A TIME TO HEAL

STANLEY HAUERWAS

pathways

INTRODUCING PATHWAYS

The situation in Northern Ireland raises many difficult - sometimes controversial - issues for Christians. However, we believe that God's people need to engage with his word and with the community.

In another situation that raised many difficult and controversial matters, the prophet Jeremiah called on God's people to search for the ancient path - the good way - and to walk in it. This series of PATHWAYS booklets is our contribution to that search for our time.

We invite others to join with us in understanding God's word to Northern Ireland.

This booklet, A Time to Heal, contains the text of a talk given by Professor Stanley Hauerwas at ECONI's annual conference in 1998.

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A TIME TO HEAL

WHY TIME CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT HEAL THE WOUNDS OF HISTORY BUT TIME HAS BEEN AND CAN BE REDEEMED

Stanley Hauerwas

1

ON NOT FORGETTING

I am honored to be asked to address this conference, but I am also frightened to be here.[1] I am not frightened for myself, but for you. Like most people who have followed your history from afar, I am aware you are living in a fragile time. It may be, as the conference title suggests, "A Time to Heal," but I do not presuppose that such a time is without its tensions. I assume you stand somewhere between not quite peace and the hope of peace. Moreover, what concrete reality that hope might take remains vague, which is as frightening as it is hopeful. This is salutary, for I do not want to say anything to make matters worse; but as a result I might not say anything worth saying.

Moreover, given the arrogance of most Americans - particularly Christian Americans - I fear that it is quite easy for us to make a terrible mess by trying to tell other people how to get along. Part of the problem, of course, is that being American hides the arrogance of being an American from Americans because we assume, exactly because we are American, we can speak from the position of anyone. America is, after all, the embodiment of an alleged universal culture - that is, Americans believe that given the opportunity to think about it, anyone would want to be like us. To be already what everyone is trying to be is but another way to say that what it means to be an American is to be a people without a history.

We think that gives us the place, which is noplace, to tell everyone else how to be what we already are. All you have to do is forget who you are and become like us. Accordingly, Americans giving advice is right up there with the Christian who observed that the Jews and Palestinians could get along better if they acted like Christians.

All of which is to say that I am well aware of just how much of an outsider I am. We share the faith made possible by the resurrection of Jesus, but that faith does not mean our different histories are irrelevant. Since the time I was invited to speak to you, I have tried to read everything I could about "the troubles."[2] Yet I well understand that no amount of reading can give the kind of understanding that comes from having suffered your history. So I will make no attempt to address the Irish situation.

Making no attempt to address the Irish situation, however, can result in a kind of fatal abstractness. Such abstractness is a particular problem if you are a theologian. In our time, what many call modern times, unbelievers and believers (and even some theologians who actually may be believers!) do not believe that theological claims do any work. I assume that helps explain that no matter how sincerely many believe what it is they believe about God, they in fact live lives of practical atheism. Accordingly, quite profound and sophisticated theological systems can be developed, but the theological discourse seems to "float," making no difference for how we live.

The most sophisticated theological speech has difficulty being heard, even by those sympathetic to that speech, as

anything other than pious platitudes. What good is a God that does no more than stand as some kind of ultimate warrant for appeals that when all is said and done we ought to try harder, even in places like Northern Ireland, to get along? I do not know if I can avoid being platitudinous, but I am not going to argue that God's peace means that Catholics and Protestants should forget their history and love one another. Rather I am going to argue why you cannot have peace in Ireland if you forget the wrongs Protestants have done to Catholics or Catholics to Protestants. There can be no healing of the wounds of history if you forget the murders perpetrated by Catholics and Protestants alike. Moreover, the reasons you cannot forget the terror Catholics and Protestants have perpetrated on one another is that you are Christians. Christians are required to confess and remember their sins, but they are also required to remember the sins of those who have sinned against us. Any reconciliation that does not require such a remembering cannot be the reconciliation made possible by the cross of Christ.

