RECONCILIATION IN IRELAND AND EUROPE 1945-1965

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Jesus spent his life crossing boundaries, often going where his culture and religion did not allow him to go. Paul was the apostle of reconciliation articulating and practicing his theology of reconciliation in the urban centers of the Roman Empire. Both Jesus and Paul were reconcilers in a world dominated and divided by empire despite the empire's assertion of *pax Romana*. The reality was: divide and rule, economic oppression, military conquest, social, political and economic injustices. Welcome to rural Galilee and urban Corinth and Phillippi; the world of Jesus and Paul in which they shaped their theological praxis of non-violent resistance and reconciliation. How seriously we take both of them calls for in-depth critical reflection.

This is the theological foreground for reflection on reconciliation in Ireland and Europe 1945-1965. First, an overview of post-war Ireland; second, a look at reconciliation in Europe during the same twenty year time span; and finally, a review of political theology and spirituality in a European context.

Post-War Ireland, 1945-1965

The divisions of Ireland were reflected in the different responses to the war and in the years that followed those divisions continued. Post-war Britain saw major reforms introduced by a Labour government, especially in the areas of health, social welfare and education. Northern Ireland because of its sectarian nature took time to implement these reforms. Educational reform was the most controversial. Education remains a divisive issue in Northern Ireland and, not surprisingly, in 1944 the proposals were denounced by the Catholic Bishops but the strongest opposition came from Protestant churches and clergy. It was asserted by a former minister of education, himself a clergy person, that the reforms would open state schools to "Jews, Agnostics, Roman Catholics, and Atheists." The proposals were declared by one MP as a "betrayal of Protestantism." It was 1948, before other reforms were implemented, having been the center of sectarian argument for four years.

The confessional nature of the Irish problem had been expressed in the Protestant and Catholic opposition to the educational reforms, especially from Protestants in 1944-1948. This again became obvious in 1951 when the Dublin Minister for Health introduced his "Mother and Child" scheme which proposed "pre- and post- Natal Care, as well as education in respect of motherhood for women and girls." Minister Noel Browne had helped eradicate tuberculosis in Ireland and now he was attempting to tackle high infant mortality rates. His proposal was opposed by the Irish Medical Association

who feared it would socialize medicine, would be unaffordable and interfere with the patient-doctor relationship. But the Catholic Church also vigorously opposed the scheme because it felt it would "violate the sanctity of the family, that it was the family's right and responsibility to provide for Health Care, and that the proposed sex education would lead to an increase in immorality." The minister was forced to resign and the government collapsed in the face of opposition. The power of the Catholic Church in relation to politics and legislation would remain until its demise in the last decade of the twentieth century. Confessionalism in Ireland north and south is not only religiously and theologically conservative, it is also socially and politically conservative and that has had a negative effect on various reforms necessary after the war and continues in the ethos of both states, even though the larger Irish churches have since been culturally disestablished. In this sense the role of the churches in Ireland has been somewhat repressive and controlling of social reforms. Change has tended to be threatening.

Northern Ireland too had a new prime minister, Terence O'Neill. A few days after his appointment he said, "Our task will be literally to transform Ulster (the old provincial name Protestants gave to Northern Ireland). To achieve it will demand bold and imaginative measures." O'Neill wanted to modernize Northern Ireland, and improve community relations. He "was the first Northern Ireland prime minister to state clearly that reconciliation was a central part of his programme." But the minority nationalist Catholic community became frustrated by his inability to deliver reforms and the unionist Protestant community became insecure and fearful because they felt he was conceding too much.

The churches were making more conciliatory statements by the mid-1960s. Yet the churches were still captive to tribal politics and sectarian religion. The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid continued to lay stress on doctrinal divisions separating the two religions, though his reluctance to engage with Vatican II reforms was shared by other conservative Bishops. He was, in fact, incapable of transcending the theological approach which he had been taught as a student. By the mid-1960s even McQuaid was being questioned by assertive Catholic lay people. In many ways McQuaid reflected the Irish Catholic church and the Protestant churches too were incapable of transcending the traditional theological approach. O'Neill was incapable of transcending his English public school culture in Northern Ireland and the rising political demigod Paisley and most unionists were incapable of transcending their sectarian politics and religion. By 1969, O'Neill was gone, Northern Ireland was in crisis and violence erupted which was to last for another thirty-five years. Reconciliation remains a very fragile process.

