

Getting to Reconciliation: A Comparative Perspective

Proceedings

Framing Reconciliation

Zilka Spahic - *Framing Reconciliation – Challenges and models of encounters in the Balkans*

In my exploration of reconciliation as a social and political practice in the Balkans, I examine two civil society initiatives that provide a forum for encounters between victims and perpetrators of wartime atrocities. These initiatives aim to create a safe space for sharing stories of the past and finding a path towards a shared future. In the first part of my analysis, I will provide a brief overview of the historical context and conceptual understanding of reconciliation. In the second part, I will introduce two specific initiatives that contribute to the process of reconciliation by fostering the rebuilding of relationships and challenging the perception of the other as an enemy.

What does reconciliation entail? In general, it encompasses various elements such as justice, repentance, forgiveness, restoring relationships, envisioning a just and mutually acceptable future, addressing the legacy of the past, transforming institutions, promoting inclusivity, and fostering cultural and attitudinal changes. Reconciliation is a broad and comprehensive concept, but it does not mean that all these elements are necessarily present at all times. Rather, it focuses on repairing the damage caused by conflict, emphasizing the rebuilding of relationships and an ongoing engagement with both the past and the future. John Paul argues that it also requires looking beyond the conventional frameworks of international political traditions, discourse, and operational methods in order to avoid perpetuating a vicious cycle.

Nearly three decades after the war in the region, the social fabric of the Balkans remains disheartening, with ethnically divided societies and traumatized citizens who predominantly reside in ethnically homogeneous communities. Numerous peace and reconciliation efforts have been undertaken, with varying degrees of success, yet the newly democratic states in the region still face fragile peace. Unfortunately, many war criminals in these countries have not been prosecuted, and some are even employed in state institutions, regularly coming into contact with war victims. While the formal cessation of hostilities was achieved through the Dayton Peace Agreement, the conflict persists through political, economic, and educational means. The politicization of trauma during commemorations of genocide and war crimes further exacerbates the situation. Consequently, explicit and implicit violence continues to plague society. This begs the question: How can we move forward? Should we forget or remember, and how should we approach memory?

Victims cannot simply forget the crimes committed against them, but they can work towards transforming their trauma. Collective remembrance can be both helpful and detrimental to victims, depending on the manner in which it is approached. Remembrance is important as it restores the dignity of victims and demonstrates a community's honest reckoning with the past. However, when manipulated for political purposes, collective remembrance can deepen divisions

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rather than bridge them. Some scholars and practitioners suggest the path of forgetting the past and focusing on creating economic conditions for a better future, thereby preventing the intergenerational transfer of trauma to the youth who should live free from war narratives and the burdens of the past. These questions raise further dilemmas: How do we keep the past alive without becoming prisoners to it? How do we avoid the repetition of past atrocities while forgetting them? Is it justifiable to sacrifice truth in order to achieve peace? Contextual examples, such as Sierra Leone and Mozambique in Africa, reveal that many survivors prioritize reintegration and peace, with greater concern for transforming ex-combatants into constructive community members rather than seeking explicit verbal accountability for the past. However, in other contexts, confronting the past is considered the most effective approach, offering catharsis and healing for both victims and perpetrators. Miroslav Volf asserts that remembering the wrongs committed by or against us is crucial for reconciliation and to prevent future evils. He emphasizes the importance of truthful and responsible remembrance, recognizing that memory lies at the root of every conflict.

The Balkan region has yet to adequately address the past, spanning from the First and Second World Wars to the conflicts of the 1990s. The complex nature of the Balkan conflicts, characterized by deep-rooted ethnic, religious, and historical tensions, requires a multifaceted approach to reconciliation. Civil society initiatives have emerged as crucial actors in this process, offering alternative spaces for dialogue, understanding, and healing.

Two notable initiatives in the Balkans are the Center for Nonviolent Action (CNA) and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR). The Center for Nonviolent Action, based in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focuses on reconciliation and peacebuilding through various programs and activities. One of its flagship projects is the "Ordinary Heroes" program, which brings together war victims and former combatants in a safe and facilitated environment. Through storytelling, dialogue, and joint activities, participants have the opportunity to humanize each other, challenge stereotypes, and find common ground. The program promotes empathy, understanding, and reconciliation by creating personal connections and fostering empathy between individuals from different sides of the conflict.

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights operates in several Balkan countries, including Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Croatia. It aims to empower young people to become active citizens, promote human rights, and contribute to reconciliation. One of its notable initiatives is the "Ordinary Heroes" campaign, which focuses on highlighting the stories of individuals who have shown bravery, compassion, and resilience during times of conflict. By amplifying these stories, the campaign aims to challenge dominant narratives and encourage critical thinking, empathy, and dialogue among young people. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights also organizes educational programs, workshops, and cultural events that promote interethnic understanding and cooperation.

These initiatives provide valuable spaces for encounters between victims and perpetrators, acknowledging the complexity of their experiences and promoting dialogue without minimizing or trivializing the suffering of the victims. By creating opportunities for empathy and understanding, they contribute to the healing process and the rebuilding of relationships. Moreover, they

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challenge the prevailing narratives of "us vs. them" and offer an alternative vision of a shared future based on cooperation, justice, and human rights.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and challenges faced by these initiatives. Reconciliation is a long and complex process that requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including political leaders, institutions, and broader society. The initiatives mentioned above operate at the grassroots level, and while they have made significant contributions, broader systemic changes are needed to achieve sustainable reconciliation. This includes addressing issues of accountability, transitional justice, educational reform, and fostering inclusive narratives that acknowledge the suffering of all sides involved in the conflicts.

In conclusion, reconciliation in the Balkans necessitates a comprehensive approach that goes beyond political agreements and legal processes. Civil society initiatives play a vital role in providing spaces for encounters, dialogue, and understanding between victims and perpetrators. By humanizing the "other" and fostering empathy, these initiatives contribute to the healing process and the construction of a shared future. However, sustainable reconciliation requires broader societal and systemic changes that address the root causes of conflict and promote justice, inclusivity, and a truthful reckoning with the past.

Pasquale Ferrara - *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Lessons from Chile, Algeria, and Afghanistan*

Good morning everyone, excellencies, professors, distinguished colleagues, dear friends. I am delighted and honored to be here with all of you today in Sarajevo, a city that represents a historical crossroad of peoples, cultures, and religions. Sarajevo commands respect and admiration worldwide. The topic of this conference, reconciliation, is not just a theory but an ongoing endeavor. In the field of political science, reconciliation has become a central topic when discussing political development, democratization, and the stabilization of political systems. Although reconciliation is a political tool, it is not necessarily linked to the role of religions. However, religions can either facilitate or hinder processes of political reconciliation. The fundamental question asked by scholars, politicians, and diplomats is whether religion, which may have been part of the problem in the past, can now be part of the solution.

Before delving into the nexus between religion and reconciliation, let us first explore reconciliation as a political notion and a secular, pragmatic process. Drawing from my personal experiences during different stages of my diplomatic career, I have witnessed attempts, successes, and failures of reconciliation in diverse contexts. Although these scenarios differ significantly, they can be useful for comparative purposes in framing reconciliation. The three cases I will discuss are Chile, Algeria, and Afghanistan.

During my time in Chile in the early 1990s, I served in the midst of the transition to democracy following the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Prior to that, the Catholic Church had established the Vicariate of Solidarity, an institution that provided legal assistance to thousands of individuals affected by the regime's repression. The records of the cases handled by the Vicariate preserved a

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fragment of national history and collective memory, ensuring that no one could claim ignorance in the future. In 1990, the Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, known as the Rettig Commission, was established. The commission had four primary tasks: to establish a comprehensive picture of human rights violations during the Pinochet regime, to gather evidence for victim identification, to recommend reparations, and to propose measures to prevent future abuses. The commission's final report, known as the Rettig Report, recommended various reparation schemes and shed light on the truth without advocating for a complete overhaul of the judiciary or military. It was a case of truth-telling and an appeal to reconciliation, but justice was still pursued.

The second case I would like to mention is Algeria, where I served as an ambassador. During my tenure, I witnessed the fall of President Bouteflika, who claimed to be a reconciler. In 2019, millions of demonstrators peacefully took to the streets daily, demanding Bouteflika's resignation. Algeria had previously experienced a brutal civil war in the 1990s, resulting from the cancellation of an election that Islamist politicians were poised to win. Bouteflika came to power in 1999 with an agenda of reconciliation. Amnesty measures were approved for both rebels and security forces. The Algerian people also voted in a referendum to approve the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, which led to the pardoning of thousands of Islamists in exchange for their surrender. The Algerian authorities acknowledged the forced disappearance of thousands of people during the conflict, but many perceived that real reconciliation had not taken place. Human rights activists highlighted the importance of truth in any reconciliation process, and Algerians felt uninformed about what truly happened in the '90s. Unlike Chile, Algeria did not establish a national commission, leading some to view it as a case of political amnesia rather than genuine amnesty.

The third case I wish to discuss is Afghanistan, where I closely followed the negotiations as the political director. In 2007, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for inclusive political dialogue and reconciliation among the various factions in Afghanistan, including the Taliban. The goal was to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict and to bring stability to the country. Over the years, several attempts were made to initiate peace talks, but progress was slow and often hindered by ongoing violence.

In recent years, there have been renewed efforts to achieve reconciliation in Afghanistan. Negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban took place, leading to the signing of the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement in 2020. The agreement aimed to facilitate a political settlement and the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country. While the process is still ongoing, it represents a significant step towards reconciliation in Afghanistan.

In all three cases, religion played a role, either directly or indirectly, in the process of reconciliation. In Chile, the Catholic Church and its institutions provided support to the victims of the dictatorship and contributed to the truth-telling process. In Algeria, Islamists and their relationship with the state were at the center of the conflict, and attempts at reconciliation involved pardons and amnesties for former rebels. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's religious ideology and their relationship with the Afghan government were key factors in the peace negotiations.

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Religion can be both a divisive and unifying force. In some cases, religious differences have fueled conflicts and hindered reconciliation efforts. However, religion can also provide a common ground and a shared language for reconciliation. Religious leaders and institutions can play a vital role in promoting dialogue, understanding, and forgiveness.

It is important to note that reconciliation is a complex and multifaceted process that goes beyond the role of religion. Political, social, and economic factors all play a part in shaping reconciliation efforts. Nevertheless, religion can be a powerful force for reconciliation when it is used to promote understanding, respect, and compassion among individuals and communities.

In conclusion, the nexus between religion and reconciliation is a topic of great significance in today's world. While religion has been both a source of conflict and a potential solution, its role in reconciliation processes cannot be ignored. Understanding the complexities and dynamics of this relationship is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners working towards sustainable peace and stability.

Debora Tonelli – *Transformative Reconciliation: Dialogues, Plural Narratives, and Global Perspectives*

Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Excellencies and colleagues. I am delighted to be a part of this conference. The use of the word "reconciliation" surprised me a little. The impression I got is that today we wanted to reflect on the kind of peace that goes beyond the goals set by negotiated agreements, involving something deeper. In the time I have, I will discuss reconciliation as an act that truly requires the personal involvement of all the actors involved, both from a social and political perspective. It necessitates a reeducation in how we relate to those who were previously our enemies. We must emphasize that education is the opposite of propaganda. Without this distinction, a peace agreement would simply be a temporary cessation of hostilities or conflicts. Reconciliation, on the other hand, entails personal transformation in order to rebuild relationships with others.

To reconcile means to embark on a journey of inner transformation that leads to a different paradigm, one that surpasses the fractures and includes the perspectives of others. It requires thinking beyond oneself and understanding that only through this can we truly exist as compassionate human beings. Now, how do we proceed with the process of reconciliation? I propose three main stages. The first stage is dialogue. The second is the reevaluation of the underlying rationale. The third is the construction of a common narrative of the fractured past.

Let's begin with dialogue. The term originates from ancient Greek and means "to discourse" or "to converse." In modern languages, it is often used in the context of negotiation, politics, economics, diplomacy, or philosophical and juridical debates. However, we must acknowledge that genuine dialogue is more than a mere exchange of words. It involves actively recognizing the validity of our interlocutor's perspective and courteously waving to them. In everyday conversations, dialogue often becomes noise, addressing trivial matters that do not require taking a position or discussing

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concerns with little consequence. Other times, dialogue addresses complex and fundamental issues, where the approach and objectives are vital in prevailing or exploring diverse perspectives. In these cases, the Socratic dialogue, which values reason and logical consistency, allows even those who may not have the same capacity for reasoned discourse to engage in rigorous reflection leading to shared conclusions. The possibility of achieving this depends on the interlocutors sharing assumptions and tools of reasoning within the Western philosophical tradition. However, the contemporary world is characterized by diverse traditions and cultures that do not always share the same understanding of dialogue. They may use the same words but with different meanings. In situations where there are disparities in conceptual frameworks and vocabularies, we confront the challenges of epistemic colonialism, radical religious pluralism, or authorized ideology.

Thus, contemporary societies cannot solely rely on Socratic dialogue unless we explicitly clarify and recognize the perspectives of each party involved. Often, the process of creating conditions for dialogue becomes dialogue itself. This process may vary depending on the parties and the topic at hand. While there is no single methodology for implementing dialogue, certain principles, such as openness to reality and the environment, should guide our attitude. It should be based on the suspension of judgment, allowing for the examination of established assumptions and beliefs. Dialogue should not only serve as a means to exchange ideas, but also as a space where existing paradoxes do not lead to polarization, but instead foster an awareness of pluralism.

Within this context, we encounter the concept of empathy. In Italian, the word "comprendere" carries a beautiful meaning, derived from Latin "comprehendere," which goes beyond mere understanding and rational reflection. It involves empathetically embracing the feelings of others, particularly regarding non-negotiable elements that differentiate us. This ability to take on the perspective of others and encompass their experiences forms the foundation for a broader common understanding that overcomes differences and extremism. However, this does not imply an extreme relativism, but rather a humbling of our own perspectives while acknowledging and embracing those of others. Imagination and empathy do not oppose reason, but rather exceed it by allowing us to participate in the deep emotions of others. By doing so, we can return to our initial positions with a renewed vision, realizing that our viewpoint is not absolute and may even be unproductive.

Now, let's move on to the third and final point: the plurality of narratives that contribute to the construction of a new and shared narrative. This necessitates a decentralization of our own centers, whether it be our individual selves, countries, religions, or ethnicities, and an inclusive perspective that recognizes every observation point as equally valid. The challenge lies in transforming the polyphony of pluralism into a symphony. While we cannot change the facts of the past, we can change our perspective on them. It is crucial to focus on disagreements, not with a superficial detachment, but with a genuine intention to engage in dialogue. This does not mean denying the past, but confronting it in order to break free from hatred and avoid becoming trapped in it. The issue at stake is not solely the historical narrative itself, but its role in legitimizing various theological positions and accepting new paradigms of rationality, which have significant social and political implications.