"The wrongs Protestants have done to Catholics and Catholics have done to Protestants" is, of course, already to oversimplify your history. "Protestant" and "Catholic" are descriptions that fail to do justice to the complexity of the differences that constitute the conflict called "the troubles." Part of the difficulty, I suspect, is that Protestant and Catholic become overdetermined descriptions naming differences that hides the fact that Protestants and Catholics are more alike than different. Michael Ignatieff reports a Serbian soldier told him that the Serbs and the Croat were really all the same, which makes it all the more necessary to emphasize the difference. As

Ignatieff observes, "It is not a sense of radical difference that leads to conflict with others, but the refusal to admit a moment of recognition. Violence must be done to the self before it can be done to others. Living tissue of connection and recognition must be cauterized before a neighbor is reinvented as an enemy."[3]

The irony, moreover, is that once such difference is in place, people need one another's difference in order to know who they are. Such need, however, can become but further fuel for our hatred of the other as we fear the knowledge that we need our enemy because without our enemy we will not know who we are. Wendell Berry, one of America's great contemporary writers, notes that it may be the most significant irony in the history of racism in America that racism

> by dividing the two races, has made them not separate but in a fundamental way inseparable, not independent but dependent on each other, incomplete without each other, each needing desperately to understand and make use of the experience of the other. After so much time together we are one body, and the division between us is the disease of one body, not of two. Even the white man and the black man who hate each other are, by that very token, each other's emotional dependents.[4]

I am aware that what I have just said is not exactly an upbeat message. Indeed it almost seems perverse to tell people in Northern Ireland that any peace worth having will require that they remember one another's sins. Surely the way forward is to "forgive and forget;" or, if unable to forgive, at least to try to get along well enough to gain time enough to develop a perspective, which is just another name for loss of memory, in

which the wrongs done by both sides seem less important. After all, what do you do when what has been done is so wrong there is nothing you can do to make it right?[5] The way forward, and there has to be a way forward, seems rightly to require some kind of forgetting.

The United States exemplifies the attempt to have time blot out past wrongs through forgetfulness. There can be no question that slavery was an institution so wrong there is nothing that can be done to make it right. Slavery and its continuing effects is a wound so deep in the American soul that we prefer, both black and white, to ignore its continuing presence in our lives. Yet our very denial of our history haunts us, frightening us with the reality so that we feel helpless before this ghost of our past. Wendell Berry, reflecting on the fact that his forebears owned slaves observes,

> There is a peculiar tension in the casualness of this hereditary knowledge of hereditary evil; once it begins to be released, once you begin to awaken to the realities of what you know, you are subject to staggering recognitions of your complicity in history and in the events of your own life. The truth keeps leaping on you from behind. For me, that my people had owned slaves once seemed merely a curious fact. Later, I think, I took it to prove that I was somehow special, being associated with a historical scandal. It took me a long time, and in fact a good deal of effort, to finally realize that in owning slaves my ancestors assumed limitations and implicated themselves in troubles that have lived on to afflict me - and I still bear that knowledge with a sort of astonishment.[6]

Wendell's conviction that "I was somehow special, being associated with a historical scandal" but exemplifies the power

of past wrongs over our present lives. Such burdens, of course, are but continuing forms of deception necessary to claim some decency in a more encompassing indecent system. The continuing effects of slavery Berry describes as a wound - "a historical wound, prepared centuries ago to come alive in me at my birth like a hereditary disease, and to be augmented and deepened by my life."[7] Moreover, just to the extent the wound is unacknowledged, white people lack the means to name how the wound of racism they have inflicted on black people - who have certainly suffered more than whites - wounds also their own lives. Yet the master, or later the member of the dominant race - failing to know how to speak of our wound - knows it only grows more painful the more deeply it is hidden within ourselves.

For example, Berry tells the story of his great-grandfather's selling of a slave who was so defiant and rebellious he could not be made to do anything worthwhile. Berry observes such a selling but exposes the inherent violence of the slave system just to the extent any kindness in slavery was dependent on the docility of the slave. A slave that was rebellious had to be dealt with by answering the slave's violence with greater violence or using the institutional violence of slavery by selling the slave to someone more willing to enact the necessary cruelty. Berry's great-grandfather, a mild and gentle man by nature, who was unwilling to commit personal violence against the slave, sold the slave to a local slave buyer who had a reputation for knowing how to deal with "mean niggers." The selling resulted in the slave being horribly beaten and led away with a rope.

