostilities or freedom from quarrels and disagreements. It also speaks of harmonious relation; public security and order; Inner contentment; serenity.⁴

All religions have the concept of peace and prayers for peace in their scriptures; they preach peace, focusing on the goodness in society. Therefore they ought to involve themselves in peacebuilding process and develop structures to protect it. Religion, thus, tries to give hopes of maintaining peace.

However, when religion moves away from true faith, to become an ideology or a political tool, this basic ‘oughtness’ of a religion disappears and religion itself becomes an instrument that creates strife. It is an accepted point by great thinkers that religion has been,

³A papal letter sent to all the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴ Peace, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/peace>.

at different points in history, both advantageous and ruinous to the promotion of peace.⁵ There is an old Persian maxim, “religion is like a candle that can illuminate one’s cottage; it can also set it on fire: the choice is one’s own, what use is made of it”⁶. We have seen this ‘candle’ becoming a destructive fire, almost in all the religions throughout history.

We vividly see this happening even today in the countries of the Middle East. That is why Salman Rushdie once said, “The simple truth is that whenever religion gets into society’s driving seat, tyranny results.” (The Guardian, March 18, 2005)⁷. Looking at history, or even the present context, we see religion proving to be the driving force for strife. Religion and Peacebuilding looks beyond headlines concerning violence perpetrated in the name of religion, to examine how world religions have also inspired social welfare and peacemaking activism.⁸ Therefore one cannot ignore the role religion has played in peacebuilding throughout history. Religion has been an impetus and inspiration for peacebuilding creating a just society.

Christianity and Peacebuilding

Is peace merely the absence of any kind of strife or war, as given in the dictionary definition? If absence of strife or war were to constitute peace, then most of the societies, including even the most subjugated, suppressed ones, could be called peaceful societies. For example, in a patriarchal society a submissive woman may not create much strife in the family, but it will always be at the cost of a woman’s fundamental rights. Similarly in a caste-ridden society, there will be peace and tranquillity as long as the lower castes are submissive and obedient to the higher. But isn’t it at the expense of the large number of people who do not have a right to claim equality? This could be applied to widows, minorities, children, illiterates etc. This kind of peace is peace at a great ‘cost’. Therefore David Trimble, a Nobel laureate, says “Peace is not the absence of war. Lasting peace is rooted in justice.”⁹

Christianity too, like other religions, has its ups and downs in Peacebuilding. Jesus’ reference to peace is abundant throughout the New Testament and this reflects Jesus’ basic outlook on life and society. At the announcement of Christ’s birth itself the angels seem to have sung: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is

⁵ Religion and peacebuilding, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_and_peacebuilding.

⁶Cited in Irfan Ahemad, “Islamism and Democracy in India”. (Princeton University Press, 2009) vii.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸Andrea Bartoli, Christianity and peacebuilding, in “Religion and Peacebuilding” Ed Harold Coward, Gordon S. Smith. State University of New York Press, 2004, page 153

⁹ Peace <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/peace>

pleased" (Lk 2, 14). The same is reflected in the life of Jesus. Right at the beginning of his ministry he speaks of the year of the Lord's favour (Lk, 4, 16), which is reflected in whole his life and activity where he gives a lot of importance to love, forgiveness even to the enemy, and reconciliation. One of the powerful depictions of this forgiveness is found in the dying Jesus, who is reported to have said about those who were crucifying him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Lk 23; 24).

Biblical Notion of peace

The normal definition of peace would be absence of civil disturbance or hostilities, or free from internal and external strife. However the biblical concept of peace is wider than that, and rests heavily on the Hebrew root *slm*, (*shalom*) which means "**to be complete**" or "**to be sound.**" The verb conveys both a dynamic and a static meaning: "**to be complete or whole**" or "**to live well.**"¹⁰

The noun has many nuances, but they can be grouped into four categories:

- (1) *shalom* as **wholeness** of life or body (i.e., health);
- (2) *shalom* as **right relationship** or harmony between two parties or people, often established by a covenant and, when related to God (whom they referred to as Yahweh), the covenant was renewed or maintained with a "peace offering";
- (3) *shalom* as **prosperity**, success, or fulfilment (Lev 26:3-9); and
- (4) *shalom* as **victory** over one's enemies or absence of war. *Salom* was used in both greetings and farewells.
- (5) *Shalom* was used in both greetings and farewells."¹¹

Biblical references exhorting peace:

The Holy Bible contains many sources for religious peacebuilding which gives us an insight into the process of peacebuilding.