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Three specific issues emerge: First, the need for epistemic and analytical understanding, distinguishing historically contingent characteristics from social ones. A genuine interpretation of history can be a valuable strategy in constructing a shared narrative that balances different perspectives. Second, a dialogical approach that takes into account the diversity of cultures, theologies, faiths, and religious practices is crucial for achieving a common purpose. Finally, the interaction between theology, politics, and the economy plays a vital role in any ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as it encompasses various dimensions of life and shapes our perception of the "other" or the unfamiliar. These issues, the need for epistemic and hermeneutical understanding, the reevaluation of the relationship between theology, religion, and culture, and a transdisciplinary approach rooted in a broader epistemology, highlight the complexity of interfaith dialogue and the necessity to rethink the global framework.

It is time to continue this journey not only as believers but as human beings who share a common home. Thank you.

Christian Perspectives on Reconciliation

Jörg Lüer – *Navigating the Complexities of Violence and Reconciliation: Insights and Challenges*

I traveled to Colombia to prepare for an international conference workshop focused on addressing violence and reconciliation based on the experiences in Colombia, in collaboration with our partners from the Bishops Conference. During my visit, I approached the president Bishop at the time, Luis Castro, and asked him about the main temptation the church faces regarding reconciliation in Colombia. He smiled and replied, "Well, there are three temptations: theology, theology, theology." This response initially irritated me, but he clarified that it referred to a high-flying theology that remains detached from the realities and suffering of the people, indulging in a comfortable life and beautiful events. He emphasized the need for the church to engage with real problems, to face them directly, and to seek solutions.

When examining the holy scripture, we find only one practical mention of reconciliation. It advises that if you have a conflict with your neighbor while on your way to the temple, you should first seek reconciliation with them before continuing. This brief passage, however, sparked a prolonged and often confusing discussion, particularly when the apostle Paul reflected on it in his letters, introducing the concept of the cross. It's not my intention to delve into the complexities of this discussion, as it could lead us astray. Nevertheless, I would like to mention an example related to church history. Many of us may recall that Pope John Paul II offered a confession of guilt for the history of the Church, which faced strong challenges from theologians and educated individuals. While interesting, this example belongs to a different level of discussion.

Moreover, I won't delve into the foundation upon which we stand. Dealing with violence, guilt, shame, forgiveness, and reconciliation is a universal challenge that extends beyond Christianity

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and Islam. It is a challenge faced by all human beings. In a brief presentation, it is difficult to fully explore the underlying anthropology, but it is crucial to acknowledge that we are relational beings. We exist both as individuals and as social beings, and it is vital not to reduce ourselves to one aspect alone. Our understanding of this profound meaning and reality is essential.

Years ago, the Commission for Justice and Peace in Germany initiated a reflective process, drawing on experiences dealing with violence and conflicts from various regions, including Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. From this ongoing work, we have learned two fundamental lessons that must be acknowledged from the outset. Firstly, there are no predetermined blueprints or master plans. We must accept that when we approach the issue from a detached and abstract perspective, we fail to respect the context and the people directly affected by violence. Violence is always concrete, and our responses must also be concrete, although cautious and respectful. Secondly, due to the shared human nature, the challenges we face in every context are fundamentally similar. However, the specific answers to these challenges must be crafted within the particular circumstances of each situation.

To comprehend the experience of violence, we must reflect on its nature. Experiencing violence means encountering extreme vulnerability, powerlessness, and the fragility of human life. Torture represents an extreme form of this experience. Reflecting on his own torture, As Hammadi described it, he said, "Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel the tone of words, and whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home." Extreme violence results in an existential shock, leading to trauma, accompanied by emotions such as shame, loss, and the accumulation of pain. The confidence in the words of those affected is profoundly affected and, in some cases, completely shattered. One's connection with oneself becomes shaky and can even be destroyed. The reactions of the victims are evident, but often overlooked are the reactions of the perpetrators, who also undergo their own shocking experience of violence. Involvement in violent acts raises questions about their values and self-perception. Fear is prevalent among those who witness violence, but their reactions may not be as apparent. Those who remain passive and fail to intervene often experience a sense of complicity or turn away from the victims. This group of bystanders also has its own experience of violence, which affects their relationships with both the victims and the perpetrators. To illustrate this point, we can look at the case of Germany and many other European countries, which were passive bystanders for too long in various conflicts. This passivity influences our relationships and has significant implications.

These brief statements highlight the diversity of experiences of violence, shaped by the individual and social roles played during acts of violence. In reality, the complexities are far greater, with roles constantly shifting and asymmetries at play. However, it is essential to acknowledge the interplay between violence and relationships—how individuals and groups relate to one another—and how violence affects individuals' relationship with themselves. It is important to recognize that the experience of violence spares no one. It takes a firm grip on the hearts and minds of those affected, leaving a lasting impact on their identities, sometimes even leading to their destruction. These effects also reverberate through subsequent generations. Understanding this, we must address the dignity and identities of those affected in our pursuit of healing and reconciliation. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that the religious community plays a particular role in dealing

with the consequences of violence, including the matter of death, for which the secular world lacks adequate answers.

The interpretation of experiences of violence leads to complex webs of conflicting narratives, reflecting the fractured relationships resulting from violent acts. These interpretations are not static; they evolve over time. It is important to comprehend the psychosocial function of these interpretations and patterns, even if they may seem absurd at times. By understanding these narratives, we gain insights that can guide us towards processes of healing and reconciliation. However, this is a challenging task, as post-violence social communication and relationships are significantly disrupted, and social communication is inherently political and culturally influenced. Nonetheless, developing effective communication skills and a willingness to engage in dialogue is essential for individual and social healing, enabling us to confront the experiences of violence and their ongoing impact. Therefore, our approach to these matters should be humble and cautious.

The primary challenge lies in building relationships to the best of our ability, while acknowledging the inherent limitations. I am not fond of romanticizing the notion of reconciliation, and I reiterate that not everything can be reconciled in this world. We must accept these inherent limits without attempting to determine what can or cannot be reconciled. However, we can develop a matrix or framework to guide us in this process. This framework consists of four main experiences: solidarity with the victims, restoring their dignity, remembrance for the deceased, and recognizing that dealing with victims is highly political.

Katerina Pekridou – *Christian Ecumenical Perspectives on Reconciliation: Exploring the Interplay of Faith, Justice, and Love*

I will present a Christian ecumenical perspective and explain my viewpoints as I go along. It is worth noting that some ideas have already been shared, indicating a shared understanding. My focus will be on the discussions among Christians regarding reconciliation in recent decades. Reconciliation, from my understanding, involves sincere efforts to make it a reality through the spirit of Jesus Christ. This concept values individuals and their relationships, weaving them together into a new reality based on God's vision for humanity.

David Tombs observes that while reconciliation as a social issue gained prominence in the 1990s, particularly in conversations on post-conflict peacebuilding and transitional justice, it has a long history as a theological concept in Christianity. The areas of sacraments and systematic theology have given special attention to reconciliation. In my presentation, I will refer to the exchanges among Anglican, Orthodox, and Protestant churches in Europe, which are members of both the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches. These organizations have recently held discussions on the themes of reconciliation, unity, and love in their main debates.

The concept of social reconciliation was inherent in the founding of these organizations and gained renewed attention during different historical periods due to social and political challenges. For example, in the 1970s, there were tensions and the challenge of racism. In the 1990s,

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following the fall of communist regimes, discussions focused on political and social reconciliation. In the early 2000s, trends such as globalization, postmodernity, and fragmentation brought further attention to the topic. Looking at the sacred book of Christianity, the Old Testament, we find numerous stories of conflict and strife among brothers, family members, and peoples. Some of these stories end in reconciliation, while others remain unresolved. The text portrays aspects of violence and emphasizes the need for reconciliation. It repeatedly addresses the estrangement between God and God's people, expressing God's desire for reconciliation and restoration of the broken relationship caused by human rebellion against the God of life and justice.

The term "reconciliation" initially appears in the Pauline corpus. The noun "katallage" is used to express God's saving work in Christ and appears in various forms 15 times. The verb form suggests a radical transformation or exchange, indicating a profound shift rather than superficial adjustments. It implies the restoration of a former state and signifies a process of bringing together again. Consequently, it involves both individual and interpersonal elements, depicted through the act of calling.

Without delving into an extensive analysis of this text, it is worth noting that the definition of reconciliation in this passage encompasses three dimensions. First, reconciliation is viewed as the work of God rather than humans. It is God's Word that reconciles humanity to God, making it a divine gift. The concept is employed in relation to the imagery of enmity and friendship used elsewhere in Paul's epistles to explain the relationship between humans and God. God is the initiator and fulfiller of reconciliation through the death of Christ. From this perspective, reconciliation is already discovered in the movement of Christ.

Second, reconciliation is entrusted to those who are in Christ and partake in the new creation. The focus and purpose of the new community initiated by Jesus are challenging and clear. Its members are called to be ambassadors, actively participating in God's mission and serving as stewards of God's actions in their specific time and place. Jesus proclaimed the coming of the reign of God, inviting people to change their lives, thoughts, and directions, and to participate in God's activity. In contrast to the prevailing imperial power of the time, God's sovereignty was a liberating, life-affirming force. The reign of God challenged power as domination, and those who engage in it shape relationships, sharing power and the righteousness of God. Over the past decade, reflections on reconciliation as participation in God's mission have also focused on the reconciliation of the entire created world, including the natural environment. In Colossians, it is stated that in Christ, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Christ, God reconciled all things, whether on Earth or in Heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross. Reconciliation is understood as the overflow of the infinite love of the child of God, fulfilling God's eternal purposes of creation and salvation through Christ. The encompassing spirit of grace extends to all.

Human beings are called to move beyond a self-centered approach and embrace a sustainable lifestyle that reflects our reconciled relationship with all of creation. Reconciliation extends beyond the restoration of broken relationships; it involves transformation and the anticipation of a completely new reality of relationships. It signifies a new bond between God, the Creator, and the created world. Reconciliation as participation in God's mission also entails the work of

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reconciliation among societies, peoples, cultures, ethnic groups, and religions. As churches and Christians engage in public discussions, they seek to incorporate additional voices and deepen their analyses with spiritual dimensions and theological insights. Initiatives in public theology have also sought to engage with social and political analyses and promote constructive dialogue with them.

In the following summary, I will highlight the main points of the public debate on reconciliation by Christian voices in the past two decades. Reconciliation is perceived as a process leading to peace and justice. Its goal is to create a community where brokenness and sectarianism are overcome, and people live together in mutual respect. Reconciliation fosters open communication without fear, emphasizing inclusion and the consideration of all individuals. In a reconciled community, conflicts can be resolved through dialogue rather than resorting to violence. It is essential to acknowledge that while these concepts and words are appealing, the actual implementation is far more complex. Nevertheless, I will provide an overview of the debates to establish a framework.

The 2005 World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism identified six key aspects of the reconciliation and healing process, with a special focus on memory, repentance, justice, forgiveness, and love. Healing requires breaking the silence and allowing the truth to come to light. Recognizing what has been concealed is crucial, although establishing the truth about the past can be challenging due to silence surrounding abuses and atrocities, as well as the systematic distortion of truth and the misuse of the language of reconciliation. Memory is closely intertwined with this, as the way we remember and speak about the past carries significance. Authentic memories reveal the truth and enable healing when they lose their toxic quality, empowering us to create a future where past wrongdoings are not repeated. Human memories shape our present interactions and our vision for the future.

Repentance is necessary before reconciliation can occur in situations involving personal or collective wrongdoing and guilt that have caused enmity and estrangement. The guilty party must acknowledge and repent for their actions, leading to a renewed relationship based on forgiveness, which is essential for the work of reconciliation. Christian literature emphasizes three forms of justice: retributive justice, which holds wrongdoers accountable for their actions and is the responsibility of the legal system; restorative justice, which ensures that what was wrongfully taken from victims is restored, either directly or symbolically; and structural justice, which reforms societal institutions to prevent injustice from recurring. Forgiveness is often seen as an explicitly religious aspect of reconciliation. Forgiveness does not mean condoning or forgoing punishment for past wrongdoings but rather seeks a different relationship with the wrongdoer and the deed. While we cannot forget wrongdoing as if it never happened, forgiveness enables us to establish a different relationship with the past and the wrongdoer. Love, a distinct feature of the Christian faith, encompasses all created beings and the fullness of creation, including our enemies, whom we are commanded to love.

In conclusion, interfaith dialogue and cooperation are essential in the work of reconciliation. Christians view interfaith dialogue as grounded in the love of the triune God. It aims to delve deeper into the mystery of what God is doing in the lives of people from other religions, leading to a greater understanding, mutual respect, and the building of peace and community. Through

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interreligious dialogue, Christians bear witness to their faith, engage in theological and spiritual sharing, and reflect on common ethical, just, and democratic principles. Strategies for promoting reconciliation involve action and collaboration on various levels, including ethics, justice, democracy, and the restoration of humanity and the whole creation.

Stephen Pope – *Reconciliation and Forgiveness: A Path to Healing and Peace*

Good afternoon. I want to express my gratitude to be here. Some of the points I'll be discussing overlap with the previous presentations, so I apologize if it seems repetitive. When I wrote this, I considered my academic background as well. I'm a Catholic, but I draw inspiration from Protestantism as well. I have learned a great deal from my Jewish friends and their traditions, which I believe should be seen as a continuation rather than a break from Judaism. So, my talk focuses on the theology of reconciliation from a Catholic perspective, but it also takes an ecumenical approach.

The main idea I want to convey is that reconciliation holds central importance for all Christians, and not just Christians, but also for those who may not be familiar with this concept, such as Muslims and secular individuals. There are resonances with Islam in some aspects. The foundation of this perspective is the belief that salvation and history originate from God's love. God creates the world out of love, but human beings tend to cause problems, perpetuating evil, injustice, and suffering. Therefore, God's will becomes redemptive, aiming to bring us back from our destructive and violent tendencies, both individually and collectively, and restore our relationship with God and with one another. This restoration is summarized as communion with God, which leads to redemption or salvation. The mission of Jesus, his teachings, his incarnation, his death, and resurrection all revolve around the purpose of reconciliation. On Jesus' death, the Holy Spirit, also known as the Spirit of Christ, was present in the community, calling people to reconciliation and forming a community centered on reconciliation.

The church, in its essence, must be a community of forgiveness and reconciliation. I would like to emphasize that repentance is crucial for reconciliation. Without repentance, true reconciliation cannot occur. An example of this is depicted in the image of Paul and Peter, who had a significant conflict and had to reconcile. Another visual representation is the famous Rembrandt painting in the Hermitage Museum, symbolizing the embrace of the prodigal son by his father and serving as an icon of reconciliation.

The Catholic tradition views reconciliation as a holistic, multidimensional, and biblically rooted concept. It recognizes that reconciliation is primarily the work of God, in which people participate. It is a belief that God wants us to love one another as brothers and sisters, and even extend love to those who have wronged us. Reconciliation involves both vertical aspects, relating to our relationship with the divine, as well as personal, interpersonal, and sociopolitical dimensions. It extends beyond the individual and emphasizes the community of reconciliation.