Berry observes that it is impossible to believe his great grandfather was oblivious to the pain in this. He had a reputation for being kind to his slaves. He could not have wanted the slave beaten. Yet they, and we, became burdened "with a malignant history and a malignant inheritance, and they endeavored to protect themselves by a carefully contrived myth, preserving them against any acknowledgment, spoken or unspoken, of their involvement."[8] Such silence envelops us, making it impossible for the wound to be lanced or cauterized. As a result, we literally lack the language to recognize ourselves across the divisions our history names. We are left in silence, playing out endless games of guilt and recrimination benefitting no one.

As a result, blacks and whites can find no common story that will enable them to heal the wound. Such a situation ironically means blacks are better able to negotiate the everyday racism that constitutes our lives than whites. As Berry observes,

> Blacks know harsher truth about the whites than the whites have ever admitted to themselves - and the whites know it. No matter how friendly a given white may seem, the black man, of course, fears that he is being stereotyped and misjudged. Whites fear what they feel, secretly or otherwise, to be the righteousness of the anger of blacks; as the oppressors they feel, secretly or otherwise, morally inferior to those they have oppressed. In their struggle to advance themselves, the blacks fear to be disarmed by the proffered friendliness of whites. It is even possible for whites to hesitate to offer friendliness to blacks for fear that they will seem to condescend or patronize.[9]

So we stare at one another and in the staring become less known to one another - and thus, to ourselves. Allegedly having broken down the past walls of racism and slavery, we become even more divided from one another.[10] That blacks and whites increasingly know one another only as abstractions, Berry observes, is not the intensification of the crisis, it is the crisis. A crisis, I might add, that feels like being caught in a ditch with walls so high you cannot climb out nor can you see the end - in short it feels like being in a grave with the end kicked out.

C. Eric Lincoln, one of our most thoughtful commentators on race in America, thinks our only way forward is through forgetting. Lincoln observes that we suffer from a national malaise, a "melancholia," that derives from an "acute sense of moral wretchedness over the silent recognition of an ethic that failed in a historic surrender to expediency and avarice."[11] In spite of our protestations of personal innocence - "my family never owned slaves" or "I am not a racist" - Lincoln notes this brings us no relief because we have not distinguished the fact of history from the sense of obligation to justify it after the fact. He argues that we can do nothing about the reality of the past. History cannot be recalled and made right. With his usual eloquence, Lincoln argues,

> What was remains in fact what it was. But we can and we must separate ourselves from the psychological trauma of a history we did not commit, and which does not require our endorsement for its justification. The justifications for the dehumanization and enslavement of the Africans were invented before the fact. They were institutionalized in the fact, and they died with the

> fact. Let them rest where they are. They belong to another time, another order, another civilization. They do not belong to us, or to our children. We are beyond the past. It is irrevocable, and our chief loyalties must be to the future, to a new beginning.[12]

Lincoln calls for "no-fault reconciliation" as our only way forward in America. We must, he suggest, learn to accept each other with appreciation for what we are, but even more for what we can become. He knows this will not be easily accomplished because, as he puts it, too much "history" keeps getting in the way. Yet he thinks such reconciliation is the only way forward. Nor is it impossible. As he puts it, it "is the least we can do for our country; that is the most we can do for each other; that is the best we can do for ourselves and for our posterity. That is the ultimate meaning of survival, and the only strategy that will work."[13]

Yet I do not believe such strategy will work in America or Northern Ireland. As Berry makes clear, and as I think Lincoln knows, the wound that silences our speech will continue to haunt us. The blood of the past has drenched our land and will continue to make it impossible to "forget" in the name of easy reconciliation. In his wonderful book, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, Michael Ignatieff observes the process of healing the wounds of the past is the most mysterious process of all. Yugoslavia, Rwanda, South Africa are names that remind us that the past continues to torment us because it is not the past. "These places are not living in a serial order of time but in a simultaneous one, in which the past and the present are continuous, an

agglutinated mass of fantasies, distortions, myths, and lies."[14]

