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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

I. MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES AND IDEALS IN JUDAISM

The Jewish 'way of life' has its origins in the experience of the Divine Presence in the midst of the decisive events of the Exodus and of Sinai, events which have altered the entire course of human history. The children of Israel experienced the reality of the Lord of history through His involvement in their liberation from physical oppression, persecution, massacre, and injustices as 'slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt'. To Pharaoh, who was worshipped as a divine emperor and who was the source of law, never its servant, the Israelite slaves were regarded as chattel, 'the untouchables' of ancient Egypt.

At Sinai, the Israelites had a transforming experience of Divine Revelation as moral will which was ratified by an everlasting Covenant. Henceforth, the Israelites are perceived by God to be a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. What an extraordinary Divine-human scenario! Yesterday, they were slaves, the outcasts of history; now an entire people are stamped with the dignity of priesthood and holiness, and are set on the course of history with a messianic task of redemption in society and through history until the coming of the Kingdom.

Israel's religion, Prof. David Flusser asserts, was a breakthrough in human consciousness. The God of Israel initiated a new era in the history of mankind, introducing a new concept of justice - which is the central message of His revelation - an uncompromising moral law, and an original social order to be established paradigmatically in the Holy Land of Palestine (see The Holy Year and Its Origins in the Jewish Jubilee Year, by this writer, published by the Vatican Office for the Holy Year, 1975, Vatican City) conceived in this justice. This postulate of individual and social justice was not to be limited to Israel only. The Creator of the universe postulates this justice for all His human creatures; it was incumbent on all the peoples of the world.

The concept of justice which emerges from the Hebrew Bible is not just the regiment of mighty men - the Bible does not identify God on the side of Pharaoh and his imperium! It stresses that God cares for the poor, and unprotected, for the orphan, the widow and the stranger.

The basis of social justice was not to be external power and might, but the reverence of God and obedience to His moral will.

A. The Sacredness of Human Life

To understand the idea of justice in Israel, we must bear in mind the Biblical teaching that the human being is created in the image of God, that each human life is sacred and of infinite worth. In consequence, a human being cannot be treated as a chattel, or an object to be disposed of for someone's programme or project or ideology, but must be treated as a personality. Every human being is the possessor of the right-to-life, dignity and honour, and the fruits of his or her labour.

Justice is respect for the personality of others and their inalienable rights, even as injustice is the most flagrant manifestation of disrespect for the personality of others. Judaism requires that human personality be respected in every human being - in the female prisoner of war, in the delinquent, even in the criminal condemned to death. The supreme importance of the human being in the economy of the Universe is expressed in this Rabbinic teaching: 'Man (the human being) was first created as a single individual to teach the lesson that whoever destroys one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had destroyed a whole world; and whoever saves one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had saved a whole world' (Sanhedrin 4:5).

However, justice is more than mere abstention from injuring our fellow human beings. 'The work of justice is peace, and the effect thereof quietness and confidence forever' (Isaiah 32:17). It is a positive conception, and includes economic well-being, intellectual and spiritual growth, philanthropy, and every endeavour that will enable human beings to realize the highest and best in their natures.

The conditions for that self-realization require active efforts to bring about the final disappearance of injustice and oppression, which as represented in the Jewish High Holiday liturgy, are the goals of human history. 'And may all wickedness be consumed as a flame and may evil rule be removed from the earth', declare the Rosh Hashana prayers.

B. The Moral Duties of Tzedakah

Nothing is more fundamental in Biblical and Rabbinic ethics than the moral obligation of tzedakah, a Hebrew term which means both 'charity' and 'to do justice'. The Rabbinic sages of the Talmud declared that 'Almsgiving - i.e., aiding the poor and feeding the hungry - weighs as heavily as all the other commandments of the Torah' (Talmud Baba Batra 9a).

In proclaiming the Jubilee year, which like the Ten Commandments was ascribed to divinely-inspired legislation revealed on Mount Sinai, the Bible ordained: 'And if your brother waxes poor, and his means fail with you, then you shall uphold him: as a stranger and a settler shall he live with you' (Leviticus 25:35). The Rabbis observe that the expression that 'Your brother may live with you' means that it is our personal and communal duty to see to it that our fellow human beings do

not die of starvation. Though the person be a 'stranger' or 'an alien settler', he (or she) is to be included in the term 'your brother' and is to be treated in a brotherly and compassionate manner.

To underscore the supreme virtue of humanitarian aid to the needy in the hierarchy of Jewish moral and spiritual values, the Rabbinic sages regarded such compassionate care of man as an act worthy of association with Divinity itself: 'God says to Israel, "My sons whenever you give sustenance to the poor, I impute it to you as though you gave sustenance to me, for it says, "Command the children of Israel... my bread for for my sacrifices... shall ye observe unto me. Does, then, God eat and drink? No, but whenever you give food to the poor, God accounts it to you as if you gave food to Him'" (Numbers Rabbah XXVIII: 2).

The virtue of such care for the poor and hungry is depicted in Jewish tradition as the salient attribute of the 'founding father' of Judaism, the Patriarch Abraham, who is called the archetype of the 'Pharisee of love'. In a midrashic commentary that begins with the phrases, 'Let your house be open; let the poor be members of your household. Let a man's house be open to the north and to the south, and to the east and to the west', the Rabbis describe the humanitarianism of Abraham:

He went out and wandered about, and when he found wayfarers, he brought them to his house, and he gave wheaten bread to him whose wont it was not to eat wheaten bread, and so with meat and wine. And not only this, but he built large inns on the roads, and put food and drink within them, and all came and ate and drank and blessed God. Therefore, quiet of spirit was granted to him, and all that the mouth of man can ask for was found in his house /Abot de Rabbi Nathan, VII: 17a,b/

Elsewhere the Talmud admonishes: 'He who has no pity upon his fellow creatures is assuredly not of the seed of Abraham our father' (Bezah 32b).

In Jewish communities, from Biblical times through the present, there was much free and generous giving of alms to all who asked - even to deceivers! - and there was also much systematic and careful relief through established institutions. Each Jewish community boasted of a tamhui (public kitchen) from which the poor received two meals daily. There was also the kupah (alms box) for the disbursement of benevolent funds on Sabbath eve to provide three meals for Sabbath (Mishnah Peah VIII: 7). Additional care was exercised in respect of the itinerant poor, who were provided with a loaf of bread which sufficed for two meals, and who were also entitled to the cost of lodging.

The Biblical laws of charity in Palestine relating to 'gleaning' the 'forgotten sheaf' and 'the corner of the field', implied the underlying idea that national territory belongs to the public as a whole. In accordance with Jewish law, landowners used to lay open fences surrounding their fields and vineyards, and during certain hours of the day, the needy were allowed to eat from the produce of the harvest. There was also a three-yearly allocation of Maaser Ani (poor man's tithe) from the threshing floor.

Thus, there arose the charitable traditions and institutions of the Jewish people which have remained a religious-communal characteristic ever since. These customs of charity, which were foreign to the pagan frame of mind of the Greeks and Romans, also had an abiding impact on the nature of the Christian 'caritas'.

C. Peace and War

And finally, the stability, as well as the happiness of a community, can only be assured when it rests upon a foundation of peace. In the absence of peace there can be neither prosperity nor well-being. 'Peace is equal in worth to everything', declare the Rabbis (Sifra), and they add: 'Beloved is peace since the benedictions only conclude with the hope of peace', thus teaching that the blessings even of the High Priest are of no avail unless accompanied by peace (Numbers Rabbah 11:7).

While the Prophets of Israel and the Rabbis believed that God intended the nations to be at peace with one another, war was not prohibited. Jewish ethics would admit the duty to defend the higher values in human life by war if necessary. If Isaiah or Jeremiah had thought that yielding to the foreign invader would mean destruction to the religion or the people they valued, they would have urged resistance, with the same vigour that they demanded constantly the practice of righteousness in obedience to God's will. All the facts of Biblical and post-Biblical Judaism taken together lead to the conclusion that the ethical judgement on war, according to Judaism, is that it must be eradicated to make human life conform to the Divine rule, that those guilty of causing it commit a crime against humanity and a sin against God. However, they are justified who, to defend the higher values in human life, resist, if necessary by war, an attack on them. The justification would extend to a nation's defence of its liberty. The spiritual values in the life of a nation, which include its historic distinctiveness, may justify it, when attacked or threatened, to engage in war to save its independent existence. (See Dr Israel Mattuck in his study, Jewish Ethics, particularly his chapter on 'The Judgement on War'.)

II. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

What are the implications of these facts for Christians and Jews today?

It is evident that we live in an age of violence and of terror. There is not a continent on the globe that is not despoiled by terror and violence, by barbarism and by a growing callousness to human suffering and pain and threat to human existence. At the centre of the human crisis is the fundamental depreciation of the meaning and value of human life. In theological terms, the Biblical affirmation that each human life is created in the sacred image of God and is therefore of ultimate worth and preciousness is being battered from every side.

It is my conviction that this erosion in the belief in the sanctity of human life is one of the decisive black legacies bequeathed by Nazi Germany to mankind. By and large, with rare exception, the

overwhelming majority of citizens of the Western world, and their dominant institutions have avoided confronting the magnitude of evil incarnate in the Nazi Holocaust, and have therefore failed to learn how to cope with forces and structures of dehumanization that are being replicated in many parts of the globe.

The Nazi campaign against the Jewish people was unique and in many ways unprecedented. Yet the Nazi trauma must not be seen as 'a Jewish obsession', for the fateful meaning of the Holocaust is of ultimate importance to the future capacity of mankind to understand itself and to acquire the resources to cope with the challenges to its survival. (See the discussion of Max Weber's 'secularization, disenchantment of the world, and rationalization' as root causes for undermining all moral norms in a bureaucratized society in my Religious Values in an Age of Violence, pp. 46/52.)

Bleak as are the prospects for countering these forces of dehumanization in the world, 'we need not complete the task', as Rabbi Tarphon admonished, 'but neither are we free to desist therefrom'. In concert, if we are to learn from the Nazi Holocaust and not be doomed to allow its repetition, we must attempt at the very least the following:

First, Christians and Jews should engage in a massive, concerted effort to establish a 'new humanism' on a global basis that seeks to restore the Biblical value of the infinite worth and preciousness of each human life that must be appreciated as an end itself and never as an object of somebody else's project, programme, ideology, or revolution.

Second, Christians and Jews must help engender a national and international attitude of scorn and contempt for those who use violence or who advocate the use of violence. We must work to deromanticize all appeals to use violence and terrorism as a means of liberation or of institutionalized oppression, since from a moral standpoint no ends can justify such anti-human means.

Third, Christians and Jews must work to curtail the resort to inflammatory propaganda, especially from international forums which have psychological impact on an international scale. As Prof. Gordon Allport of Harvard University demonstrated in his monumental study, The Nature of Prejudice, there is an inevitable progression from 'verbal aggression to violence, from rumour to riot, from gossip to genocide'.

Fourth, Christians and Jews must work toward educational development and communication among peoples to reduce the abrasive effects of 'differences'. Differences, as we have learned in the pluralistic experience of the Western world, can be a source of enrichment rather than a threat.

Fifth, Christians and Jews should engage in an urgent and sustained intellectual and educational effort to elaborate a theology and ideology of pluralism which presupposes the right of each religious, racial, and ethnic group to define itself in its own terms and to be accepted unconditionally by its own self-definition. Group narcissism, as Dr Erich Fromm observes, arouses intense hostility between groups, and 'is one of

the most important sources of human aggression'. In helping establish a pluralistic world-view, Christians and Jews have a decisive contribution to make to the building of the ideological foundations without which a stable world community cannot come into being.

Sixth, Christians and Jews should work toward making the economy of each nation as self-sufficient and stable as possible in the sense of not perpetually requiring relief support. Inextricably linked with such an effort is the control of the arms race on an international scale, and a rational re-ordering of priorities that allows for adequate defence and yet at the same time reallocates some of the billions wasted on arms that should be applied to the crying needs of the hungry, the diseased and the homeless.

Central in such efforts must be the pressing need to raise human consciousness in an effective international effort to halt the irrational proliferation of nuclear weaponry and to bring about serious sustained actions for universal simultaneous disarmament. There is no higher priority for human survival at this moment in human history.

And finally, Christians and Jews need to recognize the fundamental interdependence of all human rights and collaborate vigorously to assure that every nation - East and West, North and South - implement fully their commitments to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In particular, Christians and Jews should work for the completion of the judicial instrumentalities called for by Article 6 of the Genocide convention in the form of an international penal tribunal for trying those who are accused of genocide attempts anywhere in the world.

'The salvation of mankind', Alexander Solzhenitzyn reminds us, 'will depend on everyone becoming concerned about the welfare of everybody everywhere'.

LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Shayk Yusuf Khan Shakirov

From the point of view of Islamic teachings life in all its diversities and manifestations, in all its kinds and forms, including death as the cessation of the earthly existence - is the creation of the Almighty Allah.

First of all we believe that Allah is the Living God, who lives the life of his own, does not depend upon anyone and is not guided by anybody. In the Quran Allah is therefore called "al-Hayy al-Qayyum", the Living, the Self-Subsisting. He continuously and restlessly controls everything that exists in the world and nothing can be realised without Him. This idea is present in many Ayats of the Holy Quran (2:255, 3:2, 25:58) and many others, as well as in many Hadithes of our Prophet.

Another important moment of the Islamic teachings about life is the belief that God has control not only over life, but over its cessation, i.e. death as well. God gives life and nobody else besides Him can grant life. God ceases life, and nobody besides Him can take this life away. Everything is in His power, everything belongs to Him. This teaching is confirmed by the Ayats 2:28, 3:156, 7:116 of the Holy Quran, as well as by many others.

Muslims consider life to be the greatest gift of God. It is why our Prophet Muhammed and after him all prominent scholars of Islam stressed, that people must appreciate life. Islam is therefore rightly called a life-asserting religion. It promotes in the souls of its believers the feelings of careful and respectful attitude towards life. To take away life given by God to any living being, is a great sin, which the Almighty Allah will never pardon. Because only Allah grants life and only Allah may take it away.

Allah gives us not only life, but all means of its development and continuation. He gives us air to breathe and water to drink and to feed all plants and animals we use for the continuation of our life. He gave us earth which we use for our nutrition. These are very deep philosophic conceptions because they are closely connected with our life, with its manifestations and processes. We say that Islam

is not only a religion, it is also a mode of life. On the ground of this teaching Islam requires from its adherents to lead a decent life, an honest life to be worthy of God's creation.

Secondly, Islam requires to preserve everything living on earth, as everything on earth is the creation of God and is intended to serve man as the highest of all God's creations. To preserve everything that exists on earth is again the continuation of life, because life is impossible without the surrounding nature. The problem of preserving the environment has become most acute on our planet in our days. But 14 centuries ago our Prophet Muhammed called people to be careful with the environment as He understood that life on earth will become impossible if the environment is polluted or spoiled. "Say who has forbidden the beautiful things of this world which God has created for His Servants ..." (7:32)

Physical and spiritual aspects of life in Islam are thus merged together, and life is considered only in these two aspects.

Islam teaches to overcome death by establishing links with the Living God, Who does not die. It means that Islam teaches to fear God, to worship God, as God is present in each living being and is always ready to lead man on the right path.



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Shri Shrivatsa Goswami

Brothers and Sisters,

One of the earliest Hindu scriptures opens with this affirmation:

"Whatever there is in creation is the Lord." God is truth, consciousness and bliss. Each of us, therefore, partakes in this manifestation of God.

But what have we done with this manifestation? When we look around, we do not find the Kingdom of God; we are surrounded by war, exploitation of nature, suppression of the weaker by the stronger. Why has this happened?

It is because we have turned away from God and have not used God's gifts as we should. For God has given us knowledge to understand the universal reality that undergirds the whole of humanity. We are given the intellect to know the sufferings of others, and the free-will to say "no" to injustice. We are even given the free-will to lay down our lives non-violently in the face of violence.

Our ignorance, however, has caused us to turn away from God. Therefore we feel estranged from nature; we have enmity towards the other human beings and creatures.

This alienation leads to the perversion of the divine nature in us. Our ego feels itself as a separate entity from God, and grows more and more powerful causing the loss of the Kingdom of God in us.

Instead of the unity of the Kingdom of God we have innumerable separate egos affiliating themselves with a race, a particular language, sex, class or nation; splintering the basic unity. Even in the field of religion instead of approaching a universal spiritual experience, we experience only further separation. The Vedas acknowledge that "the truth is the same, but may be expressed or realized in different ways".

From time to time God compassionately appears among us. One such appearance was in the form of Chaitanya Maha Prabhu in the fifteenth century. He spoke of the reality of God as love and of the individual as the atomic expression of that love-energy; God and creation are thus two dimensions of the whole, which is love divine.

In this spirit of universal love may I offer the words spoken by Chaitanya as my offering to this assembly:

"Be humbler than a blade of grass;
More persevering than a tree.
Take no honour to yourself but give honour to all.
And thus remain in constant remembrance of God."

Om shanti, shanti, shanti.



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

(Masuo Nezu)

Buddhism affirms the sanctity of all life. Its goal is to free all living beings from the miseries of life, so that they may attain the "joy of peace". This peace and liberation are the right of all beings; they are equal before the dharma; the message of liberation therefore falls on all, like rain, that their lives may blossom and bear fruit. This is best expressed in the following Lotus Sutra:

"I appear in the world just like a great crowd,
to our enrichment on all parched living beings,
to free them all from misery
and so attain the joy of peace,
joy in the world,
and the joy of nirvana.

To give peace to all creatures,
I appear in the world and,
for the hosts of the living,
preaching the law,
pure as sweet dew;
the one and the only law of emancipation
and the nirvana.

I preach the law equally;
as I preach to one person,
so I preach to all.

This is the law preached by the Buddha.
It is just like a great cloud
which with the same kind of rain and
which is men and blossoms,
so that each bears fruit."

Lotus Sutra (mainly taken
from chapter 5 but also from 3 & 4)

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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Sithembiso Nyoni

Since this is a testimony of my personal experience as a mother, I run the risk of romanticizing childbirth and motherhood and of sharing from a human and emotional view point rather than from an intellectual or scientific point of view.

CHILDBIRTH

Giving birth to children is one of those experiences that confront women with both physical pain and suffering as well as joy. In my case, I have had long hours of labour for my two sons. In each case I ended up undergoing a caesarian section. In the case of my daughter who is 6 months now and present here with me, although I did not go through the labour pains, I was very ill for weeks after the caesarian section. After each anasthetic, I woke up in great pain, but with a tremendous deep feeling of joy in the thought that I have participated in the Lord's creation of life. Something in me and in the world has been made anew.

"Behold I make all things new".

For me, childbirth is not only a painful process, it is also frightening - the thought of going through a caesarian section and what could go wrong as in my last child. But I go through it in hope and faith in God the Creator and in the knowledge and love of life as a gift of God.

DANGERS

After childbirth dangers continue to confront me and my children. These are many. They are both physical as well as spiritual dangers. More dramatic however are the dangers of militarism, drought and the anti-Christ alternative religions. In my country today as is true of some parts of Africa, there are some villages with more arms and armed men than there are water points and food for people. With South Africa at our door steps, we shall continue to be divided and set against each other, recognizing also our own human weaknesses as a nation. The result of all this is political instability and a global threat to peace.

Another disturbing factor is drought. Some villages have gone two years without any harvest. There is a shortage of food and water. Disease is rife. Thousands of babies are dying from some mysterious as well as common diseases. Under these conditions, what is the future of my children? Am I producing future soldiers? Will they be affected by the drought and the threatening diseases? Will I be one of the lucky mothers? Should they live, will they be part of the 20% privileged few of my country, fighting and jostling for power? Will they be of service to the nation? Will they change things for the better for all? Will they belong to the deprived 80%? - no jobs? no land? no hope? What is the destiny of my children under all these dangers?

All these are frightening questions, for which I have no answers. Society is not helpful either. Nobody, not even those close to me probably realise how much I agonise over the future of my children. This is partly because society does not care to understand the meaning of motherhood in its fullest sense. For me, motherhood goes beyond childbirth and upbringing. It brings with it a lot of responsibility among which is to see that this life is nurtured and lived in its fullness.

TEMPTATIONS

Most of the temptations I face as a mother stem from the confusion and social forces and pressures acting upon me. On one hand society expects me as a woman to have children and "look after them". On the other hand because of my education and social status, I am expected to pay back that which society gave me through education by working for it.

I love my children and I care about them. They need me. I need them. Apart from the social pressures on me to work, I feel very strongly that my work in Rural Development is a challenge to which every Christian in our so called developing countries must respond. We have got to rid our countries of these forces which keep our rural populations poor and powerless. As a result of these two realities, I am a torn person, torn between motherhood and a worker for social change.

THE BEAUTY

Despite all these dangers and temptations the beauty of motherhood cannot be overemphasized. Part of it can neither be transformed into beds of flowers, or rolling hills, or the rising or the setting sun, the blue skies and seas or the green vallies of this world. Was this possible, it would have been easily shared and thus possibly better understood and appreciated by our societies. But the beauty of motherhood can only be experienced. It can only be lived.

I have also learnt that motherhood and parenthood are inseparable. This is my hope for our manfolk and our world.

Parenthood has helped me to experience and understand the love of God as it was reflected in his son Jesus Christ.

"Abba father"

"Then Jesus gave up a loud cry and said 'Father (Mother) into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23-45)

"Ask and you will receive -- Is there a parent among you who will offer their 'children' a stone when they ask for bread --?" (Math. 7.7-10).

All parents of the world are called to share in this beauty of the love of life. To nurture it, to protect it and to assist God to fulfill his will on earth through this gift of life.



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LIFE A GIFT OF GOD

Roderick A. Robinson Sr.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my fellow Christians, Friends:

It is indeed an honour to be asked to speak to you at this Sixth gathering of the World Council of Churches, here in Vancouver. On behalf of the Nishga people, I thank you for this opportunity to further your awareness of our fundamental world view, its relationship to the theme, 'Life as a Gift of God', and its absolute inseparableness from our longstanding struggle for recognition and justice in pursuit of an honourable settlement of the Canadian Government's claim to the title of our God-given lands; lands which we have owned, occupied and governed since time immemorial.

In keeping with the protocol of aboriginal nations, may I first publicly thank the Musqueam people for this opportunity to confer with you within their territory. They too have their trail of tears, as does every tribe and aboriginal nation in this country, and in particular, within the province of British Columbia. I would hope that before this Assembly closes, you will recognize their struggle and ours by also publicly thanking the Musqueam people for this opportunity to meet here. Their story like ours, is one of hope and disillusionment, anger and frustration. Oppression and injustice extending well over one hundred years. However, in keeping with protocol, it is only our story which I can relate to you.

Our struggle is for the recognition and just settlement of our aboriginal title and rights within the Canadian confederation. In positive terms, our struggle is for the re-affirmation and effective re-establishment of our universally recognized right to the self-government of our traditional lands. It is the struggle for cultural survival; the struggle to re-affirm our social and spiritual way of life and to bring its values to bear upon a modern economy in a changing world.

Our history begins in the spirit world before the light of day. Our humanness derives from the act of our creation and placement upon our traditional lands by God. Our land is indeed a holy land. Our identity is inseparable from our land. By definition, a Nishga does not exist in the fullness of his 'being' without a complete melding of his land, language, laws, tribal system and spiritual values.

The fundamental integrating force for this holistic existence has always been our belief in God. Since the time the missionaries brought the gospel to us, Christianity has been the integrating and central element in our society. It is the continuing demand of God for unity within the Body of Christ which calls our community together and which gives our culture and tribal system its power and its strength.

With great emotion, our people often articulate this holistic spiritual reality from the depths of their souls in demanding that recognition must first be given to Nishga title by the community of man in order for the Nishga people to be fully integrated human beings. Thus, we have indicated to governments that our aboriginal title and rights are sacred and holistic as well as political.

Thus, we have called for the clear affirmation, not extinguishment, of our title and rights in the Canadian constitution. For it is this present denial of our God-given 'beingness' by the acts of colonization, the negation of God's gift of life, that is at the heart of our struggle and our many social and economic difficulties today. Let me assure you I am not discussing theoretical matters divorced from our reality and our daily lives.

In negative terms, our struggle is against one hundred and fifty years of racism, oppression and injustice. It is often described as the process of decolonization; a struggle most familiar to all of us when witnessed in countries unlike Canada, where the native population is in the majority.

Our struggle for justice begins centuries ago with the journey of a small boat filled with strange bearded white men lost at sea: men who landed on shores unknown and arrogantly claimed them as their own. Our people, owners and occupiers of over 5,000 square miles of territory since the memory of man, have always questioned this incredulous idea, so easily acceptable to the self-interests of some European nations, that one should have rights to another's land by the simple act of discovery.

When our turn came 'to be discovered' the incomprehensible arrogance of colonizers astounded our forefathers. Government surveyors were told to leave after offering to give our people a portion of our own land. One of our ancestors put it this way when speaking to a royal commission in 1887:

"They (the Government) have never bought it from us or our forefathers. They have never fought and conquered our people and taken the land in that way, and yet they say now that they will give us so much land - our own land. These chiefs do not talk foolishly, they know the land is their own; our forefathers for generations and generations past had their land here all around us; chiefs have had their own hunting grounds, their salmon streams, places where they got their berries; it has always been so. It is not only during the last four or five years that they have seen the land; we have always seen and owned it,

it is no new thing, it has been ours for generations. If we had only seen it for twenty years and claimed it as our own, it would have been foolish, but it has been ours for thousands of years. If any strange person came here and saw the land for twenty years and claimed it, he would be foolish..."

Our struggle also has a beginning in the universities of Spain where, unknown to us, the rights of Indians were being debated in the sixteenth century. It is there that we must look to honour a Christian friend, Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria, who asserted "that Indians were the true owners of the land, both from the public and private point of view". He further stated that "the fact that Indians did not believe in the Roman Catholic faith could not affect the question, as heretics in Europe were not denied property rights". He suggested "that Indians were no less intelligent than Spanish peasants and therefore were equally fit to have legal rights". To the argument that the Pope had granted the new world to Spain, Vitoria replied "that the Pope had no temporal power over Indian lands. Spain had no claim to the land through discovery, he said, because that notion only applied to unoccupied lands".¹

Pope Paul III, shortly thereafter in 1537, issued the Bull sublimis deus which states in part:

"... Indians are truly men... they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and of no effect."²

We honour these brave and thoughtful men of the sixteenth century for their support; for their clarity of thought and spiritual strength in an age of overwhelming greed. For it is these intellectually and spiritually honest Christians who laid the groundwork for the international recognition of aboriginal title and rights as we know it today. (I should add here, as an aside, that we too were uncertain whether those strange bearded beings on our shores were indeed human. It was not so much their avarice, but rather their lust, that helped us settle the question quickly.)

Our struggle moves from the universities of Spain to the colonial policies and practices of Great Britain and other governments and companies engaged in colonizing North America. The New England colonies had a particularly good record of respecting Indian land and acquiring it through purchase. Generally, the British colonizers followed this practice in North America. This practice culminated

¹ Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg (Eds.) Native Rights in Canada (the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, 1972).

² Ibid.

in what is now one of the leading Canadian constitutional documents on Indian rights, the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Essentially, this document establishes the point in British and Canadian constitutional law that Indian lands must be respected and may only be acquired through purchase by the Crown, this practice was largely followed through the Treaty process.³

However, it may shock you today to know that 40% of the land mass of the Canadian nation has never been formally ceded to Canada by the aboriginal owners or purchased from them by the Crown of either Britain, Canada, or the Provinces, particularly British Columbia. I want to emphasize that British Columbia has not formally and legally acquired our territory from us. Further, any land rights which the aboriginal owners possess in these non-treaty areas, including most of British Columbia, are seen to be wholly dependent upon the extent to which 'the theory' of aboriginal rights is accepted by the courts and legislatures of Canada. Canadian Governments have to date refused to provide the aboriginal people of Canada a clear and firm declaration of title and rights in Canadian law. This is despite the undisputed fact, that in our case, it is no theory that we have owned, occupied and used our land since time immemorial.

Following years of struggle, including a petition to the King of England seventy years ago, and the shackles of legal restrictions placed upon our protests, we took our case to the Supreme Court of Canada in the early 1970s. Just prior to our case being heard, the Prime Minister stated that aboriginal rights were too vague to be given recognition. Our case split the seven-member Supreme Court three-to-three, the seventh judge ruled on a technicality, stating that we did not possess the right to sue the Government of British Columbia without its permission. As a result of our case, the Federal Government made a political decision to negotiate comprehensive land claims in Canada.

Our negotiations have been stumbling along for the past seven years stalemated by a reluctant and non-committed Provincial Government which refuses to negotiate on the basis that we are the owners of our land and by a Federal Government which implicitly insists we accept a settlement as a gift from Canada without explicit recognition of our God-given title and our God-given rights.

Clearly, our struggle for justice within Canada is far from over: a struggle which is obscured by both platitudes and covenants supported in international forums by the Government of Canada. Nor is our struggle over in convincing Canadians of the historical truths and justice of our case. I quote from an article appearing in a local newspaper by a well known columnist, 28 March 1983:

³ Ibid., pp. 23-30.

"... We took this country fair and square, it being practically empty anyway, and if it weren't for all the academic, political, and media creeps that keep beating their breasts and shouting mea culpa there wouldn't be any of this Indian noise at all...."⁴

Well, let me assure you, that we, the Nishga people, are not asking anyone to beat his breast 'shouting mea culpa'. Rather we are asking all people of goodwill to recognize the strength and dignity of our case. We are asking all people of goodwill to support and walk beside us in our struggle for justice. We are asking all intellectually and spiritually honest Christians, including the World Council of Churches, to join those who have walked with us over the decades; particularly the Anglican Church of Canada which has supported us both financially and spiritually.

In your thoughtful deliberations, it will also interest you to know that on 24 March 1982, the President of AMAX of Canada Limited wrote a letter to the Federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, (copy to the Prime Minister), wherein he stated:

"In past discussions with members of the Council for Yukon Indians and the Nishga Tribal Council, we have indicated that AMAX of Canada supports fair and expeditious settlement of native land claims.... We believe that an equitable and timely settlement of native land claims is in the best interest of all Canadians. In particular, we encourage those in the private resource sector who have not already done so, to also support such a settlement. This will facilitate the orderly development of Canada's resources, thus strengthening the country's economic activity for the benefit of all Canadians."

We would hope that your support will help to convince the Governments of Canada to clearly affirm aboriginal title and rights in the Canadian constitution. This will then provide our people with a firm basis in Canadian law upon which to negotiate a just and honourable settlement; a dignified place within the Canadian Confederation: a recognition by the people of Canada and the world that we, the Nishga people are human beings whose spiritual 'beingness' and daily lives are inseparable from our God-given lands.

May I conclude by relating a brief incident that occurred just a few years ago when our delegation was meeting a senior government official. After listening to our presentation, the official turned to our Anglican bishop who was in attendance and asked, "And what is the opinion of the church on these matters my lord?" Our bishop replied, "you have just heard the opinion of the church".

⁴ Collins in Burnaby Today.

My fellow Christians, we the Nishga people, like our bishop, would hope that our struggle is indeed your struggle, that our dignity is indeed your dignity, that our truth is indeed your truth; that indeed we are one in His truth and His love.

May God bless you and guide your safe journey home.



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24 July - 10 August 1983
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Document No.

TH1-1

LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

(John Vikström)

"In him we live, and move"

In a discussion about the existence of God in Finland's largest daily newspapers recently, there was a contribution from the paper's political cartoonist. Done in the cartoonist's own style, the cartoon showed the smiling bearded face of God the Father peering from behind a mountain. His arm stretched round the mountain and in his hand sat a number of serious-faced gentlemen engrossed in discussion. The cartoon needed no caption. Anyone opening the newspaper on that morning was fully aware that the topic of the gentlemen's animated discussion was the existence of God.

St Paul the Apostle would have been able to supply a suitable caption to the cartoon had one been needed. He could have taken a few words from his sermon to the Athenians on Areopagus, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

The Old Testament story about Jacob provides ample evidence that one can fight against God without realising against whom he is fighting. The same story also shows that one can even be blessed by God without knowing by whom he is being blessed. (Gen 32:24-29)

As Christians we live in the happy assurance that it is God who has created this world and who sustains its matter and life regardless of what opinions we may hold of God, regardless of our beliefs and our doubts. This means that it is not just human beings, but everything on this earth that is related to God just by the mere fact of existence. The whole of our existence, the whole of our reality has, in a manner of speaking, a personal character - not in the sense that reality is identical with God but in the sense that all reality and therefore all life, everywhere and at all times, is related to a personal power which calls everything into existence. The innermost essence of this power is love and the name of this love is Jesus Christ. Christ is the expression of God's love for this world - "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son ..."

(John 3:16). Through Christ (Col 1:16), through the Word (John 1:3) all things are made. Above the whole of God's creation we may therefore write the words, "GOD SO LOVED". Above the stars, we may write the words "God so loved", above every flower, every human being, every tree, and every meadow we can imagine that the words "God so loved" are written - perhaps rather "God so loves", for God is always present as the creator and the force that sustains the creation. Not a single sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowing and willing it (Matt 10:29). Therefore "Cast all your cares upon him, for you are his charge" (I Peter 5:7). This is what we believe and we acknowledge that the very essence of all creation is faith, trust, love. God is continually moving towards us in order to be met openly and in trust.

In God's good and unspoiled creation this love and this goodness lead to closer interaction and intercommunication, to greater fellowship, both between persons and between persons and nature. This we can read in the first pages of the Bible. God places persons in the Garden of Eden to tend it and watch over it (Gen 2:15). Persons and nature are united in each other's service - the land is tended and cared for and persons, in turn, experience the joy of creating, tending and watching over the land. In the same way man and woman, human being and human being, come together and meet each other. This is the true reality that the God of love creates, sustains and continually renews through the Holy Spirit (Ps 104:30).

Praise the Lord, the Creator

The vision of God the Trinity's creative work is a vision of exuberant and abundant happiness and love. Every attempt to portray this in words therefore tends to be transformed into expressions of gratitude and praise. Consequently, the account of God's creation in Holy Scripture is couched in the form of praise. The creation as recounted in the first pages of the Bible is more a hymn of praise of the Creator than an account of the Creator's work and the psalmist never ceases to sing the praises of God for God's wonderful works:

O praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord out of heaven;
praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
praise him heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!
Let them all praise the name of the Lord!
for he spoke the word and they were created;
he established them for ever and ever
by an ordinance which shall never pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth,
you water-spouts and ocean depths;
fire and hail, snow and ice,
gales of wind obeying his voice!
all mountains and hills;
all fruit-trees and all cedars!
wild beasts and cattle,
creeping things and winged bird birds!
kings and all earthly rulers,
princes and judges over the whole earth!
young men and young maidens,
old men and young together!
Let all praise the name of the Lord
for his name is high above all others,
and his majesty above earth and heaven.

(Psalm 148)

The voices of evil

What has become of this song of praise in this world in which we live today? Praise of God's glory is today mingled with many other voices and noises - the thunder of tanks and bomb explosions, screams from torture chambers and prison camps, the heart-rending weeping of starving children, the voices of those intent on destroying their lives with drugs and cursing the day they were born, the clatter of machines mercilessly exploiting the natural resources of this planet.

Why has it turned out this way? Why has praise of God been drowned by the voices of selfishness, hate, evil and violence? The Bible tells us how the first human beings opposed God, how they fled from the face of God and were driven out of Paradise (Gen 3). Outside the very gates of Paradise the first fratricide takes place and there is heard the scornful question of selfishness and lack of concern, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). At the very gates of Paradise human beings use their technical know-how not to the glory of God but to further their own selfish interests; "Come, let us build ourselves a tower with its top in the heavens, and make a name for ourselves." (Gen 11:4)

The consequences of this tower raised in the name of vanity and selfishness are that the builders are divided among themselves and can no longer understand each other (Gen 11). So persons come to realise that the tree of knowledge is a tree of both good and evil.

This old story from the Bible still has something to tell us about ourselves and our world even today. They show how the good that God created is no longer what it was intended to be. Instead of being united we are divided; instead of giving life we take it. We think more of ourselves than of our brothers and sisters. We are more interested in our own glory than in God's. We are moving away - from God, from our sisters and brothers, from ourselves, from a proper relationship to nature.

The occupied life

Why then this senseless self-destruction? Because this world has been occupied by a foreign power that is opposed to God and wishes to destroy what God has created - "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I Jn 5:19). The good that God has created is continually threatened by this foreign destructive power, sorely threatened. This explains why the good in this world can very often only be achieved through a struggle with the evil. In such cases, it is in fact God the Creator who takes up the struggle by creating new life and by protecting life with the divine message of love, justice and truth.

Since our Creator continues to play an active role in this world beset by evil, we can still rejoice over much that is good and beautiful. We can take pleasure in human creative ability, not only in the fields of science, technology and the arts but also in simple activities in the home and at our place of work. We may occasionally catch glorious glimpses of the Paradise that we have lost - in love and tenderness, in loyalty and friendship, in solidarity and brotherhood, in happy games and lively parties.

Life in this world is a mixture of freedom and compulsion, of kindness and cruelty, of pleasure and strife, of truth and lies, of justice and injustice, of constructiveness and destruction. Between these there is waged an incessant struggle, which at bottom is a struggle between God and those who oppose God, between "the all-merciful Father" (II Cor 1:3) and "the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). This struggle concerns us all. It goes on both within and without us. We experience it through the tension between God's commandments, which call upon us to work in the service of life, and the temptation to be the servant of destruction. This is something which concerns us simply because we are human beings and part of God's creation. Regardless of our beliefs we are involved in the struggle between good and evil. Regardless of our beliefs we can stand side by side in the struggle for life against death, for truth, for justice, and for a better world in every sense of the word. This is possible not least because there are obvious parallels between the moral principles of different religions. In these parallels we, as Christians, see proof that God as the Creator is related to all life and therefore to every human being. When the apostle Paul pronounced those words upon Areopagus in Athens - "In him we live, and move, and have our being" -, he immediately pointed out that this was in fact nothing new to the Greeks. Their own poets had said earlier, "We are also his offspring." (Acts 17:28)

"The Prince of Life"

The awareness that a god exists is therefore nothing new in this world; nor is the awareness of higher ethical ideals that can serve in the defence of and furtherance of life. This is common knowledge essential for the whole humanity, created and kept alive by the universal Creator. But Paul did not go to Areopagus just to

tell the Greeks what they already knew. He had something new to relate, a revolutionary piece of news for them. It was because of this news that he had travelled so far and it was this news which formed the basis of the young church.

This revolutionary and fundamental news was that the lawful king has come to this, our occupied world. Naturally he has come in disguise, which explains why not everyone recognises him, but he is here and now as the leader of a growing resistance movement. Signs of the king's presence may be detected from time to time, signs that indicate the new power which is still hidden but which will one day come forth when the forces of the occupying power are finally broken.