Reconciliation in Europe, 1945-1965

Somehow in all of this there were those who had a vision of a reconciled Europe, a Europe in which wounds could be healed. Even before the war there were ideas of a European movement, now those ideas began to

find voice and action in the west. It began as a moral campaign for the reform of international relations, and then it moved to economic cooperation. Through all of this it nurtured a new sense of community. It began in 1949, with the Council of Europe and from 1960 became the EEC, the European Economic Community. From six it expanded becoming increasingly inclusive especially after 1989 with the accession or welcoming of more and more European countries committed to democracy and human rights. Institutions were formed, human rights declarations were framed and the World Council of Churches was born in Amsterdam in 1948. Looking back we might say that Europe has been a laboratory of conflict transformation, reconciliation and peace building. Shortcuts have not been possible but the work of decades, people and personalities with moral vision, politicians and people of faith pursuing a vision of a divided Europe, have healed it of deep wounds and united it in rich diversity. There are key figures and events.

Schuman Plan

Robert Schuman was a French Catholic and French Foreign Minister from 1948-1950. Schuman was part of a formidable team, Paul-Henri Spaak of Belgium and Alcide De Gasperi of Italy. This trinity was the driving force behind European reform, rehabilitation and integration. It is worth remembering at this point that "Germany's only link to Europe was through the Marshall Plan and that most western Europeans still thought of Germany as a threat, not a partner." The French were aware of the need to do something. Jean Monnet had sown the seeds of something and Schuman then produced his plan. He said: "The French government proposes that the entire French—German coal and steel production be placed under a joint high authority within the framework of an organization which would also be open to the participation of other countries in Europe." There was a delighted German response and Konrad Adenauer said that "this plan of the French government has given the relations between our two countries, which threatened to be paralyzed by mistrust and reserve, a fresh impetus towards constructive cooperation." Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries ratified Schuman's plan. Britain declined which left Scandinavians unable to sign. Six west European states signed and in April, 1951, the European Coal and Steel community came into being. The journey towards an integrated Europe had begun.

Tony Judt draws attention to the significant political identity of the six foreign ministers who signed the Paris treaty. They were all members of their respective Christian Democrat parties. Gasperi, Adenauer and Schuman were all from the margins of their countries and all three had joined Catholic associations. Their common language was German which they spoke when they met. The others from Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands were likewise Christian Democrats and they could see that cooperation made cultural and economic sense. They were all men coming out of a committed moral vision. When Schuman spoke of a trans-national High Authority, au-

thority higher than France or Germany, he was speaking of an executive exercise of power for the common good. It was a moral vision of the European common good at the heart of which was faith. The Schuman Plan has been described as "a political vehicle in economic disguise, a device for overcoming Franco-German hostility." It was a plan for political reconciliation.

There is no reconciliation without moral vision and faith inspires and sustains moral vision. The moral vision for reconciliation is intensely practical; it is both political and economic. Without these two strands reconciliation is not possible.

The World Council of Churches 1948

It was not only the United Nations which formed in 1945 as a response to the war, producing landmark declarations like the Declaration of Human Rights as a way of healing and reconciling broken international relations. On August 22, 1948, the World Council of Churches was formed. World Christianity was realigning itself, Protestant and Orthodox and very northern hemisphere, again in response to the brokenness of the nations.

The moral and spiritual vision of the churches for unity and reconciliation had earlier roots in the work of the Indian born Anglican, J. H. Oldham and the great Swedish Lutheran Archbishop Nathan Soderblom. There was also the American Episcopal Bishop, Charles Brent. Oldham and Brent had been concerned with what the church believed and how it structured itself, faith and order. Soderblom was looking at the major challenge of human dislocation and anxiety and with the church's witness and voice in the public sphere, life and work. Their groundbreaking work had laid the foundations of the World Council of Churches even before the war, but was needed more than ever after the war's devastation.

At the end of the earlier war in 1918, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davdison, preached before the King and Queen and the British House of Commons and Lords. The Archbishop had protested frequently about the government's war-time policy. With prophetic voice he proclaimed, "There is a form of wrath which may degenerate into a poisonous hatred running right counter to the principles of a Christian's creed. As pledged disciples of a living Lord and Master who had died upon the cross for all who hated him, we have to see to it that the spirit of hate finds no nurture in our hearts." These words were just as relevant after the Second World War. Sitting close by Archbishop Davidson was his Chaplin George Bell who later became Anglican Bishop of Chichester and also the leading European voice of "Christian Internationalism." Bell was greatly influenced by Soberblom and throughout World War II he had courageously spoken out and persisted in his links with German Christians. He denounced saturation bombing as "a wrong deed," directly angering Churchill in the process. He believed that the church needed to set itself against "the propaganda of lies and hatred." He bluntly said that, "The church fails to be the church if it forgets that its members in one nation have a fellowship with its members in every nation."