- The Priestly Blessing in Numbers ends with the words: "May God lift up his face onto you and give you peace" (Num 6:24–26).
- The Psalms, one of the single biggest collections of prayer songs in the Bible, there are several references to peace. "The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked,

¹⁰ Dictionaries - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology – Peace, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/peace/>

¹¹ Ibid.

those who love violence, he hates with a passion” (Ps 11,5) Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. (Ps. 34,14)

- Isaiah, one of the Major Prophets, has the following often quoted passages concerning peace: “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” (Is 2:4, Mic 4:3) and he continues the same saying “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them...They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.(Is 11:6-9).

One must acknowledge that in the Old Testament there are also a lot of instances of war and retaliation, and often in the name of God. The real wars in which Yahweh himself is involved are those that usher in justice, welfare, liberation - in a word, shalom.¹² However, it is of a great importance to see how King David was forbidden to build the temple for God and thus was deprived of that honour for the sole reason that his hands were bloodstained hands, 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.’ (1 Ch 22:8).

Similarly in the New Testament which was written after the death of Jesus contains the teachings of Jesus directly in the Gospels and through the disciples, in the Epistles. They are often quoted to help the peacebuilding process. Some of the quotes are given below:

- "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Mt. 5:9)
- "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also". (Mt. 5:38-39)
- "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (Mt. 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28)
- "As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Rom. 12:18)
- Similarly we see the practical aspect of love in the letter of John; he says, “Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love

¹²Joseph Lobo, “Biblical Shalom: A Paradigm of Peace and Harmony for our Times” *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*” Vol 79, No 4, April 2015.

a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen (1Jn, 4, 20).

In this context the definition of peace in Christianity has moved from its simplistic understanding as absence of strife to a comprehensive understanding of it. And therefore justice and rights are integral aspects of lasting and liberative peace, and one of the Christian ways of achieving it is through reconciliation.

History of peacebuilding in Christian tradition

Throughout history Christians have struggled to understand how best to follow Jesus' peace message, especially in a world in which violence and injustice are constant features. Some have created regimes that included and justified the use of force; others have felt that violence is always wrong, and that Christians should be mindful of Jesus' words to Peter at the time of his arrest in Gethsemane: "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword,"¹³ (Mt, 26;52)

In the first 2 centuries of the Christian era, Christianity it spread like wild fire, even though there was no political patronage to it. It was a new kind of philosophy, when there was so much of moral degradation in the Roman society. The first Christian centuries were a time of growth and martyrdom. The models within the Christian community in this period were nonviolent and based on a Christ-like witness of the faith by believers who preferred to die rather than respond violently, as in the case of Stephen's martyrdom.¹⁴

Consequently some Christians feel that it is inconsistent with their religious principle to kill, or even to bear arms or serve in the military. Christian pacifism has been a significant element in the Christian tradition, even though it often met with persecution. Even though some Christians have found reassurance that strong military and political power could ensure order with the use of threat or force, others have consistently held on to the gospel message of "non- resistance to evil." (Mt 5,9) While some enthusiastically promoted the crusades, others like St Francis of Assisi, peacefully found ways to enter into dialogue with Muslims.¹⁵

Similarly several Church Fathers interpreted Jesus' teachings as advocating nonviolence. Some even declined to join or discouraged others to join the military service.

In the last few centuries there have been a lot of church denominations that would solely identify themselves as Peace Churches. The concept evolved around it is called

¹³ Andrea Bartoli 153.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Andrea Bartoli 156.

Christian pacifism. Christian pacifism is the theological and ethical position that any form of violence is incompatible with the Christian faith. Christian pacifists state that Jesus himself was a pacifist who taught and practiced pacifism, and that his followers must do likewise.¹⁶

From the beginning of the First World War, Christian pacifist organizations emerged to support Christians in denominations other than the historic peace churches¹⁷. The first was the interdenominational Fellowship of Reconciliation ("FoR"), founded in Britain but soon joined by sister organizations in other countries. Pacifist organizations serving specific denominations are more or less closely allied with the FoR: they include the Pax Christi (Roman Catholic), the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, the Methodist Peace Fellowship, and so forth.

Where has Christianity failed in Peacebuilding?