Unfortunately, there are instances where communities promote hatred and religious leaders incite enmity and violence, which contradicts the essence of this message. True religion, as the etymology of the word suggests, should bind people together in love and extend hospitality to others. False religion, on the other hand, creates hatred towards others. It is important to recognize that public critiques of religion often stem from exposure to negative manifestations of it. However, figures like Abraham Joshua Heschel, whom I greatly admire, remind us that the solution to bad religion is good religion, not its rejection.

In the Catholic tradition, there are seven sacraments, and baptism is seen as a reconciliatory act for the forgiveness of sins. The sacrament of reconciliation, formerly known as the Sacrament of Penance, serves to reconcile individuals with God and their neighbors,

not merely as a means of satisfaction for harm caused. Additionally, the Eucharist, as a meal of celebration and thanksgiving, represents the sacrament of reconciliation. We are called to be agents of reconciliation in the world.

I would like to highlight the significance of forgiveness as an important step in the process of reconciliation. On the right, you can see an image of Pope Francis hearing someone's confession and granting God's forgiveness. He often emphasizes that the sacramental setting should be a place of mercy, rather than a torture chamber. On the left, the Pope himself admits that he is a sinner when asked, "Who are you?" This demonstrates the understanding that repentance and forgiveness are interconnected and necessary for true reconciliation.

These concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness have ethical implications and contribute to true peace or shalom, which encompasses human flourishing grounded in justice and right relationships. Justice involves respecting equality, dignity, solidarity, and fraternity among individuals and communities. Forgiveness primarily serves as a means to reconcile estranged parties, especially between victims and repentant wrongdoers. In the top-right image, we witness Pope John Paul II visiting the man who had attempted to assassinate him, demonstrating forgiveness and embracing him as a gesture of reconciliation. Similarly, Pope Francis recently apologized to the First Nations Aboriginal people in Canada for the harm inflicted by Catholic institutions in residential schools. These instances show the two sides of the coin—repentance and forgiveness—and it is crucial for Christians, particularly those who have wielded power and propagated religiously motivated violence, to recognize the need for repentance.

Repentance involves four elements: remorse, contrition, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, making amends through restitution and reparation, and a commitment to reform one's own life or the community's life. This transformative process leads to reconciliation, and reparative justice plays a significant role in repairing the damage caused by wrongdoing, forming the foundation of true reconciliation. I will stop here and I would be happy to engage in a conversation and address any questions or points you may have.

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Jewish Perspectives on Reconciliation

Melissa Raphael – *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Jewish Possibilities* *(see citations below)

“All that is written in the Torah was written for the sake of peace” (Tanhuma Shofetim 18) Even the name of God may be blotted out in water for the sake of peace (Leviticus Rabah 9:9). And there are many more such texts in the rabbinical literature where these came from. But unless they are to travel beyond the fabulously hyperbolic or even platitudinous, these texts must be activated critically, practically, systemically within the real, complex, historical moment as part of a spiritual-political praxis that is conducive to overcoming estrangement with both the Other and the same. The tradition must be activated towards living, as Ezekiel (36:26) would put it, with a new spirit and a new heart of flesh, not stone.

I want to suggest that in the criticism of idols – false images or ideas of self and the human or divine other- there is the possibility of an inter-Abrahamic praxis that is reconciliatory not because it forgives the unforgivable, but because it changes minds and hearts, overcoming the alienation that lies at the root of all injury.

In the aftermath of modern crimes against humanity the destruction of idols through the creation of new and truthful ideas or images of our real and imagined adversaries seems to me to be a more promising avenue of enquiry than focusing on what Judaism has to say about reconciliation and forgiveness. There are two reasons for arguing that the Jewish apparatus of forgiveness itself isn't all that promising a body of thought and practice. First, before the more expansive, universalistic modern Jewish turn, the process of forgiveness and reconciliation effectively operates intra-Judaically, addressing the righting of wrongs between fellow-Jews on the basis of a common trust: a shared and particular covenantal theology and community. In Judaism, forgiveness comes with quite a number of not unreasonable stipulations. Doing penance for sins is not a feature of classic rabbinic theology,ⁱ but the three classic prerequisites for forgiveness and reconciliation - confession, repentance, and a sincere resolve not to repeat the deed in question - are met within the community's own ritual and ethical culture.ⁱⁱ

And secondly, presenting far more difficulties for our theme, Judaism also has no tradition of vicarious forgiveness. There is of course great moral dignity and grace in an individual Jew's exercising her own freedom to forgive another individual's offence against her.ⁱⁱⁱ But if to pardon is a victim's prerogative alone and one person cannot forgive on behalf of another; if one cannot one forgive someone other than the perpetrator of the offence, then, logically, there can be no forgiveness for murder.

As such, Jewish teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation is not straightforwardly applicable in the aftermath of modern crimes against humanity such as the Holocaust. Who, even, was its perpetrator when the genocide was committed on an industrial scale not by a small band of German perpetrators but a whole generation of non-Jewish, non-halakhically obligated, individuals, groups and institutions bureaucratically mobilised to kill. The Holocaust, like other genocides, was a whole period of unfolding atrocity where personal intentionality, responsibility, and accountability can be philosophically and legally difficult to ascertain.

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And by now, both the survivors and the perpetrators - who may have committed anything between one and hundreds of thousands of crimes - are now almost all dead. Any window in which a victim might forgive his own tormentor and achieve reconciliation with him is all but closed.

It's also worth pointing out that not only has the Jewish people never felt at liberty to 'forgive' the German people and their collaborators, it hasn't even forgiven God. Post-Holocaust theology neither exculpates God, nor accepts Jewish culpability for some putative sin against God, let alone that of Jewish children. It breaks with the broad biblical and rabbinic theodical tradition and refuses to accept that the catastrophe happened 'on account of our sins'. Berkovits argued that the catastrophe ran its course because God failed to intervene – hid his face. This is something God mysteriously does, but it was also an injustice countenanced, unforgivably, by God. Eli Wiesel and later David Blumenthal protested God's failure to intervene, the latter judging God to have been an abuser or having turned a blind eye to the violence. Neither Blumenthal nor Wiesel will forgive nor forget, but this God is their God and the only God they've got. Yitz Greenberg accused God of getting us to sign up to a covenant that was no better than a suicide mission for us and worse, for our children. After that, the covenant had to be voluntary. From now on God had forfeited any right to our devotion.

This post-Holocaust impasse is not to be wondered at: not even God has the right to forgive on behalf of the victim. Indeed, God never did have the power to forgive crimes committed against us, or by us, against others. Yom Kippur can absolve one of all of one's sins against God, but not against one's fellow. (Mishna Yoma VIII 8f).iv

Simon Wiesenthal famously asked for justice not vengeance against Germany. But despite the Eichmann trial, which as Arendt tactlessly pointed out to the dismay of most Jews at the time, was philosophically problematic in many ways, most survivors were agnostically indifferent to what the perpetrators themselves did or did not feel about their crimes. They quietly rebuilt their lives, honoured righteous gentiles by planting a tree on the Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem, and sought little or no retribution. Dina Porat has estimated that only about 200 Holocaust survivors attempted to exact violent revenge. Including assassinations carried out by the Mossad around a 1,000 to 1,500 Nazi perpetrators were killed. But Nakam's notorious attempt to take proportionate revenge on the German people by poisoning the water supply was foiled by Israel itself. As David Ben Gurion famously put it, taking 6 million German lives would not bring 6 million Jews back to life.

Post-Holocaust theology invokes neither the hope of reward for the righteous victims nor punishment for their killers. But in some sense, there could be neither justice nor vengeance for crimes against humanity. For as with other genocides and mass atrocities, the Nazi's crimes against humanity were crimes against God, their creator and therefore of unquantifiable magnitude. Their gravity, never mind their scale and duration, was wholly and eternally incommensurate with any possible vengeance, apology or retributive, rehabilitative, or restitutive penalty within the world's criminal justice system.

We I do think we see is rapprochement without forgiveness. I refer you to the survivor Wiesenthal's 1969 study, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* especially the 1998 expanded version, and to the many moving cases of the children and grandchildren of Nazis – neither of whom were there – reaching out in friendship to the descendants of their victims – effectively calling back from the future to their forebears take a different path.v As Rabbi Albert Friedlander used to recall - Once, at a Kirchentag in Nuremberg, I talked about the anguish of Auschwitz. A young girl rushed up to me after the lecture. 'Rabbi, she said, I wasn't there, but can you forgive me?' and we embraced and cried together. The hand of friendship was extended, not of forgiveness. Then an older man approached me. 'Rabbi', he said, I was a guard at a concentration camp. Can you forgive me?' 'No, I said. I cannot forgive. It is not the function of rabbis to give absolution, to be pardoners.'

There has also been reconciliation without forgiveness between the Jewish and German states. Just seven years after the liberation of Auschwitz – on 10 September 1952 Chancellor Konrad Adenauer made a unique, free, non-obligated payment of reparations of over 3 billion marks over a period of 14 years to the State of Israel, received without handshakes or speeches.vi Although the process of rapprochement between the two states took place against a background of Jewish protest and moral and emotional disquiet, the admission of wrong-doing by the German state paved the way for the establishment of formal friendly diplomatic relations in 1965. Of course, pragmatism probably played a more immediate role than theology: Adenauer knew that Germany would not return to the “family of nations” unless it dealt with its horrific past and Israel knew it needed the financial restitution to keep its fledgling economy afloat.

There is nothing pragmatic, though, about the way that friendly relations between second and third generation Jews and Germans are being restored. In 2020, funded by the German state, The Central Council of Jews in Germany launched a “Meet a Jew” project designed to open up spaces in which Jews and Germans talk to each other not about each other is an act of mending by breaking: breaking stereotypes, false images or idols. Face to face, by Zoom or IRL, Jews and Germans talk to each other as speaking subjects, not as the descendants of victims and perpetrators not as ‘just a chapter in German history’.vii Here, in the breaking of an idol, does a crack appear through which the past might open a way into the future.

I'd like to turn our attention now to the possibility of moving on after a very different case of injury. Towards the end of the 20C, early second wave Jewish feminism charged patriarchal Judaism with a refusal of the full humanity of Jewish women – a crime of sorts against the humanity of women. Of course, women experience all over the world have and still do experience socio-religious injuries against their dignity and persons, but in this case the charge was brought intra-Judaically, intra-communally.

Cynthia Ozick was one of those who brought the charge in an essay originally published in 1979 essay and published to a much wider audience in a 1983 reader called *On Being a Jewish Feminist* edited by Susannah Heschel. The essay is, I think, one of the most important texts ever penned by a Jewish woman. In it, Ozick lamented the long centuries of unremarked, un-mourned, and at that time barely corrected, cultural and spiritual excision of the female from the creative heart and mind of the Jewish people. Here Jewish men had done to Jewish women what they would not like

to have had done to themselves. That is, they ‘omitted – by purposeful excision’ Jewish women from the ‘collective endeavour of the Jewish people.’ The loss of generations of women’s intelligent, speaking subjectivity had, as it were, been numerically greater, she wrote, than the Jews lost in a hundred pogroms; yet of this loss, Jewish literature and history report ‘not one wail, not one tear’. It is not to draw any parallel between these women and the victims of brutal regimes to understand them as another category of ‘the disappeared’. Their silencing has been a loss more culturally and intellectually debilitating, she writes, than a century of autos-da-fé...’yet Jewish literature and history report not one wail, not one tear.’viii

Ozick knew that after all the catastrophes faced by the Jewish people, including the Shoah just a few decades before, hers might seem a shallow and inflammatory argument. She was also well aware that for a woman to be subordinated to men, sexualized, defined and legislated as a non-juridical adult, has been the way of world, hardly a crime against the dignity of women unique to Judaism. But it is precisely because the Torah stands in moral opposition to the ways of the world and precisely because Jewish history understands the catastrophes of erasure, that a woman’s halakhic standing – somewhere between a chattel and a person - is a peculiarly Jewish injury to her humanity. Nothing less than the Torah itself must therefore cleanse the precept of justice. So, she proposes the institution of an 11th commandment, ‘Thou shalt not lessen the humanity of women’. The world, not just the Jewish people, must stand under the judgement of this commandment. That the world may yet continue to abrogate this commandment is evidence enough of its very purpose and sanctity.

Even in 1979, Ozick knew that there had been considerable improvements in the role of women in Judaism, and not just in the liberal denominations. And since then, the numbers of distinguished Orthodox women scholars and in Open Orthodoxy, rabbis, has been steadily growing. Yet Ozick is convinced that the crime against the humanity of women, indeed against the humanism of the Torah itself, will not be corrected by the mere alleviations and apologetics of a benevolent or lenient rabbinical authority.ix Only an 11th commandment’s powerful countermand to a world that exploits and oppresses others by dehumanizing them will name the crime before it occurs. To insist on a new humanitarian commandment has an active, preventative, paradigm-shifting urgency and sacrality that seeking forgiveness does not.

And in any case, as this essay has already indicated, no Jewish woman can accept an apology from Orthodoxy or forgive the injuries sexism on behalf of most of the Jewish women who had ever lived. And nor could Orthodoxy apologize for injuries to the human dignity of Jewish women, not least because within the logic of their theologically ordained idea of a woman, this was an injury that Orthodoxy could not have conceived, let alone acknowledged.

One of the greatest poseks of the 20C, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, deliberated on the justice of Jewish feminism’s claim not long after Ozick published her essay, which he probably never read, and without enquiring of the women concerned. Feinstein expressed no remorse for the hurts Jewish feminism expressed. Not just because he could not apologise on behalf of other rabbinical authorities or God, but because he regarded the gendered economy of holiness as God-given, and because he regarded what he called ‘self-assured’ women’s’ militations as a merely secular political statement of women’s rights, not sincere attempts to get closer to Godx. He therefore

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dismissed the charges as having been brought by over-confident, self-important women who have no desire to fulfil God's commandments. He encouraged them to take a more active role within the acceptable boundaries of a halakhah governed by men, but warned them not to expect any change in God's laws.

Leaving aside the wrongs and rights of the feminist charges and counter-charges, what matters for us here today is the way that, without any formal process of repentance or forgiveness, Jewish feminists across the denominational spectrum have chosen to remain within their communities, reconciled to a tradition that both countermands its own patriarchy and is essentially and systemically compromised by it.

As I explored in my 2019 book on religious feminism and idoloclasm, Jewish and other religious feminists have made a new beginning after the centuries of women's internalised hurt by breaking their own and other's false idea or idol of the feminine. Not with a hammer; not with terror, but with educational, halakhic and institutional and, of course, theological initiatives that have variously cut patriarchal powers down to their true size. It is by changing their own and others' idea of the feminine that women have become speaking subjects of their own experience, authoritative interpreters of scripture, have established the conditions of their own futurity.