Ignatieff notes that reporters in the Balkan war often discovered when they were told about atrocities that they were uncertain whether the stories they were hearing had occurred yesterday or in 1941 or 1841 or 1441. For those that told the tales, yesterday and today were the same. Ignatieff observes that simultaneity "is the dream time of vengeance. Crimes can never be safely fixed in the historical past; they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for blood. Joyce understood that in Ireland the bodies of the past were never safely dead and buried; they were always roaming through the sleep of the living in search of retribution."[15]

Modern people believe that the unwillingness to forgive past wrongs is wrong. We need to simply forget our past, recognizing that when all is said and done we really share more than we differ. Ignatieff rightly, I think, challenges our modern sensibilities not only because they are unrealistic but even more importantly because they are morally superficial. The price we pay to make such strategies work is to become superficial people. There can be no "no-fault reconciliation." Good people, morally substantive people, rightly want revenge. In Ignatieff's words,

> The chief moral obstacle in the path of reconciliation is the desire for revenge. Now, revenge is commonly regarded as a low and unworthy emotion, and because it is regarded as such, its deep moral hold on people is rarely understood. But revenge - morally considered - is a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honor their memory by taking up their cause where they left off. Revenge keeps faith between generations; the

> violence it engenders is a ritual form of respect for the community's dead - therein lies its legitimacy. Reconciliation is difficult precisely because it must compete with the powerful alternative morality of violence. Political terror is tenacious because it is an ethical practice. It is a cult of the dead, a dire and absolute expression of respect.[16]

From this perspective the conflicts in Bosnia, South Africa, and Northern Ireland are not, as is often implicitly implied, the work of morally inferior people. Indeed the exact opposite may well be the case. For at least in these societies you still have people willing to be killed as well as to kill in honor of their forebears. Such societies are probably the only kind in modernity that deserve to be called "historical" just to the extent they live by memory. I am not, of course, suggesting that all fighters in such societies fight in the name of preserving such memory. Warriors, as well as peacemakers, will have their share of cruel and sociopathological people. Rather my point is that irrespective of how the conflict may be misused by some, the conflict itself is morally worthy.

I am acutely aware that by now some of you may begin to become distinctly uncomfortable. I am sure that I must have been invited to speak to you partly because some of you knew I am an advocate of Christian nonviolence. But so far what I have had to say sounds anything but nonviolent. Indeed if I follow out the implications of my last remarks in relation to the race problem in America, it seems I should argue that what we need is a good old race war. I am, of course, not advocating such a war - though it is by no means clear to me that in fact that is not what we have been going through in America since the so-called Civil War.

But if I am not advocating war, then what alternative do I have, given the analysis I have provided to this point? My alternative, like yours, I am sure, is the name and confession: Jesus is the Christ of God. Jesus Christ is the language that ends the silences that threaten to destroy us. Christ is the memory that makes possible the memory of the wrongs we have done as well as that have been done to us. All this I believe. All this I know to be true. But such believing and knowing, as I suggested above, cannot help but be simplistic preachments without the material display of the costs required.

Ignatieff suggests that only reconciliation can break the spiral of intergenerational vengeance. Such reconciliation means, he says, substituting the vicious downward spiral of violence with the virtuous upward spiral of mutually reinforcing respect. Yet he observes further that such

> reconciliation has no chance against vengeance unless it respects the emotions that sustain vengeance, unless it can replace the respect entailed in vengeance with the rituals in which communities once at war learn to mourn their dead together. Reconciliation must reach into the shared inheritance of the democracy of death to teach the drastic nullity of all struggles that end in killing, the unending futility of all attempts to avenge those who are no more.[17]

Wise words, but they are not Christian words; for the reconciliation for which Ignatieff appeals is not the reconciliation of Christ. The cult of the dead is no doubt profound, but it is not the Christian cult. Our cult is called the communion of saints, and we believe that communion makes possible a reconciliation of memory otherwise impossible. But

Ignatieff's account of reconciliation rightly insists that any account of such a healing of memories is a politics. The challenge of articulating that politics is what remains before us. It is a fearful task requiring nothing less than making explicit what we really think the difference God makes in our world.