Over the past twenty centuries Christianity has done a lot for peace. But one should not ignore that religion cannot be independent of socio-economic, cultural and political factors. So, as we look at the past we do see a lot of scars in the peacebuilding process, some of which are discussed below.

The Idea of Monotheism and the desire for homogenisation

The Semitic religions' Divine experience is monotheistic. Though theologically one may say that the Christian experience of the Divine is Trinitarian, we can still put it in the category of Monotheism. Strict monotheism will have lots of social implications. It can justify totalitarianism, it can justify centralised political power in one person, or monopolise the religious experience and its interpretation and theology.

This does away with numerous religious experiences in different places and cultures at different times. Plurality is a natural thing but monotheist religions can subjugate the uniqueness of plurality to maintain the hegemony of the hierarchy claiming to know the absolute truth. Such interpretations are so well intertwined with political interest, that very often religion and its spirit is forgotten.

Very few religions have really integrated themselves in the cultures and traditions of the places where the particular religions later spread, worse still, in Monotheistic religions. Christianity is not an exception to that. This idea of monotheism leads to homogenisation.

¹⁶ Christian pacifism, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_pacifism.

¹⁷ The term historic peace churches refers specifically only to three church groups among pacifist churches— Church of the Brethren; Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); and Mennonites.

Over the centuries, we have seen the European cultures dominating the places where Christianity spread. When the Portuguese or the Spaniards or the French, invited people to be part of their religion they also imposed their culture, language, food and dress habits on them, monotheism thus leading to monoculture. The *National Sorry Day*¹⁸ is one of the finest examples of the realisation of the damage that the homogenisation brought by religion coupled with culture and politics.

It is a pity that after the 15th century, the Church was closely connected with the colonial powers, with the hope of propagating the Christian faith, sometimes with real conversion of the person and sometimes by force. In the meantime there have been efforts to homogenise the Christian way of living with the western way of living. Faith was part of the culture of the colonisers as well!

Forced Conversion and Inquisition

It is an undeniable fact that most religions want their respective fold's numbers to increase. For this a lot of proselytising means were used for both political and religious gains. Christianity too has its share of forced conversions. First in Europe and later worldwide - specifically in countries colonized by "Christian" Nations - pressures of various kinds were used to convert the colonised people to Christianity. Threats to life, punishment, and harsh treatment were routinely utilised by an alliance of sacred and secular powers. Although in many cases conversions were genuine and freely decided, overwhelming proof exists that the use of force was deemed an acceptable tool to obtain assent. The scars that this procedure left in the collective memory are hard to evaluate.¹⁹ When we discuss the reconciliation as peacebuilding it is necessary to acknowledge these unpleasant facts.

Pope John Paul II included forced conversions in the list of sins for which Christians should repent and ask forgiveness. He did ask for forgiveness during the Jubilee Year 2000. Here both individual and collective sins committed by Christians were acknowledged and forgiveness was sought. Clearly, it is of central importance for Christian Peacebuilding to continue in the task of acknowledging the discrepancy between the radical and absolute

¹⁸ National Sorry Day is an annual event that has been held in Australia on 26 May, since 1998, to remember and commemorate the mistreatment of the country's indigenous population. During the 20th century, the Australian government's policies resulted in a "Stolen Generation"—i.e., "Aboriginal children separated, often forcibly, from their families in the interest of turning them into white Australians".

¹⁹ Andrea Bartoli 153.

commandment of the Lord Jesus and the actual historical experience of millions of Christians²⁰.

RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE AS PEACE; CHRISTIAN PEACEBUILDING IN ACTION

In the second part of this essay, the focus will be on the practical application of the Christian idea of peace in the encyclicals of the Catholic Church and in the real life incidents of Archbishop Oscar Romero as well as the reconciliation process in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa.

Biblical peace, as we have seen earlier, is a holistic peace and is not merely absence of strife. Holistic peace is possible when there is respect for human life and dignity, upholding of human and fundamental rights of all sorts with socio-economic and political justice through reconciliation as means to achieve the goal, namely peace.