In other words, they've insisted that only way that human, not just women's, consciousness, will be transformed for peace is by liberation from a three-fold cognitive captivity to the power of idols: first, liberation from the self-idolizing god called 'Man'; second from the exclusively masculine supreme being, 'God', who is a projection of 'Man's' power, and third from the idol of the feminine called 'Woman' that the god-called-God created to serve the interests of 'Man'. That is how we move forward truthfully, and with authentic love of the stranger – the Other – not just the neighbour or the same - in an Abrahamic community grounded in Genesis 1's affirmation that all humanity, regardless of race, gender, or social class, is made in God's image. To be made in the image of anything else is dangerous. False images are, after all, sub-human images and 'subhumans' can be tortured and murdered with impunity by anyone who serves human gods who justify or order such crimes. The world needs Ozick's commandment, 'Thou shalt not lessen the humanity of women', but perhaps even more than that, it needs another additional wording, 'Thou shalt not de-divinize God / replace God with human gods.' 'Thou shalt not de/sub/post/super-humanize the human.'

Conclusion

I've noted the theological impasse in which Jews can't forgive the perpetrators or God on behalf of their victims. And God can't forgive the perpetrators on any victim's behalf.

Forgiveness is, in any case, always and already too late for the last trauma and too soon for the next. Specific bouts of traumatic conflict or oppression are rarely discrete entities but continuous phases of endlessly longer wars and religio-politically systemic assaults on the human, where peace doesn't, in any case, turn out to be peace all but an inter-conflict period. I was struck the other day by Ukrainian novelist Andrey Kurkov's opening his April 'Letter from Ukraine' with the words, 'I always thought I was born after the war, not before it.' And after the development of

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nuclear arms and the tipping points of climate change, the evils threatening survival, let alone peace, seem not just continuous but irrevocable or un-survivable.

Now more than ever, we shouldn't be merely apologising for crimes of estrangement, we should be liberating ourselves from the false ideas or ideologies that permit them, that lead to the denial of inalienable human rights and dignities with numinously awful results. To divest human gods of their power over God and God's creation is the prophetic task of Abrahamic religion. And it is only when modern Abrahamic religion activates its criticism of idols that it will prevent ever more lethal outbreaks of the atrocious yet-again, with their steady erosion of hope in the never again. Only when the stone hearts of our idols become friable, compassionate hearts of flesh, will death stop tyrannising life. Only then might we glimpse an outbreak of the unprecedented, an outbreak not of war, but of the messianic not-yet.

Susannah Heschel – *Restoring Dignity: Jewish Perspectives on Reconciliation and Accountability*

Thank you so much. I appreciate the invitation. It's delightful to be here. Can everyone hear me? Great. I'd like to start with a confession by Heinrich Heine, a 19th-century German Jewish poet. He writes, "I have the most peaceful disposition. My desires are a modest cottage with a thatched roof, a comfortable bed, good food, fresh milk and butter, flowers outside my window, and a few beautiful trees by my door. And if God wishes to make me completely happy, He will grant me the joy of seeing six or seven of my enemies hanging from those trees before their death. It would move my heart to forgive them for all the wrong they have done me during their lives." Heine's words express a desire for vengeance or retaliation that is often seen as part of human nature, whether consciously or unconsciously. This longing for retribution, which we might call the antithesis of reconciliation, involves harboring deep resentment, reliving and re-experiencing the emotions and events that triggered it, whether in fantasy or renewed violence. This leads to a growing prevalence of wars in the world today, affecting both the political right and left and profoundly undermining human dignity.

In a 19th-century commentary on Exodus Chapter 10, verse 1, where God tells Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart," the commentator remarks that God is not giving Pharaoh dignity but rather creating the conditions for Pharaoh to repent. Repentance requires dignity. Thus, the question arises: How can we restore dignity, especially among perpetrators, in order to embark on the path of reconciliation? What resources does Judaism offer in this quest for reconciliation? It is crucial for religious traditions to honestly acknowledge the positive and negative aspects within their own traditions.

Let us now explore the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic and medieval sources, and conclude with a reflection on prayer. The Hebrew Bible chronicles numerous wars, many ending with the annihilation of the designated enemy, a common practice in ancient Eastern societies. Sometimes the Bible portrays war as a means of purification, such as eliminating those who lead us astray from God. Alternatively, war is seen as polluting those who engage in it, necessitating their own purification, even the victors themselves. Deuteronomy and Joshua, for instance, demand the

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complete eradication of the enemy without showing any mercy. This echoes the ancient concept of human sacrifice to appease God.

However, the Bible also emphasizes two crucial elements of peacemaking: how we treat the enemy and how we should feel about the enemy. Proverbs 25 advises, "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you." A similar act of contrition involving offering bread was a practice in ancient Egypt. In other words, the Bible promotes kindness towards the enemy. Leviticus 19 contains the famous verse, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." Vengeance is prohibited, forgiveness is mandated. Yet, we must grapple with the question of who our neighbor is and how an enemy can become a neighbor. Reconciliation lies at the heart of the messianic vision of peace as envisioned by the prophets, saving them from despair and preventing their revulsion toward the wicked.

These principles continue in rabbinic texts, which emphasize both actions and emotions in the pursuit of reconciliation. Reconciliation must commence by articulating accusations against the oppressor in a regulated manner. As one midrash states, "Complete accusation leads to destruction, partial accusation leads to partial destruction, and no accusation leads to complete destruction." This highlights the importance of acknowledging wrongdoing and seeking accountability in the process of reconciliation.

Rabbinic literature also encourages the cultivation of empathy and compassion towards the enemy. In the Talmud, we find the teaching that "He who has mercy on cruel people will ultimately become cruel to merciful people." This suggests that while we should strive for compassion, we must also be cautious not to enable or tolerate cruelty. It is a delicate balance that requires discernment and moral clarity.

Moreover, the concept of teshuvah, often translated as repentance, plays a significant role in the Jewish tradition's understanding of reconciliation. Teshuvah involves recognizing one's wrongdoing, remorse, confession, restitution, and a genuine commitment to change. It is a process that allows for the transformation of both the perpetrator and the relationship with the victim. Teshuvah offers the possibility of redemption and the restoration of dignity, even to those who have caused harm.

In addition to these textual sources, prayer holds a central place in Jewish spirituality and the pursuit of reconciliation. Prayer serves as a means to cultivate humility, gratitude, and a sense of interconnectedness with others. It provides an opportunity for introspection and self-reflection, enabling individuals to confront their own flaws and seek inner transformation. Through prayer, one can develop a compassionate heart and a willingness to extend forgiveness and reconciliation to others.

In conclusion, Judaism offers valuable insights and resources for the pursuit of reconciliation. While the Hebrew Bible contains passages that advocate violence and the annihilation of enemies, it also emphasizes acts of kindness, forgiveness, and the transformative power of repentance.

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Rabbinic and medieval teachings further expand on these concepts, emphasizing the importance of communication, self-reflection, and the pursuit of peace. Prayer serves as a spiritual practice that cultivates empathy and compassion. By embracing these teachings and practices, individuals can work towards restoring dignity and fostering reconciliation, even in the face of deep-rooted conflicts. Thank you.

Igor Kozemjakin – *Building Unity and Addressing Challenges: Lessons from Sarajevo's Jewish Community*

It gives you a sense of unity, even though we represent a small minority in terms of political power, here in Sarajevo. However, our influence extends beyond our numbers, particularly when collaborating with other communities. I have been involved in the council representing Jewish communities for 15 years and served as a senior advisor. Regarding the mention of recognition, I can share my own experiences. Participating in the reconciliation process in this country has been challenging, and the Council plays a significant role in addressing issues such as religious violence. Unfortunately, personal circumstances sometimes hinder progress. When working with Jewish history, we face considerable difficulties. I must acknowledge that Jews have held substantial influence for five centuries, and there are significant differences between us and other groups. Our community dates back to 1565, and it has experienced its share of hardships. It's important to clarify that our dreams were not born out of genocide but were influenced by historical circumstances. While some misunderstandings persist, it is essential to recognize the role of reconstruction. This discussion was previously neglected during the era of the socialist movement and government, which sought to create a new narrative of unity. However, progress was impossible without addressing the past in a comprehensive manner. I

must stress that we are victims of historical forces, and it is crucial to highlight the role of the Jewish community in protesting the current situation in our country. Over the past 50 years, we have made tremendous efforts to build bridges and foster understanding with other religions. Despite the challenges we face, the Jewish community, including social workers, must play an active role in post-war reconstruction. We are often perceived as bystanders in historical events, but it's important to note that we were also victims during the past years. This positioning allowed us to assist others and contribute to the establishment and organization of institutional power among religious groups in the country. Although we were unable to establish a truth and reconciliation commission similar to South Africa's, religious dialogue can serve as a mechanism for initiating change and promoting reconciliation. In my opinion, this should be our first step. However, we often encounter time constraints that limit our progress. It has been an interesting journey, and I believe we still have much work to do. Our approach has evolved, focusing on collaboration and bringing together all stakeholders, whether they are perpetrators, victims, or bystanders. Consequently, subservient dynamics often arise. As an intelligence council, we have also addressed issues such as sexual violence and the plight of its victims. It is disheartening that sexual assault and violence still persist in our society. We must combat this issue and challenge the stigma associated with it. Additionally, religious leaders have an important role to play in declaring their stance against such violence and creating a safe space for victims to come forward.

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Unfortunately, cases of sexual abuse involving trusted individuals, including ministers, continue to occur. This lack of trust hinders our progress. Furthermore, it is disheartening to see that 55% of people identify as anti-Semitic, as evidenced by the recent images from the prime ministerial meeting with Jewish representatives. This demonstrates the need for consistent efforts to address this issue. Jewish families of Muslim immigrants have revealed that anti-Semitism is not solely a Jewish issue. Immigration also presents its own challenges, and we must be mindful of this as we work towards reconciliation and fostering acceptance. I refuse to be complacent and recognize that there is much more I can contribute to this institution and our country's overall progress.

Daniel Roth – *Reconciliation Judaism in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Today*

Thank you so much. I want to focus on two recent publications and parts of my work. First, I'll discuss reconciliation within Judaism, which I extensively covered in my book on third-party peacemakers. While my colleagues emphasized reconciliation in biblical Judaism, I'll shift the focus to the significance of rabbinic Judaism. This interpretation spans 2000 years and offers valuable insights for religious Jews today. Reconciliation, when translated into Hebrew, can be rendered as "pius" or "shalom." Shalom, meaning "wholeness" or "completeness," extends beyond peace and can often be understood as reconciliation. Both "shalom" and "pius" refer to the healing and restoration of warm relationships between conflicting parties. They differ from the concept of "p'shara" or "k'tav p'shara" in rabbinic literature, which represents a non-coercive compromise agreement resolving the material aspects of a conflict. Shalom and pius generally follow the p'shara process, addressing the restoration of the relationship after resolving the material justice components. However, in certain cases, reconciliation must occur first when the animosity is too intense to engage in p'shara. Stories in rabbinic literature illustrate that shalom and pius often arise from a transformation of the conflicting parties' perspectives. These narratives show how shared experiences, such as prayer or learning together, can normalize relationships and foster reconciliation.

I will provide two brief examples before transitioning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One widely known story revolves around the reconciliation process conducted by the high priest, the older brother of Moses. He would approach conflicting parties individually, demonstrating respect and conveying the message of reconciliation. They would realize that the other party had already reconciled, leading them to ask forgiveness from one another. This tale illustrates reconciliation that goes beyond traditional mediation, emphasizing the restoration of the relationship rather than just a written agreement. Another lesser-known story involves Rabbi Haim Josef David Azulai, an influential figure from the 18th century. In one instance, he facilitated shalom between two conflicting parties before addressing the territorial aspects through strict arbitration. By bringing them into a shared ritual space, he created an atmosphere of reconciliation. Disentangling the animosity allowed for subsequent p'shara agreements.

Transitioning to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it's essential to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Neglecting to address this conflict within the framework of reconciliation and Judaism would undermine our understanding of the world today. A crucial aspect of the reconciliation

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process in the stories I shared is the role of the facilitator. These individuals were not professional outsiders but respected insiders. This raises the question of who has been playing the role of third-party insider in the Israeli-Palestinian context. My work on "Insider Religious Mediators advancing religious peace in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" explores this topic in depth, with an online version available on the website. Insider religious mediation involves identifying and gaining the trust of the leaders who represent the most influential and extremist factions in the conflict. Building a network that mediates between these various extremes is crucial. The inspiring story of the pastor and the imam exemplifies this approach, as clergy members work together as insider religious mediators in Northern Ireland and other locations like Malmo. Insider religious mediators possess a deep understanding of the religious worldviews in question and maintain strong connections to influential representatives. They enable a peace-building process that incorporates these religious worldviews, unlike a purely secular or liberal approach that excludes them.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not just a dispute over real estate or scarce resources. It is a collision of worldviews, religious beliefs, and national identities. To address this conflict effectively, we need to understand and engage with these deep-rooted factors. That's where insider religious mediators come in. These mediators, who are respected and trusted by the extremists on both sides, can play a crucial role in bridging the divides and fostering reconciliation.

One example I mentioned is Sheikh Abdallah ibn Darwish, the founder of the Islamic Jihad movement who underwent a transformation from violence to nonviolence and started a religious peace movement. His student, Mansour Abbas, has been working towards bridging the gaps between different extremes within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Another key figure in this work is Rabbi Michael Melchior, the chief rabbi of Norway and a former government minister in Israel.

Insider religious mediation goes beyond political peace and aims to establish a warm peace based on religious values and beliefs. Only religious leaders who understand the religious worldviews at play and have strong ties to influential representatives of these views can effectively include these worldviews in the peace process. This approach recognizes that the conflict is about more than just material issues and requires addressing the deeper religious and ideological aspects.

In conclusion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a pre-conflict situation, and the work of religious peace is essential in preventing a global holy war. Insider religious mediators, deeply connected to the parties in conflict, can help mitigate crises, build peace, and foster reconciliation. By embracing the religious dimensions of the conflict and engaging religious leaders as mediators, we have a better chance of achieving a lasting and meaningful resolution. Thank you.

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Muslim Perspectives on Reconciliation

Kenan Music – Sources of Reconciliation in Islamic Texts

I am honored to be a part of this conference and I extend my best wishes to the organizers and all those who have contributed to making this important topic a focal point of an international workshop or conference. We are all aware that peace and security are closely intertwined, and their absence often becomes apparent only when it is too late to take action. Therefore, it is crucial to address the role of various factors that should converge to prevent conflicts when stability is lost and peace is replaced by conflict or war. As complex organisms, societies rely on numerous factors that can either foster unity and harmony or contribute to conflict and instability. Our discussions center around this intricate complexity, and I am delighted that individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives have come together to contribute to a foundation for reconciliation.

It brings me both joy and regret to have this event taking place in Bosnia, where the process of reconciliation is still ongoing. We have not yet achieved the level of harmony and understanding that we desire with our neighbors and within our communities. The role of religion in shaping people's perception of reality and their place within it is significant. While I understand the perspective of those who prioritize policies and politics over religion, it is important to acknowledge that all individuals possess a set of values and religious beliefs that influence their functioning and worldview. I don't need to elaborate on this matter as it is well-known that religions and human beliefs, in general, can have both positive and negative effects on society. This applies to all sets of values and beliefs.