We who have gathered at this assembly here in Vancouver are members of this resistance movement. Our life as Christians "lies hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). At times we may find it hard to recognise both ourselves and others as Christians - and sometimes we may have difficulty in recognising our disguised king, Jesus Christ. But we wish to give each other support, to be more closely united in order to fight for our Lord and God's kingdom, inspired with the hope that this kingdom will indeed come.

When we fight for God's kingdom, we do so in the knowledge that we are not foreign conquerors of this world. When Christ came on to this earth to be among us, he came to "his own" (Jn 1:11). It is God's own human race and God's own creation which shall be freed (Rom 8:19-23). This is why Paul in his sermon also includes a reference to the creation and to the fellowship that exists among all people on this earth as a result (Acts 17:22-31). To convert to God in Christ is to be united with the one "by whom all things were made" (Nicene Creed, Col 1:16) - with the one who is the rightful ruler of heaven and earth, "the prince of life" (Mt 28:18; Acts 3:15).

The prince of life frees and renews the life of occupied creation. Therefore we follow and praise Christ as the life of the world when we praise and pray to God, the Holy Trinity:

"Of him, through him, and to him, are all things;
to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom 11:36)

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Document TH1-2

LIFE A GIFT OF GOD

Dr John M. Francis

Knowledge that comes from scientific investigation is a gift from God. But we can only gain access to this knowledge through the integrity, discipline and openness of mind of practising scientists, technologists and engineers. Despite the great advances in physics and mathematics, in biology and genetics in this century we are still at the edge of understanding so that many recent developments in computers or in the manipulation of the living cell will come to be regarded as little more than useful first steps in the direction of new technologies. We struggle forward continuing to confront the world of nature - its triumphs and disasters - and at the same time accepting that the growth of knowledge brings with it an endless chain of new questions about the universe and about ourselves - our souls as well as our minds and bodies.

It is in the nature of progress that we shall continue this journey of discovery, constantly challenged and amazed by our mastery of science and technology but increasingly humbled by our failure to acknowledge the essential spirituality at the centre. For in probing deeply to the centre of creation it is arguable whether we can expect to enhance our understanding of life itself.

This is the source of the real challenge for a scientific age. Despite our limited understanding of nature, we have acquired immense technical skills which should allow us to confront the real problems of the future:

- the ability to feed, clothe, house and provide medical care for 4 billion people in the world. It can be done.
- the ability to overcome superstition, ignorance and fear with life-affirming choices. With scientific knowledge we can turn the world upside down and make it a far better place in which 'to be'.

While this is the kind of inspiration that we can draw from the present state of our knowledge, we can go further.

The Great Experiment

There is a fundamental law of experimental science which directs all scientists - whether nuclear physicists, molecular biologists, metallurgists or chemists - to probe deeply into the nature of matter, the living cell, the universe itself. This law can be stated quite simply - "Do not hold back".

We are all familiar with the results of this continuing journey of discovery. Scientists have indeed become the new priesthood; the pursuit of scientific knowledge will mark this period in our history as the Era of the Great Experiment. The scientific literature abounds with talk of "the latest breakthrough", of "unifying theories" and of "advances towards the science and technology of the 21st century". This year of our Lord - 1983 - is no exception since the march of science is both formidable and relentless. Let us search the first weeks of the first month of this year for an example of what I have in mind.

At 3.00 p.m. on 21 January the European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN), Geneva - a very few kilometers from the Ecumenical Centre - announced that their experiment "UA1 has singled out five events in a total of one thousand million collisions revealing the expected signature of the charged W boson". There are four forces controlling the universe - electromagnetic, weak nuclear, strong nuclear and gravitational. A number of eminent theoretical physicists predict that these forces are not entirely separate but are interlinked. Although the idea of a unified single force is not proved by the results of this experiment, tangible proof of the existence of the W vector boson provides a "vital link between the electromagnetic force and the weak nuclear force".

This is the stuff of which sub-nuclear particles are made. The unapproachable inner world - a world of "hadrons" and "quark symmetries" - a world where scientists themselves can only journey through a fierce mixture of tenacity, immense technical skill and faith in the scientific enterprise. For indeed CERN has become the Sanhedrin of Pure Science and the acolytes who travel there to conduct their experiments are the High Priests of this century.

In the space of a mere hundred years or so the growth of scientific knowledge has surpassed all expectations. Scientists have not held back; they have not attempted to stem the tide of human progress. With the evolution of scientific knowledge has come the capacity to control and even to conquer much human disease and misery, the ability to produce food and medicines - although this is not matched by an ability to ensure that this reaches those often in greatest need, the power to unlock vast sources of energy, both renewable and non-renewable, and inevitably, as part of the Faustian bargain, the ultimate power to destroy the whole of creation.

With some credibility, I think we can say that we have left behind the worlds of Galileo and Newton, recognizing that without these great classical figures of science there could have been no discrete evolution of science as we know it. Even Charles Darwin contemplating

"The Origin of Species" on the date of its publication in 1859 could have had no insights on the molecular structure of the living cell or of the information encoded in the DNA molecule. Coming back to the present I should of course not wish to leave you with the illusion that all scientific endeavour is conducted on such an esoteric plane. And that is where the scale of a particular scientific activity or investigation becomes critically important because it is bound to influence the scientist's own perception of the world outside the laboratory.

I have spoken about the era of the Great Experiment but even within the scientific community there is a rising awareness of a new tension over the public face of modern science and technology. The prevailing mood is no longer one of scientific triumphalism - 'Science can solve all our problems'. Instead the promise of more scientific power over nature tends to increase the fears and anxieties that many people entertain about the future. They can barely cope with the process of rapid technological, economic and social change that is already expected of them. However, a great many scientists are themselves far removed from the realities of life in the latter part of this century; it might be said that they have already projected themselves into the future. It is therefore reasonable to ask what scientists are doing to make sure that the Great Experiment does not turn into the Great Disaster.

We all recognize that the patterns of world trade and economic development are passing through a period of deep recession. The prospects for recovery involve an inevitable and traumatic transition for many industrialised countries between the "sunset" industries of a previous generation - including the great giants of coal and steel, of metal extraction and metal fabrication - to the "sunrise" industries grouped around the new technologies that miniaturise so many products through the use of microprocessors thereby realising and releasing a vast range of potential applications in the fields of communications, robotics and automation. This immense challenge from the world of microelectronics coupled with the continuing series of breakthroughs in the biological and life sciences must now constitute the platform on which to create the sustainable technologies that the world will take as commonplace as we prepare to enter the 21st century. Such is the capacity of science and technology to transform our physical world and to reveal opportunities for a more hopeful future. I think that it is fair to say that we have moved forward from the enlightenment of the Sixties and Seventies which focussed an awareness of environmental problems, of "limits to growth" and of the need for a transition towards a more just and sustainable society. As the world economy struggles to recover we need to be clear as to whether the decisions to be taken over the adoption of new technologies will favour the "life-enhancing" group, building on our knowledge of ecological balance and renewable cycles of energy production and use, or the "life-defeating" choices leading us in the direction of further weapons of mass destruction. Here lie the seeds of the Great Disaster.

Of course we have passed this way before and people of goodwill and a clear conscience have attempted to articulate the concerns of a wider public. In the past leading members of the scientific community have

attempted to impress on politicians their desire to hold back but they have never been supported or sustained in such an argument. Take, for example, the views expressed by some of the nuclear scientists working alongside Robert Oppenheimer in 1949 when the technical feasibility of the hydrogen bomb was under consideration: I quote from one of their reports:

"The fact that no limits exist to the destructiveness of this weapon makes its very existence and the knowledge of its construction a danger to humanity as a whole. It is necessarily an evil thing considered in any light. For these reasons,we think it is wrong on fundamental ethical principles to initiate the development of such a weapon."

We can therefore detect the personal challenge to the social responsibility of scientists, technologists and engineers employed in the many industrial corporations producing both conventional and nuclear armaments. It may be that the churches have been far too reticent in appealing to the collective sense of responsibility of this highly skilled and professional group whose creative energies might very well be harnessed to alternative systems of production. The attempts by some groups of scientists and technicians within the defence industries to introduce and to promote "alternative" corporate plans for a particular company or enterprise are a sign that there is growing unease amongst the workforce in those centres. At such a moment these groups can be threatened with the loss of their jobs and their professional standing as scientists and engineers. These are moments of crisis when the churches acting together in any part of the world should be able to provide support for those prepared to take an active stance in opposition to the continuing development of weapons of mass destruction. If the churches are unable to offer solidarity with these groups then they are not entitled to make public pronouncements condemning such weapons as morally and theologically wrong. In these situations the churches must be prepared to engage in a 'ministry of reconciliation' in order to counter the inevitable accusations of naivete and betrayal which will be levelled at those individuals and groups who speak out in opposition to the enormous diversion of resources, both human and material, into weapons production of all kinds.

The Mystery and the Mastery of Science

Those of you who are familiar with the world of science, its systems of belief and its practices already know that through the application of scientific method we can study natural phenomena at many different levels. We are not confined to sending beams of protons and anti-protons in opposite directions around a 7 km. circular underground track near the Swiss-French border simply to observe the interactions between these particles - however significant that may be for the future of life on this planet. "Big Science" has its place in the nature of things, but for the most part science is practised in more down-to-earth terms. In other words, most scientists stand back. They have entrusted their colleagues with the responsibility of "pushing back the frontiers" and from time to time they may check on progress. To that extent at least most scientists contribute to faith in the

scientific enterprise. They cannot influence or direct its path; they are inclined to leave it to others to ensure that the essential scientific discipline is maintained.

However, we are all conscious that the influence exerted by our scientific knowledge and culture has now permeated to virtually every corner of the inhabited world. If it has not been carried there by working scientists, then it has almost certainly travelled there by means of some technology or other which has translated scientific knowledge into a mundane item of mass production - a tin can, a plastic bottle or a transistor radio. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether science can be controlled or perhaps what is more relevant - whether scientists themselves might be prepared to exercise more careful choices in the type of science and technology which they are inclined to pursue.

In order to advance their understanding in a particular field of research scientists have to learn to stand back, to observe and record those events which lie within the range of their own techniques and instrumentation. They acknowledge the constraints and wherever possible the boundary of each experiment is closely prescribed and maintained. Thus the territory of each scientific discipline is carefully marked out and defended.

At no point in the interdependent chain of scientific teamwork is the individual scientist required to exercise a value judgement as to the social acceptance of the risks of this enterprise. Only in recent years have some scientists elected to voice their own fears and anxieties over the nature of a particular development - sometimes at great personal cost to themselves - and have thereby directed the attention of the public at large to the choices that need to be examined in the political arena. In most democratic societies it is fair to say that this expression of social responsibility by members of the scientific community has been welcomed - if not always wholeheartedly. However, it is an important and critical step towards the formulation of a science policy 'with a human face'.

The scientist's concept of the "mystery and mastery of life" is directly related to this overall goal of a socially acceptable science and technology serving the needs of humanity. The principle is embodied in the statement - "Never underestimate the sacramental nature of matter". Let me remind you of the mastery of the scientist who after all is interventionist by nature.

Scientists can control the fission of heavy atoms and the fusion of light atoms thereby releasing immense quantities of energy; they can manipulate genetic material in the living cell and directly influence the process of natural selection; they can devise machines with artificial intelligence that as yet have not been formally constrained; they have provided theories which throw into question the origin of the cosmos itself. It must also be said that scientists collectively do not hold back from addressing the ultimate questions. For this quest is the very nature of science. And on the same pathway science and faith are drawn together for the first time after centuries of conflict following in the wake of Copernicus, Galileo and Darwin.

I hesitate to say that science and faith could become inextricably intertwined yet again but the signs are there - plain enough for all to see. It is of course the interpretation of the signs which will always prove to be difficult and the continuing source of much dispute.

Science and Society

There are of course many substantial arguments that need to be addressed. It is often said that the pursuit of scientific knowledge leads to a reductionist, materialistic and entirely secular view of the world that is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ. That is perfectly understandable when we consider that our political, economic and social systems are dominated by assumptions about material growth and prosperity or - on the other side of the coin - the continuing and increasing struggle to survive in an unloving and unheeding world. Under these pressures it is so easy to relegate our spiritual needs and anxieties to the interstices of our lives while we get on with the business of living or of coping with life as best we can according to individual demands and circumstances. The scientist, isolated in the laboratory is beset by similar doubts and fears about the future, particularly if he or she is constantly confronted by difficult choices and decisions over the direction in which science is taking us. Remember the words of Robert Oppenheimer: "A scientist cannot hold back progress because of fears of what the world will do with his discoveries".

It may be that many scientists would still wish to adhere to this kind of statement so that they can thereby be absolved from the guilt or anger which others can turn in their direction. However I believe that increasingly scientists, technologists and engineers directly concerned with some of the harder decisions are prepared to open up the debate and acknowledge both the gaps in our present understanding and the need for a wider form of democratic decision-making. Wherever this ripple of dissent breaks the surface the churches have the opportunity to become informed and involved in some of these choices. In many cases it is a matter of choice and of collective decision based on a clear understanding of the risks and benefits associated with any new technology emerging from the laboratories.

It is not that we need a doctrinaire system to control science and technology within the political and economic framework but rather that more people should become involved and concerned with the exercise of judgement over the future directions of science and technology. Into this forum they need to bring their own declarations of belief, spiritual and otherwise, so that more balanced and representative decisions can become possible. By this means we could hope to avoid the confrontations which will continue if new forms of technology are imposed upon whole communities without any process of explanation or accommodation. We must recognize the impasse that has been reached in so many different parts of the world whether over the siting of nuclear missiles, the construction of nuclear and chemical plant, the location of highways, dams and airports - in fact the entire infrastructure of any industrialized society. In the past the decisions have been remote from the communities directly concerned and the changes to the way of life and means of subsistence of large numbers

of people have simply been accepted albeit unwillingly at first. At the other end of the economic cycle the enforced changes resulting from the collapse of traditional industries and the ensuing unemployment has also to be accommodated in due course. Now more and more people are coming to realize that these planning decisions which affect their own lives and that of their families over several generations should be the subject of careful public scrutiny and inquiry. For the churches this is an important and essential way of grappling with the hard decisions of the material world while at the same time providing an opportunity to focus and reinforce other values in a caring and responsive way. This is a further element in the "ministry of reconciliation" which the churches are now called to exercise if the future is to become manageable in any better sense of the word.

My own view is that these problems and choices have to be tackled at a local level. Here the detailed aspect of any proposed development incorporating new technology can be teased out and explored in a fundamental way. It is at this point the scientists, the planners and the politicians can be brought face to face with the realities of their proposals as seen through the eyes of those most likely to be directly concerned with the consequences of the final decisions. If the churches are able to contribute a perspective and to remind the decision-makers of the spiritual dimension of their concern for the future, then the new streams bringing together science and faith in the face of contemporary issues will be joined in earnest. We shall then be able to put aside the sterile debates on the conflicting philosophical or spiritual assumptions which have added to the conflict between science and faith over many years and plan for a more constructive dialogue between the two respective schools of thought. It has to be said that they still have much in common and far more now than might have been imagined at the turn of this century.

As for the ecumenical dimension of this problem, there is still an immense task stretching forward to provide an overview of the struggle to gain insights at the community level. The communication of experience from one country to another, sharing the insights and the Christian response to the challenge of science and technology will itself provide the basis for continuing commitment by the World Council of Churches over the coming decades. The WCC has not spared itself in the past in identifying this as an ongoing task and I feel sure that this Assembly will also wish to encourage and endorse a substantial programme of further work in this area.

Conclusion

In this short paper I have attempted to do two things. First, to remind you that every advance in scientific understanding brings with it new threats and new possibilities. Scientists do not hold back on discoveries, but more and more they are anxious to inform a wider public about the consequences of some of this new knowledge and the power it represents. They are anxious to see the choice explored and the decisions made in an open and responsible manner.

Second, the challenge to the churches is to become vigorously involved in this dialogue with members of the scientific community. We have

an immense task before us if we are to harness the true power of science and technology to keep the world in peace, to feed the hungry and heal the sick.

That is the measure of the task. - How to hold the cup of life full to the brim - with steady hands.



LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Sithembiso Nyoni - Zimbabwe

Baby - Cecelia

Since this is a testimony of my personal experience as a mother, I run the risk of romanticizing childbirth and motherhood and of sharing from a human and emotional view point rather than from an intellectual or scientific point of view.

CHILDBIRTH

Giving birth to children is one of those experiences that confront women with both physical pain and suffering as well as joy. In my case, I have had long hours of labour for my two sons. In each case I ended up undergoing a caesarian section. In the case of my daughter who is 6 months now and present here with me, although I did not go through the labour pains, I was very ill for weeks after the caesarian section. After each anesthetic, I woke up in great pain, but with a tremendous deep feeling of joy in the thought that I have participated in the Lord's creation of life. Something in me and in the world has been made anew.

"Behold I make all things new".

For me, childbirth is not only a painful process, it is also frightening - the thought of going through a caesarian section and what could go wrong as in my last child. But I go through it in hope and faith in God the Creator and in the knowledge and love of life as a gift of God.

DANGERS

After childbirth dangers continue to confront me and my children. These are many. They are both physical as well as spiritual dangers. More dramatic however are the dangers of militarism, drought and the anti-Christ alternative religions. In my country today as is true of some parts of Africa, there are some villages with more arms and armed men than there are water points and food for people. With South Africa at our door steps, we shall continue to be divided and set against each other, recognizing also our own human weaknesses as a nation. The result of all this is political instability and a global threat to peace.

Another disturbing factor is drought. Some villages have gone two years without any harvest. There is a shortage of food and water. Disease is rife. Thousands of babies are dying from some mysterious as well as common diseases. Under these conditions, what is the future of my children? Am I producing future soldiers? Will they be affected by the drought and the threatening diseases? Will I be one of the lucky mothers? Should they live, will they be part of the 20% privileged few of my country, fighting and jostling for power? Will they be of service to the nation? Will they change things for the better for all? Will they belong to the deprived 80% - no jobs? no land? no hope? What is the destiny of my children under all these dangers?

All these are frightening questions, for which I have no answers. Society is not helpful either. Nobody, not even those close to me probably realise how much I agonise over the future of my children. This is partly because society does not care to understand the meaning of motherhood in its fullest sense. For me, motherhood goes beyond childbirth and upbringing. It brings with it a lot of responsibility among which is to see that this life is nurtured and lived in its fullness.

TEMPTATIONS

Most of the temptations I face as a mother stem from the confusion and social forces and pressures acting upon me. On one hand society expects me as a woman to have children and "look after them". On the other hand because of my education and social status, I am expected to pay back that which society gave me through education by working for it.

I love my children and I care about them. They need me. I need them. Apart from the social pressures on me to work, I feel very strongly that my work in Rural Development is a challenge to which every Christian in our so called developing countries must respond. We have got to rid our countries of these forces which keep our rural populations poor and powerless. As a result of these two realities, I am a torn person, torn between motherhood and a worker for social change.

THE BEAUTY

Despite all these dangers and temptations the beauty of motherhood cannot be overemphasized. Part of it can neither be transformed into beds of flowers, or rolling hills, or the rising or the setting sun, the blue skies and seas or the green vallies of this world. Was this possible, it would have been easily shared and thus possibly better understood and appreciated by our societies. But the beauty of motherhood can only be experienced. It can only be lived.

I have also learnt that motherhood and parenthood are inseparable. This is my hope for our manfolk and our world.

Parenthood has helped me to experience and understand the love of God as it was reflected in his son Jesus Christ.

"Abba father"

"Then Jesus gave up a loud cry and said 'Father (Mother) into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23-45)

"Ask and you will receive -- Is there a parent among you who will offer their 'children' a stone when they ask for bread --?" (Math. 7.7-10).

All parents of the world are called to share in this beauty of the love of life. To nurture it, to protect it and to assist God to fulfill his will on earth through this gift of life.



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LIFE A GIFT OF GOD

Roderick A. Robinson Sr.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my fellow Christians, Friends:

It is indeed an honour to be asked to speak to you at this Sixth gathering of the World Council of Churches, here in Vancouver. On behalf of the Nishga people, I thank you for this opportunity to further your awareness of our fundamental world view, its relationship to the theme, 'Life as a Gift of God', and its absolute inseparableness from our longstanding struggle for recognition and justice in pursuit of an honourable settlement of the Canadian Government's claim to the title of our God-given lands; lands which we have owned, occupied and governed since time immemorial.

In keeping with the protocol of aboriginal nations, may I first publicly thank the Musqueam people for this opportunity to confer with you within their territory. They too have their trail of tears, as does every tribe and aboriginal nation in this country, and in particular, within the province of British Columbia. I would hope that before this Assembly closes, you will recognize their struggle and ours by also publicly thanking the Musqueam people for this opportunity to meet here. Their story like ours, is one of hope and disillusionment, anger and frustration. Oppression and injustice extending well over one hundred years. However, in keeping with protocol, it is only our story which I can relate to you.

Our struggle is for the recognition and just settlement of our aboriginal title and rights within the Canadian confederation. In positive terms, our struggle is for the re-affirmation and effective re-establishment of our universally recognized right to the self-government of our traditional lands. It is the struggle for cultural survival; the struggle to re-affirm our social and spiritual way of life and to bring its values to bear upon a modern economy in a changing world.

Our history begins in the spirit world before the light of day. Our humanness derives from the act of our creation and placement upon our traditional lands by God. Our land is indeed a holy land. Our identity is inseparable from our land. By definition, a Nishga does not exist in the fullness of his 'being' without a complete melding of his land, language, laws, tribal system and spiritual values.

The fundamental integrating force for this holistic existence has always been our belief in God. Since the time the missionaries brought the gospel to us, Christianity has been the integrating and central element in our society. It is the continuing demand of God for unity within the Body of Christ which calls our community together and which gives our culture and tribal system its power and its strength.

With great emotion, our people often articulate this holistic spiritual reality from the depths of their souls in demanding that recognition must first be given to Nishga title by the community of man in order for the Nishga people to be fully integrated human beings. Thus, we have indicated to governments that our aboriginal title and rights are sacred and holistic as well as political.

Thus, we have called for the clear affirmation, not extinguishment, of our title and rights in the Canadian constitution. For it is this present denial of our God-given 'beingness' by the acts of colonization, the negation of God's gift of life, that is at the heart of our struggle and our many social and economic difficulties today. Let me assure you I am not discussing theoretical matters divorced from our reality and our daily lives.

In negative terms, our struggle is against one hundred and fifty years of racism, oppression and injustice. It is often described as the process of decolonization; a struggle most familiar to all of us when witnessed in countries unlike Canada, where the native population is in the majority.

Our struggle for justice begins centuries ago with the journey of a small boat filled with strange bearded white men lost at sea: men who landed on shores unknown and arrogantly claimed them as their own. Our people, owners and occupiers of over 5,000 square miles of territory since the memory of man, have always questioned this incredulous idea, so easily acceptable to the self-interests of some European nations, that one should have rights to another's land by the simple act of discovery.

When our turn came 'to be discovered' the incomprehensible arrogance of colonizers astounded our forefathers. Government surveyors were told to leave after offering to give our people a portion of our own land. One of our ancestors put it this way when speaking to a royal commission in 1887:

"They (the Government) have never bought it from us or our forefathers. They have never fought and conquered our people and taken the land in that way, and yet they say now that they will give us so much land - our own land. These chiefs do not talk foolishly, they know the land is their own; our forefathers for generations and generations past had their land here all around us; chiefs have had their own hunting grounds, their salmon streams, places where they got their berries; it has always been so. It is not only during the last four or five years that they have seen the land; we have always seen and owned it,

it is no new thing, it has been ours for generations. If we had only seen it for twenty years and claimed it as our own, it would have been foolish, but it has been ours for thousands of years. If any strange person came here and saw the land for twenty years and claimed it, he would be foolish..."

Our struggle also has a beginning in the universities of Spain where, unknown to us, the rights of Indians were being debated in the sixteenth century. It is there that we must look to honour a Christian friend, Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria, who asserted "that Indians were the true owners of the land, both from the public and private point of view". He further stated that "the fact that Indians did not believe in the Roman Catholic faith could not affect the question, as heretics in Europe were not denied property rights". He suggested "that Indians were no less intelligent than Spanish peasants and therefore were equally fit to have legal rights". To the argument that the Pope had granted the new world to Spain, Vitoria replied "that the Pope had no temporal power over Indian lands. Spain had no claim to the land through discovery, he said, because that notion only applied to unoccupied lands".¹

Pope Paul III, shortly thereafter in 1537, issued the Bull sublimis deus which states in part:

"... Indians are truly men... they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and of no effect."²

We honour these brave and thoughtful men of the sixteenth century for their support; for their clarity of thought and spiritual strength in an age of overwhelming greed. For it is these intellectually and spiritually honest Christians who laid the groundwork for the international recognition of aboriginal title and rights as we know it today. (I should add here, as an aside, that we too were uncertain whether those strange bearded beings on our shores were indeed human. It was not so much their avarice, but rather their lust, that helped us settle the question quickly.)

Our struggle moves from the universities of Spain to the colonial policies and practices of Great Britain and other governments and companies engaged in colonizing North America. The New England colonies had a particularly good record of respecting Indian land and acquiring it through purchase. Generally, the British colonizers followed this practice in North America. This practice culminated

¹ Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg (Eds.) Native Rights in Canada (the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, 1972).

² Ibid.

in what is now one of the leading Canadian constitutional documents on Indian rights, the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Essentially, this document establishes the point in British and Canadian constitutional law that Indian lands must be respected and may only be acquired through purchase by the Crown, this practice was largely followed through the Treaty process.³

However, it may shock you today to know that 40% of the land mass of the Canadian nation has never been formally ceded to Canada by the aboriginal owners or purchased from them by the Crown of either Britain, Canada, or the Provinces, particularly British Columbia. I want to emphasize that British Columbia has not formally and legally acquired our territory from us. Further, any land rights which the aboriginal owners possess in these non-treaty areas, including most of British Columbia, are seen to be wholly dependent upon the extent to which 'the theory' of aboriginal rights is accepted by the courts and legislatures of Canada. Canadian Governments have to date refused to provide the aboriginal people of Canada a clear and firm declaration of title and rights in Canadian law. This is despite the undisputed fact, that in our case, it is no theory that we have owned, occupied and used our land since time immemorial.

Following years of struggle, including a petition to the King of England seventy years ago, and the shackles of legal restrictions placed upon our protests, we took our case to the Supreme Court of Canada in the early 1970s. Just prior to our case being heard, the Prime Minister stated that aboriginal rights were too vague to be given recognition. Our case split the seven-member Supreme Court three-to-three, the seventh judge ruled on a technicality, stating that we did not possess the right to sue the Government of British Columbia without its permission. As a result of our case, the Federal Government made a political decision to negotiate comprehensive land claims in Canada.

Our negotiations have been stumbling along for the past seven years stalemated by a reluctant and non-committed Provincial Government which refuses to negotiate on the basis that we are the owners of our land and by a Federal Government which implicitly insists we accept a settlement as a gift from Canada without explicit recognition of our God-given title and our God-given rights.

Clearly, our struggle for justice within Canada is far from over: a struggle which is obscured by both platitudes and covenants supported in international forums by the Government of Canada. Nor is our struggle over in convincing Canadians of the historical truths and justice of our case. I quote from an article appearing in a local newspaper by a well known columnist, 28 March 1983:

³ Ibid., pp. 23-30.

"... We took this country fair and square, it being practically empty anyway, and if it weren't for all the academic, political, and media creeps that keep beating their breasts and shouting mea culpa there wouldn't be any of this Indian noise at all...."⁴

Well, let me assure you, that we, the Nishga people, are not asking anyone to beat his breast 'shouting mea culpa'. Rather we are asking all people of goodwill to recognize the strength and dignity of our case. We are asking all people of goodwill to support and walk beside us in our struggle for justice. We are asking all intellectually and spiritually honest Christians, including the World Council of Churches, to join those who have walked with us over the decades; particularly the Anglican Church of Canada which has supported us both financially and spiritually.

In your thoughtful deliberations, it will also interest you to know that on 24 March 1982, the President of AMAX of Canada Limited wrote a letter to the Federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, (copy to the Prime Minister), wherein he stated:

"In past discussions with members of the Council for Yukon Indians and the Nishga Tribal Council, we have indicated that AMAX of Canada supports fair and expeditious settlement of native land claims.... We believe that an equitable and timely settlement of native land claims is in the best interest of all Canadians. In particular, we encourage those in the private resource sector who have not already done so, to also support such a settlement. This will facilitate the orderly development of Canada's resources, thus strengthening the country's economic activity for the benefit of all Canadians."

We would hope that your support will help to convince the Governments of Canada to clearly affirm aboriginal title and rights in the Canadian constitution. This will then provide our people with a firm basis in Canadian law upon which to negotiate a just and honourable settlement; a dignified place within the Canadian Confederation: a recognition by the people of Canada and the world that we, the Nishga people are human beings whose spiritual 'beingness' and daily lives are inseparable from our God-given lands.

May I conclude by relating a brief incident that occurred just a few years ago when our delegation was meeting a senior government official. After listening to our presentation, the official turned to our Anglican bishop who was in attendance and asked, "And what is the opinion of the church on these matters my lord?" Our bishop replied, "you have just heard the opinion of the church".

⁴ Collins in Burnaby Today.

My fellow Christians, we the Nishga people, like our bishop, would hope that our struggle is indeed your struggle, that our dignity is indeed your dignity, that our truth is indeed your truth; that indeed we are one in His truth and His love.

May God bless you and guide your safe journey home.



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

I. MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES AND IDEALS IN JUDAISM

The Jewish 'way of life' has its origins in the experience of the Divine Presence in the midst of the decisive events of the Exodus and of Sinai, events which have altered the entire course of human history. The children of Israel experienced the reality of the Lord of history through His involvement in their liberation from physical oppression, persecution, massacre, and injustices as 'slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt'. To Pharaoh, who was worshipped as a divine emperor and who was the source of law, never its servant, the Israelite slaves were regarded as chattel, 'the untouchables' of ancient Egypt.

At Sinai, the Israelites had a transforming experience of Divine Revelation as moral will which was ratified by an everlasting Covenant. Henceforth, the Israelites are perceived by God to be a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. What an extraordinary Divine-human scenario! Yesterday, they were slaves, the outcasts of history; now an entire people are stamped with the dignity of priesthood and holiness, and are set on the course of history with a messianic task of redemption in society and through history until the coming of the Kingdom.

Israel's religion, Prof. David Flusser asserts, was a breakthrough in human consciousness. The God of Israel initiated a new era in the history of mankind, introducing a new concept of justice - which is the central message of His revelation - an uncompromising moral law, and an original social order to be established paradigmatically in the Holy Land of Palestine (see The Holy Year and Its Origins in the Jewish Jubilee Year, by this writer, published by the Vatican Office for the Holy Year, 1975, Vatican City) conceived in this justice. This postulate of individual and social justice was not to be limited to Israel only. The Creator of the universe postulates this justice for all His human creatures; it was incumbent on all the peoples of the world.

The concept of justice which emerges from the Hebrew Bible is not just the regiment of mighty men - the Bible does not identify God on the side of Pharaoh and his imperium! It stresses that God cares for the poor and unprotected, for the orphan, the widow and the stranger.

The basis of social justice was not to be external power and might, but the reverence of God and obedience to His moral will.

A. The Sacredness of Human Life

To understand the idea of justice in Israel, we must bear in mind the Biblical teaching that the human being is created in the image of God, that each human life is sacred and of infinite worth. In consequence, a human being cannot be treated as a chattel, or an object to be disposed of for someone's programme or project or ideology, but must be treated as a personality. Every human being is the possessor of the right-to-life, dignity and honour, and the fruits of his or her labour.

Justice is respect for the personality of others and their inalienable rights, even as injustice is the most flagrant manifestation of disrespect for the personality of others. Judaism requires that human personality be respected in every human being - in the female prisoner of war, in the delinquent, even in the criminal condemned to death. The supreme importance of the human being in the economy of the Universe is expressed in this Rabbinic teaching: 'Man (the human being) was first created as a single individual to teach the lesson that whoever destroys one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had destroyed a whole world; and whoever saves one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had saved a whole world' (Sanhedrin 4:5).

However, justice is more than mere abstention from injuring our fellow human beings. 'The work of justice is peace, and the effect thereof quietness and confidence forever' (Isaiah 32:17). It is a positive conception, and includes economic well-being, intellectual and spiritual growth, philanthropy, and every endeavour that will enable human beings to realize the highest and best in their natures.

The conditions for that self-realization require active efforts to bring about the final disappearance of injustice and oppression, which as represented in the Jewish High Holiday liturgy, are the goals of human history. 'And may all wickedness be consumed as a flame and may evil rule be removed from the earth', declare the Rosh Hashana prayers.

B. The Moral Duties of Tzedakah

Nothing is more fundamental in Biblical and Rabbinic ethics than the moral obligation of tzedakah, a Hebrew term which means both 'charity' and 'to do justice'. The Rabbinic sages of the Talmud declared that 'Almsgiving - i.e., aiding the poor and feeding the hungry - weighs as heavily as all the other commandments of the Torah' (Talmud Baba Batra 9a).

In proclaiming the Jubilee year, which like the Ten Commandments was ascribed to divinely-inspired legislation revealed on Mount Sinai, the Bible ordained: 'And if your brother waxes poor, and his means fail with you, then you shall uphold him: as a stranger and a settler shall he live with you' (Leviticus 25:35). The Rabbis observe that the expression that 'Your brother may live with you' means that it is our personal and communal duty to see to it that our fellow human beings do

not die of starvation. Though the person be a 'stranger' or 'an alien settler', he (or she) is to be included in the term 'your brother' and is to be treated in a brotherly and compassionate manner.

To underscore the supreme virtue of humanitarian aid to the needy in the hierarchy of Jewish moral and spiritual values, the Rabbinic sages regarded such compassionate care of man as an act worthy of association with Divinity itself: 'God says to Israel, "My sons whenever you give sustenance to the poor, I impute it to you as though you gave sustenance to me, for it says, "Command the children of Israel... my bread for for my sacrifices... shall ye observe unto me. Does, then, God eat and drink? No, but whenever you give food to the poor, God accounts it to you as if you gave food to Him'" (Numbers Rabbah XXVIII: 2).

The virtue of such care for the poor and hungry is depicted in Jewish tradition as the salient attribute of the 'founding father' of Judaism, the Patriarch Abraham, who is called the archetype of the 'Pharisee of love'. In a midrashic commentary that begins with the phrases, 'Let your house be open; let the poor be members of your household. Let a man's house be open to the north and to the south, and to the east and to the west', the Rabbis describe the humanitarianism of Abraham:

He went out and wandered about, and when he found wayfarers, he brought them to his house, and he gave wheaten bread to him whose wont it was not to eat wheaten bread, and so with meat and wine. And not only this, but he built large inns on the roads, and put food and drink within them, and all came and ate and drank and blessed God. Therefore, quiet of spirit was granted to him, and all that the mouth of man can ask for was found in his house /Abot de Rabbi Nathan, VII: 17a,b/

Elsewhere the Talmud admonishes: 'He who has no pity upon his fellow creatures is assuredly not of the seed of Abraham our father' (Bezah 32b).

In Jewish communities, from Biblical times through the present, there was much free and generous giving of alms to all who asked - even to deceivers! - and there was also much systematic and careful relief through established institutions. Each Jewish community boasted of a tamhui (public kitchen) from which the poor received two meals daily. There was also the kupah (alms box) for the disbursement of benevolent funds on Sabbath eve to provide three meals for Sabbath (Mishnah Peah VIII: 7). Additional care was exercised in respect of the itinerant poor, who were provided with a loaf of bread which sufficed for two meals, and who were also entitled to the cost of lodging.

The Biblical laws of charity in Palestine relating to 'gleaning' the 'forgotten sheaf' and 'the corner of the field', implied the underlying idea that national territory belongs to the public as a whole. In accordance with Jewish law, landowners used to lay open fences surrounding their fields and vineyards, and during certain hours of the day, the needy were allowed to eat from the produce of the harvest. There was also a three-yearly allocation of Maaser Ani (poor man's tithe) from the threshing floor.

Thus, there arose the charitable traditions and institutions of the Jewish people which have remained a religious-communal characteristic ever since. These customs of charity, which were foreign to the pagan frame of mind of the Greeks and Romans, also had an abiding impact on the nature of the Christian 'caritas'.

C. Peace and War

And finally, the stability, as well as the happiness of a community, can only be assured when it rests upon a foundation of peace. In the absence of peace there can be neither prosperity nor well-being. 'Peace is equal in worth to everything', declare the Rabbis (Sifra), and they add: 'Beloved is peace since the benedictions only conclude with the hope of peace', thus teaching that the blessings even of the High Priest are of no avail unless accompanied by peace (Numbers Rabbah 11:7).

While the Prophets of Israel and the Rabbis believed that God intended the nations to be at peace with one another, war was not prohibited. Jewish ethics would admit the duty to defend the higher values in human life by war if necessary. If Isaiah or Jeremiah had thought that yielding to the foreign invader would mean destruction to the religion or the people they valued, they would have urged resistance, with the same vigour that they demanded constantly the practice of righteousness in obedience to God's will. All the facts of Biblical and post-Biblical Judaism taken together lead to the conclusion that the ethical judgement on war, according to Judaism, is that it must be eradicated to make human life conform to the Divine rule, that those guilty of causing it commit a crime against humanity and a sin against God. However, they are justified who, to defend the higher values in human life, resist, if necessary by war, an attack on them. The justification would extend to a nation's defence of its liberty. The spiritual values in the life of a nation, which include its historic distinctiveness, may justify it, when attacked or threatened, to engage in war to save its independent existence. (See Dr Israel Mattuck in his study, Jewish Ethics, particularly his chapter on 'The Judgement on War'.)

II. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

What are the implications of these facts for Christians and Jews today?

It is evident that we live in an age of violence and of terror. There is not a continent on the globe that is not despoiled by terror and violence, by barbarism and by a growing callousness to human suffering and pain and threat to human existence. At the centre of the human crisis is the fundamental depreciation of the meaning and value of human life. In theological terms, the Biblical affirmation that each human life is created in the sacred image of God and is therefore of ultimate worth and preciousness is being battered from every side.

It is my conviction that this erosion in the belief in the sanctity of human life is one of the decisive black legacies bequeathed by Nazi Germany to mankind. By and large, with rare exception, the

overwhelming majority of citizens of the Western world, and their dominant institutions have avoided confronting the magnitude of evil incarnate in the Nazi Holocaust, and have therefore failed to learn how to cope with forces and structures of dehumanization that are being replicated in many parts of the globe.