Concept of Reconciliation: a Christian Perspective

In understanding the Christian perspective of reconciliation the Idea of Jubilee year is very significant. It is very well brought out both in the New and the Old testaments. Jesus' public service begins with the announcement of the Jubilee year. Reading out a passage from the prophet Isaiah, and acknowledging being anointed by the Spirit, he announces *good news to the poor, the release of captives, the recovery of sight by the blind, and freedom for the oppressed*. Here Jesus in replicating the words of Isaiah, sets an agenda for his life as to passionately proclaims God's justice, where we see four provisions of social justice, namely the release of slaves, restoration of properties to the impoverished, rest to the land, and release or cancellation of the debts of the poor, and he advocates the duty of the people to establish right relationships with God, with one another and with the land. The concept of Jubilee year was intended to break the greed-exploitation spiral through releasing the slaves, restoring the land, cancelling the debt etc. with an intention of restoring everything to its original nature. The purpose of Christian concept of reconciliation is to create the 'year of Lord's favour'

Cosmotheandric Reconciliation

²⁰ Ibid.

Cosmotheandric, a word borrowed from Raimon Panikkar, speaks about the God-Cosmos-human relationship. The Christian reconciliation is of this kind. It is a triple reconciliation: reconciliation with God, with fellow human beings and with nature.

Taking a cue from Jesus' manifesto as expressed in Luke 4,16, we see that Jesus' message of reconciliation was preached both to the people of Israel and to those living outside its physical and spiritual frontiers: tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners, and persons of all kinds who were marginalised and excluded. His ministry of reconciliation with God and with one another knew no boundaries. He spoke to the powerful, challenging them to a change of heart. He showed special love for the sinner, the poor widow, and the lost sheep. The kingdom of God, which he constantly preached, became a vision for a world where all relationships are reconciled in God.²¹ This kind of triple reconciliation is expressed in the following way:

Reconciliation with God: it is also called vertical reconciliation. One of the pre-requisites for Peacebuilding is peace within oneself. At least those who follow their religion believe peace can be achieved only through the right relationship with God. What is also important here is to develop a right idea of God, an idea of a God who is himself peace loving!

Reconciliation with one another: the second significant kind of reconciliation is a horizontal one where the peacebuilding process is done between humans. In this global world, there are social, economic and political forces that have facilitated the creation of new relationships among people, but there are other forces which have broken the bonds of love and solidarity within the human family. While many poor people have been lifted from poverty, the gap between the rich and the poor within nations and across national boundaries has increased. From the perspective of those living at the margins, globalisation appears to be a massive force that excludes and exploits the weak and the poor, and this intensifies exclusion on the basis of religion, race, caste, and gender.²² Transnational interests, unconstrained by national laws and often abetted by corruption, frequently exploit the natural resources of the poor.²³ Therefore to develop a right relationship one needs to see from the perspective of the poor and the marginalised. Here reconciliation demands that we build

²¹Cf Decrees of General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus, Gujarat SahityaPrakash, Anand, Gujarat, 2008, 71

²² Ibid., 76-77.

²³ Ibid., 77.

bridges between the rich and the poor, establishing advocacy links of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests.

Lastly, reconciliation with the Cosmos: during the World Day of Peace address in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI spoke about good environmental stewardship. The present pope, Francis, focused his attention on repairing our relationship with the natural world. He also emphasized that environmental destruction is a sin. We have seen in the past how humans have gone away from a good environmental stewardship. So when so much harm has been done, reconciliation with nature is a must.

The Process of reconciliation

It is important for us to understand the process of reconciliation. It could be formulated like this: After an offense is committed, the wrongdoer comes to an awareness of the nature of the offense. The wrongdoer then expresses remorse, and goes to the victim, offering an apology and seeking forgiveness. The victim, after hearing the wrongdoer and judging the person to be genuinely remorseful, extends forgiveness to the person, and then reconciliation between the two takes place²⁴. The basic requirement here is to distinguish the wrongdoer from wrong done. This is an ideal way of personal reconciliation. The process can be the similar at a political or communitarian level. What can immediately be expected here is the restoration of relationship, of peace, and a return to the condition which was prior to the wrongdoing.

However, whether at a personal level or at the community level reconciliation is not so easy. Very often the wrongdoers do not show any remorse, even if they do realise their wrong; there will be umpteen ways of justification to defend it. Sometimes they may even believe they have done nothing wrong or they may be fearful of punishment, humiliation etc.; there can be a host of other reasons as well, like the extent of damage, discouragement from a few in the community, leaders milking some political mileage etc. At the community level there may be a lot of historical reasons for justification and very often the victim is innocent. This can be vividly seen in any of the riots or social conflicts.

What is Justice in the Bible?