My paper aims to modestly present the Muslim perspective on reconciliation and shed light on relevant aspects that warrant consideration for constructive dialogue. In contemporary Muslim literature, the topic of reconciliation, in its modern understanding and encompassing all its elements, has not received sufficient attention. However, I believe that in the future, there will be a greater focus on religion in addressing this topic, particularly considering that many ongoing conflicts are concentrated in regions where Muslims constitute the majority.

As I contemplate how to approach my presentation, I am faced with a significant personal dilemma that also extends beyond theology. Merely 200 meters away from here stands my family house, a place that holds emotional weight for me. It was in that house that my grandfather was killed in 1993 during the shelling of the city. Furthermore, just 300 meters away, my cousin lost his life in 1994. Thus, I grapple with the challenge of how to deal with these experiences on an emotional, intellectual, and theological level. I wanted to share this information to provide context and create room for questions and conversation later on.

Islamic identity, situated between the mind and the sources of Islamic teachings, particularly the revelation from God, involves a significant interaction. It is important to recognize that this interaction, like any interaction between humans and external influences, is shaped by time, space, and the surrounding context. Before delving into the topic of reconciliation, I want to emphasize this aspect. Within the sources of Islam, there are essential elements that aim to

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prevent conflicts and wars from arising. For instance, Chapter 2, verse 208, states: "O you who have believed, enter into peace completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy." This approach addresses the problem of interpersonal hostilities at its root, with a clear directive to enter into peace and avoid following the path of Satan, who is described as an enemy of humanity. In Islamic tradition, war is considered the worst attribute or name for a human being, as expressed by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Despite being a prevalent name during that time, the Prophet (pbuh) challenged this perception and fundamentally shifted the vision regarding politics and war.

Additionally, it is worth noting that war is approached differently in the holy book, with various qualifications attributed to it. My colleague from Judaism emphasized that Islam, as taught by Sheikh Abdallah, treats war as an undesirable state and explains it in that context. It is important to highlight that Islam views war as a state that God Almighty extinguishes, as He does not favor those who propagate conflict. Their intention may be to accept but not actively pursue war. However, when faced with enemies, steadfastness is required. Islamic sources consistently guide individuals away from conflict and emphasize that a healthy human nature seeks peace and stability. Reconciliation, deeply rooted in Islamic sources, is derived from the word that signifies goodness and benefit. It represents a core principle in Islamic teachings, a fundamental intention of Islamic law and ethics.

When peace is disrupted and conflicts arise, according to the teachings of Islam and the Quranic text, it is necessary to take the first step toward improving the situation and stopping hostilities. Chapter 8, verse 61, states: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing." In times of hostilities, returning to the foundations becomes essential. Reconciliation not only encompasses the prevention of conflicts but also involves preparing social harmony to act even during clashes or conflict.

The sanctity of human life is emphasized in the Sunnah. This theological approach represents a significant step forward. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated that the first matter to be judged on the Day of Judgment among people is not about their prayers but rather their lives. Specifically, it pertains to those who have jeopardized human life. This emphasis on the sanctity of life further highlights the importance of peace and reconciliation in Islamic teachings.

When a peace agreement is reached, it is crucial to address the issue of law and the adherence to agreements and contracts. This aspect holds immense significance within Islamic tenets. Chapter 5, verse 1 states: "O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts." The process of reconciliation, as a whole, is contingent upon fulfilling the agreements reached between conflicting parties. By abiding by these agreements, a foundation for sustainable peace can be established.

Justice constitutes a crucial element in understanding how Islam approaches reconciliation. Justice is the first step in the process of reconciliation. Post-conflict societies often discuss transitional justice, which may extend beyond specific events. During lunch, I mentioned a Muslim activist from the Communist era who, after being crippled during his imprisonment, had his son operate on the prison guard who had tortured his father. This example demonstrates that achieving justice

can involve deep sources and can play a crucial role in the reconciliation process, surpassing the events of 1992-1995.

Compassion and empathy also hold great importance in the reconciliation of post-conflict societies. We are all aware of the consequences when certain individuals, nations, or ethnic groups are deprived of their humanity and treated differently. In the Quran and Sunnah, all human beings are considered sacred due to the fact that God Almighty bestowed life upon them. Compassion is vital, and it is mentioned in the works of notable scholars such as Mr. Bush, who focused on compassion and care for all creatures. It is imperative to foster compassion and empathy to build bridges and foster understanding.

In the historical context of Islam, an example worth highlighting is when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) entered Mecca after triumphing over the polytheists. He addressed the population of Mecca, assuring them that there would be no reproach on that day. This example teaches us how to cultivate positive social cohesion and approach reconciliation.

In the remaining time, I would like to emphasize that these principles and ideals should be strived for by all, regardless of religious affiliation. The Muslim reality is not always aligned with these principles, just as the realities of other religions may differ from their respective ideals. It is crucial to recognize the common ground upon which we can build bridges and foster understanding. This is the key point I would like to emphasize. Thank you.

A. Rashied Omar – *An Islamic Concept of Strong Reconciliation*

Introduction

Religious discourses are invariably ideational and aspirational. They are often not sufficiently attentive to the frailty and precarity of human dispositions in socio-political contexts and consequently turn a blind eye to the oppressive and unjust nature of social structures. This fault-line in religious discourses on social reality has been challenged by what has come to be known as “prophetic theology” i.e., speaking truth to power. In my paper I would like to do three things. First, I would like to provide a theoretical framework for what the late Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu described as “bicycle theology” as a metaphor for strong reconciliation. Second I argue that the so-called “bicycle theology” or what in theological terms can best be described as restitution theology resonates well with the teachings of Islam. In the third and last section of my paper I expound on an Islamic concept of reconciliation which I argue is a strong one that entails both personal processes of forgiveness and healing as well as systemic changes, aimed at achieving social justice and dignity for all.

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Bicycle Theology as a Metaphor for Strong Reconciliation

Archbishop Tutu first introduced the notion of “Bicycle Theology”. It captures the concept of Restitution Theology in graphic terms and can be simply described as follows.

“Bicycle theology is when I come and steal your bicycle. Six months later I come back to you and admit that I am the one who stole your bike. “I am very sorry I stole your bike. Please will you forgive me? Because you are a religious person, who say’ “Yes, I do forgive you.” The forgiven person then walks away then walks away still having the bicycle.”`

According to Tutu what he depicts as restitution theology requires that the perpetrator should not only return the bicycle in exactly the same condition as it was before it was stolen but for the perpetrator to also compensate the owner for the period that the person did not have access to the bicycle. It is only after such a form of restitution that the perpetrator should consider asking forgiveness. Sometimes, however, theologians reduce forgiveness to simply saying sorry. For Tutu true forgiveness involves returning the bike.

Contemporary Theories of Reconciliation

During the past three decades we have witnessed the emergence of some rich and innovative theoretical insights on the concept of reconciliation. Tristan Anne Borer has distinguished between so-called “thin” and “thick” reconciliation. One of the foremost protagonists of Borer’s category of “thin reconciliation” is Charles Villa-Vicencio. He argues that the responsibility of the state is to establish political reconciliation. This essentially means that the state creates political stability and law and order in order for it to fulfill its functions. In Villa-Vicencio’s view it is not the responsibility of the state to reconcile individuals within the state, this he argues is the job of civil society.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his book “No Reconciliation Without Forgiveness” argues that political reconciliation will not succeed if the affective dimension of people’s lives has not been transformed. By this he means that ordinary individuals within a society need to forgive each other. Borer calls this thick reconciliation i.e.; it includes the affective dimension.

R. Scott Appleby distinguishes between what he calls strong and weak concepts of reconciliation. According to this distinction a reconciliation process in which personal and subjective dynamics such as forgiveness and the healing of memories predominate at the expense of the transformation of the objective realities of socio-economic justice are insufficient and consequently weak concepts of reconciliation. (Appleby, 2000:194-7).

Appleby invokes support for his concept of strong reconciliation from the insights of a number of contemporary scholars of religion. Robert J. Schreiter, for example, argues that "genuine reconciliation among erstwhile enemies' demands structural change as well as forgiveness, peaceful and just relations cannot thrive within the structures of society that provoked, promoted and sustained violence".

Similarly, Walter Wink argues that: "genuine reconciliation is something more than forgiveness... Reconciliation can be sustained only in a society that is addressing the social inequalities that inspired the insurrection or the civil war."

These definitions of strong reconciliation lend support to the view that sustainable peace can only be achieved if the reconciliation process addresses the structural inequities inherent in any society. In the remainder of my paper, I argue that a thick and strong concept of reconciliation resonates well with the teachings of Islam

An Islamic Concept of Reconciliation

The Islamic equivalent of reconciliation is the Arabic word *sulh*. *Sulh* is an important term in both the vocabulary of the Qur'an and in Islamic jurisprudence. In the Qur'an there are two types of *sulh*: *personal sulh* and *social sulh*. From the Islamic perspective, personal reconciliation is the foundation for cultivating sustainable social reconciliation and genuine social reconciliation entails both personal processes of forgiveness and healing as well as systemic changes aimed at achieving social justice.

Moreover, reconciliation is a process rather than an event. It is an arduousness process which needs to be nurtured over a long period in order for it to procure its fruits of justice and peace. Notwithstanding the difficulty and arduousness of the reconciliation process, it is a process which is extolled in the Muslim sacred scripture, the Glorious Qur'an, and as such should be encouraged and supported by each and every conscientious believer. In Chapter 4, *surah al-Nisa'*, verse 128, for example, the Qur'an asserts:

وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ
وَأَحْضَرْتِ الْإِنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ
وَإِنْ تَحْسَبُوا وَتَتَّقُوا
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

Reconciliation is always preferable
and selfishness is ever prevalent in the human soul,
but if you do good and are conscious of God,
behold God is indeed aware of all that you do.

The Qur'anic understanding of social reconciliation or *sulh ijtimai`i* is powerfully illustrated in *surah al-Hujurat*, Chapter 49, verse 9 in which the believers are exhorted to make peace and reconciliation (*sulh*) between two conflicting parties with justice and equity:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا
فَإِنْ بَعَثَ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْآخَرَى
فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ
فَإِنْ فَأَتَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them transgressors beyond all bounds against the other, then fight you all against the transgressor until it complies with the command of God; but if it complies then make peace between them with justice and equity; for God loves those who are just and equitable.

It is instructive to note that the Qur'anic exhortation to promote peace and reconciliation in the above verse is in the imperative form.

This gives the injunction to promote social reconciliation greater credence.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic concept of social reconciliation does not merely aspire for a cessation of hostility, violence and warfare. Rather, it seeks to build long-term sustainable relationships and social reconciliation based on justice, known in the Qur'an as *'adl* and *qist*. This is clearly enunciated in the above verse from the Qur'an.

From an Islamic perspective then, social reconciliation is more than personal forgiveness. It is a strong concept of reconciliation that requires that the social inequalities and injustices that caused the conflict in the first place be transformed. In sum, reconciliation in Islam demands both structural and institutional changes as well as personal processes of forgiveness and healing. If social reconciliation does not result in fairness and justice for all groups in the conflict then the reconciliation process is flawed. The Islamic concept of reconciliation is a strong one which entails both personal processes of forgiveness and healing as well as systemic changes aimed at achieving social justice and dignity for all. Such a strong concept of reconciliation founded on social justice resonates with cutting edge theories on reconciliation have merged during the past three decades.

Concluding Remarks

An Islamic articulation of strong reconciliation lend support to the view that sustainable and positive peace can only be achieved if the reconciliation process addresses the structural inequities inherent in any society. In conclusion, in applying the concept of strong reconciliation to the South African context with the benefit of three decades of hindsight I have elsewhere argued that the South African reconciliation process was "thick" but "weak" since it did not create the conditions for the transformation of the structural violence that lay at the core of the legacy of the apartheid system.

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Hasan Nuhanovic - *The Aftermath of Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Closure can only Follow Disclosure*

I survived the Srebrenica-Potočari genocide; my parents and brother were killed. What I hope to do now is actually present a paper that I extracted from my Ph.D. dissertation, which I defended two months ago at the University of Melbourne in Australia. It focused on the missing persons problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a direct consequence of ethnic cleansing and genocide. These missing persons did not disappear for any other reason than the fact that those who made them disappear wanted them gone—they killed them. However, these individuals were registered as missing persons after the Dayton Peace Agreement and before it because the bodies disappeared. As we speak, 7,000 persons are still missing in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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When the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, the number of missing persons was 31,500. Up to 1995, over 100,000 people were killed or disappeared, almost half of whom were civilians. Among the three major ethnic groups in Bosnia, Bosniacs (Bosnian Muslims) accounted for over 80% of the civilian losses. The estimated number of missing persons in Bosnia was approximately 31,500. Even those individuals who were killed and whose bodies went missing, preventing identification or exhumation, were often buried in mass graves. Even when their remains are eventually recovered—a lengthy process—the ordeal is not over. Recently, I received a call from Tuzla, Central Bosnia, where the DNA laboratory for identification projects is located. They informed me that my brother's skull has now been identified. This is just one example among many, documented in several reports, of bodies or skeletal remains being recovered from multiple mass graves. In July '95, the perpetrators killed these victims and over 8,000 others in less than three to four days. They buried them in clandestine, hidden, and unmarked mass graves. Later, when it became clear that American forces and troops from other countries would be deployed in Bosnia at the end of '95 and beginning of '96, the Bosnian Serb perpetrators used heavy machinery to unearth the bodies from primary mass grave sites. They then transported them tens of kilometers away to secondary mass grave sites, only to repeat the process a few weeks later and bury them in tertiary mass grave sites. When people talk about their next of kin being identified through DNA, it becomes evident that without DNA identification technology, identifying the remains would have been impossible. In many cases, only certain bones are found. In my brother's case, his grave will have to be reopened, his remains taken out, and his skull added to the grave next year. I had thought this was all behind me, but apparently, it's not.

Moving back to my paper, which is essentially parts of my doctoral dissertation, I explore the context of genocide, other atrocities, and related elements. Numerous atrocities occurred, but it was the Srebrenica genocide in July that was classified as such by the international tribunal, while the other crimes were referred to as crimes against humanity and other crimes. As Cox et al. wrote, “The ‘g-word’, so to speak, need not be applied to every atrocity. And we should never allow a linguistic debate to desensitize us to mass atrocities and mass suffering that might not qualify as “genocide” under standard definitions but that share many features and dynamics of crimes routinely designated as such” (Cox et al, 2022:3)

Ed Vulliamy, the British journalist, similarly stated, “Unfortunately – and despite the clarity of the best chronicling of Bosnia's war – the whole rainforests-worth of paper produced by journalists, UN officials, soldiers or lawyers has had the effect of obfuscating rather than telling the cruelly simple story of genocide” (Vulliamy, 1997). Cox et al. also point out that “A common objection to the “genocide” designation – and a basis for much genocidedenial – are arguments such as, “well, that was very complicated” or “there were atrocities on all sides.” These sound reasonable, but the fact is that all genocides are complex and contain tremendous moral ambiguities” (Cox et al, 2022:3).