The Nazi campaign against the Jewish people was unique and in many ways unprecedented. Yet the Nazi trauma must not be seen as 'a Jewish obsession', for the fateful meaning of the Holocaust is of ultimate importance to the future capacity of mankind to understand itself and to acquire the resources to cope with the challenges to its survival. (See the discussion of Max Weber's 'secularization, disenchantment of the world, and rationalization' as root causes for undermining all moral norms in a bureaucratized society in my Religious Values in an Age of Violence, pp. 46/52.)

Bleak as are the prospects for countering these forces of dehumanization in the world, 'we need not complete the task', as Rabbi Tarphon admonished, 'but neither are we free to desist therefrom'. In concert, if we are to learn from the Nazi Holocaust and not be doomed to allow its repetition, we must attempt at the very least the following:

First, Christians and Jews should engage in a massive, concerted effort to establish a 'new humanism' on a global basis that seeks to restore the Biblical value of the infinite worth and preciousness of each human life that must be appreciated as an end itself and never as an object of somebody else's project, programme, ideology, or revolution.

Second, Christians and Jews must help engender a national and international attitude of scorn and contempt for those who use violence or who advocate the use of violence. We must work to deromanticize all appeals to use violence and terrorism as a means of liberation or of institutionalized oppression, since from a moral standpoint no ends can justify such anti-human means.

Third, Christians and Jews must work to curtail the resort to inflammatory propaganda, especially from international forums which have psychological impact on an international scale. As Prof. Gordon Allport of Harvard University demonstrated in his monumental study, The Nature of Prejudice, there is an inevitable progression from 'verbal aggression to violence, from rumour to riot, from gossip to genocide'.

Fourth, Christians and Jews must work toward educational development and communication among peoples to reduce the abrasive effects of 'differences'. Differences, as we have learned in the pluralistic experience of the Western world, can be a source of enrichment rather than a threat.

Fifth, Christians and Jews should engage in an urgent and sustained intellectual and educational effort to elaborate a theology and ideology of pluralism which presupposes the right of each religious, racial, and ethnic group to define itself in its own terms and to be accepted unconditionally by its own self-definition. Group narcissism, as Dr Erich Fromm observes, arouses intense hostility between groups, and 'is one of

the most important sources of human aggression'. In helping establish a pluralistic world-view, Christians and Jews have a decisive contribution to make to the building of the ideological foundations without which a stable world community cannot come into being.

Sixth, Christians and Jews should work toward making the economy of each nation as self-sufficient and stable as possible in the sense of not perpetually requiring relief support. Inextricably linked with such an effort is the control of the arms race on an international scale, and a rational re-ordering of priorities that allows for adequate defence and yet at the same time reallocates some of the billions wasted on arms that should be applied to the crying needs of the hungry, the diseased and the homeless.

Central in such efforts must be the pressing need to raise human consciousness in an effective international effort to halt the irrational proliferation of nuclear weaponry and to bring about serious sustained actions for universal simultaneous disarmament. There is no higher priority for human survival at this moment in human history.

And finally, Christians and Jews need to recognize the fundamental interdependence of all human rights and collaborate vigorously to assure that every nation - East and West, North and South - implement fully their commitments to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In particular, Christians and Jews should work for the completion of the judicial instrumentalities called for by Article 6 of the Genocide convention in the form of an international penal tribunal for trying those who are accused of genocide attempts anywhere in the world.

'The salvation of mankind', Alexander Solzhenitzyn reminds us, 'will depend on everyone becoming concerned about the welfare of everybody everywhere'.

is not only a religion, it is also a mode of life. On the ground of this teaching Islam requires from its adherents to lead a decent life, an honest life to be worthy of God's creation.

Secondly, Islam requires to preserve everything living on earth, as everything on earth is the creation of God and is intended to serve man as the highest of all God's creations. To preserve everything that exists on earth is again the continuation of life, because life is impossible without the surrounding nature. The problem of preserving the environment has become most acute on our planet in our days. But 14 centuries ago our Prophet Muhammed called people to be careful with the environment as He understood that life on earth will become impossible if the environment is polluted or spoiled. "Say who has forbidden the beautiful things of this world which God has created for His Servants ..." (7:32)

Physical and spiritual aspects of life in Islam are thus merged together, and life is considered only in these two aspects.

Islam teaches to overcome death by establishing links with the Living God, Who does not die. It means that Islam teaches to fear God, to worship God, as God is present in each living being and is always ready to lead man on the right path.



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Shri Shrivatsa Goswami

Brothers and Sisters,

One of the earliest Hindu scriptures opens with this affirmation:

"Whatever there is in creation is the Lord." God is truth, consciousness and bliss. Each of us, therefore, partakes in this manifestation of God.

But what have we done with this manifestation? When we look around, we do not find the Kingdom of God; we are surrounded by war, exploitation of nature, suppression of the weaker by the stronger. Why has this happened?

It is because we have turned away from God and have not used God's gifts as we should. For God has given us knowledge to understand the universal reality that undergirds the whole of humanity. We are given the intellect to know the sufferings of others, and the free-will to say "no" to injustice. We are even given the free-will to lay down our lives non-violently in the face of violence.

Our ignorance, however, has caused us to turn away from God. Therefore we feel estranged from nature; we have enmity towards the other human beings and creatures.

This alienation leads to the perversion of the divine nature in us. Our ego feels itself as a separate entity from God, and grows more and more powerful causing the loss of the Kingdom of God in us.

Instead of the unity of the Kingdom of God we have innumerable separate egos affiliating themselves with a race, a particular language, sex, class or nation; splintering the basic unity. Even in the field of religion instead of approaching a universal spiritual experience, we experience only further separation. The Vedas acknowledge that "the truth is the same, but may be expressed or realized in different ways".

From time to time God compassionately appears among us. One such appearance was in the form of Chaitanya Maha Prabhu in the fifteenth century. He spoke of the reality of God as love and of the individual as the atomic expression of that love-energy; God and creation are thus two dimensions of the whole, which is love divine.

In this spirit of universal love may I offer the words spoken by Chaitanya as my offering to this assembly:

"Be humbler than a blade of grass;
More persevering than a tree.
Take no honour to yourself but give honour to all.
And thus remain in constant remembrance of God."

Om shanti, shanti, shanti.



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TH1-8

LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

(Masuo Nezu)

Buddhism affirms the sanctity of all life. Its goal is to free all living beings from the miseries of life, so that they may attain the "joy of peace". This peace and liberation are the right of all beings; they are equal before the dharma; the message of liberation therefore falls on all, like rain, that their lives may blossom and bear fruit. This is best expressed in the following Lotus Sutra:

"I appear in the world just like a great crowd,
to our enrichment on all parched living beings,
to free them all from misery
and so attain the joy of peace,
joy in the world,
and the joy of nirvana.

To give peace to all creatures,
I appear in the world and,
for the hosts of the living,
preaching the law,
pure as sweet dew;
the one and the only law of emancipation
and the nirvana.

I preach the law equally;
as I preach to one person,
so I preach to all.

This is the law preached by the Buddha.
It is just like a great cloud
which with the same kind of rain and
which is men and blossoms,
so that each bears fruit."

Lotus Sutra (mainly taken
from chapter 5 but also from 3 & 4)

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BIO-DATA

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JOSE MIGUEZ-BONINO

Age: 59 Residence: Buenos Aires, Citizenship: Argentinian
Argentina

Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina

Presbyter

Dean of postgraduate studies at Evangelical Institute for
Higher Theological Studies
President, WCC (1975-)

Previous experience: Chairman, The Board for Life & Mission, EMCA
Professor of dogmatics and symbolics
President, Facultad Evangelica Teologia
Secretary, Association for Theological
Institutions (Southern Region)
Member, WCC Faith & Order Commission
Member, Comm. on Church Union in Argentina
and Uruguay

Other biodata: Married to Noemi Nieuwenhuize 1947, three children
Specialist on Roman Catholic theology
Hobby: football

DR: JOHN VIKSTROM

Age: 51 Citizenship: Finnish
Archbishop of Turku & Finland (1980-)

Previous experience: Secretary for diaconal work and social ethics
in the Borga diocese (1957-61)
Research and instruction in the Theological
Faculty of Abo Akademi (1962-70)
Associate Professor of Ethics and Philosophy
of Religion (1970)
Bishop of Borga diocese (1970-82)

Other biodata: Married to Birgitta Vikstrom 1957, three children
Hobby: sports

JOHN MICHAEL FRANCIS

Age: 44 Residence: Scotland, UK Citizenship: UK

Church of Scotland

Government Assistant Secretary with responsibility for social work services

Chairman, Church of Scotland Committee on Society, Religion and Technology

Adviser, WCC Subunit on Church and Society

Previous experience: Nuclear scientist (1960-70)
Consultant on science policy, particularly with regard to North Sea oil (1970-74)
Senior research fellow in energy studies, the Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh

Other biodata: Married with two daughters

AMERICAN JEWISH
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SITHEMBISO NYONI

Age: 33

Anglican

Development Consultant

Previous experience: YWCA rural development programme secretary in Zimbabwe
Work with the USA food & nutrition programme in Mississippi and Georgia
Dorothy Cudbury fellow, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham: teaching groups about rural development and the relationship between mission and development (1979-80)
Oxfam rural development consultant, Zimbabwe (1980)
Numerous consultancy assignments at village level

Other biodata: Founder member of the Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress, including 250 village groups

Anglican

Executive Vice-President Nishga Tribal Council, New Aiyansh, B.C.,
Canada

Roderick Anthony Robinson Sr was born in Aiyansh B.C. Canada, March 30, 1931. He was raised from youth as a Nishga Prince and graduated through the Hereditary Tribal System to achieve one of the most honoured and respected ranks, Chief Minesque. His Nishga rank and traditional wisdom would be seen by his people as equivalent to a Canadian Government Minister with Doctoral degrees in Law and Philosophy. Rod was taken from his parents as a child by Canadian Authorities to attend Indian schools where he was forbidden to speak his native language. By trade Rod has been both a fisherman and a logger. He is an Anglican lay reader and has served as a church warden. He has been elected to both his village council and the Nishga Tribal Council Executive for many years. He is currently the Chief Councillor of his home town and is occupied full time as the Executive Vice-President of the Nishga Tribal Council.

MARC H: TANENBAUM Citizenship: USA

Rabbi

National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee.

In a cover story, entitled "The Ten Most Powerful Rabbis", NEW YORK magazine described Rabbi Tanenbaum as "the foremost Jewish ecumenical leader in the world today."

President Carter invited Rabbi Tanenbaum as the American Jewish Leader among the national religious spokesmen to discuss "the State of the Nation" at Camp David "summit" meetings in 1979.

He served as a consultant to the NBC-TV nine-hour special "Holo-caust", was the only Rabbi at Vatican Council II and is the founder and co-Secretary of the Joint Vatican International Jewish Consultative Committee.

Rabbi Tanenbaum lectured at major universities, seminaries and religious and educational bodies in the USA, Europe and Israel, and is the author or editor of several books and numerous articles.

SHEIKH DR YUSUFKHAN SHAKIROV

Age: 57 Nationality: Soviet Union

Previous

experience: After his graduation from the religious school Madrassah in Bukhara, he went to Cairo (Egypt) and became a student of the "Al-Azhar" Islamic University. Graduated in 1961 with the diploma of a specialist in Arabic philology and returned to his country to begin work at the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

For 15 years Sheikh Shakirov headed the Department of Foreign Relations of the Board. Then he was promoted to the post of Vice-President responsible for international relations. He later enrolled in the Tashkent State University, Arabic Department of the Oriental Faculty, from which he successfully graduated after five years of intensive studies. He holds the degree of Doctor in Arabic Philology.

In his capacity of Vice-President of the Board responsible for international relations Sheikh Shakirov often undertakes trips to various countries, where he participates in conferences, symposiums and different meetings both on religious and civil levels.

SHRIVATSA GOSWAMI

Director of the Sri Caitanya Prema Sansthana, an institute of Vaisnava culture and studies and a fast-growing centre for interfaith and dialogue at Vrindaban, is a member of eminent family of priests and scholars at Sri Radharamana Temple Vrindaban.

Toured extensively to participate in conferences on philosophy and religion and lecture in major universities round the world, he is co-author (with John Stratton Hawley) of At Play with Krishna: Pilgrimage Dramas from Brindavan (Princeton University Press, 1981) and contributor to The Divine Consort: Radha and the Goddesses of India (Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1982), Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna: Five Distinguished Scholars on the Krishna Movement in the West (Grove Press, 1983) and is editor of forthcoming volumes on Caitanya, Nimbark and minor Vaisnava sampradayas for the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies (American Institute for Indian Studies).

MASUO NEZU

Age: 50 Nationality: Japanese

Buddhist

Managing Director of International Affairs Department of
Rissho Kosei-Kai, a lay Buddhist organisation with 5.7 million
members in Japan and abroad (since 1981)

Previous Publisher, Rossho Kosei-Kai (1956-61)
experience: Editor, Newspaper Dept. Rissho Kosei-Kai (1961-71)
 Managing Director, Kosei Publishing Co. (1971-81)



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

(John Vikström)

"In him we live, and move"

In a discussion about the existence of God in Finland's largest daily newspapers recently, there was a contribution from the paper's political cartoonist. Done in the cartoonist's own style, the cartoon showed the smiling bearded face of God the Father peering from behind a mountain. His arm stretched round the mountain and in his hand sat a number of serious-faced gentlemen engrossed in discussion. The cartoon needed no caption. Anyone opening the newspaper on that morning was fully aware that the topic of the gentlemen's animated discussion was the existence of God.

St. Paul the Apostle would have been able to supply a suitable caption to the cartoon had one been needed. He could have taken a few words from his sermon to the Athenians on Areopagus, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

The Old Testament story about Jacob provides ample evidence that one can fight against God without realising against whom he is fighting. The same story also shows that one can even be blessed by God without knowing by whom he is being blessed. (Gen 32:24-29)

As Christians we live in the happy assurance that it is God who has created this world and who sustains its matter and life regardless of what opinions we may hold of God, regardless of our beliefs and our doubts. This means that it is not just human beings, but everything on this earth that is related to God just by the mere fact of existence. The whole of our existence, the whole of our reality has, in a manner of speaking, a personal character - not in the sense that reality is identical with God but in the sense that all reality and therefore all life, everywhere and at all times, is related to a personal power which calls everything into existence. The innermost essence of this power is love and the name of this love is Jesus Christ. Christ is the expression of God's love for this world - "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son ..."

(John 3:16). Through Christ (Col 1:16), through the Word (John 1:3) all things are made. Above the whole of God's creation we may therefore write the words, "GOD SO LOVED". Above the stars, we may write the words "God so loved", above every flower, every human being, every tree, and every meadow we can imagine that the words "God so loved" are written - perhaps rather "God so loves", for God is always present as the creator and the force that sustains the creation. Not a single sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowing and willing it (Matt 10:29). Therefore "Cast all your cares upon him, for you are his charge" (I Peter 5:7). This is what we believe and we acknowledge that the very essence of all creation is faith, trust, love. God is continually moving towards us in order to be met openly and in trust.

In God's good and unspoiled creation this love and this goodness lead to closer interaction and intercommunication, to greater fellowship, both between persons and between persons and nature. This we can read in the first pages of the Bible. God places persons in the Garden of Eden to tend it and watch over it (Gen 2:15). Persons and nature are united in each other's service - the land is tended and cared for and persons, in turn, experience the joy of creating, tending and watching over the land. In the same way man and woman, human being and human being, come together and meet each other. This is the true reality that the God of love creates, sustains and continually renews through the Holy Spirit (Ps 104:30).

Praise the Lord, the Creator

The vision of God the Trinity's creative work is a vision of exuberant and abundant happiness and love. Every attempt to portray this in words therefore tends to be transformed into expressions of gratitude and praise. Consequently, the account of God's creation in Holy Scripture is couched in the form of praise. The creation as recounted in the first pages of the Bible is more a hymn of praise of the Creator than an account of the Creator's work and the psalmist never ceases to sing the praises of God for God's wonderful works:

O praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord out of heaven;
praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
praise him heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!
Let them all praise the name of the Lord!
for he spoke the word and they were created;
he established them for ever and ever
by an ordinance which shall never pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth,
you water-spouts and ocean depths;
fire and hail, snow and ice,
gales of wind obeying his voice!
all mountains and hills,
all fruit-trees and all cedars!
wild beasts and cattle,
creeping things and winged bird birds!
kings and all earthly rulers,
princes and judges over the whole earth!
young men and young maidens,
old men and young together!
Let all praise the name of the Lord
for his name is high above all others,
and his majesty above earth and heaven.

(Psalm 148)

The voices of evil

What has become of this song of praise in this world in which we live today? Praise of God's glory is today mingled with many other voices and noises - the thunder of tanks and bomb explosions, screams from torture chambers and prison camps, the heart-rending weeping of starving children, the voices of those intent on destroying their lives with drugs and cursing the day they were born, the clatter of machines mercilessly exploiting the natural resources of this planet.

Why has it turned out this way? Why has praise of God been drowned by the voices of selfishness, hate, evil and violence? The Bible tells us how the first human beings opposed God, how they fled from the face of God and were driven out of Paradise (Gen 3). Outside the very gates of Paradise the first fratricide takes place and there is heard the scornful question of selfishness and lack of concern, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9) At the very gates of Paradise human beings use their technical know-how not to the glory of God but to further their own selfish interests; "Come, let us build ourselves a tower with its top in the heavens, and make a name for ourselves." (Gen 11:4)

The consequences of this tower raised in the name of vanity and selfishness are that the builders are divided among themselves and can no longer understand each other (Gen 11). So persons come to realise that the tree of knowledge is a tree of both good and evil.

This old story from the Bible still has something to tell us about ourselves and our world even today. They show how the good that God created is no longer what it was intended to be. Instead of being united we are divided; instead of giving life we take it. We think more of ourselves than of our brothers and sisters. We are more interested in our own glory than in God's. We are moving away - from God, from our sisters and brothers, from ourselves, from a proper relationship to nature.

The occupied life

Why then this senseless self-destruction? Because this world has been occupied by a foreign power that is opposed to God and wishes to destroy what God has created - "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I Jn 5:19). The good that God has created is continually threatened by this foreign destructive power, sorely threatened. This explains why the good in this world can very often only be achieved through a struggle with the evil. In such cases, it is in fact God the Creator who takes up the struggle by creating new life and by protecting life with the divine message of love, justice and truth.

Since our Creator continues to play an active role in this world beset by evil, we can still rejoice over much that is good and beautiful. We can take pleasure in human creative ability, not only in the fields of science, technology and the arts but also in simple activities in the home and at our place of work. We may occasionally catch glorious glimpses of the Paradise that we have lost - in love and tenderness, in loyalty and friendship, in solidarity and brotherhood, in happy games and lively parties.

Life in this world is a mixture of freedom and compulsion, of kindness and cruelty, of pleasure and strife, of truth and lies, of justice and injustice, of constructiveness and destruction. Between these there is waged an incessant struggle, which at bottom is a struggle between God and those who oppose God, between "the all-merciful Father" (II Cor 1:3) and "the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). This struggle concerns us all. It goes on both within and without us. We experience it through the tension between God's commandments, which call upon us to work in the service of life, and the temptation to be the servant of destruction. This is something which concerns us simply because we are human beings and part of God's creation. Regardless of our beliefs we are involved in the struggle between good and evil. Regardless of our beliefs we can stand side by side in the struggle for life against death, for truth, for justice, and for a better world in every sense of the word. This is possible not least because there are obvious parallels between the moral principles of different religions. In these parallels we, as Christians, see proof that God as the Creator is related to all life and therefore to every human being. When the apostle Paul pronounced those words upon Areopagus in Athens - "In him we live, and move, and have our being" -, he immediately pointed out that this was in fact nothing new to the Greeks. Their own poets had said earlier, "We are also his offspring." (Acts 17:28)

"The Prince of Life"

The awareness that a god exists is therefore nothing new in this world; nor is the awareness of higher ethical ideals that can serve in the defence of and furtherance of life. This is common knowledge essential for the whole humanity, created and kept alive by the universal Creator. But Paul did not go to Areopagus just to

tell the Greeks what they already knew. He had something new to relate, a revolutionary piece of news for them. It was because of this news that he had travelled so far and it was this news which formed the basis of the young church.

This revolutionary and fundamental news was that the lawful king has come to this, our occupied world. Naturally he has come in disguise, which explains why not everyone recognises him, but he is here and now as the leader of a growing resistance movement. Signs of the king's presence may be detected from time to time, signs that indicate the new power which is still hidden but which will one day come forth when the forces of the occupying power are finally broken.

We who have gathered at this assembly here in Vancouver are members of this resistance movement. Our life as Christians "lies hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). At times we may find it hard to recognise both ourselves and others as Christians - and sometimes we may have difficulty in recognising our disguised king, Jesus Christ. But we wish to give each other support, to be more closely united in order to fight for our Lord and God's kingdom, inspired with the hope that this kingdom will indeed come.

When we fight for God's kingdom, we do so in the knowledge that we are not foreign conquerors of this world. When Christ came on to this earth to be among us, he came to "his own" (Jn 1:11). It is God's own human race and God's own creation which shall be freed (Rom 8:19-23). This is why Paul in his sermon also includes a reference to the creation and to the fellowship that exists among all people on this earth as a result (Acts 17:22-31). To convert to God in Christ is to be united with the one "by whom all things were made" (Nicene Creed, Col 1:16) - with the one who is the rightful ruler of heaven and earth, "the prince of life" (Mt 28:18; Acts 3:15).

The prince of life frees and renews the life of occupied creation. Therefore we follow and praise Christ as the life of the world when we praise and pray to God, the Holy Trinity:

"Of him, through him, and to him, are all things;
to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom 11:36)

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Document **TH1-2**

LIFE A GIFT OF GOD

Dr John M. Francis

Knowledge that comes from scientific investigation is a gift from God. But we can only gain access to this knowledge through the integrity, discipline and openness of mind of practising scientists, technologists and engineers. Despite the great advances in physics and mathematics, in biology and genetics in this century we are still at the edge of understanding so that many recent developments in computers or in the manipulation of the living cell will come to be regarded as little more than useful first steps in the direction of new technologies. We struggle forward continuing to confront the world of nature - its triumphs and disasters - and at the same time accepting that the growth of knowledge brings with it an endless chain of new questions about the universe and about ourselves - our souls as well as our minds and bodies.

It is in the nature of progress that we shall continue this journey of discovery, constantly challenged and amazed by our mastery of science and technology but increasingly humbled by our failure to acknowledge the essential spirituality at the centre. For in probing deeply to the centre of creation it is arguable whether we can expect to enhance our understanding of life itself.

This is the source of the real challenge for a scientific age. Despite our limited understanding of nature, we have acquired immense technical skills which should allow us to confront the real problems of the future:

- the ability to feed, clothe, house and provide medical care for 4 billion people in the world. It can be done.
- the ability to overcome superstition, ignorance and fear with life-affirming choices. With scientific knowledge we can turn the world upside down and make it a far better place in which 'to be'.

While this is the kind of inspiration that we can draw from the present state of our knowledge, we can go further.

The Great Experiment

There is a fundamental law of experimental science which directs all scientists - whether nuclear physicists, molecular biologists, metallurgists or chemists - to probe deeply into the nature of matter, the living cell, the universe itself. This law can be stated quite simply - "Do not hold back".

We are all familiar with the results of this continuing journey of discovery. Scientists have indeed become the new priesthood; the pursuit of scientific knowledge will mark this period in our history as the Era of the Great Experiment. The scientific literature abounds with talk of "the latest breakthrough", of "unifying theories" and of "advances towards the science and technology of the 21st century". This year of our Lord - 1983 - is no exception since the march of science is both formidable and relentless. Let us search the first weeks of the first month of this year for an example of what I have in mind.

At 3.00 p.m. on 21 January the European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN), Geneva - a very few kilometers from the Ecumenical Centre - announced that their experiment "UA1 has singled out five events in a total of one thousand million collisions revealing the expected signature of the charged W boson". There are four forces controlling the universe - electromagnetic, weak nuclear, strong nuclear and gravitational. A number of eminent theoretical physicists predict that these forces are not entirely separate but are interlinked. Although the idea of a unified single force is not proved by the results of this experiment, tangible proof of the existence of the W vector boson provides a "vital link between the electromagnetic force and the weak nuclear force".

This is the stuff of which sub-nuclear particles are made. The unapproachable inner world - a world of "hadrons" and "quark symmetries" - a world where scientists themselves can only journey through a fierce mixture of tenacity, immense technical skill and faith in the scientific enterprise. For indeed CERN has become the Sanhedrin of Pure Science and the acolytes who travel there to conduct their experiments are the High Priests of this century.

In the space of a mere hundred years or so the growth of scientific knowledge has surpassed all expectations. Scientists have not held back; they have not attempted to stem the tide of human progress. With the evolution of scientific knowledge has come the capacity to control and even to conquer much human disease and misery, the ability to produce food and medicines - although this is not matched by an ability to ensure that this reaches those often in greatest need, the power to unlock vast sources of energy, both renewable and non-renewable, and inevitably, as part of the Faustian bargain, the ultimate power to destroy the whole of creation.

With some credibility, I think we can say that we have left behind the worlds of Galileo and Newton, recognizing that without these great classical figures of science there could have been no discrete evolution of science as we know it. Even Charles Darwin contemplating

"The Origin of Species" on the date of its publication in 1859 could have had no insights on the molecular structure of the living cell or of the information encoded in the DNA molecule. Coming back to the present I should of course not wish to leave you with the illusion that all scientific endeavour is conducted on such an esoteric plane. And that is where the scale of a particular scientific activity or investigation becomes critically important because it is bound to influence the scientist's own perception of the world outside the laboratory.

I have spoken about the era of the Great Experiment but even within the scientific community there is a rising awareness of a new tension over the public face of modern science and technology. The prevailing mood is no longer one of scientific triumphalism - 'Science can solve all our problems'. Instead the promise of more scientific power over nature tends to increase the fears and anxieties that many people entertain about the future. They can barely cope with the process of rapid technological, economic and social change that is already expected of them. However, a great many scientists are themselves far removed from the realities of life in the latter part of this century; it might be said that they have already projected themselves into the future. It is therefore reasonable to ask what scientists are doing to make sure that the Great Experiment does not turn into the Great Disaster.

We all recognize that the patterns of world trade and economic development are passing through a period of deep recession. The prospects for recovery involve an inevitable and traumatic transition for many industrialised countries between the "sunset" industries of a previous generation - including the great giants of coal and steel, of metal extraction and metal fabrication - to the "sunrise" industries grouped around the new technologies that miniaturise so many products through the use of microprocessors thereby realising and releasing a vast range of potential applications in the fields of communications, robotics and automation. This immense challenge from the world of microelectronics coupled with the continuing series of breakthroughs in the biological and life sciences must now constitute the platform on which to create the sustainable technologies that the world will take as commonplace as we prepare to enter the 21st century. Such is the capacity of science and technology to transform our physical world and to reveal opportunities for a more hopeful future. I think that it is fair to say that we have moved forward from the enlightenment of the Sixties and Seventies which focussed an awareness of environmental problems, of "limits to growth" and of the need for a transition towards a more just and sustainable society. As the world economy struggles to recover we need to be clear as to whether the decisions to be taken over the adoption of new technologies will favour the "life-enhancing" group, building on our knowledge of ecological balance and renewable cycles of energy production and use, or the "life-defeating" choices leading us in the direction of further weapons of mass destruction. Here lie the seeds of the Great Disaster.

Of course we have passed this way before and people of goodwill and a clear conscience have attempted to articulate the concerns of a wider public. In the past leading members of the scientific community have

attempted to impress on politicians their desire to hold back but they have never been supported or sustained in such an argument. Take, for example, the views expressed by some of the nuclear scientists working alongside Robert Oppenheimer in 1949 when the technical feasibility of the hydrogen bomb was under consideration: I quote from one of their reports:

"The fact that no limits exist to the destructiveness of this weapon makes its very existence and the knowledge of its construction a danger to humanity as a whole. It is necessarily an evil thing considered in any light. For these reasons,we think it is wrong on fundamental ethical principles to initiate the development of such a weapon."

We can therefore detect the personal challenge to the social responsibility of scientists, technologists and engineers employed in the many industrial corporations producing both conventional and nuclear armaments. It may be that the churches have been far too reticent in appealing to the collective sense of responsibility of this highly skilled and professional group whose creative energies might very well be harnessed to alternative systems of production. The attempts by some groups of scientists and technicians within the defence industries to introduce and to promote "alternative" corporate plans for a particular company or enterprise are a sign that there is growing unease amongst the workforce in those centres. At such a moment these groups can be threatened with the loss of their jobs and their professional standing as scientists and engineers. These are moments of crisis when the churches acting together in any part of the world should be able to provide support for those prepared to take an active stance in opposition to the continuing development of weapons of mass destruction. If the churches are unable to offer solidarity with these groups then they are not entitled to make public pronouncements condemning such weapons as morally and theologically wrong. In these situations the churches must be prepared to engage in a 'ministry of reconciliation' in order to counter the inevitable accusations of naivete and betrayal which will be levelled at those individuals and groups who speak out in opposition to the enormous diversion of resources, both human and material, into weapons production of all kinds.

The Mystery and the Mastery of Science

Those of you who are familiar with the world of science, its systems of belief and its practices already know that through the application of scientific method we can study natural phenomena at many different levels. We are not confined to sending beams of protons and anti-protons in opposite directions around a 7 km. circular underground track near the Swiss-French border simply to observe the interactions between these particles - however significant that may be for the future of life on this planet. "Big Science" has its place in the nature of things, but for the most part science is practised in more down-to-earth terms. In other words, most scientists stand back. They have entrusted their colleagues with the responsibility of "pushing back the frontiers" and from time to time they may check on progress. To that extent at least most scientists contribute to faith in the

scientific enterprise. They cannot influence or direct its path; they are inclined to leave it to others to ensure that the essential scientific discipline is maintained.

However, we are all conscious that the influence exerted by our scientific knowledge and culture has now permeated to virtually every corner of the inhabited world. If it has not been carried there by working scientists, then it has almost certainly travelled there by means of some technology or other which has translated scientific knowledge into a mundane item of mass production - a tin can, a plastic bottle or a transistor radio. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether science can be controlled or perhaps what is more relevant - whether scientists themselves might be prepared to exercise more careful choices in the type of science and technology which they are inclined to pursue.

In order to advance their understanding in a particular field of research scientists have to learn to stand back, to observe and record those events which lie within the range of their own techniques and instrumentation. They acknowledge the constraints and wherever possible the boundary of each experiment is closely prescribed and maintained. Thus the territory of each scientific discipline is carefully marked out and defended.

At no point in the interdependent chain of scientific teamwork is the individual scientist required to exercise a value judgement as to the social acceptance of the risks of this enterprise. Only in recent years have some scientists elected to voice their own fears and anxieties over the nature of a particular development - sometimes at great personal cost to themselves - and have thereby directed the attention of the public at large to the choices that need to be examined in the political arena. In most democratic societies it is fair to say that this expression of social responsibility by members of the scientific community has been welcomed - if not always wholeheartedly. However, it is an important and critical step towards the formulation of a science policy 'with a human face'.

The scientist's concept of the "mystery and mastery of life" is directly related to this overall goal of a socially acceptable science and technology serving the needs of humanity. The principle is embodied in the statement - "Never underestimate the sacramental nature of matter". Let me remind you of the mastery of the scientist who after all is interventionist by nature.

Scientists can control the fission of heavy atoms and the fusion of light atoms thereby releasing immense quantities of energy; they can manipulate genetic material in the living cell and directly influence the process of natural selection; they can devise machines with artificial intelligence that as yet have not been formally constrained; they have provided theories which throw into question the origin of the cosmos itself. It must also be said that scientists collectively do not hold back from addressing the ultimate questions. For this quest is the very nature of science. And on the same pathway science and faith are drawn together for the first time after centuries of conflict following in the wake of Copernicus, Galileo and Darwin.

I hesitate to say that science and faith could become inextricably intertwined yet again but the signs are there - plain enough for all to see. It is of course the interpretation of the signs which will always prove to be difficult and the continuing source of much dispute.

Science and Society

There are of course many substantial arguments that need to be addressed. It is often said that the pursuit of scientific knowledge leads to a reductionist, materialistic and entirely secular view of the world that is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ. That is perfectly understandable when we consider that our political, economic and social systems are dominated by assumptions about material growth and prosperity or - on the other side of the coin - the continuing and increasing struggle to survive in an unloving and unheeding world. Under these pressures it is so easy to relegate our spiritual needs and anxieties to the interstices of our lives while we get on with the business of living or of coping with life as best we can according to individual demands and circumstances. The scientist, isolated in the laboratory is beset by similar doubts and fears about the future, particularly if he or she is constantly confronted by difficult choices and decisions over the direction in which science is taking us. Remember the words of Robert Oppenheimer: "A scientist cannot hold back progress because of fears of what the world will do with his discoveries".

It may be that many scientists would still wish to adhere to this kind of statement so that they can thereby be absolved from the guilt or anger which others can turn in their direction. However I believe that increasingly scientists, technologists and engineers directly concerned with some of the harder decisions are prepared to open up the debate and acknowledge both the gaps in our present understanding and the need for a wider form of democratic decision-making. Wherever this ripple of dissent breaks the surface the churches have the opportunity to become informed and involved in some of these choices. In many cases it is a matter of choice and of collective decision based on a clear understanding of the risks and benefits associated with any new technology emerging from the laboratories.

It is not that we need a doctrinaire system to control science and technology within the political and economic framework but rather that more people should become involved and concerned with the exercise of judgement over the future directions of science and technology. Into this forum they need to bring their own declarations of belief, spiritual and otherwise, so that more balanced and representative decisions can become possible. By this means we could hope to avoid the confrontations which will continue if new forms of technology are imposed upon whole communities without any process of explanation or accommodation. We must recognize the impasse that has been reached in so many different parts of the world whether over the siting of nuclear missiles, the construction of nuclear and chemical plant, the location of highways, dams and airports - in fact the entire infrastructure of any industrialized society. In the past the decisions have been remote from the communities directly concerned and the changes to the way of life and means of subsistence of large numbers

of people have simply been accepted albeit unwillingly at first. At the other end of the economic cycle the enforced changes resulting from the collapse of traditional industries and the ensuing unemployment has also to be accommodated in due course. Now more and more people are coming to realize that these planning decisions which affect their own lives and that of their families over several generations should be the subject of careful public scrutiny and inquiry. For the churches this is an important and essential way of grappling with the hard decisions of the material world while at the same time providing an opportunity to focus and reinforce other values in a caring and responsive way. This is a further element in the "ministry of reconciliation" which the churches are now called to exercise if the future is to become manageable in any better sense of the word.

My own view is that these problems and choices have to be tackled at a local level. Here the detailed aspect of any proposed development incorporating new technology can be teased out and explored in a fundamental way. It is at this point the scientists, the planners and the politicians can be brought face to face with the realities of their proposals as seen through the eyes of those most likely to be directly concerned with the consequences of the final decisions. If the churches are able to contribute a perspective and to remind the decision-makers of the spiritual dimension of their concern for the future, then the new streams bringing together science and faith in the face of contemporary issues will be joined in earnest. We shall then be able to put aside the sterile debates on the conflicting philosophical or spiritual assumptions which have added to the conflict between science and faith over many years and plan for a more constructive dialogue between the two respective schools of thought. It has to be said that they still have much in common and far more now than might have been imagined at the turn of this century.

As for the ecumenical dimension of this problem, there is still an immense task stretching forward to provide an overview of the struggle to gain insights at the community level. The communication of experience from one country to another, sharing the insights and the Christian response to the challenge of science and technology will itself provide the basis for continuing commitment by the World Council of Churches over the coming decades. The WCC has not spared itself in the past in identifying this as an ongoing task and I feel sure that this Assembly will also wish to encourage and endorse a substantial programme of further work in this area.

Conclusion

In this short paper I have attempted to do two things. First, to remind you that every advance in scientific understanding brings with it new threats and new possibilities. Scientists do not hold back on discoveries, but more and more they are anxious to inform a wider public about the consequences of some of this new knowledge and the power it represents. They are anxious to see the choice explored and the decisions made in an open and responsible manner.

Second, the challenge to the churches is to become vigorously involved in this dialogue with members of the scientific community. We have

an immense task before us if we are to harness the true power of science and technology to keep the world in peace, to feed the hungry and heal the sick.

That is the measure of the task. How to hold the cup of life full to the brim - with steady hands.



LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Sithembiso Nyoni

Since this is a testimony of my personal experience as a mother, I run the risk of romanticizing childbirth and motherhood and of sharing from a human and emotional view point rather than from an intellectual or scientific point of view.

CHILDBIRTH

Giving birth to children is one of those experiences that confront women with both physical pain and suffering as well as joy. In my case, I have had long hours of labour for my two sons. In each case I ended up undergoing a caesarian section. In the case of my daughter who is 6 months now and present here with me, although I did not go through the labour pains, I was very ill for weeks after the caesarian section. After each anasthetic, I woke up in great pain, but with a tremendous deep feeling of joy in the thought that I have participated in the Lord's creation of life. Something in me and in the world has been made anew.

"Behold I make all things new".

For me, childbirth is not only a painful process, it is also frightening - the thought of going through a caesarian section and what could go wrong as in my last child. But I go through it in hope and faith in God the Creator and in the knowledge and love of life as a gift of God.

DANGERS

After childbirth dangers continue to confront me and my children. These are many. They are both physical as well as spiritual dangers. More dramatic however are the dangers of militarism, drought and the anti-Christ alternative religions. In my country today as is true of some parts of Africa, there are some villages with more arms and armed men than there are water points and food for people. With South Africa at our door steps, we shall continue to be divided and set against each other, recognizing also our own human weaknesses as a nation. The result of all this is political instability and a global threat to peace.

Another disturbing factor is drought. Some villages have gone two years without any harvest. There is a shortage of food and water. Disease is rife. Thousands of babies are dying from some mysterious as well as common diseases. Under these conditions, what is the future of my children? Am I producing future soldiers? Will they be affected by the drought and the threatening diseases? Will I be one of the lucky mothers? Should they live, will they be part of the 20% privileged few of my country, fighting and jostling for power? Will they be of service to the nation? Will they change things for the better for all? Will they belong to the deprived 80% - no jobs? no land? no hope? What is the destiny of my children under all these dangers?

All these are frightening questions, for which I have no answers. Society is not helpful either. Nobody, not even those close to me probably realise how much I agonise over the future of my children. This is partly because society does not care to understand the meaning of motherhood in its fullest sense. For me, motherhood goes beyond childbirth and upbringing. It brings with it a lot of responsibility among which is to see that this life is nurtured and lived in its fullness.