²⁴ Robert Schreiter, "The Distinctive Characteristics of Christian Reconciliation" Catholic Peacebuilding Network, <http://cpn.nd.edu/topics-in-catholic-peacebuilding/reconciliation/the-distinctive-characteristics-of-christian-reconciliation/>

When one thinks of biblical justice, the first passage that comes to mind is the parable of equal wages (Mt 20 1-16). Here the owner of the vineyard paid the same wage for one who had been working since morning and for the one who came late in the evening. He gave those who did work from morning what was justly agreed upon. He was generous to the one who came last. He did not see how much work was done; rather, his focus was on the need of the worker. This is the kind of justice we see all through the Bible.

In the Bible justice describes God's moral nature. The word justice (*mispat*) is often juxtaposed with words like righteousness (*tsedeqah*), but the meaning of justice (*mispat*) in Hebrew thought differs from its conception in Greek, which is popular in the Western thinking, according to which justice consists in each person receiving equal due. In the Hebrew vision compassion and mercy are intrinsic to justice. Hence there can be no justice and consequently no *shalom* until and unless the needs of the poor, the widows, and the orphans are met.²⁵

Therefore God's justice is focused more on action than on words. Through Isaiah (58:6-7), God says, "No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help" Similar ideas are expressed by Jesus in Matthew 25. In this passage Jesus speaks about the Judgment Day, when Jesus rewards people who saw God in the poor, the naked, the prisoners etc.²⁶

It is important to note from the peacebuilding point of view, that behind the biblical idea of justice is the rich concept of *shalom* or peace. Justice in the biblical sense pervades all aspects of life. Peace can exist only when there is this kind of justice

THE CHURCH ENCYCLICALS WITH REFERENCE TO PEACE AND PEACEBUILDING

Since the time of the release of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, the Church has made conscious efforts to know the pulse of the people and to respond to it. For our benefit only two Encyclicals, *Pacem in Terris* and *Caritas in Veritate* are cited here.

²⁵Joseph Lobo 31.

²⁶Timothy Keller, "The Beauty of Biblical Justice" *By Faith* Issue number: 29 Oct 2010, 2010
<http://byfaithonline.com/the-beauty-of-biblical-justice/> accessed on May 28, 2015

Pacem in Terris (1963)

The central theme of *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) is peace. Here Pope John XXIII dwells on the 'signs of the time' such as an increasing consciousness of human dignity (number 79), workers' rights (40), women's rights (41), nations becoming free from colonial subjugation (42), constitutional governments (76), issues of fundamental human rights (75) and the awareness of the whole world as a community (145). In this context he speaks about the need for negotiations and dialogue (126)

The fundamental thesis of the encyclical is that peace will be only an empty-sounding word unless it is based on the order founded on truth, built according to justice, integrated with charity, and put into practice in freedom (167). In developing this thesis, Pope John reminds Christians that Jesus Christ is the author of peace (117), the Prince of Peace (167) who brings us peace and leaves us peace (170), and he reminds everyone that there can be no peace among people unless there is peace within each one of them (165).²⁷

In this encyclical the Pope says that peace is possible only if it is grounded on truth, guided by justice, inspired by love, and refined in freedom (37); or, to put it in another way: its foundation is truth, its measure and objective is justice, its driving force is love, and its method of attainment is freedom (149). The Pope stresses also the importance of human dignity as well as individual and community rights to achieve peace.

Caritas in Veritate (2009)

Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth) is one of the recent encyclicals which comprehensively deals with issues of the people of the world. It is concerned with the problems of global development and progress towards the common good; it states that both Love and Truth are essential elements of an effective response. The encyclical begins with a discussion on how charity and truth are fundamental requirements of our development, both of individuals and of humanity as a whole.

Love is described as an extraordinary force motivating people to strive for the common good: "The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them". The Pope emphasises that while charity is "**at the heart of the Church's social doctrine**", it must be linked to truth if it is to

²⁷Gerald Darrin, "Summary of *Pacem in Terris*, by John XXIII"
http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/summary_pacem.htm, accessed May 28th 2015.

remain a force for good. Without truth, love can become an "empty shell," to be filled with emotional influences which in the worst case can result in love turning into its opposite²⁸.

In chapter five on "the cooperation of the human family," the Pope speaks of what human development is. He advocates discernment as a necessary tool so that folk can avoid dangerous ideologies and religions that encourage people to cut themselves off from communion with others. He says religion must play a part in political discussion, so there can be a fruitful dialogue between faith and reason. The Pope cautions against keeping God out of human society and fundamentalism, both of which make such dialogue difficult.