When the war ended he said publicly, "No nation, no church, no individual is guiltless. Without repentance, and without forgiveness, there can be no regeneration." He retained warm friendship with German church people, he played a prominent role in the formation of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948; and it is believed that Churchill's anger and Bells outspokenness cost him the appointment as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Christian faith community is never outside politics or politically neutral. Its spiritual role is at the heart of political and economic dynamics. Building relationships, trust, friendship and forgiveness are the spiritual strand of reconciliation intertwined with the political and economic strands.

A Public Theological and Spiritual Praxis of Reconciliation

We have already begun to trace the contours of reconciliation in Europe between 1945 and 1965. It is still a work in progress and perhaps it always will be. Reconciliation is not a goal it is a process, a process that requires renewal and sustainability. In identifying a public theological praxis of reconciliation we need to recognize four indivisible, interdependent and inseparable strands. We have already highlighted two of them, the socio-political, for reconciliation requires political vision, initiatives and strategies. The whole European integrative process is an example of political vision and action and it is still a process. And second, the socio-economic, for reconciliation requires economic strategies and regeneration. Europe was economically devastated after the war and there would have been no reconciling journey in Europe without the Marshall Plan. The creation of the European Economic Community was not a dream driven by materialism or mammon. It was a strategy for economic recovery and regeneration without which a reconciling Europe would not have been possible.

A third strand is the socio-psychological; this strand of reconciliation addresses issues of identity, culture and ethnicity. War and violence shatter all of these. After 1945, what did it mean to be German, French, Swiss, and Irish? What does it do to people who are displaced and dislocated, especially because of borders and boundaries being redrawn? I once heard the story of a very elderly man who has lived in three countries without ever moving to a different house. His house is currently within Romania! What does that do to a person psychologically and what tensions has it created in Transylvania or in the regions between Poland and Germany? Reconciliation needs to address the socio-psychological issues of identity, culture and ethnicity. To be secure and to relate to others people need to know who they are and have their sense of cultural identity recognized.

The fourth strand is the socio-spiritual. Bishop George Bell's idea of "Christian Internationalism" or church as transnational community has something to offer the socio-psychological strand of reconciliation. Transnational relational networks are necessary and significant and the primary Christian loyalty to the inclusive reign of God is both a challenging and healing dynamic. Christian faith also points beyond its own institutional form to the most fundamental identity marker. All humankind is made in the image of

God, sharing a common humanity, needing one another and the common good to be fully and truly human. This is a radical relational dynamic contributing towards the socio-psychological strand of reconciliation

At heart this is also the socio-spiritual strand and it is where the faith community comes into its own. By the spiritual we do not mean something other-worldly, that part of our faith that takes us out of the world, but rather that which is authentically spiritual at the heart of the brokenness and messiness of the world. The socio-spiritual is the heartbeat of the political, economic and psychological strands of reconciliation. If it is not the heartbeat of these concrete activities then it is not an incarnational spirituality but religious escapism, an otherworldly pietism justifying Marxist criticism that religion is the opium of the people. The original six foreign ministers who shaped the European Coal and Steel Community were politicians and economists with a moral vision rooted in their Christian Democrat ethos. Faith or spirituality or spiritual values shaped their moral vision of a reconciled Europe. The socio-spiritual element goes beyond individualism and shapes a social or communal vision which in concrete terms deals with political, economic and cultural realities.

We cannot separate these four strands of reconciliation, they are intertwined. There is no reconciliation in Europe, no reconciliation in Ireland without each of the political, economic, psychological and spiritual strands interconnecting. Faith communities as moral and spiritual communities need the appropriate confidence and courage to take their theology and spirituality of reconciliation into the public square.

The essence of such a public theological and spiritual praxis of reconciliation lies in four core values. Albert Einstein once said, "Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." Theology and spirituality suffer when they become trapped in logic, rationalism or scholasticism. There is more strength in theological and spiritual imagination. Think of how much of ancient Israel's prophetic tradition is expressed in poetry. If Christians believe that Jesus was one of the greatest, if not the greatest teacher ever, then reflect on his frequent use of metaphor and story. Even Paul, when we rescue him from his doctrinal and scholastic captors, is rooted in his Jewish poetic, metaphoric, even mythical and symbolic tradition. Faith is at home in a symbolic world, faith is at its best with moral imagination.