2

A BRIEF INTERLUDE FOR A WORD FROM THE OPPOSITION

Before I take up that task, I need to let the opposition to the position I am taking have a word. That position of the opposition was nicely articulated by a column by one of the most respected journalists in America, George Will. The column concerned the report written by President Clinton's Advisory Committee on Race. Will's column was entitled, "Race Advisory Report Immune to Time's Passage."[18] Will's criticism of the Advisory Committee Report is quite simple - the Report did not understand that the Civil War is over. His evidence for the Advisory Committee's failure is that the committee still thinks America should be seen in black and white. Will thinks this is perverse because Hispanics are close to becoming America's largest minority with Asian-American's not far behind.

According to Will, the principal impediments to upward mobility are not "institutionalized repression" but certain behaviors (principally illegitimacy) best understood in terms of class rather than race. The Advisory Committee, however, stayed with the old racial paradigm by encouraging minorities to continue to believe their progress depends on minting ever new rights to be secured by governmental interventions. Yet Will notes that happily old habits of mind do die. He tells the story of Douglas MacArthur who, in 1925 when he was newly stationed in Atlanta, entered the Episcopal cathedral with his staff. The result was that three-quarters of the congregation

walked out. Why? They remembered his father's role in the Union capture of Atlanta.

But according to Will, sensibilities have changed. Memories of that war have long ago lost their power. Will thinks that is what is now happening to the idea of "civil rights" though many, and in particular those associated with government, fail to notice that is the case. From Will's perspective, the wonders of capitalism combined with liberal democracy mean that the battles of the past are just that, battles of the past that we are foolish to continue to fight. In a society that promises to make us all rich, all free, what is a little slavery between friends!

You may well think the last comment to be an unfair characterization. But if you do, you do not understand why the very character of democracy (at least the kind of democracy that characterizes the American political system) is an attempt to substitute freedom - which turns out to be primarily the freedom to make money - for memory. This can be nicely confirmed by an earlier column by the same George Will concerning a church-state decision that had been made by the Supreme Court concerning the practice of native Americans' use of peyote in religious ceremonies. Approving of the Court's decision to deny the use of peyote, Will observed,

> A central purpose of America's political arrangements is the subordination of religion to the political order, meaning the primacy of democracy. The founders, like Locke before them, wished to take and domesticate religious passions of the sort that convulsed Europe. They aimed to do so not by establishing religion, but by establishing a commercial republic

> - capitalism. They aimed to submerge people's turbulent energies in self-interested pursuit of material comforts.[19]

Will obviously assumes that what worked for domesticating religion - and there can certainly be no argument that it did work just as Will's characterization of the Founders' intent said it would - will also work for ending the conflicts between the races in America.

I could not help but think of Will's formula for peace when I read an article called "Peace in Northern Ireland?" that appeared in PeaceWatch.[20] PeaceWatch is a magazine sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, which is an agency of the United States Department of State. The article was a report of presentations by Professors Paul Arthur and John Darby of the University of Ulster. They are reported to believe that though the movement toward peace is still vulnerable to disruption after the Referendum of May 22nd 1998, the peace process probably cannot be stopped.