Both these encyclicals have a special emphasis on justice and reconciliation as peacebuilding. As in the biblical notion of peace, we see here too, multidimensional causes for losing or restoring peace. Each of the encyclicals speaks about rights, dignity, justice, dialogue etc. as necessary for the common good.

Particularly in the more recent encyclical, there is a special stress on charity or love and he says that *Charity goes beyond justice*, because to love is to give, to offer what is "mine" to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is "his/hers", what is due to them by reason of their being or acting. We cannot "give" what is ours to the other, without first giving him/her what pertains to him/her in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we will be just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, an alternative or parallel path to it, but it is inseparable from charity, and is intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, it is "the minimum measure" of it, an integral part of the love "in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us²⁹.

Archbishop Oscar Romero (El Salvador)

"The violence we preach is not the violence of the sword, the violence of hatred. It is the violence of love, of brotherhood, the violence that wills to beat weapons into sickles for work".

– Oscar Romero, Nov 27, 1977.³⁰

²⁸Caritas in Veritate , http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caritas_in_Veritate

²⁹ Benedict XVI Caritas in Veritate, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html

³⁰ Oscar Romero. "The Violence of Love". Compiled and translated by James R Brocman, SJ, The Bruderhof Foundation, USA, 2003, <http://servicioskoinonia.org/biblioteca/pastoral/RomeroBrockmanViolenceOfLove.pdf>

There are countless heroes who tirelessly worked for justice and peace. Oscar Romero is one of them. The basic inspiration for his vigorous involvement in the people's struggles can be traced back to *Gaudium et Spes*, a document of the Catholic Church, in which emphasis is given to the concept of 'People of God'. This document also addresses justice and peace issues. It says, "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."³¹ The document expressed the terrible divide in our world between the rich and the poor, especially the people who go hungry. It stressed the importance of solidarity, dialogue and engagement with the world in order to transform the world, promoting human dignity, freedom, and human rights. The core message of the document was that peace is the fruit of justice³².

El Salvador, a tiny Catholic country in Central America, named after Christ the Saviour, with a population of about 4 million, was ruled at the time by a military-led junta. It was a country with terrible economic exploitation, social deprivation and malnutrition – a result of institutionalised injustice. To put it in Romero's words,

"...faces of landless peasants, mistreated and killed by the forces of power, faces of labourers arbitrarily dismissed and without a living wage for their families, faces of the elderly, faces of outcasts, faces of slum dwellers, faces of poor children who from infancy begin to feel the cruel sting of social injustice. For them, it seems, there is no school, no high school, no university. By what right have we catalogued persons as first-class persons or second-class persons? In the theology of human nature, there is only one class: children of God"³³.

Killings, torture, disappearances, political imprisonment and forced exile were the order of the day under the military regime. Six priests and dozens of catechists were killed before Romero. He integrated well, the message of Jesus in his daily life and worked for social justice, non-violent change, peace and reconciliation in society. He was always on the side of poor and oppressed people. He denounced violation of human rights, political violence, the corrupt system of justice and exploitation. His message was clear. No to the

³¹ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 1 by Pope Paul VI, Dec 7, 1965. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

³² Julian Filochowski, Archbishop Romero – Bishop, Martyr and patron of Justice and peace. 25th September 2005, <http://ocarm.org/en/content/ocarm/archbishop-romero-bishop-martyr-and-patron-justice-and-peace>

³³ Oscar Romero. "The Violence of Love". Compiled and translated by James R Brocman, SJ, The Bruderhof Foundation, USA, 2003, page 212.

killings of the right.No to the violence of the left. Yes to political organisation. Yes to the option for the poor. Yes to dialogue. He invited the wealthy groups to a change of heart - sometimes gently; sometimes more sharply³⁴. He spoke the truth fearlessly, prophetically. He did not speak to one group or another. He simply spoke the truth and paid with his life the price for speaking. Following his assassination the war became unstoppable and during twelve years claimed over 70,000 lives. Archbishop Romero's relevance to us and to justice and peace movement around the world is manifold.