The central concept of my doctoral dissertation was the survivor shared narrative. It is a narrative that connects the individual stories and experiences of the survivors. I have interviewed a number of them in different locations. Sometimes, it was the people who survived the Srebrenica

genocide, and other times, it was people who survived other crimes, not classified as genocide but equally terrible in their consequences. I am referring to a metanarrative or narrative superstructure. I compare these stories to the judicial narrative, including the judgments rendered by the International Tribunal in The Hague for the Former Yugoslavia. Therefore, there are several sources of narrative that we can refer to. The central concept in my thesis is the survivor shared narrative. While we have already recorded hundreds of these individual stories, a large-scale oral history project has only recently begun. Besides, the tourism narrative is already in the public domain as it is available on the ICTY's website. In my thesis, I propose that the best utilization of the survivor shared narrative is achieved through the project's oral history.

Speaking about justice after the Bosnian genocide, in 2008, the prosecutor's office, which is the state-level institution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, published the state's strategy for the prosecution of war crimes cases. According to their statistics, by 2008, 9,879 individuals had been suspected or accused of war crimes. However, the number of convictions has significantly lagged behind the statistics of those suspected or accused. Between 2005 and 2009, the courts in Bosnia-Herzegovina rendered a total of 222 verdicts. Turning to the tribunal in The Hague, which closed down several years ago, 161 individuals were indicted, of whom 90 were sentenced. Based on available statistics, over 90% of those indicted and convicted were Bosnian Serbs, primarily from Bosnia and Serbia. Thus, a process of justice has been ongoing both in Bosnia and outside through the tribunal in The Hague. This process includes searching for truth and the remains of the victims. As mentioned earlier, the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and numerous other atrocities were killed, and their bodies were buried in hidden, unmarked mass graves. The search for truth is not merely metaphysical; it involves locating the bodies of our family members who remain in mass graves. Consequently, there is significant frustration regarding the number of arrested and prosecuted war criminals, especially considering that many war criminals still live in their villages in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Let me now refer to one case, or rather one individual within this narrative. I interviewed him for my dissertation. His name is Zijad Bačić, and he was 14 years old when he survived a massacre in a village called Zecovi near Prijedor. Alongside him were his two younger brothers and a sister, as well as a group of ten children and nine women who were hiding in a house when their neighbors from a neighboring Serb village attacked. The village was raided, and 19 women and children were killed that day. By pure accident, Zijad managed to run away and survive. I interviewed him after he returned to the village in 2000, eight years later. By then, he had grown up, married, and had two children. However, the bodies of his mother and his three siblings have never been recovered. He suspects that their bodies might be somewhere in the vicinity of that house, which is a terrible burden to bear. Nonetheless, their remains could also be buried in any other mass grave across the region. During our conversation, I asked him about his hopes for the future. He mentioned that between 2001 and 2014, there was a period of 14 years when some of the murderers were detained in a village nearby. In 2014, an arrest operation took place, which was rather exceptional. Many of these war criminals were arrested locally, not the mid-level or high-level officials or officers, but people from the neighborhood. Some of them were tried and convicted. However,

Zijad, the survivor, had hoped that through these court hearings, information about the location of the graves would be revealed, but unfortunately, it hasn't happened. When I asked him how he sees the future, he responded, "One cannot forget it. However, I hope that once the trial is finished and the perpetrators have been sentenced, and if we ever manage to find and bury the bodies, even though we can never completely close the book, it will be easier for us to live our lives."

In my doctoral dissertation, I also addressed the topic of reconciliation. As I wrote, given the overuse of the words "closure" and "reconciliation" in postwar Bosnia, it may come as a surprise that the word "closure" or "peace" appears only once in the entire text of the ICRC's Handbook addressing the problem of missing persons worldwide. As they state, "It is unwise to have unrealistic expectations: for instance, it is unlikely that families will easily turn the page, as it were, and move on. There is no closure for ambiguous loss in relation to a missing person" (ICRC, 2013:3). Time is running short, so I'll try to speed up. Over the past eight years, Bosnia has undergone several different phases. While it may have seemed at certain points that this society, consisting of Bosnians, Serbs, Croats, and others, was ready to enter the next phase of facing the past, I don't believe we have reached that stage yet. Instead, we are facing the denial of genocide, which has become institutionalized, particularly within the institutions of the Republika Srpska and their top-level politicians. There was an initiative at the regional level, involving the countries that were once part of the former Yugoslavia, to establish a reconciliation commission. It still exists in some form. However, members of several Srebrenica survivor associations have expressed reservations about reform schools and conferences held in 2013, leading to their withdrawal of support for this initiative. I also discussed the closure-disclosure paradigm in relation to the concept of reconciliation in my thesis. As I wrote, closure cannot be expected to happen before disclosure occurs. This has a direct relationship to reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot happen without disclosure, which involves sharing information about what happened, including the fate of the missing persons. Furthermore, disclosure means that society must confront the facts. Therefore, what we should seek to reconcile with are the facts.

This raises a dilemma concerning reconciliation, closure, and disclosure. This perspective is reflected in the limited options imposed on Srebrenica survivors through public discourse and their own self-reflection. It is believed that they must somehow choose a future from among the following four paths: to forgive and forget, to forgive but not forget, to forget but not forgive, or to neither forgive nor forget. These four narrow tracks contend with a broader call to action made by the genocide survivors, encapsulated in the slogan "Never Forget Srebrenica." This mantra has undergone subtle transformations over the years and is officially accepted. These words headline the official pamphlet of the program commemorating the Srebrenica Genocide on July 11. The public exhortation to never forget serves as a reminder born from the atrocities, echoing the "never again" sentiment of the Holocaust. Almost every public address by Srebrenica survivors includes the phrase "Srebrenica must never happen to anyone again." Therefore, it is within the space created by these "nevers" that we should seek solutions and perhaps find what can be called reconciliation. Thank you.

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Reconciliation after Political Conflict

Reconciliation in Democratic Transition

Andres Pacheco Lozano: *(Re)imagining a new horizon: overcoming crises in the pilgrimage towards reconciliation in Colombia.*

Thank you very much. It's a privilege to be able to join you and connect with you this morning. Of course, ideally, after these couple of years, I would have wished to meet you in person, but for different reasons, this was the best means to engage in a conversation this time around.

As many of you may know, during the years 2012 to 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla forces held a process of peace dialogues. This resulted in the signing of a peace agreement at the end of 2016. While the FARC guerrilla forces are only one of the armed groups that have operated in the country, this peace process represented the possibility to explore and deal with the history of the armed conflict in new ways. Once the peace agreement was signed and ratified, the phase of implementation began. Many assumed that we had entered a post-conflict time, while others preferred the term "post-agreement context" to describe this new phase of the country. It was around this peace process that reconciliation became a central theme for the Colombian society.

In the time I have today, I would like to share four statements or theses about the challenges and possibilities of reconciliation in the Colombian context. These correspond to some of the learnings that I was able to gather from working with faith communities, specifically Christian faith communities, on the topic of reconciliation as part of my doctoral research.

So first thesis is that **reconciliation in Colombia is not about restoring or returning to a status quo ante. It is rather about imagining and (re)creating a new horizon.** Colombia has been immersed in a long term armed conflict. It is often said that the conflict lasted more than 60 years. The middle of the 1960s are often referred to as its origins, since it was around that time that different guerrilla forces, the FARC included, were officially constituted. Since then, other guerrilla forces and paramilitary groups have been formed and have played a role in the armed confrontation. In addition, the forces of the state that is the army and the police have been openly accused of perpetrating human rights violations. As a result, there have been more than 8 million victims, and that's a very conservative estimation, which includes people who have been killed and internally displaced. Furthermore, these more than six decades of conflict have left a deeply wounded and divided society.

However, if you talk to indigenous communities, some of them would say that the conflict has lasted more than 500 years, not only 60. This since the violence and injustices of today are in many ways rooted in the colonial past marked by the European colonization of the Americas. From that time on, there has been no peace, no justice, no healing of communities. Whether it is decades or

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centuries, there are multiple generations of Colombians who have never experienced just relationships and peace. For decades, relationships have been unjust. Rich and poor, center and periphery, urban and rural areas, gender relations, racial and ethnic divides have been all areas in which injustices have persisted and deepened.

If we were to consider reconciliation as a restoration of a state of being for and relating before the conflict, then, in the Colombian case, there's no desirable prior state to which people, especially the victims and the marginalized, would like to return to. There's no desirable status quo ante to be recuperated. This stresses the need to see reconciliation as transformation of unjust relationships rather than as restoration of past dynamics. This does not mean that there is no need to heal the wounds of the past. This emphasis on transformation, rather, highlights how reconciliation implies that people, relations and structures need to change and be changed to establish more just relationships. Yet, since there has been no recent experience of relating in or peaceful ways the direction in which we are supposed to go, is uncertain. The horizon of reconciliation is wide open to be imagined, to be recreated.

The second thesis: **there is a deep *spiritual* crisis that has been at the core of the Colombian conflict. Considering reconciliation in such a context requires, therefore, addressing this *spiritual* dimension.** Identifying the roots and origins of the conflict in Colombia has always been a highly contested debate. What some people would then define land concentration, deep economic inequalities, corruption and lack of political participation and representation as key factors, others would point to the emergence of the guerrilla forces or drug trafficking as generators of the armed confrontation.

Alternatively in his book, *L'Audacia de la Paz Imperfecta*, which in English roughly translates to "The Audacity of the Imperfect Peace", Catholic priest Francisco de Roux stresses that a spiritual crisis has been at the very center of the many decades of war in Colombia. De Roux, who was eventually appointed as the President of the Truth Commission in Colombia, comments "the crisis of Colombia, which has not ended with the silencing of the weapons and which challenges us to reconcile our antagonistic divisions is, before anything else, a spiritual crisis. It is due to a loss of sense of ourselves. It is due to the incapacity to comprehend that the suffering of the victims of all parties is part of our identity and our personal and collective responsibility. It is a spiritual crisis much more profound than a religious, economic, social or political crisis." By speaking about spiritual crisis, de Roux signals how deep the wounds of violence have been. It has altered the construction of the cells and identities as well as it serves to show or to basically stress how broken relationships are at this state to the point that they are compromising the possibility to comprehend the other's suffering, the victim's suffering in particular, and the personal and communal ethical commitments.

This spiritual crisis, we could argue, has also distorted the image of the divine, the sacred, as well as the role of religious institutions like churches in the Colombian case. Historically, for instance, there has been a deep division between the Catholic and Protestant churches, which had its peak in the conflict between the conservative and liberal political parties that preceded the current armed confrontation in Colombia. When the Catholics supported the Conservative Party, the Protestants opted for the Liberal one. Nevertheless, up until today, the term Catholics and the

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term Christians are used to differentiate and separate those who identify as Catholic, in the first case, from those who identify as Protestant, evangelical and Pentecostal. Persecution, condemnation, stigmatization have been part of this historical conflict. The disfiguration of the sacred and the divine has also impacted people's lives and beliefs. There are well-known stories about how hitmen or sicarios, would go to church to pray for protection and for a good day of work as they prepared themselves to kill a person. In similar lines, it is not uncommon to find images when soldiers, for example, carry Christian symbols combined with weapons and uniforms as they go to war.

To consider the spiritual dimension of reconciliation as a key does not mean to neglect other important factors. What it does, however, is to highlight the depth of the wounds that need to be healed by any attempt to truly reconcile a deeply divided society. To give an example, the question of land concentration and forced displacement has been one of the neuralgic aspects of the conflict. Speaking about spiritual crisis does not mean that the immediate redistribution of land or economic reparations are not crucial. They certainly are and they are in a process, if we really want to walk in the path of reconciliation. What this spiritual dimension does, however, is to help us see how forced displacement has also implied a spiritual rupture by dislocating bodies from land, by breaking the connection between culture and nature, which especially is visible in indigenous and campesino or farmers' communities. Then the problem of land and land possession is not only an economic or juridical problem, but also a spiritual one which has fractured people, identities and belonging.

Third thesis: **the metaphor of "pilgrimage" can help envisioning the transformative and spiritual dimensions of reconciliation in Colombia.** In this context of spiritual or spiritual crisis, reconciliation can be then seen as a transformative spiritual journey, as a pilgrimage. The metaphor of the pilgrimage has become especially vivid and close to me, thanks to the initiative of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace of the World Council of Churches, which was officially launched in 2013 to the then 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Since then, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has gained more theological deepness and has become a whole methodology of working in companionship with communities in different parts of the world. One of the different stations visited as part of this global ecumenical initiative was Colombia. This visit took place in 2018. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace was framed by the World Council of Churches as a spiritual, transformative journey in anticipation of God's gifts of reconciliation, justice and peace.

Having in mind the spiritual crisis in Colombia, the metaphor of pilgrimage has then the potential to emphasize the spiritual dimension of reconciliation, as well as to nurture the needed imagination about what a journey of reconciliation would apply for a deeply wounded and divided society like the Colombian one. Being in a pilgrimage is not the same as visiting or being a tourist. Being in a pilgrimage implies a commitment to be transformed, to seek healing as one travels or moves to sacred places as one visits different stations along the way. The journey will involve parts when one must walk by oneself, while other segments of the journey will be walked with others. Following the metaphor, reconciliation could be perceived and seen as the horizon of the journey. While key aspects of reconciliation, such as truth telling, memory, repentance, forgiveness, reparation, justice could be seen as stations of that pilgrimage. While it is possible to experience a

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foretaste of reconciliation in each of the stations, there's still a way to go; a journey to be completed before it is possible to fully live reconciliation. Thinking about this image of pilgrimage and stations, it is worth noticing and mentioning how just a few weeks ago the Truth Commission in Colombia, which was appointed as part of the implementation of the peace process, issued its final report. Now this final report is available online. It is now important for society, for the Colombian society, to engage with this report, to study it, to process it as one important piece of visiting the station of truth telling, following this metaphor of a pilgrimage of reconciliation, if you will.

Six years after the peace agreement was signed, it will be impossible to see and identify how different people and communities have actively embarked in pilgrimages of reconciliation in Colombia. It has been possible, however, also to see how different sectors of the government, other armed groups and portions of society have not. Thus, while there are signs and examples of hope in concrete cases, there is still a deeply wounded, polarized and divided society that needs healing and transformation.

Final thesis or statement: **amid the possibilities and limitations of existing models and approaches of reconciliation, it is crucial to turn to the wisdom and experiences of local communities to nurture the needed imagination and creativity for reconciliation.** Studying the successes and limitations of different global experiences of reconciliation can help us in envisioning the challenges and possibilities of reconciliation for the Colombian society. Theoretical frameworks can be valuable tools in such a process. However, there are also many lessons that can be learned from grassroots communities regarding reconciliation. It is possible that some of the imagination to recreate relations, to transform relations as part of the pilgrimage of reconciliation can be found in already existing stories and experiences of local communities.