Arthur is quoted to the effect that, "The peace agreement received genuine communal support. Instead of focusing on the wounds of the past, it allows us to be visionary for the first time since Northern Ireland was created in l92l." The report goes on to characterize Arthur's views as believing that the Irish can now begin to think about building a new society in which they, like all modern peoples, can have many identities not simply one - Catholic or Protestant. In summary, Arthur is reported to have said, "We can follow a global phenomenon in which the great stress is on diversity and the richness of diversity."[21]

I am aware that I should not make more of these brief comments by Professors Arthur and Darby than is warranted,

but I fear what they say may be Ireland's future. Namely, that you will learn to resolve your differences by becoming (Irish) Americans, which is but another way of saying you will leave your violence behind in the interest of becoming rich. Money is but another name for loss of memory in modernity.[22] To be sure, conflicts take place around money; but they are the conflicts of interest not memory. Government will be necessary for seeing that such conflicts do not get out of control; but such governments will no longer be about the goods held in common, one good of which is the memory that makes you who you are. Until now Ireland's great resource for community and the conflict between communities has been your poverty. You may well believe that is too high a price to pay for being a people of memory. But if memory must be lost, I for one will be saddened.

Of course, I have no standing to judge if you go the way of forgetfulness promised by capitalism and liberal democracy. I have no idea whether you have any idea how you might produce that strange entity of modernity called the "individual." I need to make clear, however, that my regret at the prospect of your finding your way to that result is a moral regret. I am, like many, charmed by your "Irishness," even the Irishness of the Protestant variety. But what you should fear is that Irishness become charming for yourselves. When that happens, you will no longer be a people capable of remembering your dead. When that happens we will have all lost another moral resource, a moral example, necessary for us to have an account of how moral traditions work.[23]

3
GOD REMEMBERS

In a profound set of reflections on memory and its role in reconciliation, Miroslav Volf argues that a certain kind of forgetting - a forgetting quite different than that exemplified by liberalism and capitalism - is nonetheless required. Such a forgetting requires that matters of "truth" and "justice" have been taken care of, that those that have committed crimes have been named, judged, and (hopefully) transformed, that victims are safe and healed. When all this has happened, Volf argues, then we must hope for a forgetting.

> Since no final redemption is possible without the redemption of the past, and since every attempt to redeem the past through reflection must fail because no theodicy can succeed, the final redemption is unthinkable without a certain kind of forgetting.
>
> Put starkly, the alternative is: either heaven or the memory of horror.[24]

Volf argues that appropriately to appreciate his argument, we must give up our prejudice against non-remembering. He observes that in complex relations between friends complete remembering of the past is not only impossible: it is terrifying. Memory is not simple retention, but rather a complex process in which every remembering entails a forgetting. That is why the memory of a wound can be the source of our unwillingness to be redeemed. According to Volf, we must learn that we cannot make "sense" or "non-sense" as noetic responses to

"solve" the problem of evil, but rather we must come to understand that the problem of past suffering can only be overcome by a "nontheoretical act of non-remembering."[25]

Such a "non-remembering" is what God makes possible. As Volf puts it,

> What will happen after God has narrated the history of the offender's sin in the context of grace and has given the offender a new identity? The answer is so simple and we are so used to hearing it that we miss its profundity: God, to whom all things are present, will forget the forgiven sin. The God of Israel, who is about "to do a new thing" and who calls people "not to remember the former things," promises to blot their transgression out of God's own memory (Isaiah 43:18-19,25; cf. 65:17). "I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:34)[26]

God's "forgetfulness" is nothing less than our final redemption:

> Enveloped in God's glory we will redeem ourselves and our enemies by one final act of the most difficult grace made easy by the experience of salvation that cannot be undone - the grace of non-remembering. When not born out of resentment, the memory of inhumanity is a shield against inhumanity. But where there are no swords, no shields will be necessary. Freed by the loss of memory of all unredeemed past that un-redeems every present and separated only by the boundaries of their identities, the former enemies will embrace each other within the embrace of the triune God.[27]

Volf quickly cautions that this last act of non-remembering does not mean that we can forget that the Messiah has not come in glory, which means for the sake of the victims

we must keep alive the memory of their suffering. But that indispensable remembering must be guided by the hope that one day we will lose the memory of hurts and offenses. We remember in the hope we may forget.