To articulate his works and mission in his own words “...*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the masterbuilder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.*”

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is”.³⁵ Religion influences public sphere in many ways, especially when people are so religiously oriented. Though the themes such as forgiveness, reconciliation and reparation are not normal in political discourse, they could be well made use of in the process of peacebuilding. One of the well-known examples on how religion played its role in communitarian reconciliation and conflict resolution is ‘The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ (TRC). TRC was a court-like restorative justice body assembled in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid. In this the witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences. There was also a provision for the perpetrators of violence to give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. Here the survivors would come forward to give testimony about the death of their loved ones under the repression of apartheid, and the suffering they themselves had undergone since.

Religious and political leaders like Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, influenced by the religious concepts of forgiveness and love for neighbour initiated the process of reconciliation to reconstruct the nation without retaliation, bloodshed or civil war, thus allowing a smooth transition into a new nation.

Religious leaders possess a tremendous ability to influence people through moral language that resonates with people’s basic values. In South Africa, the call for people to

³⁴ Julian Filochowski.

³⁵ Mahatma Gandhi Quotes,<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/mahatmagan135298.html#XiES404i4xFOXs95.99>

reconcile became a surround-sound campaign, with preachers linking faith with political transition every week and on radio stations across the country. Religious institutions are widespread and provide places for meetings, and their hierarchical structure allows for connecting local people to national and international offices and communication structures. The TRC used churches as meeting places to hold hearings on human rights violations. In many ways Christianity infused the entire TRC process.³⁶The people who testified to this were often poor and without formal education. Nor did they undergo any therapy. It was their faith and religious experience coupled with national ethos and leaders' vision that made this process possible.

Peacebuilding in the Indian context

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda defined the greatness of Hindu religion to the world in his model speech at the Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago. He said, "I thank you in the name of the mother of religions...I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth".³⁷ In India diversity is our strength. There is creativity and beauty in diversity. On the other hand uniformity at the cost of diversity is a threat. Homogenising is not a good thing to a vibrant society. Respecting diversity and the identity of each of the segments of society and getting along with it has been the tradition in India.

This diversity has been now challenged. There is a stress on monoculture and homogenisation. There is a rise in religious fundamentalism and communal violence, so much so it made the U.S. President Barack Obama say, 'India will succeed as long as it is not splintered along religious lines'³⁸ This opinion articulates the fears that an ordinary thinking Indian has whenever he/she sees that the very religion which was born as a means of liberation has become the cause for suffering.

³⁶Lisa Schirch, Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2011)
<https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/issues/winter-2011/religion-and-conflict-resolution-christianity-and-south>

³⁷Saswat Panigrahi, Decoding Hindu, Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra <http://www.niticentral.com/2014/08/17/decoding-hindu-hindutva-and-hindu-rashtra-236054.html>, Aug 17, 2014.

³⁸MSN news, Religious intolerance in India would have shocked Mahatma Gandhi dated 06.02.15,
<http://www.msn.com/en-in/news/other/religious-intolerance-in-india-would-have-shocked-mahatma-gandhi-barack-obama/ar-AA92j6y?ocid=UP97DHP>

Since the time of independence there have been so many religious and ethnic conflicts in India. This has been a threat to peacebuilding and consequently nation building. Such kind of religious conflicts vulgarizes religion destroying the beauty of Religion. Very often it is influenced by political agenda and invariably the victims are innocent people. In such a context, how can justice and reconciliation help build our nation?

One thing that we can easily harness from the Indian ethos is the ability of Indian people to absorb, accommodate and be at ease with plurality. Having understood the lessons from the life and acts of Romero and TRC, we ask: can justice and reconciliation be used to build up peace, given the spiralling violence in the name of ethnicity and Religion? Indeed there is a need for justice in society and reconciliation between the communities.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the process of peacebuilding is complex and interconnected. It is a divine gift as well as human responsibility; it demands justice and at the same time, it is characterised by mercy, compassion and is abounding in love; it denotes conflicts and at the same time makes radical reconciliation its aim. In other words biblical peace does not negate war [or conflict] in an absolute way, but directs it not against any human beings perceived as enemies but against the very forces that make human beings their agents³⁹. The transformation that is brought about in justice and in reconciliation is not just a truce, but rather it has its spill-over effects in all walks of life; this becomes essential in building the nation. In reconciliation the wrongdoer does not disappear from view. Since justice is an important dimension of reconciliation the wrongdoer is confronted. However, the divine dimension in this process is to have the ability to distinguish the wrongdoer from the wrong done. This will lead to a just and humane society of peace and prosperity.

³⁹ Joseph Lobo 32.

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