TEMPTATIONS

Most of the temptations I face as a mother stem from the confusion and social forces and pressures acting upon me. On one hand society expects me as a woman to have children and "look after them". On the other hand because of my education and social status, I am expected to pay back that which society gave me through education by working for it.

I love my children and I care about them. They need me. I need them. Apart from the social pressures on me to work, I feel very strongly that my work in Rural Development is a challenge to which every Christian in our so called developing countries must respond. We have got to rid our countries of these forces which keep our rural populations poor and powerless. As a result of these two realities, I am a torn person, torn between motherhood and a worker for social change.

THE BEAUTY

Despite all these dangers and temptations the beauty of motherhood cannot be overemphasized. Part of it can neither be transformed into beds of flowers, or rolling hills, or the rising or the setting sun, the blue skies and seas or the green vallies of this world. Was this possible, it would have been easily shared and thus possibly better understood and appreciated by our societies. But the beauty of motherhood can only be experienced. It can only be lived.

I have also learnt that motherhood and parenthood are inseparable. This is my hope for our manfolk and our world.

Parenthood has helped me to experience and understand the love of God as it was reflected in his son Jesus Christ.

"Abba father"

"Then Jesus gave up a loud cry and said 'Father (Mother) into your hands I commit my spirit' (Luke 23-45)

"Ask and you will receive -- Is there a parent among you who will offer their 'children' a stone when they ask for bread --?" (Math. 7.7-10).

All parents of the world are called to share in this beauty of the love of life. To nurture it, to protect it and to assist God to fulfill his will on earth through this gift of life.



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TH1-4

LIFE A GIFT OF GOD

Roderick A. Robinson Sr.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my fellow Christians, Friends:

It is indeed an honour to be asked to speak to you at this Sixth gathering of the World Council of Churches, here in Vancouver. On behalf of the Nishga people, I thank you for this opportunity to further your awareness of our fundamental world view, its relationship to the theme, 'Life as a Gift of God', and its absolute inseparableness from our longstanding struggle for recognition and justice in pursuit of an honourable settlement of the Canadian Government's claim to the title of our God-given lands; lands which we have owned, occupied and governed since time immemorial.

In keeping with the protocol of aboriginal nations, may I first publicly thank the Musqueam people for this opportunity to confer with you within their territory. They too have their trail of tears, as does every tribe and aboriginal nation in this country, and in particular, within the province of British Columbia. I would hope that before this Assembly closes, you will recognize their struggle and ours by also publicly thanking the Musqueam people for this opportunity to meet here. Their story like ours, is one of hope and disillusionment, anger and frustration. Oppression and injustice extending well over one hundred years. However, in keeping with protocol, it is only our story which I can relate to you.

Our struggle is for the recognition and just settlement of our aboriginal title and rights within the Canadian confederation. In positive terms, our struggle is for the re-affirmation and effective re-establishment of our universally recognized right to the self-government of our traditional lands. It is the struggle for cultural survival; the struggle to re-affirm our social and spiritual way of life and to bring its values to bear upon a modern economy in a changing world.

Our history begins in the spirit world before the light of day. Our humanness derives from the act of our creation and placement upon our traditional lands by God. Our land is indeed a holy land. Our identity is inseparable from our land. By definition, a Nishga does not exist in the fullness of his 'being' without a complete melding of his land, language, laws, tribal system and spiritual values.

The fundamental integrating force for this holistic existence has always been our belief in God. Since the time the missionaries brought the gospel to us, Christianity has been the integrating and central element in our society. It is the continuing demand of God for unity within the Body of Christ which calls our community together and which gives our culture and tribal system its power and its strength.

With great emotion, our people often articulate this holistic spiritual reality from the depths of their souls in demanding that recognition must first be given to Nishga title by the community of man in order for the Nishga people to be fully integrated human beings. Thus, we have indicated to governments that our aboriginal title and rights are sacred and holistic as well as political.

Thus, we have called for the clear affirmation, not extinguishment, of our title and rights in the Canadian constitution. For it is this present denial of our God-given 'beingness' by the acts of colonization, the negation of God's gift of life, that is at the heart of our struggle and our many social and economic difficulties today. Let me assure you I am not discussing theoretical matters divorced from our reality and our daily lives.

In negative terms, our struggle is against one hundred and fifty years of racism, oppression and injustice. It is often described as the process of decolonization; a struggle most familiar to all of us when witnessed in countries unlike Canada, where the native population is in the majority.

Our struggle for justice begins centuries ago with the journey of a small boat filled with strange bearded white men lost at sea: men who landed on shores unknown and arrogantly claimed them as their own. Our people, owners and occupiers of over 5,000 square miles of territory since the memory of man, have always questioned this incredulous idea, so easily acceptable to the self-interests of some European nations, that one should have rights to another's land by the simple act of discovery.

When our turn came 'to be discovered' the incomprehensible arrogance of colonizers astounded our forefathers. Government surveyors were told to leave after offering to give our people a portion of our own land. One of our ancestors put it this way when speaking to a royal commission in 1887:

"They (the Government) have never bought it from us or our forefathers. They have never fought and conquered our people and taken the land in that way, and yet they say now that they will give us so much land - our own land. These chiefs do not talk foolishly, they know the land is their own; our forefathers for generations and generations past had their land here all around us; chiefs have had their own hunting grounds, their salmon streams, places where they got their berries; it has always been so. It is not only during the last four or five years that they have seen the land; we have always seen and owned it,

it is no new thing, it has been ours for generations. If we had only seen it for twenty years and claimed it as our own, it would have been foolish, but it has been ours for thousands of years. If any strange person came here and saw the land for twenty years and claimed it, he would be foolish..."

Our struggle also has a beginning in the universities of Spain where, unknown to us, the rights of Indians were being debated in the sixteenth century. It is there that we must look to honour a Christian friend, Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria, who asserted "that Indians were the true owners of the land, both from the public and private point of view". He further stated that "the fact that Indians did not believe in the Roman Catholic faith could not affect the question, as heretics in Europe were not denied property rights". He suggested "that Indians were no less intelligent than Spanish peasants and therefore were equally fit to have legal rights". To the argument that the Pope had granted the new world to Spain, Vitoria replied "that the Pope had no temporal power over Indian lands. Spain had no claim to the land through discovery, he said, because that notion only applied to unoccupied lands".¹

Pope Paul III, shortly thereafter in 1537, issued the Bull sublimis deus which states in part:

"... Indians are truly men... they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and of no effect."²

We honour these brave and thoughtful men of the sixteenth century for their support; for their clarity of thought and spiritual strength in an age of overwhelming greed. For it is these intellectually and spiritually honest Christians who laid the groundwork for the international recognition of aboriginal title and rights as we know it today. (I should add here, as an aside, that we too were uncertain whether those strange bearded beings on our shores were indeed human. It was not so much their avarice, but rather their lust, that helped us settle the question quickly.)

Our struggle moves from the universities of Spain to the colonial policies and practices of Great Britain and other governments and companies engaged in colonizing North America. The New England colonies had a particularly good record of respecting Indian land and acquiring it through purchase. Generally, the British colonizers followed this practice in North America. This practice culminated

¹ Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg (Eds.) Native Rights in Canada (the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, 1972).

² Ibid.

in what is now one of the leading Canadian constitutional documents on Indian rights, the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Essentially, this document establishes the point in British and Canadian constitutional law that Indian lands must be respected and may only be acquired through purchase by the Crown, this practice was largely followed through the Treaty process.³

However, it may shock you today to know that 40% of the land mass of the Canadian nation has never been formally ceded to Canada by the aboriginal owners or purchased from them by the Crown of either Britain, Canada, or the Provinces, particularly British Columbia. I want to emphasize that British Columbia has not formally and legally acquired our territory from us. Further, any land rights which the aboriginal owners possess in these non-treaty areas, including most of British Columbia, are seen to be wholly dependent upon the extent to which 'the theory' of aboriginal rights is accepted by the courts and legislatures of Canada. Canadian Governments have to date refused to provide the aboriginal people of Canada a clear and firm declaration of title and rights in Canadian law. This is despite the undisputed fact, that in our case, it is no theory that we have owned, occupied and used our land since time immemorial.

Following years of struggle, including a petition to the King of England seventy years ago, and the shackles of legal restrictions placed upon our protests, we took our case to the Supreme Court of Canada in the early 1970s. Just prior to our case being heard, the Prime Minister stated that aboriginal rights were too vague to be given recognition. Our case split the seven-member Supreme Court three-to-three, the seventh judge ruled on a technicality, stating that we did not possess the right to sue the Government of British Columbia without its permission. As a result of our case, the Federal Government made a political decision to negotiate comprehensive land claims in Canada.

Our negotiations have been stumbling along for the past seven years stalemated by a reluctant and non-committed Provincial Government which refuses to negotiate on the basis that we are the owners of our land and by a Federal Government which implicitly insists we accept a settlement as a gift from Canada without explicit recognition of our God-given title and our God-given rights.

Clearly, our struggle for justice within Canada is far from over: a struggle which is obscured by both platitudes and covenants supported in international forums by the Government of Canada. Nor is our struggle over in convincing Canadians of the historical truths and justice of our case. I quote from an article appearing in a local newspaper by a well known columnist, 28 March 1983:

³ Ibid., pp. 23-30.

"... We took this country fair and square, it being practically empty anyway, and if it weren't for all the academic, political, and media creeps that keep beating their breasts and shouting mea culpa there wouldn't be any of this Indian noise at all...."⁴

Well, let me assure you, that we, the Nishga people, are not asking anyone to beat his breast 'shouting mea culpa'. Rather we are asking all people of goodwill to recognize the strength and dignity of our case. We are asking all people of goodwill to support and walk beside us in our struggle for justice. We are asking all intellectually and spiritually honest Christians, including the World Council of Churches, to join those who have walked with us over the decades; particularly the Anglican Church of Canada which has supported us both financially and spiritually.

In your thoughtful deliberations, it will also interest you to know that on 24 March 1982, the President of AMAX of Canada Limited wrote a letter to the Federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, (copy to the Prime Minister), wherein he stated:

"In past discussions with members of the Council for Yukon Indians and the Nishga Tribal Council, we have indicated that AMAX of Canada supports fair and expeditious settlement of native land claims.... We believe that an equitable and timely settlement of native land claims is in the best interest of all Canadians. In particular, we encourage those in the private resource sector who have not already done so, to also support such a settlement. This will facilitate the orderly development of Canada's resources, thus strengthening the country's economic activity for the benefit of all Canadians."

We would hope that your support will help to convince the Governments of Canada to clearly affirm aboriginal title and rights in the Canadian constitution. This will then provide our people with a firm basis in Canadian law upon which to negotiate a just and honourable settlement; a dignified place within the Canadian Confederation: a recognition by the people of Canada and the world that we, the Nishga people are human beings whose spiritual 'beingness' and daily lives are inseparable from our God-given lands.

May I conclude by relating a brief incident that occurred just a few years ago when our delegation was meeting a senior government official. After listening to our presentation, the official turned to our Anglican bishop who was in attendance and asked, "And what is the opinion of the church on these matters my lord?" Our bishop replied, "you have just heard the opinion of the church".

⁴ Collins in Burnaby Today.

My fellow Christians, we the Nishga people, like our bishop, would hope that our struggle is indeed your struggle, that our dignity is indeed your dignity, that our truth is indeed your truth; that indeed we are one in His truth and His love.

May God bless you and guide your safe journey home.



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

I. MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES AND IDEALS IN JUDAISM

The Jewish 'way of life' has its origins in the experience of the Divine Presence in the midst of the decisive events of the Exodus and of Sinai, events which have altered the entire course of human history. The children of Israel experienced the reality of the Lord of history through His involvement in their liberation from physical oppression, persecution, massacre, and injustices as 'slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt'. To Pharaoh, who was worshipped as a divine emperor and who was the source of law, never its servant, the Israelite slaves were regarded as chattel, 'the untouchables' of ancient Egypt.

At Sinai, the Israelites had a transforming experience of Divine Revelation as moral will which was ratified by an everlasting Covenant. Henceforth, the Israelites are perceived by God to be a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. What an extraordinary Divine-human scenario! Yesterday, they were slaves, the outcasts of history; now an entire people are stamped with the dignity of priesthood and holiness, and are set on the course of history with a messianic task of redemption in society and through history until the coming of the Kingdom.

Israel's religion, Prof. David Flusser asserts, was a breakthrough in human consciousness. The God of Israel initiated a new era in the history of mankind, introducing a new concept of justice - which is the central message of His revelation - an uncompromising moral law, and an original social order to be established paradigmatically in the Holy Land of Palestine (see The Holy Year and Its Origins in the Jewish Jubilee Year, by this writer, published by the Vatican Office for the Holy Year, 1975, Vatican City) conceived in this justice. This postulate of individual and social justice was not to be limited to Israel only. The Creator of the universe postulates this justice for all His human creatures; it was incumbent on all the peoples of the world.

The concept of justice which emerges from the Hebrew Bible is not just the regiment of mighty men - the Bible does not identify God on the side of Pharaoh and his imperium! It stresses that God cares for the poor and unprotected, for the orphan, the widow and the stranger.

The basis of social justice was not to be external power and might, but the reverence of God and obedience to His moral will.

A. The Sacredness of Human Life

To understand the idea of justice in Israel, we must bear in mind the Biblical teaching that the human being is created in the image of God, that each human life is sacred and of infinite worth. In consequence, a human being cannot be treated as a chattel, or an object to be disposed of for someone's programme or project or ideology, but must be treated as a personality. Every human being is the possessor of the right-to-life, dignity and honour, and the fruits of his or her labour.

Justice is respect for the personality of others and their inalienable rights, even as injustice is the most flagrant manifestation of disrespect for the personality of others. Judaism requires that human personality be respected in every human being - in the female prisoner of war, in the delinquent, even in the criminal condemned to death. The supreme importance of the human being in the economy of the Universe is expressed in this Rabbinic teaching: 'Man (the human being) was first created as a single individual to teach the lesson that whoever destroys one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had destroyed a whole world; and whoever saves one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had saved a whole world' (Sanhedrin 4:5).

However, justice is more than mere abstention from injuring our fellow human beings. 'The work of justice is peace, and the effect thereof quietness and confidence forever' (Isaiah 32:17). It is a positive conception, and includes economic well-being, intellectual and spiritual growth, philanthropy, and every endeavour that will enable human beings to realize the highest and best in their natures.

The conditions for that self-realization require active efforts to bring about the final disappearance of injustice and oppression, which as represented in the Jewish High Holiday liturgy, are the goals of human history. 'And may all wickedness be consumed as a flame and may evil rule be removed from the earth', declare the Rosh Hashana prayers.

B. The Moral Duties of Tzedakah

Nothing is more fundamental in Biblical and Rabbinic ethics than the moral obligation of tzedakah, a Hebrew term which means both 'charity' and 'to do justice'. The Rabbinic sages of the Talmud declared that 'Almsgiving - i.e., aiding the poor and feeding the hungry - weighs as heavily as all the other commandments of the Torah' (Talmud Baba Batra 9a).

In proclaiming the Jubilee year, which like the Ten Commandments was ascribed to divinely-inspired legislation revealed on Mount Sinai, the Bible ordained: 'And if your brother waxes poor, and his means fail with you, then you shall uphold him: as a stranger and a settler shall he live with you' (Leviticus 25:35). The Rabbis observe that the expression that 'Your brother may live with you' means that it is our personal and communal duty to see to it that our fellow human beings do

not die of starvation. Though the person be a 'stranger' or 'an alien settler', he (or she) is to be included in the term 'your brother' and is to be treated in a brotherly and compassionate manner.

To underscore the supreme virtue of humanitarian aid to the needy in the hierarchy of Jewish moral and spiritual values, the Rabbinic sages regarded such compassionate care of man as an act worthy of association with Divinity itself: 'God says to Israel, "My sons whenever you give sustenance to the poor, I impute it to you as though you gave sustenance to me, for it says, 'Command the children of Israel... my bread for for my sacrifices... shall ye observe unto me. Does, then, God eat and drink? No, but whenever you give food to the poor, God accounts it to you as if you gave food to Him'" (Numbers Rabbah XXVIII: 2).

The virtue of such care for the poor and hungry is depicted in Jewish tradition as the salient attribute of the 'founding father' of Judaism, the Patriarch Abraham, who is called the archetype of the 'Pharisee of love'. In a midrashic commentary that begins with the phrases, 'Let your house be open; let the poor be members of your household. Let a man's house be open to the north and to the south, and to the east and to the west', the Rabbis describe the humanitarianism of Abraham:

He went out and wandered about, and when he found wayfarers, he brought them to his house, and he gave wheaten bread to him whose wont it was not to eat wheaten bread, and so with meat and wine. And not only this, but he built large inns on the roads, and put food and drink within them, and all came and ate and drank and blessed God. Therefore, quiet of spirit was granted to him, and all that the mouth of man can ask for was found in his house /Abot de Rabbi Nathan, VII: 17a,b/

Elsewhere the Talmud admonishes: 'He who has no pity upon his fellow creatures is assuredly not of the seed of Abraham our father' (Bezah 32b).

In Jewish communities, from Biblical times through the present, there was much free and generous giving of alms to all who asked - even to deceivers! - and there was also much systematic and careful relief through established institutions. Each Jewish community boasted of a tamhui (public kitchen) from which the poor received two meals daily. There was also the kupah (alms box) for the disbursement of benevolent funds on Sabbath eve to provide three meals for Sabbath (Mishnah Peah VIII: 7). Additional care was exercised in respect of the itinerant poor, who were provided with a loaf of bread which sufficed for two meals, and who were also entitled to the cost of lodging.

The Biblical laws of charity in Palestine relating to 'gleaning' the 'forgotten sheaf' and 'the corner of the field', implied the underlying idea that national territory belongs to the public as a whole. In accordance with Jewish law, landowners used to lay open fences surrounding their fields and vineyards, and during certain hours of the day, the needy were allowed to eat from the produce of the harvest. There was also a three-yearly allocation of Maaser Ani (poor man's tithe) from the threshing floor.

Thus, there arose the charitable traditions and institutions of the Jewish people which have remained a religious-communal characteristic ever since. These customs of charity, which were foreign to the pagan frame of mind of the Greeks and Romans, also had an abiding impact on the nature of the Christian 'caritas'.

C. Peace and War

And finally, the stability, as well as the happiness of a community, can only be assured when it rests upon a foundation of peace. In the absence of peace there can be neither prosperity nor well-being. 'Peace is equal in worth to everything', declare the Rabbis (Sifra), and they add: 'Beloved is peace since the benedictions only conclude with the hope of peace', thus teaching that the blessings even of the High Priest are of no avail unless accompanied by peace (Numbers Rabbah 11:7).

While the Prophets of Israel and the Rabbis believed that God intended the nations to be at peace with one another, war was not prohibited. Jewish ethics would admit the duty to defend the higher values in human life by war if necessary. If Isaiah or Jeremiah had thought that yielding to the foreign invader would mean destruction to the religion or the people they valued, they would have urged resistance, with the same vigour that they demanded constantly the practice of righteousness in obedience to God's will. All the facts of Biblical and post-Biblical Judaism taken together lead to the conclusion that the ethical judgement on war, according to Judaism, is that it must be eradicated to make human life conform to the Divine rule, that those guilty of causing it commit a crime against humanity and a sin against God. However, they are justified who, to defend the higher values in human life, resist, if necessary by war, an attack on them. The justification would extend to a nation's defence of its liberty. The spiritual values in the life of a nation, which include its historic distinctiveness, may justify it, when attacked or threatened, to engage in war to save its independent existence. (See Dr Israel Mattuck in his study, Jewish Ethics, particularly his chapter on 'The Judgement on War'.)

II. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

What are the implications of these facts for Christians and Jews today?

It is evident that we live in an age of violence and of terror. There is not a continent on the globe that is not despoiled by terror and violence, by barbarism and by a growing callousness to human suffering and pain and threat to human existence. At the centre of the human crisis is the fundamental depreciation of the meaning and value of human life. In theological terms, the Biblical affirmation that each human life is created in the sacred image of God and is therefore of ultimate worth and preciousness is being battered from every side.

It is my conviction that this erosion in the belief in the sanctity of human life is one of the decisive black legacies bequeathed by Nazi Germany to mankind. By and large, with rare exception, the

overwhelming majority of citizens of the Western world, and their dominant institutions have avoided confronting the magnitude of evil incarnate in the Nazi Holocaust, and have therefore failed to learn how to cope with forces and structures of dehumanization that are being replicated in many parts of the globe.

The Nazi campaign against the Jewish people was unique and in many ways unprecedented. Yet the Nazi trauma must not be seen as 'a Jewish obsession', for the fateful meaning of the Holocaust is of ultimate importance to the future capacity of mankind to understand itself and to acquire the resources to cope with the challenges to its survival. (See the discussion of Max Weber's 'secularization, disenchantment of the world, and rationalization' as root causes for undermining all moral norms in a bureaucratized society in my Religious Values in an Age of Violence, pp. 46/52.)

Bleak as are the prospects for countering these forces of dehumanization in the world, 'we need not complete the task', as Rabbi Tarphon admonished, 'but neither are we free to desist therefrom'. In concert, if we are to learn from the Nazi Holocaust and not be doomed to allow its repetition, we must attempt at the very least the following:

First, Christians and Jews should engage in a massive, concerted effort to establish a 'new humanism' on a global basis that seeks to restore the Biblical value of the infinite worth and preciousness of each human life that must be appreciated as an end itself and never as an object of somebody else's project, programme, ideology, or revolution.

Second, Christians and Jews must help engender a national and international attitude of scorn and contempt for those who use violence or who advocate the use of violence. We must work to deromanticize all appeals to use violence and terrorism as a means of liberation or of institutionalized oppression, since from a moral standpoint no ends can justify such anti-human means.

Third, Christians and Jews must work to curtail the resort to inflammatory propaganda, especially from international forums which have psychological impact on an international scale. As Prof. Gordon Allport of Harvard University demonstrated in his monumental study, The Nature of Prejudice, there is an inevitable progression from 'verbal aggression to violence, from rumour to riot, from gossip to genocide'.

Fourth, Christians and Jews must work toward educational development and communication among peoples to reduce the abrasive effects of 'differences'. Differences, as we have learned in the pluralistic experience of the Western world, can be a source of enrichment rather than a threat.

Fifth, Christians and Jews should engage in an urgent and sustained intellectual and educational effort to elaborate a theology and ideology of pluralism which presupposes the right of each religious, racial, and ethnic group to define itself in its own terms and to be accepted unconditionally by its own self-definition. Group narcissism, as Dr Erich Fromm observes, arouses intense hostility between groups, and 'is one of

the most important sources of human aggression'. In helping establish a pluralistic world-view, Christians and Jews have a decisive contribution to make to the building of the ideological foundations without which a stable world community cannot come into being.

Sixth, Christians and Jews should work toward making the economy of each nation as self-sufficient and stable as possible in the sense of not perpetually requiring relief support. Inextricably linked with such an effort is the control of the arms race on an international scale, and a rational re-ordering of priorities that allows for adequate defence and yet at the same time reallocates some of the billions wasted on arms that should be applied to the crying needs of the hungry, the diseased and the homeless.

Central in such efforts must be the pressing need to raise human consciousness in an effective international effort to halt the irrational proliferation of nuclear weaponry and to bring about serious sustained actions for universal simultaneous disarmament. There is no higher priority for human survival at this moment in human history.

And finally, Christians and Jews need to recognize the fundamental interdependence of all human rights and collaborate vigorously to assure that every nation - East and West, North and South - implement fully their commitments to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In particular, Christians and Jews should work for the completion of the judicial instrumentalities called for by Article 6 of the Genocide convention in the form of an international penal tribunal for trying those who are accused of genocide attempts anywhere in the world.

'The salvation of mankind', Alexander Solzhenitzyn reminds us, 'will depend on everyone becoming concerned about the welfare of everybody everywhere'.

LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Shayk Yusuf Khan Shakirov

From the point of view of Islamic teachings life in all its diversities and manifestations, in all its kinds and forms, including death as the cessation of the earthly existence - is the creation of the Almighty Allah.

First of all we believe that Allah is the Living God, who lives the life of his own, does not depend upon anyone and is not guided by anybody. In the Quran Allah is therefore called "al-Hayy al-Qayyum", the Living, the Self-Subsisting. He continuously and restlessly controls everything that exists in the world and nothing can be realised without Him. This idea is present in many Ayats of the Holy Quran (2:255, 3:2, 25:58) and many others, as well as in many Hadithes of our Prophet.

Another important moment of the Islamic teachings about life is the belief that God has control not only over life, but over its cessation, i.e. death as well. God gives life and nobody else besides Him can grant life. God ceases life, and nobody besides Him can take this life away. Everything is in His power, everything belongs to Him. This teaching is confirmed by the Ayats 2:28, 3:156, 7:116 of the Holy Quran, as well as by many others.

Muslims consider life to be the greatest gift of God. It is why our Prophet Muhammed and after him all prominent scholars of Islam stressed, that people must appreciate life. Islam is therefore rightly called a life-asserting religion. It promotes in the souls of its believers the feelings of careful and respectful attitude towards life. To take away life given by God to any living being, is a great sin, which the Almighty Allah will never pardon. Because only Allah grants life and only Allah may take it away.

Allah gives us not only life, but all means of its development and continuation. He gives us air to breathe and water to drink and to feed all plants and animals we use for the continuation of our life. He gave us earth which we use for our nutrition. These are very deep philosophic conceptions because they are closely connected with our life, with its manifestations and processes. We say that Islam

is not only a religion, it is also a mode of life. On the ground of this teaching Islam requires from its adherents to lead a decent life, an honest life to be worthy of God's creation.

Secondly, Islam requires to preserve everything living on earth, as everything on earth is the creation of God and is intended to serve man as the highest of all God's creations. To preserve everything that exists on earth is again the continuation of life, because life is impossible without the surrounding nature. The problem of preserving the environment has become most acute on our planet in our days. But 14 centuries ago our Prophet Muhammed called people to be careful with the environment as He understood that life on earth will become impossible if the environment is polluted or spoiled. "Say who has forbidden the beautiful things of this world which God has created for His Servants ..." (7:32)

Physical and spiritual aspects of life in Islam are thus merged together, and life is considered only in these two aspects.

Islam teaches to overcome death by establishing links with the Living God, Who does not die. It means that Islam teaches to fear God, to worship God, as God is present in each living being and is always ready to lead man on the right path.



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

Shri Shrivatsa Goswami

Brothers and Sisters,

One of the earliest Hindu scriptures opens with this affirmation:

"Whatever there is in creation is the Lord." God is truth, consciousness and bliss. Each of us, therefore, partakes in this manifestation of God.

But what have we done with this manifestation? When we look around, we do not find the Kingdom of God; we are surrounded by war, exploitation of nature, suppression of the weaker by the stronger. Why has this happened?

It is because we have turned away from God and have not used God's gifts as we should. For God has given us knowledge to understand the universal reality that undergirds the whole of humanity. We are given the intellect to know the sufferings of others, and the free-will to say "no" to injustice. We are even given the free-will to lay down our lives non-violently in the face of violence.

Our ignorance, however, has caused us to turn away from God. Therefore we feel estranged from nature; we have enmity towards the other human beings and creatures.

This alienation leads to the perversion of the divine nature in us. Our ego feels itself as a separate entity from God, and grows more and more powerful causing the loss of the Kingdom of God in us.

Instead of the unity of the Kingdom of God we have innumerable separate egos affiliating themselves with a race, a particular language, sex, class or nation; splintering the basic unity. Even in the field of religion instead of approaching a universal spiritual experience, we experience only further separation. The Vedas acknowledge that "the truth is the same, but may be expressed or realized in different ways".

From time to time God compassionately appears among us. One such appearance was in the form of Chaitanya Maha Prabhu in the fifteenth century. He spoke of the reality of God as love and of the individual as the atomic expression of that love-energy; God and creation are thus two dimensions of the whole, which is love divine.

In this spirit of universal love may I offer the words spoken by Chaitanya as my offering to this assembly:

"Be humbler than a blade of grass;
More persevering than a tree.
Take no honour to yourself but give honour to all.
And thus remain in constant remembrance of God."

Om shanti, shanti, shanti.



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LIFE - A GIFT OF GOD

(Masuo Nezu)

Buddhism affirms the sanctity of all life. Its goal is to free all living beings from the miseries of life, so that they may attain the "joy of peace". This peace and liberation are the right of all beings; they are equal before the dharma; the message of liberation therefore falls on all, like rain, that their lives may blossom and bear fruit. This is best expressed in the following Lotus Sutra:

"I appear in the world just like a great crowd,
to our enrichment on all parched living beings,
to free them all from misery
and so attain the joy of peace,
joy in the world,
and the joy of nirvana.

To give peace to all creatures,
I appear in the world and,
for the hosts of the living,
preaching the law,
pure as sweet dew;
the one and the only law of emancipation
and the nirvana.

I preach the law equally;
as I preach to one person,
so I preach to all.

This is the law preached by the Buddha.
It is just like a great cloud
which with the same kind of rain and
which is men and blossoms,
so that each bears fruit."

Lotus Sutra (mainly taken
from chapter 5 but also from 3 & 4)

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BIO-DATA

Document TH1-9

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Age: 59 Residence: Buenos Aires, Citizenship: Argentinian
Argentina

Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina

Presbyter

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Higher Theological Studies
President, WCC (1975-)

Previous experience: Chairman, The Board for Life & Mission, EMCA
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RODERICK ANTHONY ROBINSON SR (MINESQUE)

Age: 52

Residence: Aiyansh,
B.C., Canada

Citizenship: Canada

Anglican

Hereditary Nishga Chief

Executive Vice-President Nishga Tribal Council, New Aiyansh, B.C.,
Canada

Roderick Anthony Robinson Sr was born in Aiyansh B.C. Canada, March 30, 1931. He was raised from youth as a Nishga Prince and graduated through the Hereditary Tribal System to achieve one of the most honoured and respected ranks, Chief Minesque. His Nishga rank and traditional wisdom would be seen by his people as equivalent to a Canadian Government Minister with Doctoral degrees in Law and Philosophy. Rod was taken from his parents as a child by Canadian Authorities to attend Indian schools where he was forbidden to speak his native language. By trade Rod has been both a fisherman and a logger. He is an Anglican lay reader and has served as a church warden. He has been elected to both his village council and the Nishga Tribal Council Executive for many years. He is currently the Chief Councillor of his home town and is occupied full time as the Executive Vice-President of the Nishga Tribal Council.

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Una cálurosa acogida a su grupo pequeño. Esperamos que disfruten de esta oportunidad de establecer diariamente contactos personales. En los grupos compuestos y las sesiones plenarias podrán compartir sus experiencias. Por favor, consulten la Guía de la Asamblea para localizar a su grupo y su grupo compuesto.

* * *

Warm welcome to your small group. We hope you'll enjoy this daily chance for personal contact. Through clusters and plenaries you will be able to share your experiences. Please consult your Assembly Directory for the location of your group and cluster.

* * *

Ihrer Arbeitsgruppe ein herzliches Willkommen. Wir hoffen, dass Sie an dieser täglichen Möglichkeit zu persönlichem Kontakt Freude haben werden. Die Themengruppen und Plenarversammlungen bieten Gelegenheit zum Erfahrungsaustausch. Bitte schlagen Sie in Ihrem Handbuch der Vollversammlung nach, wo Ihre Gruppe und Ihre Themengruppe tagen.

* * *

Soyez les bienvenus dans votre petit groupe. Nous espérons que vous apprécierez la possibilité qui vous est ainsi offerte, jour après jour de contacts personnels. Grâce aux groupes généraux et aux séances plénières, vous pourrez ainsi faire part de vos expériences. Veuillez vous rapporter à votre guide de l'Assemblée pour trouver le lieu de réunion de votre groupe et de votre groupe général.

* * *

Добро пожаловать в вашу малую группу.
Мы надеемся, что вам понравится
эта ежедневная возможность личного контакта.
В кластерах и на пленарных заседаниях
у вас будет возможность поделиться своим опытом.

Просим вас посмотреть в Справочнике Ассамлеи,
где будет находиться ваша группа и кластер

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Document **TH3-1**

LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

Dorothee Sölle

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
I speak to you as a woman from one of the wealthiest countries in the world; a country whose history is tainted with bloodshed and the stench of gas that some of us who are Germans have not been able to forget; a country that today has the world's greatest concentration of nuclear weapons lying at the ready. I would like to tell you a little about the fears and anxieties that reign in anger, in criticism and in sorrow. The grief I feel at my own country, the friction that sets me at odds with my own society is not a whim on my part or because I have nothing better to do; it springs from my belief in the life of the world as I find it in the poor man from Nazareth who had neither wealth nor weapons. This man, a poor man, portrays the life of the world for us to see and points us towards the ground of our being, to God. Christ is God's exegesis, the exposition who made him known to us (Jn 1:18).

I don't intend any kind of religious imperialism in saying this, as though there could be no other expositions of God in other religions; I mean it rather in the sense of unconditional commitment to become fully involved with this Jesus Christ if we seek the life of the world and not death.

Christ came into the world that all may have life "and have it in all its fullness" or, as it can also be translated, "that they may live and find in abundance all that they need" (Jn 10:10). What is this "life in all its fullness"? Where does it take place? Who lives it? Looking at our world I see two ways in which life is being destroyed: outward poverty and inward emptiness.

For a good two-thirds of the human family there is no such thing as "life in all its fullness" because they are impoverished, living on the edge of death in stark, economically conditioned poverty. They are hungry, they have no shelter, no shoes, no medicine for their children, no clean water to drink, no work - and they see no way getting their oppressors off their backs. Trade agreement and international relations are dictated by the rich first world and imposed on the poor plunging them daily deeper into destitution. The mere struggle for survival destroys the fullness of life, the shalom of God, of which the Bible speaks: Where people need not be anxious about their daily food, where they are healthy, where they are not

threatened by their enemies and can enjoy a long life in the bosom of their family and community. "Long life is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honours", as we read in Proverbs 3:16. Poverty destroys this life which is promised to all of us.

I would like here to read you a letter from a Brazilian woman, which she dictated to a nun because she herself cannot read or write. "My name is Severina, I come from the north-east. Up there in my country two of my babies died because I had no milk. One day in my village I saw forty-two little coffins being carried to the cemetery. My sister-in-law who was very poor had seventeen children: three of them lived, all the others died before they were four. Of the three who lived two are not normal. I was with her for the births and sometimes there wasn't even a clean piece of sheet to wrap the baby in. That's what happens in lots of families, thousand even - ten or fifteen children are born and five or six of the ten die. And there are priests who tell us, 'If you have seven children who die as infants you will be blessed: a crown of angels awaits you in heaven'. But who really knows what it means for a woman to carry a child for nine months, weeping for the first three of them because she knows she will never see her baby grow up - and that perhaps ten times or more. Is she to love the child only to see it die of starvation within four months ?

Can that really be what they mean when they speak about 'human dignity' ? Of course, I see from the gospel that Claudia and Vera often read to me that Christ loved poverty; but not human suffering, he didn't put up with that.

There's a difference between being poor and having nothing to give your baby except sweetened water, and you give her the water and you know she's going to die."

Christ came into the world so that all might have life "in all its fullness" but the absolute impoverishment which is a crime in a technologically developed world is destroying people physically, spiritually, mentally and also religiously because it poisons hope and makes a mockery of faith by turning it into helpless apathy. What comes between Christ and the world's impoverished peoples is exploitation, the sin of the rich who are seeking to destroy Christ's promise. Speaking of "fullness of life" Christ says in John's Gospel: "I am the door; anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe. He shall go in and out and find pasturage. The thief comes only to steal, to kill, to destroy; I have come that human beings may have life, and may have it in all its fullness" (Jn 10:9-10).

Christ and 'the thief' stand at opposite extremes from one another. The thief comes to plunder the poor so they will die. Christ came to bring fullness of life. But it would be a childish kind of Christianity that simply sat back and waited to see whether it was the thief or Christ who came. We are involved in both these undertakings, the plundering and the fullness of life. Either we participate in Christ's mission, or we participate in the thief's plans for the world. As long as we remain merely victims or merely spectators in this struggle for justice, we are supporting the thief and

his crimes. By joining in the struggle for a world of greater justice, on the other hand, we are taking part in the plan for creation of the God who has given us this earth in trust that all may have life in fullness.

Life in all its fullness is an impossibility when one is forced to live in absolute poverty. But even in the wealthy first world there is very little fulfilled life to be found, only an ever-growing inner emptiness. What comes between Christ and the middle classes of the first world is not material poverty but spiritual emptiness. The meaninglessness of life perceived by many sensitive individuals ever since the beginning of industrial development has now become a widespread experience among the mass of people in the first world: nothing delights them, nothing moves them deeply, their relationships are superficial and inter-changeable, their hopes and dreams go no further than their next holiday trip. For the majority, work is unsatisfying pointless, boring. God created us as men and women with a capacity for working and loving. We participate in creation in our work and in our sexuality in the widest sense of the word.

Fullness of life means amongst other things becoming a worker and a lover. For most people in the first world, however, life is more like a long death lingering over many years. It is pain-free: there are pills and to spare, after all; it is feeling-free: 'Don't be so emotional' is an expression of strong disapproval in our language; it is without grace because life is seen as self-achieved and not as a gift from the Creator; it is life without a soul lived in a world which calculates everything in terms of what it's worth; nothing is beautiful and a source of happiness for its own sake, the only thing that counts is what you can get for it. We are empty and at the same time surfeited with superfluous goods and products. There is an odd relationship between the many objects we possess and consume and the emptiness of our real existence. While Christ came that we might have fullness of life, capitalism came to turn everything into money: that is the long death that looks out at us from so many empty faces. Just think for a moment of a traffic jam, everyone sitting alone inside their own tin can, slowly and aggressively edging their way forward. Frustration and hatred of the people in front and the people behind is the normal reaction. This is an image of life in its emptiness in the rich world.

In the gospel we read the story of the rich young man who seemed to possess fullness of life in the form of many possessions yet is overcome by the inner emptiness of his life. Life has treated him kindly. He has what he needs and much more besides. But his questions go beyond having and being satisfied in this material sense. What shall I do with my life? What must I do to inherit eternal life? How can I make my life more radical, less ambiguous, less fragmented, less of a compromise? What can I do to escape from the half-heartedness of my existence?

Not long ago I saw a letter which might have come from the rich young man's brother, an ordinary member of the white middle-class in Europe. He wrote: "I am thirty-five, a civil servant with a good position, married. We have two children. So far our marriage

has been happy. The children are fine. I have everything I need, a secure well-paid job, there's nothing wrong at home. But for all that, recently I haven't been feeling right. I've been feeling more and more that my life is empty. Something is missing, but I don't know what. Sometimes I think I should drop everything and just take off. But I haven't the strength for that. You can't just throw away everything you've worked for." His letter ends with the question, "What shall I do?"