As part of my doctoral research, I had the opportunity to work with three different faith communities in Colombia. One of those groups was GemPaz. GemPaz is an acronym in Spanish that stands for Ecumenical Group of Women Peace Builders. It is a group of Catholic and non-Catholic women that was formed around the year 2008. In a context where so much resentment and tensions have existed between Catholics and non-Catholics, the constitution of such an ecumenical group of women is already a testimony of an alternative way of engaging with the wounds of the past. Being women, women of faith and women peacebuilders are important dimensions that the members of GemPaz always want to emphasize. This ecumenical group of women has grown throughout the years. Now there are groups of GemPaz present in different regions in Colombia. Regularly, they gather around what they call ecumenical circles. The ecumenical circles are spaces in which women's spiritualities are nurtured through celebration, symbolisms and rituals. All of this is combined with contextual readings of the Bible and connecting with discerning about important topics or themes that they want to explore as women of faith and peace builders. After many years of working as a group, the women of GemPaz decided to organize an act of reconciliation between Catholic and non-Catholic women in August 2016. Up until that moment, their common predicament as a group had led them to first acknowledge and celebrate the gifts as women of faith with a diverse backgrounds. Second, engage with the wounds created by the armed conflict, the patriarchal system, also reflected in the churches themselves and the passive mutual stigmatization between Catholics and non-

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Catholics. And third, seek to transform some of the injustices through different initiatives of education and empowerment among women. The act of reconciliation was seen by the women of GemPaz, then as another step in their journey as a group. It was also identified as a way to witness to the Colombian larger society of how ones can be addressed and how a path of transformation for reconciliation can be possible. In the act of reconciliation that I mentioned, one Catholic and one non-Catholic woman read different statements acknowledging past grievances and stigmatization against the other, requesting forgiveness from the other, and then committing themselves to continue working with the other, searching for more just relationships this symbolic time and that with the ritual of food washing, which probably is known for some of you. One Catholic woman would wash the feet of a non-Catholic woman and vice versa. Once they have performed that in front of the participants, the rest of the women present were also invited to do the same, to wash each other's feet.

When considering one more time the ideas of creativity and imagination to envision reconciliation, the experience of this group of women is really inspiring. Their own process of reconciliation can be seen as a model, as a way in which there is a real appropriation of the sacred and the symbolic, not to divide, but to heal, to bring about transformation. This is an experience that brings to the center, the spiritual dimension of reconciliation without denying but rather affirming other dimensions that need to be considered as part of this transformative journey. In this case, for example, gender justice. It is experiences like this where the gift of reconciliation or glimpses of it can be anticipated in the midst of a yet to be healed society. Thank you.

Isabel Piper – *The trap of hegemonic memory in reconciliatory transition*

Thank you very much to the organization because I am very glad to be here. I am learning so much, and I'm very happy. I'm from Chile, and I will develop some ideas based on my experience working in the field of collective memory and human rights in Latin America. I'm doing three things. First of all, I'm going to talk about the transition to democracy in Chile and the importance of the collective memory process from a transitional dispositif. I'm using the word "dispositif" in the sense Foucault used the term or the concept of dispositif. Second, I will reflect on collective memory as a mechanism of globalization for reconciliation and discuss some of its main strategies. And thirdly, I will refer to the popular revolt of October 2019 as a critical uprising against the transition and show the fragility of both the polarization of Chilean society and the absence of guarantees of non-repetition or injustice promised by memory and reconciliation policies.

The notion of transition indicates a change, a transition from a situation of destabilization or crisis to a situation of normality. What does normality mean? Normality, towards which the transition is moving, is identified by democracy and peace. Democracy is sought by societies emerging from dictatorships such as Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, among others. Peace is pursued by societies seeking to put an end to war or armed confrontation, as is the case in Colombia, El Salvador, and the Balkans. What is now a transitional process is a globally shaped model of conflict management from the past. It consists of the application of a set of institutional and cultural

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mechanisms of confrontation and violence that aim to leave behind and repair the damage caused by conflicts, reconciling conflicting sectors. Its objective is to leave violence in the past and prevent its repetition.

Transitions are not improvised; they are the product of long processes of negotiation and complex debates. In Chile, the discussion began shortly after the coup d'état of 1973, which overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende and established a military dictatorship that lasted 17 years. During this period, the opposition debated the nature of the transition. Some sectors defended the idea of accepting the pact proposed by the dictatorship, while others advocated for overthrowing the dictatorships through popular mobilization and armed struggle as the only possible means to change the imposed economic and political systems. However, in 1986, an attempt against Pinochet by a guerrilla group failed, leading to the rejection of the insurrectional route by most of the political forces. The option of steering the transition to the right, as proposed by the dictatorship, was embraced.

The triumph of the opposition to the dictatorship in the 1988 plebiscite and the inauguration of the New Democracy on March 19 marked the beginning of the period of transitional democracy. The path of the transition process was defined by Pinochet and accepted by most of the political forces, aligning with the dictator's rules in order to restore democracy. This implied, among other things, maintaining and reinforcing the neoliberal system while striving for substantive and electoral democracy. The transition is a political project with a re-foundational vocation. It establishes the beginning of the path towards a new order and does so by promoting certain truths about the past, politics, and possible futures.

The administration of the conflict is carried out through the establishment of a regiment of truth, which sets the boundaries for changing the approach to the political arena. Two mechanisms play a role in this process. The first mechanism involves constructing a narrative that excludes the ideology that guided past struggles. This entails promoting hegemonic memories focused on the suffering of victims while marginalizing the memory of the past struggles. Various strategies are employed, such as truth commissions, art, museums of memories, care programs, and memory education.

The second mechanism is reconciliation, which aims to peacefully resolve differences and reconcile diverse and opposing positions. Reconciliation has become a pillar of governance and the sustainability of the neoliberal model following dictatorships. We propose understanding the transition as a form of governability, in Foucault's sense, where it establishes an order and produces subjectivation for legitimacy, thereby continuing the legacy of dictatorships. As a dispositif of subjectivation, it employs material and discursive strategies to establish a new social contract. The primary objectives include utopian horizons for society, representative democracy, public order, and reconciliation as the primary goal. However, there is a lack of deep reflection on the desired type of democracy or the social and political order to be constructed. The neoliberal model imposed by the dictatorship remains unquestioned, setting a limit that this transitional period did not surpass. An hegemonic memory is constructed to impart lessons from the past,

emphasizing the danger of excessive politicization, the valorization of liberal representative democracy, and the need to renounce radicalism and accept state violence to maintain governability.

The construction of hegemonic memory serves the purpose of reestablishing the societal order during any political transition. In the southern region of Latin America, the struggle against oblivion has resulted in a reconciled version of the past, acceptable to diverse sectors of society. The central figure in this narrative is the victim, identified by Truth Commissions and whose suffering is publicly acknowledged. Memorials commemorate them through rituals and serve as a place for their continued presence in society, urging society not to forget. The arts capture their testimonies and transmit them to future generations as a reminder to prevent a recurrence. These efforts have contributed significantly to transitional justice but have not led to the deepening and consolidation of democracy or the establishment of a more just society or a culture of respect for human rights.

While focusing on the memories of victims and their suffering is not inherently problematic, it has the effect of constructing a universal and permanent narrative that confines the right to memory within a specific context, eclipsing other memories. This is also observed in places like Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, a museum of memory, which features breaks in the floor symbolizing turning points in Jewish history, with each gap representing events during the Holocaust. The similarities between this metaphorical representation and the narratives of recent Latin American societies are striking. The narratives of the past revolve around the argument that dictatorship violence caused a fracture and left a mark, with scars defining society and the identity of direct victims. This rhetoric contributes to the victim being portrayed as the central actor in history, the most legitimate narrator, and a symbol of reconciliation.

I argue that museums of memories and memory sites are part of the transnationality of memory, with victims serving as the technology of its construction. It is crucial to consider the geographical and contextual differences between memory sites in Chile, Jerusalem, and Bosnia. Despite their variations, they all follow a common script, emphasizing the traumatic experience as a mark and fracture in history, with victims playing a central role. This memorial model is founded on the moral duty of sustained memory, constructing a unique and transmissible narrative. However, it also establishes individual suffering and pain as the essence of memory. The imperative memory, discursive uniqueness, and directed pain have become a canonical script that is almost universally applied in museums and memorials worldwide, focusing on violence, genocide, dictatorships, and armed conflicts.

Memory museums are symbolic spaces that perpetuate the idolatry of reconciliation. They possess their own symbolic, architectural, artistic, and textual rights. These museums are unique in that they are diffuse and often lack formalities. Their collections are not comprised of objects displaying reality but rather allegories evoking the hegemonic memory embraced by the state. This unified discourse presents society's hegemonic memory, diluting the plurality of memories and subsuming the diversity of subjects under the victim. The discourse abstracts violence from its

historical context, generating moral consensus around the victims' suffering, primarily seen as victims of violence rather than as individuals making ethical or political choices. Ultimately, this discourse assimilates these categories into a single hegemonic voice, homogenizing the memories and experiences.

To conclude, the recent social revolt in Chile in October 2019 exposed a critical reflection on the transition that occurred 30 years ago. The transition, which initially criticized the dictatorship and its authoritarian legacy, failed to transform society as promised. The reconciliation and agreements pursued during the transition were denounced as a deceptive consolidation of the neoliberal model, accompanied by depoliticization and demobilization. This led to a radical questioning of the fundamental differences between dictatorships and the current democracy, dismantling the illusion of a unified narrative constructed during the transition. Contrary to the belief that transition produces a collective memory, it resists being consensual, hegemonic, or stable. Instead, it remains debatable, unstable, and continuously constructed across various social spheres.

Neither memory nor its technologies, such as memory sites and museums, should be idolized or treated as repositories of truth. Memories construct diverse narratives about the past in relation to present conditions. In transitional periods, the memory of victims often becomes hegemonic, overshadowing other memories and memory items with less visibility and recognition. In the critical analysis of transition, we have learned the importance of acknowledging the existence of multiple and diverse memories. Memory policies should be inclusive, guaranteeing the right to remember rather than imposing a duty to remember, allowing for debate, inference, and change. This approach challenges the globalistic memory and transitional dispositif. The symbolic power of memory lies in its capacity to produce substantives, relationships, and social imaginaries. However, the transformative nature of memory depends on the intentional engagement with the hegemonic narrative. Thank you.

O. Ernesto Valiente – *Refugee and Host: The Adjumani Case Study on Fostering Communal Reconciliation*

This presentation is going to focus on the collaboration of two Christian institutions that engage in or promote reconciliation among Sudanese refugees and members of the Ugandan host community. In a sense, what we were talking about yesterday is a form of soft reconciliation, stemming from faith-based community institutions. In August 2019, a team composed of members from Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) and Boston College traveled to Uganda to conduct a workshop on reconciliation among young leaders from different ethnic groups who had fled South Sudan, as well as young leaders from the host communities in an area called Adjumani, where these settlements are located.

This collaboration between Boston College, also a Jesuit university, and JRS was facilitated by the Christian character that fuels the mission of each institution. Additionally, these two institutions

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share the Jesuit mission, which is to work for reconciliation every day, both among human beings and with the environment, from a Christian perspective. Reconciliation, however, is always an eschatological reality, fully attainable only at the end of history when we will be in full communion with God. Nonetheless, the work we do today is extremely important as it anticipates and serves the needs of people who are suffering. Our project in Adjumani is one of the many services that JRS offers to communities that have experienced forced displacement and the associated losses. Furthermore, it is an ongoing collaboration, as we plan to return to East Africa in the coming months, this time focusing on resilience in the region.

Let me share a few things about JRS. They articulate reconciliation as a journey to create right relationships among the refugees they serve and between refugees and host communities. Often, tensions arise between refugees and host communities. Furthermore, JRS acknowledges the importance of social reconciliation rooted in justice and dialogue among diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic groups worldwide. JRS has developed three overarching goals for their reconciliation work. Firstly, to promote faith-based reconciliation as an intentional and integral part of JRS's overall mission. Secondly, to establish standalone reconciliation projects tailored to specific local contexts that enhance the skills, knowledge, and aptitudes of the teams and the people they work with. Lastly, JRS is committed to working with and receiving support from learning communities that strengthen the capacity of JRS teams and refugees. This is where Boston College and other institutions implementing JRS projects in various locations play a collaborative role. Our project fits within this framework.

Now, let's discuss Adjumani and our work there. The project is located in North Uganda, where a settlement of refugees from South Sudan is situated. Uganda has welcomed over 1 million refugees, with almost 800,000 originating from South Sudan. To prepare for this project, JRS conducted a comprehensive assessment in early 2019 in collaboration with the University of Winchester's Center of Religion, Reconciliation, and Peace. This assessment aimed to identify potential strengths and weaknesses, prioritize areas requiring attention, and understand the social dynamics at play. From this conflict assessment, three main findings emerged.

First, there was an increased tension between refugees and host communities, primarily concerning natural resources. Second, tension also existed among the refugees themselves due to differences in ethnic groups within the same country. Some groups exhibited a lack of tolerance rooted in tribal identity, which we frequently addressed. Lastly, there was a negative perception of the youth residing in the new settlements. These young refugees seemed to be disrupting the peace and harmony of the locality. Although I have softened the language, there were instances of violence. These were the key issues we aimed to address.

Now, in response to these conditions, we set ourselves two goals. Our project aimed to reduce the negative attitudes among the youth population by building trusted relationships among 60 young men and women from different tribal groups. We aimed to form them into a team that would serve as role models for their peers and effectively engage with their communities. So that was essentially our task. Additionally, we had a twofold objective. We were asked to develop a

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reconciliation workshop while also creating a training manual that could be adapted and repeated in different contexts. So it wasn't just about conducting a single workshop, but rather creating resources for a workshop that could be tailored to the East African region. The purpose of the first session was to establish a safe space that fostered trust among the participants, allowing them to delve into emotionally challenging topics. In this initial module, we centered the discussion around the theme of identity and the question "Who am I?". After a morning of conversation and getting acquainted, we invited the participants to reflect on their own identities and encouraged them to share their stories. Through various exercises, we explored how identities are influenced by our social positions, ethnic backgrounds, and personal histories. We provided a story for the participants to read, helping them consider these issues, and then asked them to create an identity tree after discussing it in small groups. This exercise prompted them to reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that have shaped their identities: What are their core values? Where do they find support? What contributes to their sense of self? However, this is just a snapshot of the process. We were pleasantly surprised by the participants' readiness and enthusiasm to engage in this journey. We had some concerns initially, but they appeared comfortable sharing their personal stories and listening to others' narratives. This foundation of trust established on the first day carried us through the subsequent five days. On the second day, we shifted the focus from self-reflection to understanding others. We divided the participants into small groups and encouraged them to share their stories. Instead of an identity tree, they were invited to draw a life graph, representing the trajectory of their lives as a process. They explained where they had been, where they currently stood, and shared their life histories with one another. The objective was to explore the influences that have shaped their lives over the years, to remember their origins, and understand how they reached their present circumstances. This module utilized personal storytelling to foster self-understanding and develop empathy towards others' stories. Notice how various concepts we previously discussed began to emerge here. We urged the participants to avoid adopting defensive attitudes and encouraged them to listen with a genuine desire to understand others' experiences. The key insight was the realization that despite their differences, even those who had significant grievances could recognize that people from other groups had also suffered unjustly. They discovered that the experience of displacement and injustice was a shared aspect among different groups. This module also examined the concept of outgroup bias and how group cohesion can sometimes be bolstered by excluding and contrasting oneself with outsiders, resulting in suspicion and hostility. We used a documentary on this topic, which led to a reflection on the story of the Good Samaritan and the importance of reaching out to others, placing ourselves in their situations, and cultivating compassion. While the majority of participants were Christians, it's worth noting that this story resonates across religious traditions. We also had a small group of Muslim men and women.