It was a Hebrew poet who gave us a moral vision of community or an imagined world of reconciliation. Psalm 85 is evocative in its Spanish translation. From Spanish to English in reads in verse 10: "Truth and mercy have met together; Peace and justice have kissed." Met and kissed! There is an intimate relationship between these powerful images. Or better still imagine them as four persons, an intimacy between truth and mercy, peace and justice. Consider also the paradox, they are all needed for reconciliation, and the paradox emerges when we legitimately translate the poetic verse as "Truth and mercy have collided; Peace and justice have clashed." They not only need each other but they often collide and clash in the process of reconciliation.

Reconciliation means truth-telling, honesty, revelation, clarity, openness, accountability, and vulnerability. We cannot resolve conflict without truth and yet truth is hard to get at and it leaves people exposed and vulnerable. Truth is acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss. Reconciliation needs the exercise of mercy, compassion, standing alongside, forgiveness, acceptance, and the possibility of new beginnings. Yet mercy can also be denial, cover-up, premature closure, but healing and reconciliation will not happen without mercy. Reconciliation can best happen when wrongs are put right, when individual and group rights are implemented and equal opportunity is created, there is restitution and reparation and the implementation of social restructuring. Justice also is about redistributing resources and power and the restoration of human dignity to the victim and the offender. Reconciliation is also about peace, for reconciliation creates harmony, unity, integration, total wellbeing at personal, social, political, economic and environmental levels. It means peace for all and not just a few, also peace for all and not just a majority. Peace is inclusive and integrative.

Not only are these four powerful and paradoxical values expressed in this Hebrew poetry, they are the core values at the heart of ancient Israel's moral and community vision in the radically social idea of covenant. Covenant in the Bible is a radically alternative socio-political, economic and environmental vision. It is moral imagination re-describing the community of life and re-imagining the world. Covenant imagines and expresses a reconciled world in which truth, mercy, justice and peace have met and kissed. Imagination will, as Einstein said, take you everywhere. These four core values are the heart of the socio-spiritual strand of reconciliation and the faith community brings these essential values to the political, economic and psychological strands of reconciliation in a broken Europe, Ireland, Bosnia or wherever. This is our public, theological and spiritual praxis of reconciliation.

Methodist Praxis

Methodists in Europe are a minority people and there is positive value in being no more than that. Methodism has never been a state church, a constitutionally established church, though we have not always resisted being a culturally established church. At heart we remain a free church with even a shade of Anabaptist or left-wing reformation about us. If this is true, it is a good place to be.

If Methodists want to be a reconciliation movement, then we need to re-learn how to read the Bible, to discover perhaps for the first time Israel's prophets, to learn from Jesus and Paul to live by faith even in the shadow of empire, to follow them as they entered into their political, economic and cultural worlds with moral vision and core ethical values. We may need to find a different hermeneutic to enable us to be a reconciliation movement in Europe today, a socio-political hermeneutic for living faithfully in a socio-political world.

In that different Biblical framework we need to re-interpret or re-imagine the Methodist emphasis on universal grace, God's grace for all and already

in all. This will open up radically different ways of seeing others including enemies, and will open up a very dynamic and creative way of relating across the boundaries. If reconciliation is the social embrace of others in truth, mercy, justice and peace, then we are not bringing God into the process, the God of universal grace and pure, unbounded love is already there. "Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love thou art." And if this Jesus who practiced this compassion and love in the shadow of empire is as Christians claim our greatest clue to the God of life and the God of the cosmos, then we have not only the basis of our moral vision, even more the kingdom of God is indeed within and among us, and already if not-yet fully present in the world.

Our public theological and spiritual praxis of reconciliation means we have another vision and understanding of apostolicity or apostolic succession. The historically dubious concept of being in a succession of Bishops from Peter is no longer adequate, if it ever was. The equally dubious idea of faithful succession to a body of timeless doctrines and beliefs, defined and agreed to with logical precision from the first apostles until now, is also inadequate. A more authentic apostolicity may lie in faithful commitment and active witness to a ministry of reconciliation in the world, empowered and sent by God, the God of active non-violence, reconciliation and peace. We will need a different hermeneutic to read the Bible and realize who this sending God is, what it means to be a faithful and ethical community in the world, to take our core, covenantal values into the politics and economics, cultures and spiritualties of Europe today. Is it possible to build such a Methodist movement rooted in a more authentic sense of apostolicity, apostolic vocation and witness? Can we worship and act as a movement of reconciliation and peace? I know we are not meant to go beyond 1965 in this conference, but what is our 2030 vision of Europe, and of a Methodist movement along with others of faith and moral imagination for 2030?

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