I see these two faces before me, the civil servant from West Germany and the rich young man in the New Testament. They have all they need, yet something is missing. They are not the type of the hard-headed successful male, they are not brutal but if anything rather soft. They have not earned their position and their wealth by fighting and stealing; maligning others or cheating and exploiting them. They probably look after their parents and don't beat their wives. They are polite and disinclined to radicalism of any kind. Both want to do something with their lives, they want to win eternal life. They want to be whole, they want to live unfragmented lives and reflect something of the glory of fullness. But their lives have no glory to reflect. They do not radiate brightness. There is only emptiness and, behind it, the long death.

The evangelist Mark tells us that Jesus looked upon the rich young man and loved him (Mk 10:21). Jesus wants to draw him, and all of us, into fuller life than we have known before. This rich young man, too, could enter into the fullness of life, he is even aware that something is lacking, that he can expect more of life. But there is something radically wrong with his notion of eternal life for he thinks: I have everything, I have obeyed all the rules, there is only one thing missing and that is: the meaning of life, fulfillment. If I can only have that as well everything will be fine.

Jesus turns this expectation upside down: you don't have too little, you have too much. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mk 10:21).

A lot of middle-class people today are searching for a new spirituality. They have a training and a profession, education and a secure income, family and friends but they are looking for something more - religious fulfilment, meaning in life, food for the soul, consolation; all this on top of material security, a religious added value, as it were, for people who are already over-privileged. They are seeking spiritual fullness of life in addition to material fullness, blessing from above in addition to their wealth.

But Jesus rebuffs this pious middle-class hope. Fullness of life does not come when you already have everything. We first have to empty ourselves to receive God's fullness. Give away what you have, give it to the poor then you will have found what you are looking for. The story of the rich young man ends in sorrow; sorrow in the heart of the rich young man, for he is very rich - and he goes away. Perhaps he will become depressive, perhaps he will start drinking, perhaps he will cause an automobile accident. He wouldn't let him-

self be drawn into more life, fullness of life, sharing of life.

In many towns in West Germany you will see painted on walls the English words 'NO FUTURE'. The people who feel like this are young and energetic; yet they cannot imagine bringing a child into this world, they have stopped planting trees. Life in its fullness, the promise of Christ, produces only a weary smile. Sometimes their sorrow is turned outwards, in aggressiveness, often it is turned inwards, in depression. Life is empty.

Jesus, too, in our story goes sorrowfully on his way. "How hard it will be for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mk 10:23). Fullness of life, the kingdom of God, eternal life, all are destroyed by wealth of possessions, exploitation, injustice. But the rich young man doesn't know this, he is filled with hopeless sorrow and sorrowful hopelessness. Why are so many people in the rich world so empty? With a superfluity of things life itself becomes superfluous. Among the younger generation in particular today there is a strong and growing desire to break away from dependence on too many possessions. Henry David Thoreau said: "The possibilities of life diminish as so-called 'means' increase. The best thing a rich man can do to preserve his humanity is to realize the dreams he cherished when he was poor." Economics alone cannot explain it: they have everything, people say, what more do they want! I doubt, too, whether individual psychology, that opium of the middle-classes can offer much explanation here. I don't see that we need to know the rich young man's parents and analyse their relationship with their son before we can understand his history with God. What I think we need in fact if we are to understand the empty and meaningless life of the rich, is knowledge of God, theology.

God is the ground of our life: he it was who breathed the breath of life into humankind (Gen 2:7). If we hide ourselves from God behind the barrier of our many possessions so that God cannot touch us, then we die... the long death of the middle classes and also, now, of the elites of third world countries. Wealth acts as a wall more invincible by far than the famous walls of Jericho: we set ourselves apart, we make ourselves untouchable, and our wall is sound-proof so that we cannot hear the cries of the poor and oppressed. Apartheid is not just a political system in an African country; apartheid is a certain way of thinking, feeling and living without being conscious of what is happening around us. There is a way of doing theology in which the poor and economically exploited are never seen or heard - and that is apartheid theology. I am speaking here about my own social class, but I would also want to include all those from other economic situations who pursue the same ideals even though they may not yet have achieved them. Dear sisters and brothers from the third and second worlds, I beg of you: Do not follow our example! Claim back what we have stolen from you, but do not follow us. Otherwise, like the rich young man, you will have sorrowfully to bid farewell to Christ. Do not pursue the idea of 'fullness of life' as we have developed it in the western world. It is a delusion. It separates us from God, it makes us rich... and dead.

The spiritual emptiness of the rich is a result of the economic injustice on which they capitalize. We have chosen a system based on money and violence. The rich young man will have bouts of depression. He cannot change his life he can only make it secure. And he will have to keep making it more and more secure to prevent anything being taken away from him. So he stockpiles weapons; and the mild depression prevailing in so many European and North American churches is tantamount in practice to acquiescence in militarism. They have no hope because they trust in the deadly peace of the arms advocates. Money and violence go together: those who make money their God are bound to make 'security' their state ideology and armaments a political priority.

Some Christians in our countries are saying: What's so bad about safeguarding our security with arms? We're not actually going to use the bomb, just the threat of it. In reality, however, the bomb destroys the fullness of life Christ has promised to us. It destroys the life of the poor in the material sense, the life of the rich in the spiritual sense. It has become lodged inside us, it has taken possession of us. We will never know fullness of life while we live under the bomb which has become the most potent symbol in our world, the thing our politicians research and pay for, love and fear above all else, in other words, their God.

The wealth of the wealthy lies not just in their possessions but also, perhaps more so, in their power to destroy. The world I live in is rich beyond measure in death and ever more sophisticated means of killing. The bombs lying stored ready for use beneath the earth's surface and under the oceans in submarines, the quantities of explosives intended for every human being on earth are, I believe, targeted on God. The meaning of the arms race is this: God is to be eliminated from the earth once and for all. Even the bombs that have not yet been used are directed against God. Militarism is humanity's supreme effort of get rid of God once and for all, to undo creation and prevent redemption leading to fullness of life.

If it is true that a superfluity of things makes life superfluous, then the way to change is to become poorer. "Sell what you have", Jesus tells the rich middle-class young man, "and give to the poor". We cannot fill our inner emptiness with God at no cost to ourselves by some kind of cheap spirituality, as some people seem to imagine. We first have to empty ourselves outwardly of all that overfills us. Becoming empty for God means emptying ourselves and relinquishing or reducing all the possessions of our world: money and violence. To become poorer and rely less and less on violence, that is the change of heart which leads to fullness of life.

Jesus tried to bring the rich young man to break with his own world, with its attitudes and values, and his own privileged social class. Christ faces us with the same question: How long will you continue to go along with a world order which is based on exploitation and oppression? How long will you continue to benefit from and connive at the system which is dominated by 'the thief who comes to steal, to kill, to destroy'? As far as my country is concerned, this

question is a little easier to answer today than it was even three years ago.

To be honest, I have to admit that I would never have expected our traditional churches, which I have often felt to be a grave in which Christ is buried, to generate so much liberation and life. But God creates sons and daughters for himself from stones to be a ferment for peace, so why not from congregations as well? A few years ago many of the most thoughtful people I know longed to be in the third world because there the struggles are more clear-cut, fronts more clearly defined, hopes more immediate. "I wish I were in Nicaragua," one student wrote to me, "life in Christ would be possible there." To many of us it seemed that we could only find Christ at the side of the poor and not in our first world context. I suspect things have changed somewhat in this respect now. We do not live in El Salvador, but we do live under the domination of NATO. In its planning offices decisions are taken that affect our lives and the lives of other peoples. Sacrifices are being offered there to false gods and that is where our struggles must lie. Our historical task is to fight for peace and against militarism. This is how we can participate in the third world's struggle for liberation. No one who feels a bond with the poor has any reason to despair today nor to engage in senseless acts of destruction and self-destruction. Since the latest arms build-up began with a view to perpetuating the reign of terror, we know exactly where our El Salvador lies. Our Vietnam. Our Soweto. Our liberation struggle. Our conversion away from money and violence to justice and peace. Speaking of fullness of life, Paul also says, "and because there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord; thus we are transfigured into his likeness..." (2 Cor 3:18). This splendour shines out of the faces of those who have been converted to peace and justice.

Many Christians believe freedom from violence will only be possible in the Kingdom of God, while on earth war and poverty are inevitable. People who adopt this view, however, are separating God from his Kingdom and, like the rich young man, seeking an eternal life devoid of justice and a fullness of life devoid of love, which is an absurdity. Human richness lies in a person's relationships with others, in his or her being for others. Far from being decreased by sharing with others, the fullness of life increases as miraculously as the five loaves and two fishes. Christ sets us free from life-consuming poverty and life-sapping inner emptiness, he makes us free to enter into a new community in which we need no longer do violence to one another but can make one another happy. We have become one with the living love and do not need to postpone eternal life to another age than our own.

There is a passage in the Prophet Isaiah which speaks of the fullness of life, of its beauty and truth:

Is not this what I require of you as a fast:
to loose the fetters of injustice,
to untie the knots of the yoke,
to snap every yoke
and set free those who have been crushed ?

Is not sharing your food with the hungry,
taking the homeless poor into your house,
clothing the naked when you meet them
and never evading a duty to your kinsfolk ?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn and soon
you will grow healthy like a wound newly healed;
your own righteousness shall be your vanguard
and the glory of the Lord your rearguard.

.....
You shall be called Rebuilder of broken walls,
Restorer of houses in ruins. (Is 58:6-12)

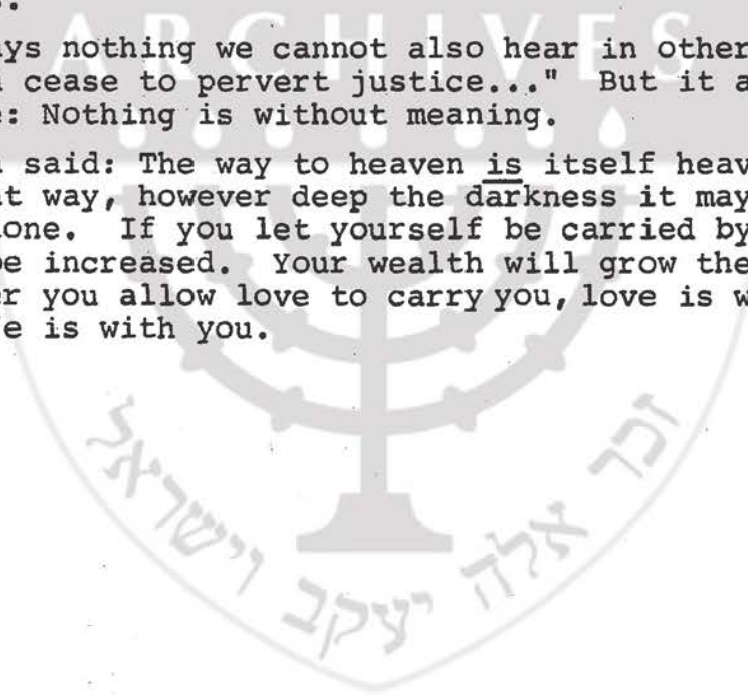
The passage speaks of the richness of life. Do not hold yourself in reserve, it tells us. Your fullness will grow with your extravagance. The richness of which this text speaks is the richness of being a human person, not the richness of having things. The richness of having is preserved in possessions, status, privileges. It is wealth gained by making others poor. The rich person of whom Isaiah speaks, who shares her food with the hungry and talks to those who are depressed, is not rich through having but rich in human relations. Such a woman has many friends. This does not mean an inward richness that enables her simply to overlook outward poverty and lack of freedom. The rich person described by Isaiah is aware of the injustice, the subjugation and destruction of life in society, but she is not prepared to come to terms with it. Her life has direction, a clear line, and its aim is that all should receive a name. Richness means gaining brothers and sisters. Richness in this sense is to be found in a tiny country like Nicaragua where fullness has grown out of want. Isaiah is not addressing people who simply receive orders and carry out assigned tasks. He is speaking to the forceful, rich human being who has been so much maligned and belittled in the Christian tradition. The Prophet counts on such people, and entices them to enter into the beauty of a real, fulfilled life.

It is a beautiful gospel - and our text is pure gospel. It promises a life free of contempt, contempt of others, contempt of myself. A life free of cynicism, free of fear, a rich life in which every hour is valuable. "Then shall your light break forth like the dawn!" New skin will grow quickly to heal your wounds. Even in the banality of everyday life, in the arid barrenness of our petrified environment "your soul will be satisfied." Things will not be meaningless. "Your dusk will be like noonday."

When I hear this text I am not faced with new demands - the demands are old and familiar - but I do find a tempting vision of life in its fullness. This is how we can live, this is what I want to be like. This is how I want people to think of me, this is the name I want to be called. When I hear this text, I am reminded afresh that we are strong, we can achieve something, we are not expendable. There is no call for us to sing all the year round that our strength avails nothing and we are lost. We have a new hymn: "Then your light will rise like dawn out of darkness, you will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." This is how it should be, this is how it will be. I shall have a name, I shall be answered, I shall no longer be a helpless, anxious being; the truth of the world, the meaning of life will be clearly revealed. "Here I am", says the Lord in this text; not far away in some other place, not at some future time or long ago with happier peoples, but here. This is where the meaning of everything is: Do not stand apart from your brothers and sisters then "your light will rise like dawn out of darkness."

Christianity says nothing we cannot also hear in other places in the world. "If you cease to pervert justice..." But it also holds out a final promise: Nothing is without meaning.

Teresa of Avila said: The way to heaven is itself heaven. At no point along that way, however deep the darkness it may lead through, are you ever alone. If you let yourself be carried by love, your strength will be increased. Your wealth will grow the more you share. Wherever you allow love to carry you, love is with you, the fullness of life is with you.



WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SIXTH ASSEMBLY - VANCOUVER 1983

Please return this form to the Assembly Desk
in Gage by noon on Tuesday, 26 July

P R O G R A M M E H E A R I N G S

On Thursday evening, 28 July, and Saturday morning, 5 August, there will be four simultaneous Programme Hearings, under the auspices of the Programme Guidelines Committee. These meetings will review the programme of the WCC as described in the Nairobi to Vancouver Report, and discuss guidelines for the programme of the WCC following this Assembly.

Please use this form to indicate your preference for the Hearing which you would like to attend. Attendance is limited by space available and it therefore may be necessary to ask you to join the group of your second choice.

Please mark 1st and 2nd choices

Programme Unit on Faith and Witness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme Unit on Justice and Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme Unit on Education and Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Secretariat	<input type="checkbox"/>

In order to help the Programme Guidelines Committee, please note here any comments you wish to make on specific points in the Nairobi to Vancouver Report or proposals regarding the future programme of the WCC.

Name Country

Church

World Council of Churches
SIXTH ASSEMBLY
24 July - 10 August 1983
Vancouver B.C., Canada

Document **AD-5**

To Dr Philip Potter
General Secretary
World Council of Churches

From the Vatican, 12 July 1983

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you" (1 Cor 16:23).
As the delegates and other participants of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches gather in Vancouver, I wish to assure you of my deep pastoral interest and closeness in prayer.

I am pleased that, for this important meeting in the service of the ecumenical movement, you have decided that the central theme would be: "Jesus Christ the life of the world". In doing this, you have reached out to Christians everywhere, to all who confess faith in Jesus Christ, believing that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). You have affirmed our common belief that Jesus is the crucified Saviour, the Redeemer of all, the Lord of life who was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4), the Risen Christ whose oneness with us in all things but sin has firmly established the dignity and worth of every human being.

Ecumenical endeavours such as this bear witness to the ever increasing longing of Christians today that the prayer of Christ may be fulfilled: "that they may be one" (Jn 17:22). This urgent task, which still encounters many difficulties, is indeed challenging and multi-faceted. It requires obedience to the will of God and cooperation with his grace. It demands persevering faith and steadfast hope. Above all, it impels us to constant prayer and continual conversion.

As I have made pastoral visits to the Catholic Church in various parts of the world, it has been a special pleasure for me to have met with representatives of a number of the member-churches of the World Council. Many also have come to Rome to further our common efforts of dialogue and mutual understanding. Such contacts have advanced the cause of Christian unity, and I trust that the present gathering in Vancouver will bring about even further progress

towards this goal for which we all long.

Upon all taking part in the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, I invoke the wisdom, light and peace of the Holy Spirit. With the words of Saint Paul I say: "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 16:24).



Barbados

Graduate nurse/midwife
Post-graduate preparation in teaching public
and administration

Teaching in schools of nursing
National Director of Nursing, University
Principal Nursing Officer, Jamaica
Nursing Consultant/Adviser, World Health
Caribbean Area
Associate Director and afterwards Director
Christian Medical Commission

Regional Y.W.C.A. Caribbean Area Chairman
World Y.W.C.A. - Member of the Executive
Vice-President, World Y.W.C.A. 1963-67
President, World Y.W.C.A. 1975
President, International Council of Adult

Dame of St. Andrews - title conferred by
the Queen on recommendation of the Barbados

Document TH-4

Citizenship: Barbados

Methodist

Professional Preparation:

Graduate nurse/midwife
Post-graduate preparation in teaching public health
and administration

Positions held:

Teaching in schools of nursing
National Director of Nursing, University of the West Indies
Principal Nursing Officer, Jamaica
Nursing Consultant/Adviser, World Health Organization,
Caribbean Area
Associate Director and afterwards Director of the WCC
Christian Medical Commission

Voluntary
Positions:

Regional Y.W.C.A. Caribbean Area Chairman - 13 years
World Y.W.C.A. - Member of the Executive Committee 1955-67
Vice-President, World Y.W.C.A. 1963-67
President, World Y.W.C.A. 1975
President, International Council of Adult Education, 1982

Other Bio-data:

Dame of St. Andrews - title conferred by Her Majesty the Queen on recommendation of the Barbados Government

CYNTHIA C: WEDEL

Age: 75 Residence: Alexandria, Virginia, USA Citizenship: USA

Episcopal Church [Anglican]

Retired psychologist

National chairperson of volunteers of the American Red Cross
Consultant on volunteers and voluntary organisations

Previous
experience:

National director youth work, Episcopal Church (1935-39)
Lecturer in psychology, American University Washington (1957-60)
Associate general secretary NCC (1962-69)

Associate director, Centre for a Voluntary Society (1969-73)
Executive director, Church Executive Development Board (1969-73)
National president, Church Women United, USA (1955-58)
Chairman, Broadcasting & Film Commission, NCCUSA (1957-60)
President, NCC (1969-72)
Member of board, NCCUSA (1955-)
Member, Vice Chairperson, WCC Dept. Laity (1961-68)
Member, WCC Comm. Men & Women in Church & Society (1950-61)
Member, Executive Council, Episcopal Church (1955-62)
Member, Joint Comm. on Ecumenical Relations (1958-69)

Other biodata: Widow of Theodore Wedel, Canon of Washington and Warden of the College of Preachers

THEODORE STYLIANOPOULOS

Age: 45 Residence: Needham, MA, USA Citizenship: USA
Teacher of New Testament theology at Holy Cross, Brookline (1967-)
Previous experience: Ordained priest in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese serving several parishes in the area of Holy Cross (1965)

Other biodata: Married to Fotini with four children

ALLAN AUBREY BOESAK

Age: 37 Citizenship: South African

Previous experience: President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches
Assessor of Synod, N.G. Sendingkerk, serving on a number of church committees
National Chairman, Association for Christian Students in Southern Africa
Member of the National Executive, South African Council of Churches
Speaker at national and international ecumenical gatherings

Main publications: Coming in out of the Wilderness, 1975
Farewell to Innocence, 1976

August 21, 1983

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES' MIDDLE EAST STATEMENT
IS A STUDY IN MORAL HYPOCRISY

RELIGION COMMENTARY

RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM* OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

The Middle East statement adopted last week by the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver "dripped with pious ecumenism wrapped around barbed wire" intended to isolate Israel as a pariah among the nations.

Thanks to the efforts of a small group of Western Christian leaders who consulted with official Jewish "guests" at the Assembly -- Rabbi Jordan Pearlson of Toronto, Dr. Zvi Werblowsky of Israel and myself -- the final WCC statement was an "improvement" over an earlier text promoted by Arab Christians who advocated a radical pro-PLO line.

The adopted Middle East text, as well as other foreign policy resolutions, made it clear that the World Council has become in the words of Time magazine, "an ecclesiastical clone of the United Nations... in its relentless denunciations of the sins of American (and Israeli) policy" and "a see-no-evil policy toward Communist (and Arab) regimes."

Under the chairmanship of Dr. William Thompson, a self-righteous American Presbyterian, the Middle East text did not make a single explicit reference to the destruction wrought on Lebanon by Syria and the PLO, while specifically denouncing Israel, in effect, as the focus of all evil in the Middle East.

They used language suggesting Israel's "discriminatory" policies toward Palestinians was like that of South Africa's apartheid toward blacks. They dishonestly accused Israel of inhibiting Moslem and Christian access to Jerusalem, without providing a shred of evidence. They invited the fair-minded United Nations, the peace-loving USSR and the murderous PLO to be central partners to Middle East negotiations.

And demonically, they sought to relieve Western Christians of any guilt for the Nazi holocaust and centuries of anti-Semitism, replacing it by guilt only for the Palestinians' plight.

Such moral hypocrisy hardly fulfills the WCC's proclaimed role of "ministry for reconciliation and witness for peace." If the media persists in savaging the WCC for its one-sided, obsessive anti-Western and anti-Israeli stances, the WCC has only itself to blame.

*Rabbi Tanenbaum is national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee.

07-29-83

Non-Christians for the first time address a plenary session of WCC

By Willmar Thorkelson
Religious News Service Correspondent

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (RNS)--Representatives of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam told an international gathering of Christians here how their traditions view life as a gift from God.

They took part in a plenary session of the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches devoted to an assembly sub-theme, "Life, A Gift of God," and made history in doing so.

Although there have been observers from non-Christian religions at previous assemblies, the assembly here marked the first time that a plenary session had been addressed by non-Christian representatives. At the New Delhi assembly in 1961, it was recalled, it was not even possible for people of other faiths to be accredited as press representatives.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, told the WCC delegates that "the central moral and human crisis of our time is the dignity of human life, which is being battered on every continent on earth."

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"What unites Jews and Christians," he said, as well as Moslems and others, "what binds them more powerfully than anything that separates them, is their conviction that every human life is precious in the eyes of God. none is expendable."

The rabbi pledged that "millions of Jews will join hands with you in the cause of God's human family."

Shri Shrivatsa Goswami, a Hindu of Vrindaban, India, said Hindu scriptures affirm that "whatever there is in creation is the Lord."

God is truth, consciousness, bliss, he said. "Each of us therefore partakes in this manifestation of God."

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Yusuf Khan Shakirov, from Tashkent in the Soviet Union, speaking in Russian, explained that Islamic teachings hold that life is the creation of the almighty Allah, and is the greatest gift of God.

Fourteen centuries ago, he said, the prophet Muhammad called people to be careful of the environment, knowing that life would become impossible if the environment was polluted.

Besides Rabbi Tanenbaum, another rabbi, Jordan Pearlson of Toronto, addressed a public program of the assembly arranged by the local Vancouver planning committee. Rabbi Pearlson and Anant Rambachan, spoke on some Jewish and Hindu perspectives of the assembly theme.

Mr. Rambachan began his address with a chanted prayer--"may we never despise each other. May our dialogue be fruitful." He spoke of the common inheritance in all religious traditions and said that dialogue was indispensable to any sincere effort of humanity. He then discussed the goals of life from the Hindu tradition.

Rabbi Pearlson, in presenting the Jewish perspective, said: "I can love you exactly where you are, but you can love me only as a potential Christian."

"Internally," he said, "each of us is complex, but we treat each other as monoliths. I, as a western, secularly-trained liberal, am not acceptable in some circles."

John Taylor, director of the WCC's interfaith dialogue committee, said dialogue is essential in promoting harmonious coexistence.

"Religion has for a long time been oil on a fire of conflict and interfaith dialogue is not only a contribution to the peace of mankind, it is also an occasion for witness."

"Every Christian must be a witness, but every Christian must also live in peace with neighbors," he declared.

DAILY NEWS
AND EVENTS

Issue No. 3

JULY 27, 1983

CANVAS

World Council
of Churches

Sixth Assembly

Vancouver, Canada

5 Faiths Represented

For the first time in its 35-year history, the World Council of Churches invited representatives of five world religions to address its Assembly. They spoke in the plenary on "Life, A Gift of God," bringing affirmations of life from their own sacred writings.

From Islamic teachings, Shayk Yusuf Khan Shakirov explained in Russian that life is the creation of the Almighty Allah, and is the greatest gift of God. Fourteen centuries ago the Prophet Muhammed called people to be careful of the environment, knowing that life would become impossible if the environment was polluted.

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miseries of life, so they may attain the "joy of peace". He quoted a brief passage from the Lotus Sutra.

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Jews and Christians are bound together, said Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, by the affirmation of the value of every human being as a child of God, deserving nurture and respect. Bemoaning that the world does not sustain 12 million refugees, although it spends \$400 billion yearly on nuclear weapons, he pledged "the millions of Jews will join hands with you in the cause of God's human family."



Peter Williams

Interfaith togetherness was demonstrated by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum of USA when he held the 6-month-old daughter of Mrs. Sithembiso Nyoni, a Zimbabwe Christian, as both waited to speak on the Assembly sub-theme: "Life, A Gift of God." Tuesday afternoon.



Canvas is published daily during the World Council of Churches' Sixth Assembly by the WCC Communications Department. Editorial team: Bruce Best, Hugh McCullum and Vic Jameson.

July 31, 1983

A JEWISH OBSERVER REPORTS ON WORLD COUNCIL
OF CHURCHES ASSEMBLY IN VANCOUVER

WINS RELIGION COMMENTARY

RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM* OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

As an official representative of the world Jewish community attending the World Council of Churches Assembly last week in Canada, I found the experience enriching, stimulating -- and troublesome.

The enrichment came from the opportunity it gave me to meet religious leaders literally from every part of the world. I even met a black Anglican Archbishop from Botswana who spoke fluent Yiddish.

The stimulation came from the privilege of listening to a series of frequently brilliant papers on the threat to human survival posed by the nuclear arms race, poverty, hunger, world refugees, and rampant fanaticism in many parts of the world.

As the first Jewish spokesman ever invited to address a World Council plenary of 4,000 delegates and guests, I told the international gathering that the Jewish people share many of these concerns. Given Judaism's emphasis on the sanctity of human life, I stated that world Jewry is prepared to collaborate in the struggle to assure human survival.

But what I found troublesome was an approach to Christian unity that seemed to ignore the powerful reality of religious pluralism in the world.

It was also unsettling to see how Arab Christians were using their Christianity to mount blatant one-sided, anti-Israel campaigns among the WCC delegates.

Next week, the resolutions on world affairs -- including the Middle East -- will be introduced. We will then have a clearer idea as to whether the World Council will be a reconciling or a polarizing force between peoples and nations.

*Rabbi Tanenbaum, who is national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, presents a weekly religion commentary over WINS-Westinghouse Broadcasting System.

07-29-83

Non-Christians for the first time address a plenary session of WCC

By Willmar Thorkelson
Religious News Service Correspondent

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (RNS)--Representatives of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam told an international gathering of Christians here how their traditions view life as a gift from God.

They took part in a plenary session of the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches devoted to an assembly sub-theme, "Life, A Gift of God," and made history in doing so.

Although there have been observers from non-Christian religions at previous assemblies, the assembly here marked the first time that a plenary session had been addressed by non-Christian representatives. At the New Delhi assembly in 1961, it was recalled, it was not even possible for people of other faiths to be accredited as press representatives.

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Rabbi: Tanelbaum

P. O. BOX No. 66 • 150, ROUTE DE FERNEY • 1211 GENEVA 20 • TELEPHONE: (022) 98 94 00 • TELEX: 23 423 OIK CH • CABLE: OIKOUMENE GENEVA

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PROGRAMME UNIT ON FAITH AND WITNESS

Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies

June 1st, 1983
JBT/lw

Dear Friends,

As the Assembly draws nearer, we realize that some of you will already be receiving invitations and making appointments. Accordingly, I have prepared a draft which indicates ways in which the three layers of the Assembly, namely the official, the visitors and the public programmes interlock. From these you will observe that, even though the dialogue issue may not have such particular focus and publicity as was the case at the last Assembly in Nairobi, there will nevertheless be many places when the issue becomes visible.

You will recall that the pattern of this Assembly is to avoid major addresses and lectures so as to permit the maximum number of shorter interventions in terms of panel discussions, group work, etc.. None of the almost daily group sessions appear on the attached list but it should be noted that they may be the occasion for some of the best discussion. Nor does the attached list indicate those plenary sessions in the last three days of the Assembly when the Assembly will discuss and adopt various statements on public issues and on programme priorities for the future; needless to say those sessions may be particularly important for our dialogue concern.

We realize what a long period of time you are being asked to offer to the Assembly, but we hope that it will be time which is full of interest and stimulus for you as well as providing us with the enrichment of your various contributions and co-operation.

My colleagues join me in sending our warmest good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. John B. Taylor
Director

Encl.

P.S. Would you please send back the official registration form if you have not already done so. Thank you very much!

ASSEMBLY ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

Official Programme, Visitors and Public Programme

JULY 24	20.00	O/P/V	Interfaith Reception in Asia Centre (by invitation) ✓
<u>MON</u> 25	9.30 - 11.00	O	Official Welcome to Guests during first Business Session (Reply by Dr Gopal Singh)
	1 p.m. 13.00	P	"Life of the World" - Jewish and Hindu perspective: Dr D. Jay*, Rabbi J. Pearlson, Anant Anand Rambachan
	8 p.m. - gymnasium		
<u>Tues</u> 26	16.30 - 18.00 4 ³⁰ - 6 ⁰⁰	○	Readings by guests of other faiths during plenary presentation on sub theme I "Life, the Gift of God" (Goswami/Shakirov/Buddhist and Tanenbaum)
<u>WED</u> 27	11.00 - 12.30	V	Christian-Muslim dialogue: Dr D. Jay*, Dr Inamullah Khan, Shaykh Kattan+, Dr D.C. Mulder
<u>THURS</u> 28	14.30	P	"Life in Community" - Muslim and native Canadian perspective: Prof. M. Talbi, Mr A. Solomon, Dr D. Eck*
<u>FRI</u> 28	20.00 - 21.30 8 ³⁰ - 9 ³⁰	○	Hearing on WCC Programmes - DFI programme discussed under Unit I
	28 12.15 - 13.15	P	Miss P. Webb - downtown presentation on interfaith
<u>SAT</u> 29	11.00 - 12.30	V	Christian-Hindu-Buddhist dialogue: Dr D. Jay*, Shrivatsa Goswami, Sri Lankan, Hindu woman, Rishho-kosei-kai, Samartha
31		O/P/V	Festival of Cultures
AUGUST			
1-5		○	See especially Issue Group I "Witnessing in a Divided World" although Guests of other faiths will contribute to other Issue Groups as well
1	11.00 - 12.30	V	Christian-Jewish dialogue: Dr D. Jay*, Mrs J. Gerber+, Vancouver rabbi, Dr C. Schoneveld, Christian woman
1	20.00 - 21.00	P	"Witnessing in a Divided World" - Buddhist and Sikh perspectives: Dr C. Schoneveld*, Dr G. Singh, Dr S. Sivaraksa
2	14.30 - 16.00	V	The Work of the WCC - presentation by DFI: Dr D. Mulder* and DFI staff
2	20.00 - 21.30	P	Three religions on P and J: Dr V. Goldbloom, Shaykh Shakirov & Dr Inamullah Khan, Canon Lloyd Casson, local interfaith member*
4	9.30 - 11.00	○	Plenary on Peace and Justice - proposed response from floor by Dr Inamullah Khan
4	14.30 - 16.00	V	Traditional religions: Dr D. Jay*, Mr A. Solomon, Miss G. George, Prof. N.K. Dzobo+, Hawaiian
6-10		○	Dialogue issues may be raised in reports of any Issue Groups, Programme Guidelines committee, Message committee, etc.
8	13.00 - 14.15	P	Interfaith panel: Dr Stanley Samartha*

O = Official programme
V = Visitors' programme
P = Public programme

* = overall Moderator
+ = other faith Moderator

July 27, 1983



Dear Marc,

It was a nice meeting

you yesterday after your very precise but meaningful address. I have been able also to glean useful and sustaining elements from your paper. Thanks

I wonder whether you are free today at 8pm (20.00pm). If you are, kindly drop a line where we can ^{meet} and I shall be there. But if you are not, do not hesitate to fix a date. I can assure you that I shall endeavour to come, unless it becomes extremely difficult.

At lunch time, I shall look into the messages ~~box~~ to hear from you.

Thanks, and Sharon
(☐ & ψ)

Rev. Dr. David Okeke





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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PROGRAMME UNIT ON FAITH AND WITNESS

Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies

June 29th, 1983

JBT/lw

TO GUESTS OF OTHER FAITHS AT VANCOUVER

Dear Friends,

First of all I thought you would like to see the copies of the Mauritius report. Please order extra copies from us if you need them.

We are looking forward to seeing you at Vancouver and hope that your journey goes well. We are sorry about delays in travel arrangements for those of you who asked for assistance from this side. Do not hesitate to call us if you are anxious.

Some of you have already received the name of a Vancouver family who will probably meet you on arrival and invite you for a meal to their home during the course of the Assembly. However, the designation host family does not mean that you will be staying with them. Unless you have informed us that you are making other arrangements, you will be staying on the Campus in accordance with the request made on your registration form.

I shall be at your disposal throughout the Assembly to give you any possible help. Please excuse me if I am not able to meet all of you at the airport as I should wish but there should be good reception facilities there. Please make sure that you inform the Assembly Office at Vancouver of your time of arrival; you will have received a printed form for this purpose.

I am including for your information a list of the official "guests" of other faiths who have now accepted to come to Vancouver. Unfortunately, the names of "visitors" of other faiths are not yet fully known, but you will meet some of these at the reception on the first Sunday evening together with friends of other faiths from Vancouver itself.

If you have any particular posters or material which you would like us to display or distribute, we shall endeavour to find a suitable place for these in the Asian Centre, although you will appreciate that space is limited.

Permit me to raise a slightly delicate question. We are grateful for the sacrifice of time which you are all making and we realize that some of you may have foreign exchange restrictions. Please feel free to ask me in Vancouver if you need reimbursement of any costs and if it would help to have up to C\$ 50.- for small local expenses such as laundry and airport tax if applicable.

With warm good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

GUESTS OF OTHER FAITHS AT VANCOUVER

I. HINDUS

Shri Shrivatsa GOSWAMI
Gambhira
Radharamana Ghera
Vrindaban UP 281 121
India

Leader of one of the leading spiritual renewal movements in North India.

Dr. Mrs. NAMBIAR
Daulat Ram College
Delhi University
New Delhi 110 007
India

Principal of Daulat Ram College,
Delhi University.

Dr. Anant Anand RAMBACHAN
Department of Theology and
Religious Studies
Leeds University
Leeds LS2 9JT
United Kingdom

A young researcher and lecturer from
Trinidad who is open to social
implications of Hinduism.

II. BUDDHISTS

The Rev. Abbess FUNG Wing Ming
Por Yea Nunnery
P.O. Box 176
Shatin N.T.
Hong Kong

Scholar in both Buddhist and Christian
thought. Rev. Fung Wing Ming is the
Abbess of the Por Yea Buddhist Nunnery
in Hong Kong.

Mr. Masuo NEZU
2-11-1, Wada
Suginami-ku
Tokyo
166 Japan

Representative of Rissho Kosei-kai
(lay Buddhist movement including
Niwano Peace Foundation).

Mr. Sulak SIVARAKSA
232/9 Nares Road
Bangkok 10500
Thailand

A Thai Buddhist layman who has long
experience of working with Christians
through ACFOD, etc.

Ven. Tissa Nanatilaka THERA
Post Graduate Institute of Pali
and Buddhist Studies
University of Kelaniya
Sri Lanka

Lecturer in the Post-Graduate Institute
of Pali and Buddhist Studies in the
University of Sri Lanka.

III. JEWS

Rabbi Jordan PEARLSON
Temple Sinai Congregation
210 Wilson Avenue
Toronto M5M 3BI
Canada

Rabbi of a major Canadian Congregation,
he is active in the Canadian Jewish
Congress and in social and political
affairs in Toronto.

Rabbi Marc TANENBAUM
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th St.
New York, N.Y. 10022
U.S.A.

Director, Department of Interreligious
Affairs of the American Jewish
Committee

IV. MUSLIMS

Sheikh Ibrahim KATTAN
Office of the Supreme Judge
Amman
Jordan

A senior, traditional Muslim leader/
judge who has taken part in various
international Christian-Muslim dialogues
and presides over Academy for Islamic
Research and Jerusalem committee.

Dr. Inamullah KHAN
World Muslim Congress
P.O. Box 5030
Karachi 2
Pakistan

General Secretary of World Muslim Con-
gress, Burmese in origin, Pakistani
by nationality.

Shaykh Yusuf Khan SHAKIROV
Vice-Chairman of Central Asian
Muslims
Khamza Street 103
700055 Tashkent 55
U.S.S.R.

One of new leaders of Soviet Muslims.

Professor Mohamed TALBI
11 rue de Téhéran
2000 Le Bardo
Tunis
Tunisia

A distinguished and articulate theo-
logian with a long experience of
Christian-Muslim dialogue including
dogmatic issues of scriptures,
Christology, etc.

V. SIKH

Dr. GOPAL SINGH
7 Poorvi Marg
Vasant, Vihar
New Delhi
India

One of the official guests at Nairobi.
Formerly ambassador and now Chairman
of Government of India panel on
minorities/scheduled castes, etc.

VI. TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Mr. Art SOLOMON
r.r. 2 Alban
Ontario pOm la0
Canada

Native spiritual leader of the Objibway
People, proposed by the Canadian
Council of Churches

NEWS

FROM THE

COMMITTEE

aje

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, July 1.....Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, has been designated one of the two official guests to represent the world Jewish community at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, July 24 through August 10.

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), a coalition body of major Jewish organizations from throughout the world, designated Rabbi Tanenbaum, together with Rabbi Jordan Pearlson of Toronto, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, to represent the Jewish people at the world assembly of Protestant and Orthodox bodies.

Both Jewish religious leaders will present papers at the assembly on the theme of "Judaism and the Life of the World." The WCC has invited the Jewish guests to participate fully in the assembly's deliberations, together with representatives from Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, African religions, and other religious and social justice groups.

Both Rabbis Tanenbaum and Pearlson are expected to take part in eight workshop groups dealing with the following themes:

- a) Witnessing a divided world; b) Taking steps toward unity; c) Moving towards participation; d) Healing and sharing life in community;
- e) Confronting threats to peace and survival; f) Struggling for justice and human dignity; g) Learning in community; and h) Communicating with conviction.