The third day proved to be the most challenging. We broached a delicate subject: how to confront one's pain, overcome the destructive dimensions of anger, and explore the potential for forgiveness. This session aimed to help participants recognize the detrimental effects of anger, the desire for revenge, and hatred on themselves and others. We encouraged them to consider constructive ways of dealing with negative emotions. In this module, we utilized the fable of the

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angry snake, which depicted a furious snake engaging in a fight with a knife and ultimately self-destructing. We believed this would capture their attention and serve as a reflection on the negative impact of anger in their lives. It is important to note that we never dismissed anger as invalid—on the contrary, we acknowledged its legitimacy. However, we aimed to address new, constructive methods of managing anger. Next, we watched a story about two young children caught in religious violence in a village in Central Africa. The story showcased the children's innocence amidst a backdrop of conflict, while also highlighting their yearning for peace, security, and a hopeful future.

We then contrasted these narratives with the stories of Nelson Mandela and his willingness to forgive those who oppressed him in South Africa, including the prison warden, government officials, and security guards. Mandela's understanding of forgiveness was rooted in his ability to recognize the humanity of others, even when they had wronged him. We emphasized that forgiveness was not presented as a moral obligation, but rather presented Mandela as a role model whose understanding of humanity transcended the cycle of violence.

The fourth module focused on the future. While our past shapes our present, it does not dictate our future. After reflecting on the past and present and gathering insights from various stories and videos, we posed the question: How can we begin building bridges for the future? How can we move forward with a new imagination and a different mindset? Here, we invited participants to contemplate how forgiveness could benefit victims, perpetrators, and the broader community. We initiated a discussion on what forgiveness meant to them personally, asking if they had witnessed or experienced forgiveness in their own lives and communities. We also explored whether forgiveness served as an inspiration for them. We engaged in several forgiveness exercises, focusing on personal liberation, healing, and creating space for forgiveness. Furthermore, we examined the Christian and Muslim perspectives on forgiveness, delving into historical experiences such as the journey of women like Immaculée Ilibagiza during the tragedy of Rwanda and the testimonies of figures like Desmond Tutu. The overarching goal was to provide participants with anthropological background knowledge and foster a sense of interconnectedness that would enhance the possibility of forgiveness. On the final day, we asked participants to brainstorm practical and concrete ways in which both the settlement and host communities could move forward. How could they receive support in developing a stronger sense of resilience within their communities? As leaders in their communities, how could the participants guide others in the peacebuilding process? During this session, they identified the needs and expectations of their communities and began considering how to organize themselves and address those needs. They started seeing themselves as leaders of a future that they would help shape. This module aimed to encourage participants to embrace a positive outlook, cultivate mutual respect, and commit to cooperation. We sought to guide them away from a position of victimhood and trauma toward one of agency and collaboration. We presented various contemporary examples where other groups were working towards similar goals. Thank you very much.

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Keynote Speech

Katherine Marshall - *The Plurality of Confronting Lasting Reconciliation Experiences*

I was struck thinking about reconciliation by realizing how difficult it is. Reconciliation is a topic when there are bitter, aching memories, often by those who've been involved in conflicts or people who've been affected by them, and often unanswered questions, people who've disappeared, mysteries of various kinds. There also are recollections of heroism and many of these shape basic values and norms and societies and senses of good and evil. And children learn at home and in school and from their playmates how to hate, as well as to love in ways that are fundamentally part of everyday life. I was struck, reflecting on how many children, at least when I was growing up in the United States, would talk about cowboys and Indians, which sounds trivial, but which basically was echoing deeply anguished conflicts over many, many years in the development and growth of the country. So you have this challenge of different narratives. And thinking about reconciliation, it's not easy to come up with clear successes. Well, the one case that always seems rather outstanding is France and Germany, which fought so bitterly during World War I and then World War II, which seem now to be completely reconciled in that sense, but also one has to recognize with some lingering issues. But despite this difficulty and despite the fact of how many problems there are, reconciliation is so important and it is a crucial part of stable societies, the basic terms we use of fair, inclusive societies. And it's linked to one of the challenges of today, which is pluralism, living with difference, which is a major feature of the modern modernization process, of the modern world. So the challenges of reconciliation are very much part of both conflict and post-conflict tensions, existing tensions and fragility, but also plural societies. And there, when we look at conflict, we have to recognize that we're talking about protracted conflicts in so many cases, protracted refugee situations where the average time people spend in refugee status is somewhere between 17 and 20 years. And the estimates put a 60% likelihood of recurrence of a conflict even after the most promising settlements. So reconciliation, I think, calls us to understand the complex root causes and the fears, the ignorance, the areas of different perceptions. And in complicated ways, reconciliation is also linked to the issues of inequality and poverty that are the centerpiece of the development and humanitarian challenges today.

I'm often struck in meeting with people involved in deep, complicated conflicts by their deep roots. Some years ago, in a Tuareg refugee camp in Mauritania, where people, when they started telling the story of why there were problems, went back to the 16th century. These were memories of people in families, not historians, but these were the stories that they had been told of injustice centuries ago. And the same is true in Burundi, looking at some of the tensions and the conflicts there, the narratives go way back and have very deep roots. And the concern with impunity and accountability comes up time and time again, is the fact that there has not been a reckoning, that there has not been anything approaching justice and accountability.

Coming back to this underlying issue of plurality, diversity in modern society. First of all, we do have the dynamism, but we also have to recognize that we're really just at the beginning of what may be waves of movement of people and therefore reintegration, as the estimates of the effects of climate change point to a much more dynamic world in the future. And the diversity issue, just

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to mention in passing, there's so much research on diversity, of course, biodiversity, but also human diversity of many kinds cultural, religious, ethnic, etc.. And the conclusion is that it is something that is great in the longer term - diversity is a benefit for almost any society - but it's also difficult to manage in the short term with the likelihood of tensions.

A final comment on this very broad sort of reflection about diversity and reconciliation and conflict. The number of truth and reconciliation efforts that have taken place is remarkable. I found one list of 54 different efforts to take a conscious, deliberate effort to look at narratives, at truth and at memory in the context of transitional justice following tensions and conflicts. There's so many ways that this happens. Museums are obviously one case, symbols as well as the really fantastic array of truth and reconciliation efforts with their different efforts, talk of reparations. It's striking in a number of recent efforts to deal with the wounds of the past that the symbols in terms of statues have become the focal point, and changing the public symbols has become so important.

So, let me now turn quickly to the question, always difficult, of what's religion got to do with it and what is the role or the non-roles of religious actors. Here I think there are two important dimensions. The first one, obviously, is how is religion involved in the problem or the conflict? And then the second is the responsibilities, but also the gifts that are part of the religious communities involved in reconciliation itself. In so many religious traditions, peace is a theme that you hear all the time, but also mercy, justice, forgiveness, even revenge and reckoning. But the first comment on the religious side that I would make is that it is always complex. It is often portrayed in quite stark and simplistic terms. But when you dig a little bit, it's always far more complex. I've been struck in many meetings and discussions, even in a single panel discussion, where you will have two people presenting completely opposite arguments. One would argue that a conflict, say, in Nigeria or the Central African Republic or let's say in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that it was primarily about religion. And then you'll have somebody else on the same panel saying that it has really nothing to do with religion, that the conflict is much more related to the manipulation of political leaders - I think that's the first candidate in most cases - but that it's a combination of a sense of injustice, of ethnic difference, of geographic, of class, and of the cause of inequality. So I think the first task is always to think about how the religious dimension really is involved in a conflict in terms of its roots, in terms of the perception of how far and in what ways is religious identity involved. I think it's very rare that religious beliefs would be involved, but certainly the religious identities in the multiple overlapping layers of identities in today's societies, those are almost always part of the complex causes of conflict. But the upshot that what we are hearing is two important things. I think the first is that there is a rise in the in the number of conflicts in the world, as well as a rise in the religious dimensions, the ways in which they are seen as religious. And in addition that the conflicts are seen as having multiple causes where religion is really just a part of the mix, one could say really in virtually any conflict situation. So understanding that and appreciating why there are such different perspectives is important.

But the second part, which is looking at the involvement of religious actors, a very broad understanding of who they are in peacebuilding is always a very significant set of questions, and it is too often neglected. There are some very clear cases where religious actors of different kinds, whether they're in organized communities or at very local level, are involved. Think of the many

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activities of the Community of Sant'Egidio, which first of all are interesting in themselves, but which also illustrate the ways in which the religious actors become involved. I was struck, for example, that in many cases or in several cases, the people involved, whether in Guinea or in Kenya or in South Sudan or in Mozambique, the most famous case, that it was the community of Sant'Egidio's involvement with people in prisons, which led them to know and to understand the feelings and the arguments and the interests of people involved in conflict that then resulted in them being invited. So you have a very wide range of religious actors who may or may not be a formal part of a track one, in other words, a formal diplomatic peace process, but may also be involved very much in a track one and a half, which involves government and civil society, governments and civil societies, a track to which would be more civil society or what people are now describing as a track three, which would be much more bottom up and community led. So the understandings of the kinds of gifts that religious actors can bring to peace processes is something that is a critical factor in looking at peacebuilding. Not always understood, but I think increasingly seen as one of the elements that one should be looking at in trying to look towards peace and reconciliation.

Another set of issues involves women peace builders. We know from many studies that have led to 1325, the U.N. resolution on women, that there is an extraordinary dearth of women involved in formal, visible peace processes. A tiny percentages Philippines often stands out as one of the few countries where there's been a direct involvement. And when you look at photographs of peace processes, it is again very striking how rare it is that women are involved. So there are conscious efforts to bring women's voices and power, but also their agendas into peace processes. But when women whose major affiliation is religious are looked at, you have what I call a Bermuda Triangle. That's a place where everything mysteriously disappears, that the religious women often are in tension with groups that see themselves as feminist. They're very little seen and have formal power within religious communities, and of course, the peacebuilding field has not seen the roles of women. So you have three strikes against them that lead to their being essentially invisible in many ways. And that was one of the titles of a book that USIP, the Berkeley Center and WFDD did looking at the roles of women who come from religious perspectives in peace processes; broadly defined as everything that includes microcredit or say, when India that's looking at the informal sector, women, etc.. But I think that the conclusion is that women, of course, have very special interests and often without essentializing women, some special gifts that they bring to peace processes. And the women who come from a religious perspective have insights and distinctive gifts of their own. So the work that we did, which I view as scratching the surface, is an area that needs much more understanding and analysis that includes narratives, a different voice, but also some more structured analysis of the roles that women play from different communities, but also in the interfaith-interreligious settings that are significant.

[Finally, before I conclude, I was asked to reflect on comparing reconciliation efforts. And that, I think is very difficult because if there's one central conclusion about the reconciliation work that's taken place, it is that it is very context specific and it is very painstaking work that involves listening and hearing, of course, and acting on what is heard in this process of listening that involves not trying to erase the past, but to make it possible to move on. And I think what we see here is what sometimes you can describe as fire from above, which is leadership showing the way, symbolic gestures of coming together, but also fire from below, the bottom up, the effort to

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involve communities, even down to the family level. And in these processes, never forgetting the religious roles and thinking through the complex teachings that religious traditions have about justice and about mercy, about reckoning oneself, but also reckoning one's relationship to others. Yes, putting it behind you with some form of forgiveness, but also taking into account some of the lessons and the meaning that come out of those processes. I think we always, or often, when we're thinking about action and lasting results, we are asked what are our priorities? And the priorities very often are education, first, education second, education third and education beyond. And then coming to some other issues among which I would put a solid and just development process that gives people much more hope and chance for developing their individual gifts. But this education starts with very, very young children, with the stories they hear, with what they learn about others, other religions, other ethnic groups. It also can take the form of adult learning through various kinds of workshops, media, etc.. But this question of education and learning I think is absolutely critical. So I will end exactly where I began: that reconciliation, which is much talked about, I think the number of truth and reconciliation commissions worldwide is a very good indication that these lingering, festering conflicts that block people's lives, that block development, that create bitterness, anger and violence. That it is important, but it is also remarkably different because it comes to some of the most human characteristics. So I hope I haven't repeated the wisdom that all of you have already distilled in your days together. But those are some of my reflections and be delighted to hear reactions and exchange.

ⁱ According to Blumenthal, repentance generally requires five elements: recognition of one's sins as sins (*hakarát ha-chét'*), remorse (*charatá*), desisting from sin (*azivat ha-chét'*), restitution where possible (*peira'ón*), and confession (*vidúit*).

ⁱⁱ Louis Newman, "The quality of Mercy. On the Duty to Forgive in the Judaic Tradition," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15 (1987), p. 155-172. Duty to forgive is not an addendum to Jewish morality but integral to it. God whose compassion we have a duty to emulate.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hannah Arendt *Human Condition: The moment of forgiveness is the experience of freedom. "Forgiving, in other words, is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven."* Arendt, *The Human Condition*. 2nd. Ed. Chicago & London: Chicago University Press. 1998 (1st ed. 1958) p. 241. One is also not obligated to forgive unilaterally, regardless of whether the offender repents.

^{iv} In fact, inverting the classic monarchical order on earth where a king would expect wrongs against him to come before those committed against a poor commoner, righting a wrong against a mere man, a fellow Jew, takes precedence over an affront to God, his creator!

^v See e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPzPsdmAK6U>

^{vi} ‘David Ben Gurion (1886-1973), in particular, stood for early reconciliation. Early on, the legendary first prime minister of Israel argued for the view of the "other Germany." Ben Gurion and the first German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), met only twice in his lifetime: in 1960 and 1966. And yet both statesmen seemed almost like distant friends.’^{vi}

^{vii} Mascha Schmerling. The project’s Jewish volunteers from different denominational backgrounds are paired with Germans to talk about their lives, usually in a classroom setting.

^{viii} ‘Notes Towards Finding the Right Question’ [1979], in Susannah Heschel, ed., *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, New York, Schocken Books, 1983, p. 138.

^{ix} ‘Notes Towards Finding the Right Question’, in Heschel, ed., *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, pp. 133-138, 120-51.

^x Since 1988, Women of the Wall (WOW) has fought for women’s right to pray collectively and aloud with Torah scrolls, prayer shawls and tefillin at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

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