Among the issues that the rabbis will be addressing will be those of Israel-Arab relations and human rights in the Soviet Union and in other parts of the world.

-more-

Howard I. Friedman, President; Theodore Ellenoff, Chairman, Board of Governors; Alfred H. Moses, Chairman, National Executive Council; Robert S. Jacobs, Chairman, Board of Trustees.

Donald Feldstein, Executive Vice President

Washington Office, 2027 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 • Europe hq.: 4 Rue de la Bienfaisance, 75008 Paris, France • Israel hq.: 9 Ethiopia St., Jerusalem, 95149, Israel

South America hq.: (temporary office) 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022 • Mexico-Central America hq.: Av. Ejercito Nacional 533, Mexico 5, D.F.

CSAE 1707

Rabbi Tanenbaum recently attended a liaison committee meeting of the World Council and IJCIC in Geneva, where plans for the Vancouver assembly were discussed.

Dr. Gerhardt Riegner, executive director emeritus of the World Jewish Congress, is chairman of IJCIC.

Founded in 1906, the American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. It combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews at home and abroad and seeks improved human relations for all people everywhere.

6/30/83
83-960-232

A, CP, EJP, PP, REL, Z



07-08-83

Gallup Poll shows most evangelicals favor verifiable nuclear arms freeze

By William Bole
Religious News Service Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (RNS) -- More than three-quarters of evangelicals expressing an opinion on the arms race favor an immediate, verifiable nuclear arms freeze, according to a poll commissioned by the National Association of Evangelicals.

The NAE, which has avoided taking a position on a nuclear freeze, was the group which gave President Reagan a warm response at its convention last March when he called the Soviet Union the "focus of evil" in the modern world and attacked religious supporters of a nuclear freeze.

Yet, despite widespread reports that the president was "preaching to the converted" at the convention, the NAE survey shows that 77 percent of the evangelicals expressing an opinion on the arms race "would favor an immediate verifiable freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons." The survey was conducted by The George Gallup Organization.

The NAE, however, played down that finding and said that survey results show that "approval of a nuclear freeze is heavily dependent on any such freeze being verifiable and bilateral." Less than 20 percent of those polled favored a unilateral nuclear freeze by the United States.

The NAE also reported that 85 percent of those with an opinion "believe that it is not inconsistent with their biblical faith to support possession of nuclear weapons for defensive purposes only." Commenting on that finding the group stated: "This view stands in sharp contrast to the view which questions the morality of nuclear deterrence under any circumstances."

The survey found, in addition, that 41 percent of those polled approved of President Reagan's handling of the arms race, while less than that, 26 percent, disapproved, and one-third were undecided.

Generally, the poll found that evangelicals' views on the arms race are in step with those of the general public, also included in the survey, despite the popular image of evangelicals as more hard-line on the issue. For instance, the 77 percent of evangelicals who registered favor for a nuclear freeze compared with 82 percent support generally among those taking a view on it. And that support, among both evangelicals and non-evangelicals, slipped substantially when they were asked if the U.S. should freeze weapons unilaterally -- to 18 percent of evangelicals and 24 percent in general.

In recent months, evangelicals have become more visible in opposing the arms race. In one religious demonstration in May spearheaded by the Washington-based evangelical community Sojourners, close to 300 people were arrested for praying inside the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol on the day after Pentecost Sunday.

The random Gallup poll consisted of in-person interviews with 1,540 adults at 300 locations from May 13 to 16. Of those, 17 percent described themselves as evangelicals who, according to the NAE, are "Christians with a high view of the Word of God, regarding it as inspired and trustworthy; . . . say that they have been born again, that is, experienced a conversion when they committed themselves to Jesus Christ; and . . . have urged others to believe in Jesus Christ or receive him as Savior."

The National Association of Evangelicals is made up of more than 36,000 congregations from 78 denominations and has a membership of 3.5 million. Affiliates include World Relief, an international relief agency, and the National Religious Broadcasters.

07-08-83

Two Jewish delegates will attend World Council of Churches assembly

By Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) -- Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, and Rabbi Jordan Pearlson, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, will represent the world Jewish community at the World Council of Churches' assembly in Vancouver.

They were designated as the two official Jewish guests for the WCC assembly by the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, a coalition of major Jewish organizations from throughout the world. The coalition is chaired by Dr. Gerhard Riegner, executive director emeritus of the World Jewish Congress.

Rabbi Tanenbaum of New York and Rabbi Pearlson of Toronto will present papers at the July 24-August 10 assembly on the theme of "Judaism and the Life of the World." The WCC has invited the Jewish guests to participate in the assembly's deliberations, together with representatives from Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, African religions, and other religious and justice groups.

The rabbis will address issues including those of Israeli-Arab relations, and human rights in the Soviet Union and other parts of the world. Rabbis Tanenbaum and Pearlson are expected to take part in eight workshop groups dealing with subjects including unity, healing and sharing life, peace and survival, justice and human dignity, learning in community, and communicating with conviction.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date July 12, 1983

to Marc Tanenbaum

from Joyce Kaplan

subject Press at Vancouver meeting

Most of the major religious writers will be in Vancouver, all will be doing something about the meeting, and all are interested in talking with you. One problem, however, is that several of them will be there only for the last few days of the meeting, and I gather that that's when you will not be there.

So, let's talk about how we can work around this little obstacle.

Here's a rundown of their plans:

Bill Bell -- Not going, & will be out of the country on vacation from July 19, but is going to write something beforehand; if you can phone him before then to give him some remarks, he might be able to include them (949-3785)

Joe Berger -- will be in Vancouver for second half of meeting (he, and all those who said something like this, weren't yet sure of exact dates)

Ken Briggs -- will be in Vancouver for second half

Jim Castelli -- not going but will probably do something on it. Judging from past performance, I think Jim would probably use some part of a statement if we had one to send.

George Cornell -- will be there throughout; will be staying at the Four Seasons, so you can look him up there if you don't find each other at the meetings

Mike McManus -- doesn't yet know if he's going

Dick Ostling -- will be there for last few days

more

Religious News Service -- Bill Thorkelsen of Minneapolis is covering for them and will be there throughout. I haven't reached him yet but I hope to, and will let him know that you'll be there.

Ken Woodward -- not certain if he's going, but if he does go it will be for the last few days

Dave Anderson is on vacation, but I'll let you know what I find out when I reach him; and Marjorie Hyer is going to take material from the wires.

To repeat, all those I spoke to showed definite interest in including your statements in whatever Vancouver stories they ultimately do, so we should make a real effort to get material to them.

cc: Mort Yarmon



Ellie's copies for Tannenbaum, Ruder, Shuster
MAY 2-3 1983
Feldstein - Resnikoff
please

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date May 17, 1983
to Abe Karlikow
from M. Bernard Resnikoff
subject Attached Report

DR. D. FELDSTEIN

MAY 24 1983

Attached is a report on a consultation on the WCC Convention to take place this August in Vancouver. It was prepared in the form of a report should you find it suitable for this purpose.

My guess is that you will want to share this report, at the very least, with Marc and with Zack. I understand that Marc is the designated observer, or even guest, at the convocation.

Also, for your information, I want to give you the names of the persons present: in the Chair was Nissim Yaish, head of the World Church Department, and he was joined by Asher Naim, Head of the Foreign Office Department of Information. The other representatives were Zvi Werblowsky, Joseph Emmanuel, Goeffrey Wigoder, Natan Lerner, Harry Wall, Lucian Harris of the WZO, and myself.

Let me know what disposition was made of this report. Kind regards.



REPORT

From the Israel Office of the American Jewish Committee

Rehov Ethiopia 9, Jerusalem 95 149 Tel. 228862, 233551 Cable: Wishom, Jerusalem

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CONVOCATION

A rare and rather remarkable consultation took place this week, convened by and held in the offices of the Division of World Church Communities of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In attendance were the Division Director, who was in the Chair, the Director of the Information Division of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, lay and professional representatives of the Israel Interfaith Association, the Anti-Defamation League, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee -- nine all told.

The meeting opened with a pessimistic report by the Chairman, concerning the potential for good of the forthcoming convocation in Vancouver, Canada, this summer, to which a minimum of 1,500 persons are expected. He presented and we discussed the Background Information brochures, prepared by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and the Commission on InterChurch Aid, Refugee and World Service of the WCC, in association with the Middle East Council of Churches. Two such brochures were analyzed, the most recent one of which is entitled "Invasion of Lebanon -- Human Rights Violations in the West Bank." In that document are such invidious statements or innuendos as: "Israel's indifference to international law and public opinion"; that Israel is not interested in any peace plan; the policy of wholesale destruction in the West Bank of what existed before 1967; the unsettling reference to the residents of Southern Lebanon as the Palestinians of the "North Bank"; the rather sudden extension of Israel's declared security zone as the establishment of a 25-40 mile security area; and concludes with a plea that the "obvious" attempt by Israel permanently to occupy the "North Bank" must be stopped. Elsewhere, Ninan Koshy, Project Director, concludes that there is still a greater need for dialogue in Christian-Jewish relations, but then adds ominously that it may be necessary to "seek new partners for dialogue."

While there were developments since the promulgation of these brochures, and Philip Potter has assured WJC Director Reiger that new partners would not be sought, the group nevertheless decided that, despite these discouraging events, an Israeli representative either as a guest or as an observer, should attend these meetings. Prof. Zvi Werblowsky agreed to go, even as it was noted that Gideon Shomron of the Israel Embassy in the United States will attend as well. But, even more significant, was the expressed plan to adequately prepare for these meetings, and, in this connection, attention was focussed on the IJCIC meeting. We must not yield, it was said, and even if these meetings show more and more Arab involvement simultaneously with less and less Jewish involvement, this trend must be fought, partly by assuring that an Israeli attends all such consultative meetings.

As a consequence, it was decided that the Jewish representatives of IJCIC in Israel send a delegate to the June IJCIC meeting in Geneva, and that we share with them, even as I share now with you, the conclusions and decisions made.

This consisted, in the main, of the decision rapidly to issue a bulletin in response to the last WCC Background Information report. This will consist of two parts: the first one will be an essay dealing with the political, international and juridicial questions raised in the opening portions of the Backgrounder. The second part will deal with a point-by-point rebuttal of all the specific allegations of human rights violations. The second part will be prepared in association with the designated representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Israel Defense Forces, and the Foreign Office liaison officer for the military authorities. Thought was also given to the distribution of the pamphlet to be published. A variety of points of view were presented. Then, as a matter of tactics, it was suggested that the text be forwarded to the WCC with the demand that, in the interest of fairness and balance, they publish and distribute to the addressees of the original pamphlets the material we will be providing. Should they decline, then it will be published separately with the announcement that the WCC declined to disseminate this information.

The two pamphlets in question are so clearly and blatantly political in nature, and biased in presentation, so bereft of any redeeming features that one might reasonably expect from a church-related body, that this consultation adjourned not with dismay -- we are too hardy for that -- but with no illusions about what might take place in Vancouver.

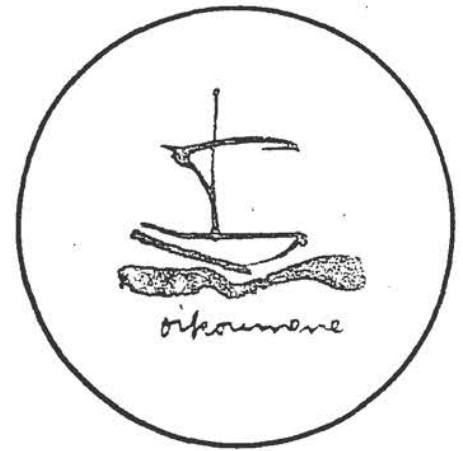
MBR/sw

May 16, 1983

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

SIXTH ASSEMBLY

VANCOUVER 1983



July 13, 1983

Dear Friends,

It is our understanding that you will be attending the World Council of Churches Assembly in Vancouver this Summer. That provides an excellent opportunity to bring together those of us who have an expressed interest in Christian Jewish relations.

We are confident that matters of mutual concern will emerge at the Assembly about which we may want to have some advance discussion early in the meeting. All of us will be called upon to participate in many activities surrounding the regular program of the Assembly. With this in mind, I send you this brief note of welcome and encouragement.

As Moderator of the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People of the WCC I would like to invite you to join me and some of our colleagues, both Christian and Jew, for a reception during the first week of the Assembly in Vancouver. We will meet on Wednesday evening, July 27, 1983 from 8:00 to 10:00 PM. at a place which is currently being determined by the WCC staff in Vancouver.

When you arrive in Vancouver, please check your mailbox at the Assembly for a note which will give you the location for the meeting. You may also contact Allen Brockway, Joan Campbell or myself if you have any questions.

A rare opportunity has presented itself and we hope you will be able to join us in Vancouver. Hoping to see you there,

Yours,

Krister Stendahl

A wine and cheese reception has been scheduled for us in the Totem Park Residence, Nootka Unit Lounge, main floor. We look forward to seeing you Wednesday night.

Policy Reference Comm. -

ASSEMBLY ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

Official Programme, Visitors and Public Programme

JULY 24	20.00	O/P/V	Interfaith Reception in Asia Centre (by invitation)
25	9.30 - 11.00	O	Official Welcome to Guests during first Business Session (Repl Archb. Scott by Dr Gopal Singh) Sikh, Indian, foot
	13.00	P	"Life of the World" - Jewish and Hindu perspective: Dr D. Jay*, Rabbi J. Pearlson, Anant Anand Rambachan
26	16.30 - 18.00	O	Readings by guests of other faiths during plenary presentation on sub theme I "Life the Gift of God" (Goswami/Shakirov/Nezu, and Tanenbaum)
	Hebrew		
27	11.00 - 12.30	V	Christian-Muslim dialogue: Dr D. Jay*, Dr Inamullah Khan, Shaykh Kattan, Dr D.C. Mulder
28	14.30	P	"Life in Community" - Muslim and native Canadian perspective: Prof. M. Talbi, Mr A. Solomon, Dr D. Eck*
28	20.00 - 21.30	O	Hearing on WCC Programmes - DFI programme discussed under Unit I / written submissions Nairobi to Vancouver - official report - Guidelines
28	12.15 - 13.15	P	Miss P. Webb - downtown presentation on interfaith
29	11.00 - 12.30	V	Christian-Hindu-Buddhist dialogue: Dr D. Jay*, Shrivatsa Goswami, Sri Lankan, Hindu woman, Rishsho-kosei-kai, Samart
	Life Gift of God		
31	Confirmation Day in Fullness in Unity	O/P/V	Festival of Cultures
AUGUST 1-5		O	See especially Issue Group I "Witnessing in a Divided World" although Guests of other faiths will contribute to other Issue Groups as well
1	11.00 - 12.30	V	Christian-Jewish dialogue: Dr D. Jay*, Mrs J. Gerber*, Vancouver rabbi, Dr C. Schoneveld, Christian woman
1	20.00 - 21.00	P	"Witnessing in a Divided World" - Buddhist and Sikh perspectives: Dr C. Schoneveld*, Dr G. Singh, Dr S. Sivaraksa
2	14.30 - 16.00	V	The Work of the WCC - presentation by DFI: Dr D. Mulder* and DFI staff
2	20.00 - 21.30	P	Three religions on P and J: Dr V. Goldbloom, Shaykh Shakirov, Dr Inamullah Khan, Canon Lloyd Casson, local interfaith *
3	Afternoon	P	Academy of Judaic, Xn. & Islamic Studies (L.A.)-presentation member
4	9.30 - 11.00	O	Plenary on Peace and Justice - proposed response from floor by Dr Inamullah Khan
4	14.30 - 16.00	V	Traditional religions: Dr D. Jay*, Mr A. Solomon, Miss G. George, Prof. N.K. Dzobo*, Hawaiian
6-10		O	Dialogue issues may be raised in reports of any Issue Groups, Programme Guidelines committee, Message committee, etc.
8	13.00 - 14.15	P	Interfaith panel: Dr Stanley Samartha*

O = Official programme
V = Visitors' programme
P = Public programme

* = overall Moderator
+ = other faith Moderator



P.O. BOX No. 66 • 150, ROUTE DE FERNEY • 1211 GENEVA 20 • TELEPHONE: (022) 98 94 00 • TELEX: 23 423 OIK CH • CABLE: OIKOUMENE GENEVA

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022
USA

May 25, 1983
AB/rp

Dear Rabbi Tannenbaum,

We are planning to circulate before the assembly plenary session, in which you will participate, a sheet of short biographical information on the respective participants.

→ Would you be so kind to send as soon as possible a short curriculum vitae of not more than 200 words. = 6/13

We are much looking forwards to receiving a draft text of your presentation in the very near future.

With kind regards and good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

A.J. van der Bent

A.J. van der Bent
Coordinator of the
Plenary Sessions



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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

GENERAL SECRETARIAT
Sixth Assembly Office

RABBI MARC TANNENBAUM
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
165 EAST 56TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022
U.S.A.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

21 March 1983
KR/bb

Dear Rabbi Tannenbaum,

It gives me great pleasure to invite you, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, to be present as a guest at our forthcoming Sixth Assembly to be held from 24 July - 10 August 1983 in Vancouver, Canada. You will know from previous correspondence from my colleagues how deeply we appreciate your readiness to attend the Assembly and thereby to contribute to our common human quest for peace and understanding.

You will already have received some documentation about the Assembly and more will follow. Please find enclosed some practical information and a registration form which I would ask you to return as promptly as possible.

I should like to thank you in advance if you are able to help us in covering some or all of your expenses, but I wish to emphasise that our invitation is not conditional upon that.

We look forward to welcoming you in Vancouver.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser,
acting General Secretary



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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

June 29, 1983
AB/rp

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum,

The time is rapidly approaching for the opening of the World Council's Sixth Assembly in Vancouver, Canada. Christians throughout the world are looking forward to this event with enthusiasm and hope.

This general letter is sent to all plenary presenters to insure a common understanding, even though not all its contents apply to all presenters in the same way or to the same degree. Please apply the general guidelines to your own particular situation.

1) Presentation Time Limit. Many manuscripts have been submitted which do not adhere to the prescribed time limits. While there is no longer enough time left to edit and reduce the written text in its various translations, we will nevertheless adhere strictly to the time limits designated in the oral presentations. For the sake of your co-presenters in each tightly-integrated programme, unfortunately you cannot be allowed to speak beyond the limit assigned.

We therefore urgently request that you time your talk orally, and then reduce material in order to remain within the time limits allocated for your oral presentation. Please do not forget that you will have to speak rather slowly in order that the interpreters can follow you. (It would be very embarrassing to have to ask you publicly to interrupt your speech before its completion if you have transgressed on someone else's assigned time).

Please be assured that the text you have sent us or will send us will be typed out in full, translated into the various languages and distributed during the respective plenary sessions.

2) Missed Deadlines. Several of you have not yet submitted the final text of your manuscripts or the requested bibliographical data. By the time you receive this letter, most of you should also have received a telex. Please respond at once to these urgent appeals.

Be assured that we are deeply grateful for these extra voluntary efforts requested of you in addition to your normal duties. We make these special appeals in recognition of your superior gifts and deep commitments. Many, many thanks.

We wish you a safe and happy trip to Vancouver!

Ans J. van der Bent

Ans J. van der Bent
Coordinator of Plenary Sessions

NEW YORK - Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, has been designated one of the two official guests to represent the world Jewish community at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, July 24 through Aug. 10.

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), a coalition body of major Jewish organizations from throughout the world, designated Rabbi Tanenbaum together with Rabbi Jordan Perlson, of Toronto, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress (?), to represent the Jewish people at the world assembly of Protestant and Orthodox bodies.

Both Jewish religious leaders will present papers at the assembly on the theme of "Judaism and the Life of the World." The WCC has invited the Jewish guests to participate fully with in the assembly's deliberations together with representatives from Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, African religion and other religious and social ~~group~~ justice groups.

~~That~~ Both Rabbis Tanenbaum and Perlson are expected to take part in eight workshop groups dealing with the following themes:

a) Witnessing in a Divided World; b) Taking Steps toward unity; c) Moving towards participation; d) Healing and sharing life in community; e) Confronting threats to peace and survival; f) Struggling for justice and human ~~community~~ dignity; g) Learning in community; and h) Communicating with conviction.

Among

~~Among~~ the issues that the Rabbis will be addressing will be those of Israel-Arab relations and human rights in the Soviet Union and in other parts of the world.

Rabbi Tanenbaum recently attended a liaison committee meeting of the World Council and IJCIC in Geneva where plans for the Vancouver assembly were discussed.

Dr. Gerhard Riegner, executive director emeritus of the World Jewish

J U D A I S M

A Presentation before the Sixth Assembly
of the World Council of Churches,
Vancouver, British Columbia, July 24-August 10, 1983

by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious
Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee,
representing the International Jewish Committee for
Interreligious Consultations.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

I Moral and Ethical Values and Ideals in Judaism

The Jewish 'way of life' has its origins in the experience of the Divine Presence in the midst of the decisive events of the Exodus and of Sinai, events which have altered the entire course of human history. The children of Israel experienced the reality of the Lord of history through His involvement in their liberation from physical oppression, persecution, massacre, and injustices as 'slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt'. To Pharaoh, who was worshipped as a divine emperor and who was the source of law, never its servant, the Israelite slaves were regarded as chattel, 'the untouchables' of ancient Egypt.

At Sinai, the Israelites had a transforming experience of Divine Revelation as moral will which was ratified by an everlasting Covenant. Henceforth, the Israelites are perceived by God to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. What an extraordinary Divine-human scenario! Yesterday, they were slaves, the outcasts of history; now an entire people are stamped with the dignity of priesthood and holiness, and are set on the course of history with a messianic task of redemption in society and through history until the coming of the Kingdom.

Israel's religion, Prof David Flusser asserts, was a break-

through in human consciousness. The God of Israel initiated a new era in the history of mankind, introducing a new concept of justice—which is the central message of His revelation—an uncompromising moral law, and an original social order to be established paradigmatically in the Holy Land of Palestine (see *The Holy Year and Its Origins in the Jewish Jubilee Year*, by this writer, published by the Vatican Office for the Holy Year, 1975, Vatican City) conceived in this justice. This postulate of individual and social justice was not to be limited to Israel only. The Creator of the universe postulates this justice for all His human creatures; it was incumbent on all the peoples of the world.

The concept of justice which emerges from the Hebrew Bible is not just the regiment of mighty men—the Bible does not identify God on the side of Pharaoh and his *imperium*! It stresses that God cares for the poor and unprotected, for the orphan, the widow and the stranger. The basis of social justice was not to be external power and might, but the reverence of God and obedience to His moral will.

(A) The Sacredness of Human Life

To understand the idea of justice in Israel, we must bear in mind the Biblical teaching that the human being is created in the image of God, that each human life is sacred and of infinite worth. In consequence, a human being cannot be treated as a chattel, or an object to be disposed of for someone's programme or project or ideology, but must be treated as a personality. Every human being is the possessor of the right-to-life, dignity and honour, and the fruits of his or her labour.

Justice is respect for the personality of others and their inalienable rights, even as injustice is the most flagrant manifestation of disrespect for the personality of others. Judaism requires that human personality be respected in every human being—in the female prisoner of war, in the delinquent, even in the criminal condemned to death. The supreme importance of the human being in the economy of the Universe is expressed in this Rabbinic teaching: 'Man (the human being) was first created as a single individual to teach the lesson that whoever destroys one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had destroyed a whole world; and whoever saves one life, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had saved a whole world' (Sanhedrin 4:5).

However, justice is more than mere abstention from injuring

our fellow human beings. 'The work of justice is peace, and the effect thereof quietness and confidence forever' (Isaiah 32:17). It is a positive conception, and includes economic well-being, intellectual and spiritual growth, philanthropy, and every endeavour that will enable human beings to realize the highest and best in their natures.

The conditions for that self-realization require active efforts to bring about the final disappearance of injustice and oppression, which as represented in the Jewish High Holiday liturgy, are the goals of human history. 'And may all wickedness be consumed as a flame and may evil rule be removed from the earth', declare the Rosh Hashana prayers.

(B) *The Moral Duties of Tzedakah*

Nothing is more fundamental in Biblical and Rabbinic ethics than the moral obligation of *tzedakah*, a Hebrew term which means both 'charity' and 'to do justice'. The Rabbinic sages of the Talmud declared that 'Almsgiving — i.e., aiding the poor and feeding the hungry — weighs as heavily as all the other commandments of the Torah' (Talmud Baba Batra 9a).

In proclaiming the Jubilee year, which like the Ten Commandments was ascribed to divinely-inspired legislation revealed on Mount Sinai, the Bible ordained: 'And if your brother waxes poor, and his means fail with you, then you shall uphold him: as a stranger and a settler shall he live with you' (Leviticus 25:35). The Rabbis observe that the expression that 'Your brother may live with you' means that it is our personal and communal duty to see to it that our fellow human beings do not die of starvation. Though the person be a 'stranger' or 'an alien settler', he (or she) is to be included in the term 'your brother' and is to be treated in a brotherly and compassionate manner.

To underscore the supreme virtue of humanitarian aid to the needy in the hierarchy of Jewish moral and spiritual values, the Rabbinic sages regarded such compassionate care of man as an act worthy of association with Divinity itself: 'God says to Israel, "My sons whenever you give sustenance to the poor, I impute it to you as though you gave sustenance to me, for it says, "Command the children of Israel...my bread for my sacrifices...shall ye observe unto me. Does, then, God eat and drink? No, but whenever you give food to the poor, God accounts it to you as if you gave food to Him"' (Numbers Rabbah XXVIII: 2).

The virtue of such care for the poor and hungry is depicted in

Jewish tradition as the salient attribute of the 'founding father' of Judaism, the Patriarch Abraham, who is called the archetype of the 'Pharisee of love'. In a midrashic commentary that begins with the phrases, 'Let your house be open; let the poor be members of your household. Let a man's house be open to the north and to the south, and to the east and to the west,' the Rabbis describe the humanitarianism of Abraham:

He went out and wandered about, and when he found wayfarers, he brought them to his house, and he gave wheaten bread to him whose wont it was *not* to eat wheaten bread, and so with meat and wine. And not only this, but he built large inns on the roads, and put food and drink within them, and all came and ate and drank and blessed God. Therefore, quiet of spirit was granted to him, and all that the mouth of man can ask for was found in his house [Abot de Rabbi Nathan, VII:17a,b].

Elsewhere the Talmud admonishes: 'He who has no pity upon his fellow creatures is assuredly not of the seed of Abraham our father' (Bezah 32b).

In Jewish communities, from Biblical times through the present, there was much free and generous giving of alms to all who asked—even to deceivers!—and there was also much systematic and careful relief through established institutions. Each Jewish community boasted of a *tamhui* (public kitchen) from which the poor received two meals daily. There was also the *kupah* (alms box) for the disbursement of benevolent funds on Sabbath eve to provide three meals for Sabbath (Mishnah Peah VIII: 7). Additional care was exercised in respect of the itinerant poor, who were provided with a loaf of bread which sufficed for two meals, and who were also entitled to the cost of lodging.

The Biblical laws of charity in Palestine relating to 'gleaning', the 'forgotten sheaf', and 'the corner of the field', implied the underlying idea that national territory belongs to the public as a whole. In accordance with Jewish law, landowners used to lay open fences surrounding their fields and vineyards, and during certain hours of the day, the needy were allowed to eat from the produce of the harvest. There was also a three-yearly allocation of *Maaser Ani* (poor man's tithe) from the threshing floor.

Thus, there arose the charitable traditions and institutions of the Jewish people which have remained a religious-communal characteristic ever since. These customs of charity, which were foreign to the pagan frame of mind of the Greeks and Romans, also had an abiding impact on the nature of the Christian 'caritas'.

(C) Peace and War

And finally, the stability, as well as the happiness of a community, can only be assured when it rests upon a foundation of peace. In the absence of peace there can be neither prosperity nor well-being. 'Peace is equal in worth to everything', declare the Rabbis (Sifra), and they add: 'Beloved is peace since the benedictions only conclude with the hope of peace,' thus teaching that the blessings even of the High Priest are of no avail unless accompanied by peace (Numbers Rabbah 11:7).

While the Prophets of Israel and the Rabbis believed that God intended the nations to be at peace with one another, war was not prohibited. Jewish ethics would admit the duty to defend the higher values in human life by war if necessary. If Isaiah or Jeremiah had thought that yielding to the foreign invader would mean destruction to the religion or the people they valued, they would have urged resistance, with the same vigour that they demanded constantly the practice of righteousness in obedience to God's will. All the facts of Biblical and post-Biblical Judaism taken together lead to the conclusion that the ethical judgement on war, according to Judaism, is that it must be eradicated to make human life conform to the Divine rule, that those guilty of causing it commit a crime against humanity and a sin against God. However, they are justified who, to defend the higher values in human life, resist, if necessary by war, an attack on them. The justification would extend to a nation's defence of its liberty. The spiritual values in the life of a nation, which include its historic distinctiveness, may justify it, when attacked or threatened, to engage in war to save its independent existence. (See Dr Israel Mattuck in his study, *Jewish Ethics*, particularly his chapter on 'The Judgement on War'.)

II Some Implications for Christians and Jews

What are the implications of these facts for Christians and Jews today?

It is evident that we live in an age of violence and of terror. There is not a continent on the globe that is not despoiled by terror and violence, by barbarism and by a growing callousness to human suffering and pain and threat to human existence. At the centre of the human crisis is the fundamental depreciation of the meaning and value of human life. In theological terms, the Biblical affirmation that each human life is created in the sacred image of God and is therefore of ultimate worth and preciousness is being battered from every side.

It is my conviction that this erosion in the belief in the sanctity of human life is one of the decisive black legacies bequeathed by Nazi Germany to mankind. By and large, with rare exception, the overwhelming majority of citizens of the Western world, and their dominant institutions have avoided confronting the magnitude of evil incarnate in the Nazi Holocaust, and have therefore failed to learn how to cope with forces and structures of dehumanization that are being replicated in many parts of the globe.

The Nazi campaign against the Jewish people was unique and in many ways unprecedented. Yet the Nazi trauma must not be seen as 'a Jewish obsession', for the fateful meaning of the Holocaust is of ultimate importance to the future capacity of mankind to understand itself and to acquire the resources to cope with the challenges to its survival. (See the discussion of Max Weber's 'secularization, disenchantment of the world, and rationalization' as root causes for undermining all moral norms in a bureaucratized society in my *Religious Values in an Age of Violence*, pp. 46-52.)

Bleak as are the prospects for countering these forces of dehumanization in the world, 'we need not complete the task', as Rabbi Tarphon admonished, 'but neither are we free to desist therefrom'. In concert, if we are to learn from the Nazi Holocaust and not be doomed to allow its repetition, we must attempt at the very least the following:

First, Christians and Jews should engage in a massive, concerted effort to establish a 'new humanism' on a global basis that seeks to restore the Biblical value of the infinite worth and preciousness of each human life that must be appreciated as an end itself and never as an object of somebody else's project, programme, ideology, or revolution.

Second, Christians and Jews must help engender a national and international attitude of scorn and contempt for those who use violence or who advocate the use of violence. We must work to de-romanticize all appeals to use violence and terrorism as a means of liberation or of institutionalized oppression, since from a moral standpoint no ends can justify such anti-human means.

Third, Christians and Jews must work to curtail the resort to inflammatory propaganda, especially from international forums which have psychological impact on an international scale. As Prof Gordon Allport of Harvard University demonstrated in his monumental study, *The Nature of Prejudice*, there is an inevitable progression from 'verbal aggression to violence, from rumour to riot, from gossip to genocide.'

Fourth, Christians and Jews must work toward educational development and communication among peoples to reduce the abrasive effects of 'differences'. Differences, as we have learned in the pluralistic experiences of the Western world, can be a source of enrichment rather than a threat.

Fifth, Christians and Jews should engage in an urgent and sustained intellectual and educational effort to elaborate a theology and ideology of pluralism which presupposes the right of each religious, racial, and ethnic group to define itself in its own terms and to be accepted unconditionally by its own self-definition. Group narcissism, as Dr Erich Fromm observes, arouses intense hostility between groups, and 'is one of the most important sources of human aggression'. In helping establish a pluralistic world-view, Christians and Jews have a decisive contribution to make to the building of the ideological foundations without which a stable world community cannot come into being.

Sixth, Christians and Jews should work toward making the economy of each nation as self-sufficient and stable as possible in the sense of not perpetually requiring relief support. Inextricably linked with such an effort is the control of the arms race on an international scale, and a rational re-ordering of priorities that allows for adequate defence and yet at the same time reallocates some of the billions wasted on arms that should be applied to the crying needs of the hungry, the diseased and the homeless.

Central in such efforts must be the pressing need to raise human consciousness in an effective international effort to halt the irrational proliferation of nuclear weaponry and to bring about serious sustained actions for universal simultaneous disarmament. There is no higher priority for human survival at this moment in human history.

And finally, Christians and Jews need to recognize the fundamental interdependence of all human rights and collaborate vigorously to assure that every nation—East and West, North and South—implement fully their commitments to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In particular, Christians and Jews should work for the completion of the judicial instrumentalities called for by Article 6 of the Genocide convention in the form of an international penal tribunal for trying those who are accused of genocide attempts anywhere in the world.

'The salvation of mankind', Alexander Solzhenitzyn reminds us, 'will depend on everyone becoming concerned about the welfare of everybody everywhere.'

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Report of a multi-faith consultation in preparation for
the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches
Mauritius, 25th January - 3rd February, 1983

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THE MEANING OF LIFE

Report of a multi-faith consultation in preparation for
the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches
Mauritius, 25th January - 3rd February, 1983

It hadn't happened since 1974. Some said it had never happened before and, of course, they were right; nothing happens twice in exactly the same way. But the multilateral dialogue organized by the World Council of Churches at Colombo, Sri Lanka, during April 1974 is the closest parallel to the multi-faith consultation on "The Meaning of Life" convened by the World Council of Churches in Mauritius, 25th January to 3rd February, 1983.

Like Sri Lanka, Mauritius is an island in the Indian Ocean and the people of Mauritius, like the people of Sri Lanka, are of many religious faiths. Christians, Muslims and Buddhists live among the majority Hindu population, along with a few Sikhs and even fewer Jews. And the consultation held there was similar in its composition to the Colombo dialogue, for to it came Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Jews plus, at Mauritius for the first time, Sikhs and Traditional spiritual leaders.

But unlike "Colombo", "Mauritius" was a consultation in preparation for the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches that will convene in Vancouver, Canada, in July 1983. As such, it was planned by the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies on behalf of the World Council of Churches and the Assembly. The participants were chosen because they were to be present at the Assembly as guests or visitors or (in the case of Christians) as delegates, advisers, visitors or staff. Many had not engaged previously in World Council of Churches' dialogue programmes.

The Mauritius theme, "The Meaning of Life", was related to the theme of the Assembly, "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World", and was designed to elicit contributions from other living faiths on the understanding of life in those various traditions. This report will indicate that that purpose was amply fulfilled. The consultation participants prepared a "Message", included here, and a set of specific recommendations that were transmitted to the World Council of Churches' committee preparing the Assembly.

It is important to note that the Mauritius consultation could not have been held prior to any other Assembly of the World Council of Churches. At the Nairobi Assembly in 1975 guests of other faiths were invited for the first time and then only in limited numbers. Five guests were present there, one each from five major religions. At Vancouver three times as many will be present, fifteen, representing six different faiths: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Traditional

peoples. The number is still small but the increase is significant, nevertheless, and even more significant is the fact that these fifteen guests or their representatives have been able to meet each other and a small group of Christians prior to the Assembly in order to begin exploration of the themes of the Assembly, comparing and contrasting their traditions and beliefs.

In the course of the days at Mauritius, in between listening to and discussing the papers that were read and the small group discussions, Hindus came to know Buddhists, Christians encountered Sikhs, Muslims met Jews, Traditional people from Canada talked with Traditional healers from Africa. They did so over meals, during breaks, and late into the evening...and in the process became friends. Many participants spoke of the deep, intense and indeed spiritual significance of their frank, open and caring conversations with persons of faiths other than their own, witnessing to a heightened awareness of the spiritual resources in their own faith as a result. "Dialogue" took on a meaning far in excess of a mere exchange of words. And then, in morning meditations, led each day by members of a different religious community, "windows" into the enacted liturgical tradition of other faiths enlivened and enriched the personal and more formal encounters.

The multi-faith character of Mauritius provided its own unique contribution to the consultation and its participants. Several Muslims, Christians and Jews from Mauritius, who joined their colleagues from elsewhere, continually reminded the consultation of the very particular reality of religious faith. And participants regretted the inadvertent absence of Mauritian Hindus and Buddhists. Further, the local host, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, urged on the consultation the necessity to extend the dialogue so as to include ideologies like Marxism. Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies is the title and mandate of the sub-unit. As a result of the careful preparation by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, Canon Rex Donat, Rev. Brian Crosby, and other Christians of Mauritius, consultation participants were able to enter into Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim celebrations, thereby discovering something of the actual practice of the religions about which they spoke.

One reality broke through time and time again during the consultation. It was simple and yet in its implications disturbingly profound: we need each other; dialogue is not an option. Some of the ramifications of that simple profundity are sketched in the paragraphs that follow.

One lasting lesson from the consultation is this: there is abroad an urge and a new momentum in all faiths to strengthen and give clearer voice to those elements in their traditions which drive towards recognizing our needs for one another. The world is one of inescapable inter-dependence in all realms. The threat to human life and to the whole earth urges upon all a growing recognition that no one faith can go it alone.

In diverse ways and degrees the various faiths have within them both universal and exclusive dimensions - in patterns of thinking, speaking and acting. But in all communities of faith we have seen that urge towards strengthening and giving clearer voice for the ways to express in thought and action, in worship and structure that inter-dependence in time and eternity which could be called our need for the other.

In probing and listening to one another the consultation came to believe that this urge was deeper and more tangible than the polite style often expected of people gathered for the purpose of "dialogue". It could even be said that the increased unity of one community could be perceived as a threat to others if not coupled with the full awareness that none of us can go it alone, can do it alone.

Thus the presence of people of other faiths as guests at the Vancouver Assembly must be seen as a step more significant than may first appear. Although few in number, the guests at Vancouver - representing the majority of humankind - serve as a reminder of the reality which is the world. And the question raised in one of the discussions of the Vancouver preparatory material cannot be taken lightly: of course the World Council of Churches speaks - and we all want it to speak clearly and strongly - the language of Christians. But certain of the documents may well be perceived by both Christians and people of other faiths as implying that the solution to whatever problems there are lies solely in Christianity - going it alone.

As often happens in dialogue, it became clear that authentic witness includes the responsibility for what one is heard to say - not only for what one thinks one says.

THE THEME

After the formal opening of the consultation by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, M. Anerood Jugnauth, the participants began their common consideration of the theme, "The Meaning of Life". Prof. D.C. Mulder, moderator of the WCC's programme unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) and moderator for the consultation, set the stage by outlining three reasons for such an inter-faith meeting prior to the Assembly:

1. that guests and visitors to the Assembly from other faiths could "establish relations of friendship with Christian participants and in that way feel better at home in the Vancouver crowd";

2. to "make people acquainted with the structure of the World Council of Churches and with the programme of Vancouver"; and
3. "the World Council of Churches is eager to hear the voices of people of other faiths on the theme, the sub-themes, the issues that are going to be discussed at Vancouver...voices (that) might easily be lost in the hectic programme during the Assembly itself".

As has already been indicated, participants did indeed "establish relations of friendship" and did so across barriers of religious faith, culture, and even political allegiance. Though cold type is incapable of conveying its depth and significance, many participants shared the sentiment expressed by one of them who wrote, after returning home, "A few events in one's life actually change entire perspectives on spiritual and intellectual issues; this conference, and the people I met there, is one such event in my own personal and professional life..."

The delicate question of "inter-faith worship" was carefully and thoroughly considered at the very beginning of the consultation by the Steering Committee (composed of participants from each of the seven faith communities present). It was recognized that genuine and full involvement in the liturgical acts of another faith was not possible or even desirable. At the same time, an adequate understanding of life from the various faith perspectives demanded awareness of the ways in which those understandings take shape in worship. The conclusion, and it was a happy one, was to meet together each morning for an explanation and/or demonstration of some element of the liturgy of a particular faith, followed by silent meditation.

Thus one morning the participants heard Dr Gopal Singh outline the meaning of Sikhism, and then sat in silence, meditating in their own ways. On other days, Hinduism was introduced by Sri Shrivastava Goswami, Islam by Dr Muzammil Siddiqi, Judaism by Rabbi Jordan Pearlson, Christianity by Dr Diana Eck, Traditional religion by Mr Art Solomon, and Buddhism by Mr Masahiro Nemoto. On the final day, Canon Lloyd Casson led a moving meditation in which members of each faith were enabled to read from their own scriptures and make their own testimony. The result was that all received unique glimpses into the lived faith of others, glimpses that enriched the words flowing from formal presentations and informal conversations.

THE SUB-THEMES

Life , a Gift of God

The formal presentations began with papers concerning the Assembly sub-theme "Life , a Gift of God". Sri Goswami offered a Hindu perspective on the dignity of life based on the concept of *dharma* (that which sustains and upholds life). Dignity

based on this *dharma* has to do with our relationship to human and non-human existence, and to Ultimate Reality itself. An understanding of the dignity of life based on the *dharma* gives meaning both to worldly and to spiritual life, he said.

Dr Anand Rambachan pointed out that the Hindu scriptural understanding of the self can give "a new perspective of the world and of our relationship with all other living things. Perhaps the most far-reaching results follow from the fact that whereas formerly all our aspiration and activities sprung from our own self-centred desire for fullness, they now arise from the fullness we have appreciated in ourselves. We can now live and act out of joy rather than for joy".

"Unfortunately," he continued, "the implications of this scriptural truth have not always been consistently reflected and explored in many of the social structures which have accompanied the development of Hinduism." But, correctly understood, "such a vision of life provides a profound and inspiring basis for an outlook of love, compassion and care...In the Hindu outlook, therefore, self-knowledge (*Atmajnana*) is a totally liberating understanding, in which the narrow and isolated perception of oneself is overcome and the way is opened to a unity with all creation and an unselfish relation with others. It is a vision that is rich for exploration in terms of its practical applications."

Following the discussion prompted by the Hindu papers, Father Michael Oleksa presented an Orthodox Christian overview of the concept that life is a gift of God. After summarising Orthodox understandings of "natural" life, death, divine life, salvation, incarnation, etc., he observed: "Traditional Orthodoxy rejects both escapism and utopianism. The world is not to be rejected or fled as in itself evil, but rather restored and transformed from being 'independent' to being the icon and therefore the Symbol of God. At the same time the ancient Church did not and does not idolize the world, nor did it believe its main function to be only the improved life of the world. The essence of the Good News is the renewed possibility for human beings to fulfil their full potential and participate in the very nature of God: 'And this is Eternal Life - that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.'

"God's gift of life," Oleksa maintained, "therefore includes all creation and all that is essentially 'very good'. It includes all living things and elements and forces that sustain life. It includes God's gift of himself and his self-revelation in Jesus the Christ. It includes ultimately the unity-in-love that is God."

Life Confronting and Overcoming Death

The consultation participants next turned to a consideration of the second Assembly sub-theme, "Life Confronting and Overcoming Death". It did so through discussion of papers by Prof. Jean Halpérin of the World Jewish Congress and by Dr J. A. Nartey, a Traditional healer from Ghana.

Prof. Halpérin said, "The awareness of death is ever present in the mind of all believing Jews, even if they choose not to make it a topic for conversation or discussion. The two main reasons for this are that, (1) being so strongly bent on life and all it represents, they fear that putting too much emphasis on death might detract from responsibilities in this world, and (2) death and what comes after is the greatest mystery of all."

But, he noted, "strangely enough, neither life nor death are to be taken for granted. Jewish teaching rules out the banality of either of them. It is because we are not immortal - and that we know it - that so much is at stake in our lifetime. Since life is the highest good, human beings are obliged to cherish and preserve it (Dt. 30:15-20). Life is, in a way, a matter of choice; it implies fully-fledged responsibility, the more so since Judaism knows of no vicariousness whatsoever. Hence, the commandment of permanent awareness and awakeness. Through my own behaviour, I am accountable for the life and death of others. The verse in Dt. 16:20 'Justice, justice you shall pursue so that you live' implies that only the unending struggle for justice can make life fully meaningful. We experience the daily miracle of life and the constant bafflement of death. To live is to remember - in order to act accordingly.

"By their deeds, the righteous continue to live even after their death; and the wicked are considered to be dead even in their lifetime. Faith makes it easier for me to live - and perhaps also to die. However, it also greatly increases the challenge and the responsibility that I face."

Dr Nartey led the consultation participants in a consideration of an African Traditional worldview. "By tradition," he said, "the African has held the belief that, as a supreme authoritative deity, Onyankopon has his messengers or attendants who serve as a link between man and himself.

While in life, therefore, the African, who knows that he owes his existence to the grace of God, serves the supreme deity through these messengers or angels, attendants or lesser gods, which have their dwelling places in mountains, rivers, valleys, and trees.

"The Traditionalist believes in reincarnation. In looking at life and death, the Traditionalist sees a continuous cycle in which the supreme Giver-of-life, in his master control room, directs affairs through his agents. In the African context it is this belief in some form of life after death that binds family relations together and has helped to retain special customary rites for particular families, binding the soul of the individual to his ancestors.

"This link makes it imperative for the individual to defend and uphold the family principles laid down by his ancestors, which contain mysterious beliefs that scare the guilty ones into confession, without being subject to any form of torture or trial by ordeal. For fear of instant justice and his wish to maintain the extended family linkage, the African fears to commit crime. In other words, the African Traditionalist never thinks of a judgment day after his death, but is always afraid of a judgment that might come before his death."

Life in its Fullness

Discussion of the third Assembly sub-theme, "Life in its Fullness", was led by Dr Sulak Sivaraksa and Dr Gopal Singh. Dr Sivaraksa led off, saying, "From a Buddhist worldview, man is a unique being - above plant, animal, and other sub-human beings like ghosts and demons. But man is classified below other superior beings, such as gods and angels. Yet man alone has the potential to achieve the highest quality in life, the ultimate end of the life cycle or liberation from sufferings. It is therefore essential for man, if he wishes to take his duty seriously, to try to overcome or eliminate suffering. And the way to do this is laid down as a guideline by the Buddha. One does not need to declare oneself Buddhist, but if one finds such a guide useful, one may study it and put it into practice.

"The basic rules for Buddhist morality are five. These are not commandments, but they are recommended for those who wish to have a social dimension to their human development: to abstain from killing, to abstain from stealing, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from false speech, and to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness.

"Practising these five precepts, one is bound to be endowed with the five ennobling virtues, namely: loving kindness and compassion, right means of livelihood and generosity, sexual restraint, truthfulness and sincerity, and mindfulness and heedfulness.

"This pair of 'fives' are essential to check a person's social growth. If he merely abstains from killing and stealing, yet he puts his money in multinational corporations or international bankings that exploit the poor or invests in armament businesses, he obviously lacks loving kindness and his means of livelihood is certainly wrong."

"For the Buddhist," he concluded, "physical, social, spiritual and intellectual growth must be developed side by side, and they must all go along towards the ultimate end of liberation from all suffering."

From a Sikh perspective, also, human beings are unique. "A human alone," Dr Gopal Singh told the consultation, "can enjoy the fullness of life, because a human alone is endowed not only with reason (not merely instinct) but also intuition (not merely intelligence). A human alone can have the craving to be other than what he is and rise above the limitations of time and circumstance... Sikhism places human life at the pinnacle of all life.

"Sikhism enjoins prayer, meditation, recitation or chanting of the Holy word to purge oneself of one's ego or I-am-ness - the greatest malady to the Sikh credo, that bars our way to fulfilment. Sikhism believes that there is evil in the world but it is also within us all. We are the creators of evil as well as the participants in evil. And, while there are things that are evil, according to Sikhism, there is no principle of evil as such. Man partaking of the essence of God, the Holy, is essentially holy and pure. To call another bad only because he is different is the worst of sins.

"Love does not mean, according to the Sikh credo, self-love but the love of others. He who cannot love or even suffer his neighbour cannot love God. But the pity is that we not only hate our neighbours and our God but also hate ourselves even more. 'O God, save us from ourselves and be our teacher and guide, in thy mercy,' prays Guru Arjan in the Sikh scripture."

Life in Unity

Mr Art Solomon and Prof. Mohamed Talbi initiated discussion of the fourth Assembly-sub-theme, "Life in Unity", by discussing the meaning of community in Traditional and Islamic traditions.

Mr Solomon demonstrated through symbolic acts - such as inviting the participants to bathe themselves in the smoke of smouldering sage, cedar, and sweet tobacco - that community for the Traditional people of North America encompasses the entire creation, including particularly the earth:

"Native spirituality/encompasses the totality of life/and the creation.

"Native Spirituality encompasses/the concept that/the Creator is his Creation.

"That we are spirit beings/who have come from the spirit world/and we must return to the spirit world/when our work in this part of the/Creation is finished.

"Our responsibility is to find/our way to live in harmony/with the cycles of the creation/and thus to come to understand/who we are/and what is the purpose/ of our individual lives.

"Since we are spirit beings/we have spiritual needs (hunger)/which must be met.

"The God who made us and sustains us/minute by minute, provided for that/ need by giving us the ways/that we were related to him./Those ways are called/ sacred ceremonies.

"The fundamental difference/between the native people/and the majority society/is a difference of philosophy.

"One is a philosophy based/on the concept/of materialism.

"The native philosophy/is based on the concept/that we cannot own/what belongs to God."

Prof. Talbi devoted his paper to the Muslim concept of community, the *Umma*, which "marks the transition to a complete openness to universalism. Like, for example, the state, it is a structure *sui generis* and an intrinsic value. The *Umma* is defined by its mission. It is a mission, and this mission consists in realizing the universal plan of God. It welcomes in its embrace all those who respond to the original founding call and who thus become part of this plan."

"The member of the *Umma*, whether praying or working, is always the same human being," he said. "He has no need to change his coat to mark the transition from one level to another. Prayer inspires the work and work sends us back to prayer. Each activity retains its own specific character.

"The true Muslim cannot do a single thing without relating it to the sacred. He is in a constant relationship to God, a relationship which culminates in the bond of a love which is both a source of privilege and reciprocal. The human being loves God and is loved by him.

"During the five daily prayers in which the Muslim ascends again and again towards God, the Muslim never presents himself alone before God. When he recites the *al-Fatiha* (the threshold of prayer) he says 'We adore thee', not 'I adore thee'. In every Muslim the whole *Umma* is offered to God and draws from him its life-giving sap in an act of surrender and renewal as well as one of voluntary, conscious, and trusting submission (*islam*).

"*Umma* is never achieved fully. It remains to be accomplished and realized afresh, in fidelity to the ideal which haunts the individual and collective imagination of its members. In our world, with its increasing acceptance of pluralism, our vocation as believers is to learn to live under the double sign of aspiration and hope: of an active aspiration which inspires us to make every effort to eliminate the roots of imperfection in ourselves, and of a hope which respects the other persons' difference and dignity, and his right to be different."

The Meaning of Life: Two Christian Introductions

Toward the conclusion of the consultation, two "introductions" to the theme and all the sub-themes were given by Christian participants, one from a Protestant perspective, the other from an Eastern Orthodox vantage point.

Dr. Krister Stendahl, who identified himself as a "Bible boy", examined the meaning of life as perceived in the biblical literature. "There is," he said, "one single writing in the Bible (*Ecclesiastes*) which takes on the question of the meaning of life as such. The answer is: vanity, all is vanity. Things come and go but there is nothing new under the sun. The dust returns to dust from where it came and the spirit returns to God who gave it. The Spirit that returns is obviously not the individual spirit, but is the energy of the creator, which was first blown into the nostrils of the red clay, Adam. That is one way of speaking about the meaning of life. There are other ways."

"God could have remained God in splendid isolation and had a lot less trouble. But the creation of the world I see as saying something about the nature of God, God wanting to share, to have something and someones with whom to share. Perhaps it is what we in the Christian tradition call love, in the

sense of not being self-contained. So God decided that somewhere in the cosmos there would be some being with what we, in common language, call free will, to serve God, not by necessity but by free will. Now that was a very risky proposition. And ever since the Bible story is about God's attempts at mending the creation."

"When Jesus comes there is no question about the theme of his message. It is not the salvation of souls; it is the Kingdom. The Kingdom is at hand, repent and seek first the Kingdom and its justice and all the rest will somehow fall into place. Jesus chose a term that was a code word for the mending of the creation. And we called him the Son of God."

"I think there are two ways of thinking about God in heaven. Some think of God as waking up in the morning and asking for the latest computation of the number of the saved. And there are others of us who think that when God wakes up in the morning, God asks if there has been any progress towards the Kingdom, have there been any signs of the mending of the creation."

"Creation means limit, the setting of limits. Salvation is not the overcoming of limits, but recognizing and accepting limitation, finitude. Our fullness lies in our need of the other, our fullness is not by self-inflation. Our fullness is God's fullness, God's self-limitation by the creation, thereby limiting God's power. Only by our limits can we recognize our need for the other. We think so often that salvation is transcending the limits, but the aim of the exercise is the mending of the creation. There is the constant lesson that by my limits I recognize my need for the other, without which the Kingdom cannot come."

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios emphasized the necessary role of tradition in the understanding of human existence. Science and technology are increasingly useful tools, he affirmed, but "there is no truth without tradition." He outlined five forms through which Eastern Orthodox Christians understand life:

"(a) The life of Him Who Is, underived, unoriginate, self-existent, *sui generis*, incomprehensible, eternal, overflowing in love towards all;

"(b) The life of human beings derived from the life of God, existent only contingent upon the will of God, constantly changing and ever in need of becoming, responsible in large measure for shaping itself;

"(c) The life of non-human beings on our planet, which are both necessary for our life and constitute a value in themselves; human beings have a responsibility to care for them and foster their existence;

"(d) The life of the departed human beings who interact with us now, and continue their ministry of worship and manifestation of God's love in the unseen realm;

"(e) The life of a vast host of created non-human beings in other realms - some working for the purposes of God, called variously angels, sons of God, etc., in the Christian Scriptures, others opposing the will of God, called in the Scriptures demons or devils; but also possibly other beings on other planets who may have physical bodies and senses; all these may be interacting with our lives on earth."

"The Eastern Orthodox understanding of life," he continued, "lays great emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit who is called the life-giver. The Spirit was at work from the beginning of creation, hovering over the waters of chaos, bringing life, beauty and joy out of chaos. The Spirit has always been at work in all humanity everywhere and at all times, giving deep experiences of reality and its meaning to people in all cultures and climes. In so far as people have responded positively to the work of the Spirit, they have experienced unity with all, realization of the truth and the joyous knowledge that results from it."

"The Eastern Orthodox tradition does not see death as the enemy of life. Death such as we know it, has been overcome by the Risen Christ. We now face death as a portal to a greater and richer life, with new opportunities and challenges. It is faced with confidence and joy by those who have faith; though for the unbeliever death may still hold its terrors. Our fathers tell us that it is not that we die because we are born; on the contrary, we are born because we die. Where death no longer is, there is no need for birth. Hence there is no birth or death or marriage in the life of the resurrection as Christ taught us...Because the true Light has overcome darkness, we shall not fear the powers of darkness."

THE ISSUES

Each afternoon of the consultation participants divided themselves into smaller groups to discuss the issues chosen for emphasis at the WCC Assembly. The discussions, free-wheeling and frank, included contributions by members of

each of the faith communities present. Mauritian guests, encouraged to speak, did so to the benefit of all.

Witnessing in a Divided World

Stress was laid on the importance of bearing witness in a dialogical manner rather than confessional, respecting each other's dignity and humanity, as an essential instrument of peace in our time. This kind of witness must be made to oneself and one's own community, especially where the tradition is strongly conversionist. Neighbours must be allowed to define themselves, must be seen for what they are really are, not for what they might potentially become.

It was recognized that the form of witness will be affected by one's placement in a minority or majority group; by whether a minority has affiliation with a majority group elsewhere, by whether the majority or the minority holds effective power.

A black Christian affirmed the importance of connecting Christian and African identity in contemporary witness, and he was supported by a representative of African primal religions.

A South African Christian spoke of the necessity of saying different things to different people, but with the same basic witness, i.e. to speak a different word to the oppressor than one speaks to the oppressed.

A Jewish woman affirmed the necessity of witnessing to the worth of women in the sight of God in adversarial terms, if necessary, and of the importance of clarifying the different meanings that the same words may have for different religious groups, e.g. Jews and Christians.

Muslims and Christians both spoke of different attitudes or stands within their traditions towards openness to others - for some it implies syncretism, for others the mutual respect necessary for common efforts toward peace.

The issue paper on "Witnessing in a Divided World" represents an advance over an old-fashioned missionary stance, but it may be perceived by both Christians and others as implying that the key to the solution of humanity's problems lies solely within Christianity.

At the Vancouver Assembly, while recognizing that the churches must be allowed to speak in their own language, attention should be given to the perceptions of other religions. Guests of other faiths have therefore an important contribution to make.

We are responsible not just for what we say but for what we are heard to say.

Taking Steps Toward Unity

Central to the discussion of this group was the tension and unclarity about how Christian unity related to the unity of humankind. Perhaps this tension lies even in the historical fact that the WCC picked up the ancient designation *oikoumene* - which means "the whole inhabited world" - for the movement toward Christian unity.

Thus the discussion centred on how Christian unity relates to world unity and its implication for relations to other religions and ideologies. Among the points and observations made the following stand out.

(1) The "successionist" model is fraught with a special problem, i.e. the idea that one religion is the forerunner of another. Christians think of Judaism as its forerunner and of itself as the real fulfilment - hence assigning an inferior or even obsolete role to Judaism. Does such a model contribute to or impede unity? Is the very problem of relating religion to one another in "developmental schemes" from lower to higher a fundamental obstacle to unity?

(2) With disarming honesty one of the guests said: "I must admit that a fully unified Christianity frightens me." And certainly unity is often spoken of as a means towards more effectiveness in terms of one's own power and influence.

(3) An interesting interpretation of the history of the ecumenical movement and WCC was offered: Nathan Söderblom's call to the churches in 1914 was deeply motivated by seeking to forestall the war which began that year - but it proved too late. The meeting did not happen until 1925 in Stockholm - after eleven years of disaster for millions. Then the focus was mainly European. Now the threat is clearly to humanity. Hence the WCC is challenged to think in terms of global unity not only in terms of geography but also in terms of faiths.

(4) Christian faith includes a wider unity beyond that of geography. There is also the unity through time, i.e. the unity with those of earlier generations, the saints and those departed.

(5) Steps towards Christian unity cannot be taken as if one first achieved Christian unity and then moved on from there. Christian unity must be sought while at the same time seeking unity wherever possible with others.

(6) How do we say clearly that in many matters we often find us more united in spirit and concerns with people of other faiths than with some sisters and brothers of our own faith? And if that is so, what actions are called for?

Moving Toward Participation

In the group discussing this topic it became clear that many of the ways in which religious and interfaith bodies work - often with significant accomplishments - actually reinforce patterns of non-participation, working for people rather than empowering people.

When the need for education as a step toward fuller participation was stressed, one was reminded of the insights of Paolo Freire's pedagogy for the oppressed, i.e. education where the style is toward a participatory society rather than an education that feeds into the patterns of "leaders and led".

The demystification of power proved to be a significant topic. Special attention was given to the need for simplifying the language of legislation and bureaucracies - not to speak of theology. Complicated language is certainly a means of self-protection for those in leadership and power. The increased need for lawyers at every turn in life is one major sign of this phenomenon - undercutting participatory structures and leading towards alienation. But the same phenomenon repeats itself in most professions and areas of life.

It seems obvious that Native Americans know of wise patterns of participatory decision-making and action for women and men - patterns threatened by the importation of "Robert's Rules of Order" or other patterns for parliamentary procedures.

In the discussion of participation of women some ironies were revealed. From Ghana came the observation that the old roles of women's leadership in religious matters had been broken or frowned upon by the churches which now were trying to restore that very role.

In surveying the role of women in various religious traditions and cultures it became clear that moves toward a fuller participation of women were often impeded by the questioning of Western models for women's liberation. One felt, however, the need for hearing the women of these traditions speak for themselves.

Thus in this matter as in so many other, participation is obviously not only a goal but the very first step.

Healing and Sharing Life in Community

Agreement was quickly reached in the group that health is not a simple matter of not being sick. Rather health is the positive harmonious interrelation of one's body, mind, spirit, and environment. Health is harmony or balance within creation,

a concept that includes all that is, uniting and overcoming the rationalistic separation that makes healing into a process of mechanistic manipulation of human bodily functions.

The group responded positively to the formulation from the Native American culture that health is "walking in the sacred way". As such, healing, far from being something generated from outside a person, comes from within - which is not to say that antibiotics or even surgery are not powerful supports for "self-healing".

It was emphasized that self-identity is a key to health, self-identity in no narrow sense, but the proper identification of oneself in the scheme of creation. Activity such as physical labour was seen as a way of maintaining the balance in creation, or health.

The role of the so-called healing professions was discussed at length, the concern being that all too frequently medical education ignores the harmony of reality, leading thus to medical practice that, while overcoming sickness, destroys genuine health. People of all religions and cultures need to address the question of medical training and practice, stressing the vital importance of communities in which the totality of creation may be evident.

Indeed, health is walking in the sacred way, the way of the Creator.

Learning in Community

The discussion on learning focused on the problems and opportunities implicit and explicit in the transmission of one's religious tradition to others within the community, especially the young. Many questions were raised: when we speak of community, do we mean our own neighbours? nation? world? is "global consciousness" too all-encompassing for actual learning?

Members of the group engaged in an exercise of witnessing to how they as individuals learned their own religious tradition and the impact on that learning of encounter with persons of another faith or faiths. As they did so, it became apparent that several channels of learning were common to the religious traditions represented: liturgy, family, childhood education in the religious community, and formal education throughout youth and adulthood. Underlying them all was the assumption that learning takes place in community.

Thus, the size and scope of the learning community becomes critical. While it was recognized that learning within a single-faith community is crucial for the

formation and continuance of that faith and its tradition, contact with and learning from religions and cultures external to the community is necessary in order to avoid exclusiveness and triumphalism.

The group agreed that the "unlearning" of some elements of learning acquired in single-faith communities is frequently requisite for depth appreciation of the faith taught and learned there. Dialogue with people of other faiths, as a "meeting of commitments", was affirmed as a primary avenue for such "unlearning".

At the same time, "unlearning" may be a prerequisite for dialogue and, therefore, attention to other faiths and "global consciousness" should receive increased emphasis within every religious community.

Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity

Sometimes the justice in a country can be gauged by the number of lawyers and prisons it produces: the more lawyers, the less justice; the more people in gaols, the less justice. But it is important to acknowledge the ways in which different religious traditions have slowed the progress of justice. Examples that come quickly to mind include the caste system in Hinduism and the traditionally inferior status accorded to women in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Justice can be voiced and tested in various relationships: men/women, labour/management, children/adults, big nations/small nations, etc.

Concern for the poor is present in all religions, but the implementation of that concern has too often been limited to alms-giving, to charity. Often religious efforts to serve the poor do so without reference to the root causes of injustice in the structure of society.

Some religious traditions have insisted that the poor have a special visa for entrance into the Kingdom, an insistence that sometimes has led to the elevation of poverty to a positive good. Monks and nuns voluntarily embrace poverty, which is something quite different from glorifying involuntary poverty, and thereby refusing to act towards its alleviation.

The opinion was expressed that the Roman Catholic Church is far more systemic in its search for and insistence on structural change in societies than is the case in other churches. All religions are called to acknowledge concretely the right of people to a share of the land where they live and to own a share of the product they produce.

In recent years important steps forward have been taken in the promotion of human rights, as, for example, in the work of Amnesty International. But the growing anxiety, shared by those of religious faith, about such injustice as child abuse and wife beating, reveals a frustration about human rights and the possibility of their universal establishment.

The teaching of religions that each person is created with a "divine spark" (Judaism) in the "image of God" (Christianity), etc., must be emphasized in order to give people, wherever they are and whatever they do, greater awareness of their basic worth.

It was noted that rich nations, peoples, and religious groups show forth an extraordinary arrogance by their willingness to distribute food as though they were the owners of it; to use food as a weapon. That one-fourth of the world's people is starving is terrible and mighty evidence of the injustice that presently reigns in the world. Delegates to Vancouver should be provided with data to demonstrate that the earth contains the resources to feed us all - if the human will to do so is there.

Confronting threats to peace and survival

The group leader introduced the discussion by emphasizing that war is the collective result of our individual weaknesses: "We are all too indifferent at a time when the house is on fire." The fact today is that, although each of us is quite different from any other, we remain exceedingly alike, neighbours in a shrinking world bound together by our common fears and hopes.

Imaginative understanding is desperately needed now in order to combat violence in a world where education, science and technology are utilized to squander the vast opportunities they provide. More and more, we need to discover ways through which mutual trust may be developed.

The role of religions should be to promote harmony and toward that end should commonly affirm, as bare minimums: a pledge to honour and respect all people; the freedom to choose one's own faith; to share resources, especially with those who are deprived; to search for universal values; to focus on a universal spirit of compassion and hope; and to promote love, truth, understanding, and justice.

Many of these same points were made in the discussion, which raised questions such as the degree to which it is possible to overcome our own hatreds and whether or not it is, actually, too late to make the needed personal changes in view of the immediate threat of nuclear destruction. Perhaps, one participant suggested, we should simply appeal to self-interest instead of idealism.

Others, however, felt the need to emulate the examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King in order to bring peace to the earth. Such an effort would encourage a meaningful programme of confidence-building in all conflict areas.

There is, though, a danger in attempting to approach the question of peace unilaterally. Peace will come only when all parties to conflict equally desire it. Therefore, extensive exchange visits by citizens of hostile countries were suggested, to lower the suspicion level and counteract fear.

Everyone agreed that what is needed is a will and an imaginative approach. Among members of the group the will was certainly present, but the imagination largely failed - and that is precisely the locus of fear and anxiety as we confront the hatred and hostility of our societies and world.

Communicating with conviction

Participants concentrated on the mass media and its social responsibility in their discussion. Though the influence of the mass media should not be overestimated or exaggerated, it tends to reflect social values, reinforcing some to the neglect of others. The media has a responsibility to clarify issues and problems, not confuse or hide them. In addition, it has the responsibility to offer viable responses to those issues and problems on the part of its readers, listeners, and viewers. Otherwise, it becomes a powerful tool for indoctrination by the ruling elite.

In that regard, the Third World's lack of financial and human resources for developing communications networks was noted. Frequently Third-World countries require assistance in constructing such networks, as well as support when they explore their own alternatives to the media styles of the west.

Some participants reflected that the mass media is probably inadequate for the dissemination of authentic Christian witness because it is too impersonal and unidirectional. Expanding beyond Christian witness to genuine dialogue, the meeting agreed that such dialogue is fully present only in direct personal expression at the grassroots level. Some examples from Mauritius were cited, including the opportunities present in its linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, which is expressed in a variety of ways, including non-verbal cross-cultural communication through dance and drama.

But even at the grass roots level - and perhaps especially there - the effect of mass communication cannot be ignored, both in its detrimental and beneficial aspects. Some believed that the radio, television, and print media lean over too far in their efforts to be objective, presenting thereby an anti-religious message. Agreeing, others saw evidence of poor and/or mis-information about religious affairs and events, with a stereotyping of racial, cultural, and religious minorities. A fully unified inter-faith response to the media would go far towards making it both responsible and responsive to the needs of religion and society.

A MESSAGE TO DELEGATES COMING TO THE 6TH ASSEMBLY OF
THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND TO ALL WHO SHARE OUR CONCERN AND HOPE FOR LIFE

We from many religious traditions and cultures look forward to meeting you at the Assembly in Vancouver. We have already met together for ten full days to explore in dialogue with one another the theme of the General Assembly - Life itself: its meaning, its struggles, and its hope. Appropriately, we met on the island of Mauritius in the midst of the Indian Ocean - a multi-religious society consisting primarily of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians from Asia, Africa and Europe.

We met at the initiative of the World Council of Churches. Our meeting was part of the preparation for the Assembly. The theme of the Assembly "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World" is the particular affirmation of Christians. However, in each of our traditions, we as people of faith affirm Life in its fullness, its mystery, and its relation to Ultimate Reality, and in doing so express our urgent concern for justice, compassion, and hope in a world beset with injustice, indifference and despair.

In our dialogue we spoke from the standpoint of our own religious and cultural traditions, and we listened carefully to one another. We came to understand more clearly where we differ. But we also discovered where we converge and can affirm basic values and hopes together as religious people, not at the "lowest common denominator", but at the very heart of our deepest commitments and convictions.

We share an affirmation of the fullness and the deep interrelatedness of all life - human life to life, human life to the life of the world of nature, and all life to its divine source. Native Americans speak of the "Great Circle of Creation", and Hindus speak of the fullness of life "From the Creator to a blade of grass". We heard from the Bhagavad Gita:

One who sees Me everywhere
and sees everything in Me,
of him shall I never lose hold,
and he shall never lose hold of Me.

We share an affirmation that we as human beings are not only given, but entrusted with, the gift of life. That sacred trust calls us to compassionate and responsible action, both personal and communal. In a world of unconscionable

disparity between races, we feel deeply that our religious traditions command us to pursue justice, with unceasing effort, not only on behalf of those of our own religious community, but for all. We are all enriched by the challenging questions of Hillel:

If I do not act for myself, who will act for me?
And if I care for myself only, what am I?
And if not now, when?

We share the affirmation that the mystery of life transcends death, and in each of our religious traditions, in our distinctive ways, we affirm life even as we face our own death and mourn the death of loved ones. Today, however, the interrelation and continuity of life and death, of birth and death, are threatened and distorted by the sheer magnitude of the forces of death: the nuclear arsenals held in threat to destroy millions of human beings and, indeed, capable of destroying life itself. In this critical time it is morally imperative for us all to "choose life" and dismantle the forces of death, to cooperate with one another in the search for peace, and to turn away from the narrowness of vision- national, racial and religious - which has polarized so many parts of our world into hostile camps competing in violence and the threat of violence.

In our search for peace we acknowledge that all too often in the past, and even today, various parts of the world have been torn by strife in the name of "religion". As we meet, we are painfully conscious of the continuing crisis in the Middle East, where people of three of our religious traditions are tragically divided. Religion has too often been misused to divide and oppose. Now we must strive as religious people to reconcile and unite. We share an affirmation that at the heart of our traditions is an ethic of non-violence and forgiveness. There is the Sermon on the Mount in the Christian Gospel and the Jain, Hindu and Buddhist heritage of Mahatma Gandhi. The Buddhist Dhammapada enjoins "Let one overcome hatred by kindness, evil by goodness, greed by generosity, and lies by truth-telling". The Qur'an commands "Repel the evil deed with the good and lo, the enemy becomes as a bosom friend". The Rabbinical Wisdom asks "Who is strong? The one who makes of his enemy a friend."

We may affirm life in its fullness and speak the word of peace, but we know that life is in peril and the world is not at peace. Thus, it is with conviction and a sense of urgency that we write this message, we who come from the African traditions and the Native Traditions of North America, from the Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh traditions, from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. Our group included among others Indians, Soviet citizens, Americans, a Palestinian, a Japanese, a South African,...

We want to stress the genuine importance and value of dialogue. By dialogue we mean speaking and listening with openness to one another in a common search for understanding, and by dialogue we also mean acting together, hand in hand, as allies in our common work for justice and peace. We must not imagine that such global issues as peace and justice can be undertaken, or even addressed in a meaningful way, by any one religious tradition alone. For we are not alone in this world. We share our world with people of all cultures, races, and religions, and our future is one.

Our host at this meeting was Archbishop Trevor Huddleston. We heard his passionate appeal to the people of all religions to unite in opposing the evil of apartheid which violates the sanctity and dignity of human life. We gave our whole-hearted support to his initiative in calling an international and inter-religious forum addressed to this issue. This will be held in Britain under the sponsorship of the United Nations soon after the 6th Assembly.

As we move ahead in the process of understanding and cooperation through dialogue, we need to focus clearly on such issues of critical concern and shared responsibility. We need to include people of ideological as well as religious commitments who are open for dialogue with us. And we need to become aware of our own ideological commitments.

We welcome the initiative, the openness, and the vision of the World Council of Churches and of others in moving towards dialogue. Some of us come from religious traditions that have always welcomed dialogue, others of us come from traditions in which dialogue is a new step, and a few of us come from parts of the world where dialogue has already begun the difficult task of reconciling and uniting those who have been divided and opposed.

Vancouver itself is such a place, the home of people of many races, religions and cultures. We hope that at the 6th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches many more people will take the opportunity of meeting with people of other faiths. We trust that the Assembly itself will reaffirm its continued commitment to and support for dialogue.

We offer the encouragement of our own experience in dialogue. In dialogue we have found that trust can overcome fear. As we have learned from others we have found that we know ourselves and our own religious traditions more fully. And in coming to know the richness and diversity of our religious heritage, we have learned

to affirm the hope for peace in a pluralistic world and to look forward together toward a more humane future.

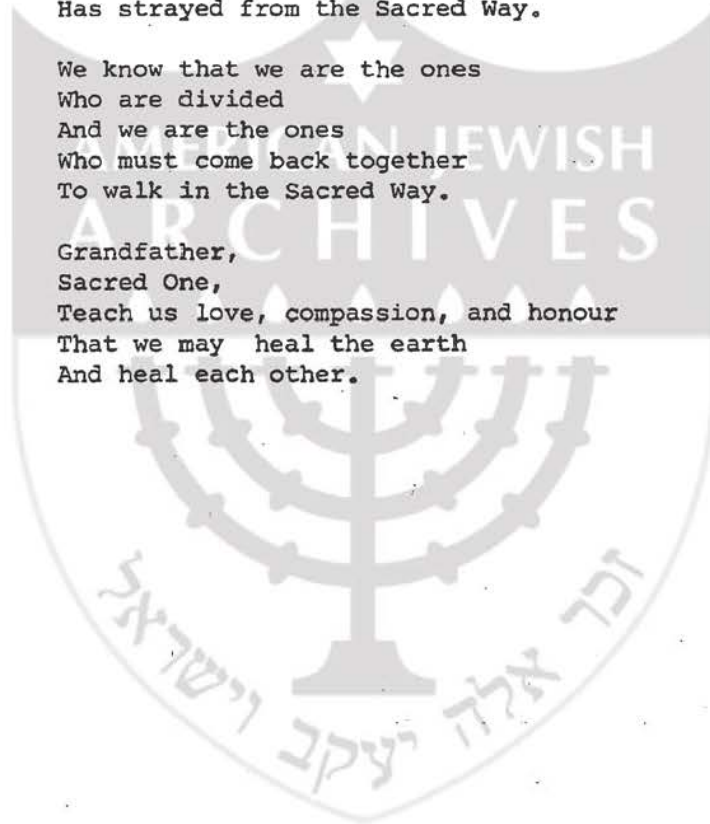
One of us, from the Ojibway nation of Canada, offered this prayer:

Grandfather,
Look at our brokenness.

We know that in all creation
Only the human family
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.

We know that we are the ones
Who are divided
And we are the ones
Who must come back together
To walk in the Sacred Way.

Grandfather,
Sacred One,
Teach us love, compassion, and honour
That we may heal the earth
And heal each other.



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MEANING OF LIFE"

A Multifaith
Consultation

Mauritius
25 January -
3 February 1983



World Council of Churches, Geneva

The Meaning of Life

A Multifaith Consultation in Preparation for the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches

I. Report of the Consultation

edited by Allan R. Brockway

It hadn't happened since 1974. Some said it had never happened before and, of course, they were right; nothing happens twice in exactly the same way. But the multilateral dialogue organized by the World Council of Churches at Colombo, Sri Lanka, during April 1974 is the closest parallel to the multifaith consultation on "The Meaning of Life" convened by the World Council of Churches in Mauritius, 25 January to 3 February 1983.

Like Sri Lanka, Mauritius is an island in the Indian Ocean and the people of Mauritius, like the people of Sri Lanka, are of many religious faiths. Christians, Muslims and Buddhists live among the majority Hindu population, along with a few Sikhs and even fewer Jews. And the consultation held there was similar in its composition to the Colombo dialogue, for to it came Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Jews plus, at Mauritius for the first time, Sikhs and Traditional spiritual leaders.

But unlike "Colombo", "Mauritius" was a consultation in preparation for the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches that will convene in Vancouver, Canada, in July 1983. As such, it was planned by the Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies on behalf of the World Council of Churches and the Assembly. The participants were chosen because they were to be present at the Assembly as guests or visitors or (in the case of Christians) as delegates, advisers, visitors or staff. Many had not engaged previously in World Council of Churches' dialogue programmes.

The Mauritius theme, "The Meaning of Life", was related to the theme of the Assembly, "Jesus Christ — the Life of the World", and was designed to elicit contributions from other living faiths on the understanding of life in those various traditions. This report will indicate that that purpose was amply fulfilled. The consultation participants prepared a "Message", included here, and a set of specific recommendations that were transmitted to the World Council of Churches' committee preparing the Assembly.

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It is important to note that the Mauritius consultation could not have been held prior to any other Assembly of the World Council of Churches. At the Nairobi Assembly in 1975 guests of other faiths were invited for the first time and then only in limited numbers. Five guests were present there, one each from five major religions. At Vancouver three times as many will be present, fifteen, representing six different faiths: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Traditional peoples. The number is still small but the increase is significant, nevertheless, and even more significant is the fact that these fifteen guests or their representatives have been able to meet each other and a small group of Christians prior to the Assembly in order to begin exploration of the themes of the Assembly, comparing and contrasting their traditions and beliefs.

In the course of the days at Mauritius, in between listening to and discussing the papers that were read and the small group discussions, Hindus came to know Buddhists, Christians encountered Sikhs, Muslims met Jews, Traditional people from Canada talked with Traditional healers from Africa. They did so over meals, during breaks, and late into the evening... and in the process became friends. Many participants spoke of the deep, intense and indeed spiritual significance of their frank, open and caring conversations with persons of faiths other than their own, witnessing to a heightened awareness of the spiritual resources in their own faith as a result. "Dialogue" took on a meaning far in excess of a mere exchange of words. And then, in morning meditations, led each day by members of a different religious community, "windows" into the enacted liturgical tradition of other faiths enlivened and enriched the personal and more formal encounters.

The multifaith character of Mauritius provided its own unique contribution to the consultation and its participants. Several Muslims, Christians and Jews from Mauritius, who joined their colleagues from elsewhere, continually reminded the consultation of the very particular reality of religious faith. And participants regretted the inadvertent absence of Mauritian Hindus and Buddhists. Further, the local host, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, urged on the consultation the necessity to extend the dialogue so as to include ideologies like Marxism. Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and *Ideologies* is the title and mandate of the Sub-unit. As a result of the careful preparation by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, Canon Rex Donat, Rev. Brian Crosby, and other Christians of Mauritius, consultation participants were able to enter into Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim celebrations, thereby discovering something of the actual practice of the religions about which they spoke.

One reality broke through time and time again during the consultation. It was simple and yet in its implications disturbingly profound: we need each other; dialogue is not an option. Some of the ramifications of that simple profundity are sketched in the paragraphs that follow.

One lasting lesson from the consultation is this: there is abroad an urge and a new momentum in all faiths to strengthen and give clearer voice to those elements in their traditions which drive towards recognizing our needs for one another. The world is one of inescapable interdependence in

all realms. The threat to human life and to the whole earth urges upon all a growing recognition that no one faith can go it alone.

In diverse ways and degrees the various faiths have within them both universal and exclusive dimensions — in patterns of thinking, speaking and acting. But in all communities of faith we have seen that urge towards strengthening and giving clearer voice for the ways to express in thought and action, in worship and structure that interdependence in time and eternity which could be called our need for the other.

In probing and listening to one another the consultation came to believe that this urge was deeper and more tangible than the polite style often expected of people gathered for the purpose of “dialogue”. It could even be said that the increased unity of one community could be perceived as a threat to others if not coupled with the full awareness that none of us can go it alone, can do it alone.

Thus the presence of people of other faiths as guests at the Vancouver Assembly must be seen as a step more significant than may first appear. Although few in number, the guests at Vancouver — representing the majority of humankind — serve as a reminder of the reality which is the world. And the question raised in one of the discussions of the Vancouver preparatory material cannot be taken lightly: of course the World Council of Churches speaks — and we all want it to speak clearly and strongly — the language of Christians. But certain of the documents may well be perceived by both Christians and people of other faiths as implying that the solution to whatever problems there are lies solely in Christianity — going it alone.

As often happens in dialogue, it became clear that authentic witness includes the responsibility for what one is heard to say — not only for what one thinks one says.

The theme

After the formal opening of the consultation by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, M. Anerood Jugnauth, the participants began their common consideration of the theme, “The Meaning of Life”. Prof. D. C. Mulder, moderator of the WCC’s Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) and moderator for the consultation, set the stage by outlining three reasons for such an interfaith meeting prior to the Assembly:

- 1) so that guests and visitors to the Assembly from other faiths could “establish relations of friendship with Christian participants and in that way feel better at home in the Vancouver crowd”;
- 2) to “make people acquainted with the structure of the World Council of Churches and with the programme of Vancouver”; and
- 3) because “the World Council of Churches is eager to hear the voices of people of other faiths on the theme, the sub-themes, the issues that are going to be discussed at Vancouver... voices (that) might easily be lost in the hectic programme during the Assembly itself”.

As has already been indicated, participants did indeed “establish relations of friendship” and did so across barriers of religious faith, culture, and even political allegiance. Though cold type is incapable of conveying its depth and significance, many participants shared the sentiment expressed by one of them who wrote, after returning home: “A few events in one’s life actually change entire perspectives on spiritual and intellectual issues; this conference, and the people I met there, is one such event in my own personal and professional life...”

The delicate question of “interfaith worship” was carefully and thoroughly considered at the very beginning of the consultation by the steering committee (composed of participants from each of the seven faith communities present). It was recognized that genuine and full involvement in the liturgical acts of another faith was not possible or even desirable. At the same time, an adequate understanding of life from the various faith perspectives demanded awareness of the ways in which those understandings take shape in worship. The conclusion, and it was a happy one, was to meet together each morning for an explanation and/or demonstration of some element of the liturgy of a particular faith, followed by silent meditation.

Thus one morning the participants heard Dr Gopal Singh outline the meaning of Sikhism, and then sat in silence, meditating in their own ways. On other days Hinduism was introduced by Sri Shrivatsa Goswami, Islam by Dr Muzammil Siddiqi, Judaism by Rabbi Jordan Pearlson, Christianity by Dr Diana Eck, Traditional religion by Mr Art Solomon, and Buddhism by Mr Masahiro Nemoto. On the final day, Canon Lloyd Casson led a moving meditation in which members of each faith were enabled to read from their own scriptures and make their own testimony. The result was that all received unique glimpses into the lived faith of others, glimpses that enriched the words flowing from formal presentations and informal conversations.

The sub-themes

LIFE, A GIFT OF GOD

The formal presentations began with papers concerning the Assembly sub-theme “Life, a gift of God”. Sri Goswami offered a Hindu perspective on the dignity of life based on the concept of *dharma* (that which sustains and upholds life). Dignity based on this *dharma* has to do with our relationship to human and non-human existence, and to Ultimate Reality itself. An understanding of the dignity of life based on the *dharma* gives meaning both to worldly and to spiritual life, he said.

Dr Anant Anand Rambachan pointed out that the Hindu scriptural understanding of the self can give “a new perspective of the world and of our relationship with all other living things. Perhaps the most far-reaching results follow from the fact that whereas formerly all our aspirations and activities sprang from our own self-centred desire for fullness, they now arise from the fullness we have appreciated in ourselves. We can now live and act out of joy rather than for joy.”

"Unfortunately," he continued, "the implications of this scriptural truth have not always been consistently reflected and explored in many of the social structures which have accompanied the development of Hinduism." But, correctly understood, "such a vision of life provides a profound and inspiring basis for an outlook of love, compassion and care... In the Hindu outlook, therefore, self-knowledge (*Atmajnana*) is a totally liberating understanding, in which the narrow and isolated perception of oneself is overcome and the way is opened to a unity with all creation and an unselfish relation with others. It is a vision that is rich for exploration in terms of its practical applications."

Following the discussion prompted by the Hindu papers, Father Michael Oleksa presented an Orthodox Christian overview of the concept that life is a gift of God. After summarizing Orthodox understandings of "natural" life, death, divine life, salvation, incarnation, etc., he observed: "Traditional Orthodoxy rejects both escapism and utopianism. The world is not to be rejected or fled as in itself evil, but rather restored and transformed from being 'independent' to being the icon and therefore the symbol of God. At the same time the ancient church did not and does not idolize the world, nor did it believe its main function to be only the *improved* life of the world. The essence of the good news is the renewed possibility for human beings to fulfill their full potential and participate in the very nature of God: 'And this is eternal life — that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.'"

"God's gift of life", Oleksa maintained, "therefore includes all creation and all that is essentially 'very good'. It includes all living things and elements and forces that sustain life. It includes God's gift of himself and his self-revelation in Jesus the Christ. It includes ultimately the unity-in-love that is God."

LIFE CONFRONTING AND OVERCOMING DEATH

The consultation participants next turned to a consideration of the second Assembly sub-theme, "Life confronting and overcoming death". It did so through discussion of papers by Prof. Jean Halpérin of the World Jewish Congress and by Dr J. A. Nartey, a Traditional healer from Ghana.

Prof. Halpérin said: "The awareness of death is ever present in the mind of all believing Jews, even if they choose not to make it a topic for conversation or discussion. The two main reasons for this are that, (1) being so strongly bent on life and all it represents, they fear that putting too much emphasis on death might detract from responsibilities in this world, and (2) death and what comes after is the greatest mystery of all."

But, he noted, "strangely enough, neither life nor death are to be taken for granted. Jewish teaching rules out the banality of either of them. It is because we are not immortal — and that we know it — that so much is at stake in our lifetime. Since life is the highest good, human beings are obliged to cherish and preserve it (Deut. 30: 15-20). Life is, in a way, a matter of choice; it implies fully-fledged responsibility, the more so since Judaism knows of no vicariousness whatsoever. Hence, the commandment of permanent awareness and awakeness. Through my own behaviour, I

am accountable for the life and death of others. The verse in Deuteronomy 16: 20, 'Justice, justice you shall pursue so that you live', implies that only the unending struggle for justice can make life fully meaningful. We experience the daily miracle of life and the constant bafflement of death. To live is to remember — in order to act accordingly.

"By their deeds, the righteous continue to live even after their death; and the wicked are considered to be dead even in their lifetime. Faith makes it easier for me to live — and perhaps also to die. However, it also greatly increases the challenge and the responsibility that I face."

Dr Nartey led the consultation participants in a consideration of an African Traditional worldview. "By tradition," he said, "the African has held the belief that, as a supreme authoritative deity, Onyankopon has his messengers or attendants who serve as a link between man and himself. While in life, therefore, the African, who knows that he owes his existence to the grace of God, serves the supreme deity through these messengers or angels, attendants or lesser gods, which have their dwelling places in mountains, rivers, valleys, and trees.

"The Traditionalist believes in reincarnation. In looking at life and death, the Traditionalist sees a continuous cycle in which the supreme Giver-of-life, in his master control room, directs affairs through his agents. In the African context it is this belief in some form of life after death that binds family relations together and has helped to retain special customary rites for particular families, binding the soul of the individual to his ancestors.

"This link makes it imperative for the individual to defend and uphold the family principles laid down by his ancestors, which contain mysterious beliefs that scare the guilty ones into confession, without being subject to any form of torture or trial by ordeal. For fear of instant justice and his wish to maintain the extended family linkage, the African fears to commit crime. In other words, the African Traditionalist never thinks of a judgment day after his death, but is always afraid of a judgment that might come before his death."

LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

Discussion of the third Assembly sub-theme, "Life in its fullness", was led by Dr Sulak Sivaraksa and Dr Gopal Singh. Dr Sivaraksa led off, saying: "From a Buddhist worldview, a person is a unique being — above plant, animal, and other sub-human beings like ghosts and demons. But a person is classified below other superior beings, such as gods and angels. Yet a person alone has the potential to achieve the highest quality in life, the ultimate end of the life cycle or liberation from sufferings. It is therefore essential for us, if we wish to take our duty seriously, to try to overcome or eliminate suffering. And the way to do this is laid down as a guideline by the Buddha. One does not need to declare oneself Buddhist, but if one finds such a guide useful, one may study it and put it into practice.

"The basic rules for Buddhist morality are five. These are not commandments, but they are recommended for those who wish to have a social dimension to their human development: to abstain from killing, to abstain

from stealing, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from false speech, and to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness. Practising these five precepts, one is bound to be endowed with the five ennobling virtues, namely: loving kindness and compassion, right means of livelihood and generosity, sexual restraint, truthfulness and sincerity, and mindfulness and heedfulness.

"This pair of 'fives' are essential to check a person's social growth. If we merely abstain from killing and stealing, yet put our money in multinational corporations or international banks that exploit the poor or invest in armament businesses, we obviously lack loving kindness and our means of livelihood are certainly wrong.

"For the Buddhist," he concluded, "physical, social, spiritual and intellectual growth must be developed side by side, and they must all go along towards the ultimate end of liberation from all suffering."

From a Sikh perspective, also, human beings are unique. "A human alone", Dr Gopal Singh told the consultation, "can enjoy the fullness of life, because a human alone is endowed not only with reason (not merely instinct) but also intuition (not merely intelligence). A human alone can have the craving to be other than what he or she is and rise above the limitations of time and circumstance.... Sikhism places human life at the pinnacle of all life.

"Sikhism enjoins prayer, meditation, recitation or chanting of the holy word to purge oneself of one's ego or I-am-ness — the greatest malady to the Sikh credo, that bars our way to fulfilment. Sikhism believes that there is evil in the world but it is also within us all. We are the creators of evil as well as the participants in evil. And, while there are things that are evil, according to Sikhism, there is no principle of evil as such. Man partaking of the essence of God, the holy, is essentially holy and pure. To call another bad only because he is different is the worst of sins.

"Love does not mean, according to the Sikh credo, self-love but the love of others. He who cannot love or even suffer his neighbour cannot love God. But the pity is that we not only hate our neighbours and our God but also hate ourselves even more. 'O God, save us from ourselves and be our teacher and guide, in thy mercy,' prays Guru Arjan in the Sikh scripture."

LIFE IN UNITY

Mr Art Solomon and Prof. Mohamed Talbi initiated the discussion of the fourth Assembly sub-theme, "Life in unity", by discussing the meaning of community in Traditional and Islamic traditions.

Mr Solomon demonstrated through symbolic acts — such as inviting the participants to bathe themselves in the smoke of smouldering sage, cedar, and sweet tobacco — that community for the Traditional people of North America encompasses the entire creation, including particularly the earth:

- Native spirituality encompasses the totality of life and the creation.
- Native spirituality encompasses the concept that the Creator is his creation.

- That we are spirit beings who have come from the spirit world, and we must return to the spirit world when our work in this part of the creation is finished.
- Our responsibility is to find our way to live in harmony with the cycles of the creation and thus to come to understand who we are and what is the purpose of our individual lives.
- Since we are spirit beings, we have spiritual needs (hunger) which must be met.
- The God who made us and sustains us minute by minute, provided for that need by giving us the ways that we were related to him. Those ways are called sacred ceremonies.
- The fundamental difference between the native people and the majority society is a difference of philosophy.
- One is a philosophy based on the concept of materialism.
- The native philosophy is based on the concept that we *cannot own* what belongs to God.

Prof. Talbi devoted his paper to the Muslim concept of community, the *Umma*, which "marks the transition to a complete openness to universalism. Like, for example, the state, it is a structure *sui generis* and an intrinsic value. The *Umma* is defined by its mission. It is a mission, and this mission consists in realizing the universal plan of God. It welcomes in its embrace all those who respond to the original founding call and who thus become part of this plan."

"The member of the *Umma*, whether praying or working, is always the same human being," he said. "He has no need to change his coat to mark the transition from one level to another. Prayer inspires the work and work sends us back to prayer. Each activity retains its own specific character."

"The true Muslim cannot do a single thing without relating it to the sacred. He is in a constant relationship to God, a relationship which culminates in the bond of a love which is both a source of privilege and reciprocal. The human being loves God and is loved by him."

"During the five daily prayers in which the Muslim ascends again and again towards God, the Muslim never presents himself alone before God. When he recites the *al-Fatiha* (the threshold of prayer) he says 'We adore thee', not 'I adore thee'. In every Muslim the whole *Umma* is offered to God and draws from him its life-giving sap in an act of surrender and renewal as well as one of voluntary, conscious, and trusting submission (*islam*).

"*Umma* is never achieved fully. It remains to be accomplished and realized afresh, in fidelity to the ideal which haunts the individual and collective imagination of its members. In our world, with its increasing acceptance of pluralism, our vocation as believers is to learn to live under the double sign of aspiration and hope: of an active aspiration which inspires us to make every effort to eliminate the roots of imperfection in ourselves, and of a hope which respects the other persons' difference and dignity, and his right to be different."

THE MEANING OF LIFE: TWO CHRISTIAN INTRODUCTIONS

Towards the conclusion of the consultation, two "introductions" to the theme and all the sub-themes were given by Christian participants, one from a Protestant perspective, the other from an Eastern Orthodox vantage point.

Dr Krister Stendahl, who identified himself as a "Bible boy", examined the meaning of life as perceived in the biblical literature. "There is," he said, "one single writing in the Bible (Ecclesiastes) which takes on the question of the meaning of life as such. The answer is: vanity, all is vanity. Things come and go but there is nothing new under the sun. The dust returns to dust from where it came and the spirit returns to God who gave it. The spirit that returns is obviously not the individual spirit, but is the energy of the creator, which was first blown into the nostrils of the red clay, Adam. That is one way of speaking about the meaning of life. There are other ways.

"God could have remained God in splendid isolation and had a lot less trouble. But the creation of the world I see as saying something about the nature of God, God wanting to share, to have something and someone with whom to share. Perhaps it is what we in the Christian tradition call love, in the sense of not being self-contained. So God decided that somewhere in the cosmos there would be some being with what we, in common language, call free will, to serve God, not by necessity but by free will. Now that was a very risky proposition. And ever since the Bible story is about God's attempts at mending the creation.

"When Jesus comes there is no question about the theme of his message. It is not the salvation of souls; it is the kingdom. The kingdom is at hand, repent and seek first the kingdom and its justice and all the rest will somehow fall into place. Jesus chose a term that was a code word for the mending of the creation. And we called him the Son of God.

"I think there are two ways of thinking about God in heaven. Some think of God as waking up in the morning and asking for the latest computation of the number of the saved. And there are others of us who think that when God wakes up in the morning, God asks if there has been any progress towards the kingdom, have there been any signs of the mending of the creation.

"Creation means limit, the setting of limits. Salvation is not the overcoming of limits, but recognizing and accepting limitation, finitude. Our fullness lies in our need of the other, our fullness is not by self-inflation. Our fullness is God's fullness, God's self-limitation by the creation, thereby limiting God's power. Only by our limits can we recognize our need for the other. We think so often that salvation is transcending the limits, but the aim of the exercise is the mending of the creation. There is the constant lesson that by my limits I recognize my need for the other, without which the kingdom cannot come."

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios emphasized the necessary role of tradition in the understanding of human existence. Science and technology are increasingly useful tools, he affirmed, but "there is no truth without tra-

dition.” He outlined five forms through which Eastern Orthodox Christians understand life:

“(a) The life of him who is, underived, unoriginate, self-existent, *sui generis*, incomprehensible, eternal, overflowing in love towards all.

“(b) The life of human beings derived from the life of God, existent only contingent upon the will of God, constantly changing and ever in need of becoming, responsible in large measure for shaping itself.

“(c) The life of non-human beings on our planet, which are both necessary for our life and constitute a value in themselves; human beings have a responsibility to care for them and foster their existence.

“(d) The life of the departed human beings who interact with us now, and continue their ministry of worship and manifestation of God’s love in the unseen realm.

“(e) The life of a vast host of created non-human beings in other realms — some working for the purposes of God, called variously angels, sons of God, etc., in the Christian scriptures, others opposing the will of God, called in the scriptures demons or devils; but also possibly other beings on other planets who may have physical bodies and senses; all these may be interacting with our lives on earth.

“The Eastern Orthodox understanding of life”, he continued, “lays great emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit who is called the life-giver. The Spirit was at work from the beginning of creation, hovering over the waters of chaos, bringing life, beauty and joy out of chaos. The Spirit has always been at work in all humanity everywhere and at all times, giving deep experiences of reality and its meaning to people in all cultures and climes. In so far as people have responded positively to the work of the Spirit, they have experienced unity with all, realization of the truth and the joyous knowledge that results from it.

“The Eastern Orthodox tradition does not see death as the enemy of life. Death such as we know it has been overcome by the risen Christ. We now face death as a portal to a greater and richer life, with new opportunities and challenges. It is faced with confidence and joy by those who have faith; though for the unbeliever death may still hold its terrors. Our fathers tell us that it is not that we die because we are born; on the contrary, we are born because we die. Where death no longer is, there is no need for birth. Hence there is no birth or death or marriage in the life of the resurrection as Christ taught us... Because the true light has overcome darkness, we shall not fear the powers of darkness.”

The issues

Each afternoon of the consultation participants divided into smaller groups to discuss the issues chosen for emphasis at the WCC Assembly. The discussions, free-wheeling and frank, included contributions by members of each of the faith communities present. Mauritian guests, encouraged to speak, did so to the benefit of all.

WITNESSING IN A DIVIDED WORLD

Stress was laid on the importance of bearing witness in a dialogical manner rather than confessional, respecting each other’s dignity and

humanity, as an essential instrument of peace in our time. This kind of witness must be made to oneself and one's own community, especially where the tradition is strongly conversionist. Neighbours must be allowed to define themselves, must be seen for what they really are, not for what they might potentially become.

It was recognized that the form of witness will be affected by one's placement in a minority or majority group; by whether a minority has affiliation with a majority group elsewhere, by whether the majority or the minority holds effective power.

A black Christian affirmed the importance of connecting Christian and African identity in contemporary witness, and he was supported by a representative of African primal religions.

A South African Christian spoke of the necessity of saying different things to different people, but with the same basic witness, i.e. to speak a different word to the oppressor than one speaks to the oppressed.

A Jewish woman affirmed the necessity of witnessing to the worth of women in the sight of God in adversarial terms, if necessary, and of the importance of clarifying the different meanings that the same words may have for different religious groups, e.g. Jews and Christians.

Muslims and Christians both spoke of different attitudes or stands within their traditions towards openness to others — for some it implies syncretism, for others the mutual respect necessary for common efforts towards peace.

The issue paper on "Witnessing in a divided world" represents an advance over an old-fashioned missionary stance, but it may be perceived by both Christians and others as implying that the key to the solution of humanity's problems lies solely within Christianity.

At the Vancouver Assembly, while recognizing that the churches must be allowed to speak in their own language, attention should be given to the perceptions of other religions. Guests of other faiths have therefore an important contribution to make.

We are responsible not just for what we say but for what we are heard to say.

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS UNITY

Central to the discussion of this group was the tension and unclarity about how Christian unity related to the unity of humankind. Perhaps this tension lies even in the historical fact that the WCC picked up the ancient designation *oikoumene* — which means "the whole inhabited world" — for the movement towards *Christian* unity.

Thus the discussion centred on how Christian unity relates to world unity and its implication for relations to other religions and ideologies. Among the points and observations made the following stand out.

1. The "successionist" model is fraught with a special problem, i.e. the idea that one religion is the forerunner of another. Christians think of Judaism as its forerunner and of itself as the real fulfilment — hence assigning an inferior or even obsolete role to Judaism. Does such a model contribute to or impede unity? Is the very problem of relating religion to

one another in “developmental schemes” from lower to higher a fundamental obstacle to unity?

2. With disarming honesty one of the guests said: “I must admit that a fully unified Christianity frightens me.” And certainly unity is often spoken of as a means towards more effectiveness in terms of one’s own power and influence.

3. An interesting interpretation of the history of the ecumenical movement and WCC was offered: Nathan Söderblom’s call to the churches in 1914 was deeply motivated by seeking to forestall the war which began that year — but it proved too late. The meeting did not happen until 1925 in Stockholm — after eleven years of disaster for millions. Then the focus was mainly European. Now the threat is clearly to humanity. Hence the WCC is challenged to think in terms of global unity not only in terms of geography but also in terms of faiths.

4. Christian faith includes a wider unity beyond that of geography. There is also the unity through time, i.e. the unity with those of earlier generations, the saints and those departed.

5. Steps towards Christian unity cannot be taken as if one first achieved Christian unity and then moved on from there. Christian unity must be sought while at the same time seeking unity wherever possible with others.

6. How do we say clearly that in many matters we often find us more united in spirit and concerns with people of other faiths than with some sisters and brothers of our own faith? And if that is so, what actions are called for?

MOVING TOWARDS PARTICIPATION

In the group discussing this topic it became clear that many of the ways in which religious and interfaith bodies work — often with significant accomplishments — actually reinforce patterns of non-participation, working *for* people rather than empowering people.

When the need for education as a step towards fuller participation was stressed, one was reminded of the insights of Paulo Freire’s pedagogy for the oppressed, i.e. education where the style is towards a participatory society rather than an education that feeds into the patterns of “leaders and led”.

The demystification of power proved to be a significant topic. Special attention was given to the need for simplifying the language of legislation and bureaucracies — not to speak of theology. Complicated language is certainly a means of self-protection for those in leadership and power. The increased need for lawyers at every turn in life is one major sign of this phenomenon — undercutting participatory structures and leading towards alienation. But the same phenomenon repeats itself in most professions and areas of life.

It seems obvious that Native Americans know of wise patterns of participatory decision-making and action for women and men — patterns

threatened by the importation of "Robert's Rules of Order" or other patterns for parliamentary procedures.

In the discussion of participation of women some ironies were revealed. From Ghana came the observation that the old roles of women's leadership in religious matters had been broken or frowned upon by the churches which now were trying to restore that very role.

In surveying the role of women in various religious traditions and cultures it became clear that moves towards a fuller participation of women were often impeded by the questioning of Western models for women's liberation. One felt, however, the need for hearing the women of these traditions speak for themselves.

Thus in this matter as in so many others, participation is obviously not only a goal but the very first step.

HEALING AND SHARING LIFE IN COMMUNITY

Agreement was quickly reached in the group that health is not a simple matter of not being sick. Rather health is the positive harmonious interrelation of one's body, mind, spirit, and environment. Health is harmony or balance within creation, a concept that includes all that is, uniting and overcoming the rationalistic separation that makes healing into a process of mechanistic manipulation of human bodily functions.

The group responded positively to the formulation from the Native American culture that health is "walking in the sacred way". As such, healing, far from being something generated from outside a person, comes from within — which is not to say that antibiotics or even surgery are not powerful supports for "self-healing".

It was emphasized that self-identity is a key to health, self-identity in no narrow sense, but the proper identification of oneself in the scheme of creation. Activity such as physical labour was seen as a way of maintaining the balance in creation, or health.

The role of the so-called healing professions was discussed at length, the concern being that all too frequently medical education ignores the harmony of reality, leading thus to medical practice that, while overcoming sickness, destroys genuine health. People of all religions and cultures need to address the question of medical training and practice, stressing the vital importance of communities in which the totality of creation may be evident.

Indeed, health is walking in the sacred way, the way of the Creator.

CONFRONTING THREATS TO PEACE AND SURVIVAL

The group leader introduced the discussion by emphasizing that war is the collective result of our individual weaknesses: "We are all too indifferent at a time when the house is on fire." The fact today is that, although each of us is quite different from any other, we remain exceedingly alike, neighbours in a shrinking world bound together by our common fears and hopes.

Imaginative understanding is desperately needed now in order to combat violence in a world where education, science and technology are

utilized to squander the vast opportunities they provide. More and more, we need to discover ways through which mutual trust may be developed.

The role of religions should be to promote harmony and towards that end should commonly affirm, as bare minimums: a pledge to honour and respect all people; the freedom to choose one's own faith; to share resources, especially with those who are deprived; to search for universal values; to focus on a universal spirit of compassion and hope; and to promote love, truth, understanding, and justice.

Many of these same points were made in the discussion, which raised questions such as the degree to which it is possible to overcome our own hatreds and whether or not it is, actually, too late to make the needed personal changes in view of the immediate threat of nuclear destruction. Perhaps, one participant suggested, we should simply appeal to self-interest instead of idealism.

Others, however, felt the need to emulate the examples of Ghandi and Martin Luther King in order to bring peace to the earth. Such an effort would encourage a meaningful programme of confidence-building in all conflict areas.

There is, though, a danger in attempting to approach the question of peace unilaterally. Peace will come only when all parties to conflict equally desire it. Therefore, extensive exchange visits by citizens of hostile countries were suggested, to lower the suspicion level and counteract fear.

Everyone agreed that what is needed is a will and an imaginative approach. Among members of the group the will was certainly present, but the imagination largely failed — and that is precisely the locus of fear and anxiety as we confront the hatred and hostility of our societies and world.

STRUGGLING FOR JUSTICE AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Sometimes the justice in a country can be gauged by the number of lawyers and prisons it produces: the more lawyers, the less justice; the more people in gaols, the less justice. But it is important to acknowledge the ways in which different religious traditions have slowed the progress of justice. Examples that come quickly to mind include the caste system in Hinduism and the traditionally inferior status accorded to women in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Justice can be voiced and tested in various relationships: men/women, labour/management, children/ adults, big nations/small nations, etc.

Concern for the poor is present in all religions, but the implementation of that concern has too often been limited to alms-giving, to charity. Often religious efforts to serve the poor do so without reference to the root causes of injustice in the structure of society.

Some religious traditions have insisted that the poor have a special visa for entrance into the kingdom, an insistence that sometimes has led to the elevation of poverty to a positive good. Monks and nuns voluntarily embrace poverty, which is something quite different from glorifying involuntary poverty, and thereby refusing to act towards its alleviation.

The opinion was expressed that the Roman Catholic Church is far more systemic in its search for and insistence on structural change in socie-

ties than is the case in other churches. All religions are called to acknowledge concretely the right of people to a share of the land where they live and to own a share of the product they produce.

In recent years important steps forward have been taken in the promotion of human rights as, for example, in the work of Amnesty International. But the growing anxiety, shared by those of religious faith, about such injustice as child abuse and wife beating, reveals a frustration about human rights and the possibility of their universal establishment.

The teaching of religions that each person is created with a "divine spark" (Judaism) in the "image of God" (Christianity), etc., must be emphasized in order to give people, wherever they are and whatever they do, greater awareness of their basic worth.

It was noted that rich nations, peoples, and religious groups show forth an extraordinary arrogance by their willingness to distribute food as though they were the owners of it; to use food as a weapon. That one-fourth of the world's people is starving is terrible and mighty evidence of the injustice that presently reigns in the world. Delegates to Vancouver should be provided with data to demonstrate that the earth contains the resources to feed us all — if the human will to do so is there.

LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

The discussion on learning focused on the problems and opportunities implicit and explicit in the transmission of one's religious tradition to others within the community, especially the young. Many questions were raised: when we speak of community, do we mean our own neighbours? Nations? World? Is "global consciousness" too all-encompassing for actual learning?

Members of the group engaged in an exercise of witnessing to how they as individuals learned their own religious tradition and the impact on that learning of encounter with persons of another faith or faiths. As they did so, it became apparent that several channels of learning were common to the religious traditions represented: liturgy, family, childhood education in the religious community, and formal education throughout youth and adulthood. Underlying them all was the assumption that learning takes place in community.

Thus, the size and scope of the learning community becomes critical. While it was recognized that learning within a single-faith community is crucial for the formation and continuance of that faith and its tradition, contact with and learning from religions and cultures external to the community is necessary in order to avoid exclusiveness and triumphalism.

The group agreed that the "unlearning" of some elements of learning acquired in single-faith communities is frequently requisite for depth appreciation of the faith taught and learned there. Dialogue with people of other faiths, as a "meeting of commitments", was affirmed as a primary avenue for such "unlearning".

At the same time, "unlearning" may be a prerequisite for dialogue and, therefore, attention to other faiths and "global consciousness" should receive increased emphasis within every religious community.

COMMUNICATING WITH CONVICTION

Participants concentrated on the mass media and its social responsibility in their discussion. Though the influence of the mass media should not be overestimated or exaggerated, it tends to reflect social values, reinforcing some to the neglect of others. The media has a responsibility to clarify issues and problems, not confuse or hide them. In addition, it has the responsibility to offer viable responses to those issues and problems on the part of its readers, listeners, and viewers. Otherwise, it becomes a powerful tool for indoctrination by the ruling élite.

In that regard, the third world's lack of financial and human resources for developing communications networks was noted. Frequently third world countries require assistance in constructing such networks, as well as support when they explore their own alternatives to the media styles of the west.

Some participants reflected that the mass media is probably inadequate for the dissemination of authentic Christian witness because it is too impersonal and unidirectional. Expanding beyond Christian witness to genuine dialogue, the meeting agreed that such dialogue is fully present only in direct personal expression at the grassroots level. Some examples from Mauritius were cited, including the opportunities present in its linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, which is expressed in a variety of ways, including non-verbal cross-cultural communication through dance and drama.

But even at the grassroots level — and perhaps especially there — the effect of mass communication cannot be ignored, both in its detrimental and beneficial aspects. Some believed that the radio, television, and print media lean over too far in their efforts to be objective, presenting thereby an anti-religious message. Agreeing, others saw evidence of poor and/or mis-information about religious affairs and events, with a stereotyping of racial, cultural, and religious minorities. A fully unified interfaith response to the media would go far towards making it both responsible and responsive to the needs of religion and society.

II. Message to Assembly Delegates .

We from many religious traditions and cultures look forward to meeting you at the Assembly in Vancouver. We have already met together for ten full days to explore in dialogue with one another the theme of the Assembly — life itself: its meaning, its struggles, and its hope. Appropriately, we met on the island of Mauritius in the midst of the Indian Ocean

— a multi-religious society consisting primarily of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians from Asia, Africa and Europe.

We met at the initiative of the World Council of Churches. Our meeting was part of the preparation for the Assembly. The theme of the Assembly “Jesus Christ — the Life of the World” is the particular affirmation of Christians. However, in each of our traditions, we as people of faith affirm life in its fullness, its mystery, and its relation to ultimate reality, and in doing so express our urgent concern for justice, compassion, and hope in a world beset with injustice, indifference and despair.

In our dialogue we spoke from the standpoint of our own religious and cultural traditions, and we listened carefully to one another. We came to understand more clearly where we differ. But we also discovered where we converge and can affirm basic values and hopes together as religious people, not at the “lowest common denominator”, but at the very heart of our deepest commitments and convictions.

We share an affirmation of the fullness and the deep inter-relatedness of all life — human life to life, human life to the life of the world of nature, and all life to its divine source. Native Americans speak of the “Great Circle of Creation”, and Hindus speak of the fullness of life “from the Creator to a blade of grass”. We heard from the Bhagavad Gita:

One who sees Me everywhere
and sees everything in Me,
of him shall I never lose hold,
and he shall never lose hold of Me.

We share an affirmation that we as human beings are not only given, but entrusted with, the gift of life. That sacred trust calls us to compassionate and responsible action, both personal and communal. In a world of unconscionable disparity between races, we feel deeply that our religious traditions command us to pursue justice, with unceasing effort, not only on behalf of those of our own religious community, but for all. We are all enriched by the challenging questions of Hillel:

If I do not act for myself, who will act for me?
And if I care for myself only, what am I?
And if not now, when?

We share the affirmation that the mystery of life transcends death, and in each of our religious traditions, in our distinctive ways, we affirm life even as we face our own death and mourn the death of loved ones. Today, however, the inter-relation and continuity of life and death, of birth and death, are threatened and distorted by the sheer magnitude of the forces of death: the nuclear arsenals held in threat to destroy millions of human beings and, indeed, capable of destroying life itself. In this critical time it is morally imperative for us all to “choose life” and dismantle the forces of death, to cooperate with one another in the search for peace, and to turn away from the narrowness of vision — national, racial and religious — which has polarized so many parts of our world into hostile camps competing in violence and the threat of violence.

In our search for peace we acknowledge that all too often in the past, and even today, various parts of the world have been torn by strife in the name of "religion". As we meet, we are painfully conscious of the continuing crisis in the Middle East, where people of three of our religious traditions are tragically divided. Religion has too often been misused to divide and oppose. Now we must strive as religious people to reconcile and unite. We share an affirmation that at the heart of our traditions is an ethic of non-violence and forgiveness. There is the Sermon on the Mount in the Christian gospel and the Jain, Hindu and Buddhist heritage of Mahatma Gandhi. The Buddhist Dhammapada enjoins: "Let one overcome hatred by kindness, evil by goodness, greed by generosity, and lies by truth-telling." The Qur'an commands: "Repel the evil deed with the good and lo, the enemy becomes as a bosom friend." The Rabbinical Wisdom asks: "Who is strong? The one who makes of his enemy a friend."

We may affirm life in its fullness and speak the word of peace, but we know that life is in peril and the world is not at peace. Thus, it is with conviction and a sense of urgency that we write this message, we who come from the African traditions and the Native Traditions of North America, from the Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh traditions, from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. Our group included among others Indians, Soviet citizens, Americans, a Palestinian, a Japanese, a South African....

We want to stress the genuine importance and value of dialogue. By dialogue we mean speaking and listening with openness to one another in a common search for understanding, and by dialogue we also mean acting together, hand in hand, as allies in our common work for justice and peace. We must not imagine that such global issues as peace and justice can be undertaken, or even addressed in a meaningful way, by any one religious tradition alone. For we are not alone in this world. We share our world with people of all cultures, races, and religions, and our future is one.

Our host at this meeting was Archbishop Trevor Huddleston. We heard his passionate appeal to the people of all religions to unite in opposing the evil of apartheid which violates the sanctity and dignity of human life. We gave our whole-hearted support to his initiative in calling an international and inter-religious forum addressed to this issue. This will be held in Britain under the sponsorship of the United Nations soon after the Sixth Assembly.

As we move ahead in the process of understanding and cooperation through dialogue, we need to focus clearly on such issues of critical concern and shared responsibility. We need to include people of ideological as well as religious commitments who are open for dialogue with us. And we need to become aware of our own ideological commitments.

We welcome the initiative, the openness, and the vision of the World Council of Churches and of others in moving towards dialogue. Some of us come from religious traditions that have always welcomed dialogue, others of us come from traditions in which dialogue is a new step, and a few of us come from parts of the world where dialogue has already begun the difficult task of reconciling and uniting those who have been divided and opposed.

Vancouver itself is such a place, the home of people of many races, religions and cultures. We hope that at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches many more people will take the opportunity of meeting with people of other faiths. We trust that the Assembly itself will reaffirm its continued commitment to and support for dialogue.

We offer the encouragement of our own experience in dialogue. In dialogue we have found that trust can overcome fear. As we have learned from others we have found that we know ourselves and our own religious traditions more fully. And in coming to know the richness and diversity of our religious heritage, we have learned to affirm the hope for peace in a pluralistic world and to look forward together toward a more humane future.

One of us, from the Ojibway nation of Canada, offered this prayer:

Grandfather,
Look at our brokenness.
We know that in all creation
Only the human family
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.
We know that we are the ones
Who are divided
And we are the ones
Who must come back together
To walk in the Sacred Way.
Grandfather,
Sacred One,
Teach us love, compassion, and honour
That we may heal the earth
And heal each other.

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