Yet I am not convinced Volf is right about the consummation as a non-remembering or about how a hope in such a consummation ought to guide our lives between the times. As Gregory Jones has put it, what protects us from our sin becoming the justification for sinning all the more is not the hope that God will forget, but rather that we are able to remember forgiven sin.[28] God remembers because if God does not remember then God is not the timeful God we find in Israel and the cross and resurrection of Christ. That God, the God of Israel, the God that raised Jesus from the dead, is the God that makes time, makes memory, possible.

The problem with Volf's non-remembering is not only the implications it seems to have for our current practices, but rather what it implies about God's life. Consummation comes too close to a false eternity. God's eternity, as Robert Jenson maintains, is not the simple contradiction of time.

> The biblical God's eternity is his temporal infinity. What he transcends is not having of beginnings and goals and reconciliations, but any personal limitations in having them. What he transcends is any limit imposed on what can be by what he has been, except the limit of his personal self-identity, and any limit imposed on his action by the availability of time. The true God is not eternal because he lacks time, but because he takes time. The eternity of Israel's God is his faithfulness. He is not eternal in that he secures himself from time, but in

> that he is faithful to his commitments within time. At the great turning, Israel's God is eternal in that he is faithful to the death, and then yet again faithful. God's eternity is temporal infinity.[29]

This is but a way to say that God makes possible all the time in the world to make our time, our memories, redeemed. Our time can be redeemed because time has been redeemed by Christ. That is why we do not need to deny our memories, shaped as they are by sin, but rather why we can trust memories to be transformed by forgiveness and reconciliation. Christian forgiveness is not that our sins no longer matter, but that our sins are now made part of an economy of salvation for the constitution of a new community otherwise impossible. As Jones puts it,

> Our forgiveness is not a gift that we receive as isolated individuals; it is a gift from the Spirit that is irreducibly particular in terms of the narratives of our pasts, yet that gift calls us into communion. In such communion, we are invited and required to learn to tell the story of each of our pasts, not ultimately in terms of diminutions, of betrayals and being betrayed, of violence committed or suffered, but in terms of the new life that induces us to repent and invites us to become holy in the future.[30]

Christian Duquoc, in an extraordinary article entitled "The Forgiveness of God," suggests that what God has done through Jesus' cross is to break the link between offence and death and, in so doing, bring to an end history as a history of violence.[31] The God of Jesus interrupts the logic of violence by forgiving those who crucified his Son. It is exactly, however, because the crime is not forgotten that forgiveness is possible.

"Forgiveness is not forgetfulness, it maintains the offending past in all its concreteness; nor is it lax, it calls for conversion."[32] Through the resurrection God takes up the forgiveness of his envoy and confesses his son. Pentecost becomes the confirmation of that new beginning by which this forgiveness is offered to everyone through the church. The church is quite simply those converted, those made vulnerable, to God's history of forgiveness. They are those who have been given a new history, a new story than the world's story.

That is why we quite literally receive at baptism a new self and name. Baptism is but a reminder that we need the whole church to help us understand the ongoing task of unlearning the old self and learning to appropriate our new life.[33] Such an "unlearning" rather than a forgetting turns out to be a restoration of memory by our being given a new story that makes truthful memory possible. We thereby learn as Christians that we become whom we have been made not first by learning how to forgive, but rather by learning to be forgiven. We receive our lives individually and communally as gift. Our lives are constituted by discovering we are part of a history we have not created, a history without which we cannot make sense of what we think we have done as well as what we think has happened to us. Baptism is thereby completed in eucharist through which we discover that our lives are constituted by the lifelong project of forgiveness and repentance.[34] God does not forget our sins, but rather redeems our sins through eucharistic transformation.

God does not only make possible the church as a community of memory: the church is God's memory for the

world. That is why it is such a scandal when the church fails to confess its sins. Too often such confessions occur when they seem no longer to matter, but I am not convinced confessions for past wrongs are pointless. It was a good thing for the Southern Baptists to confess that they had sinned against their black brothers and sisters. It is a good thing for Roman Catholics to confess the sin of the Protestant Reformation. It is a good thing for the French Bishops to confess their complicity in the destruction of the Jews.

Indeed I think the French Bishops were particularly candid as well as eloquent, insofar as they acknowledged that it is not so much what the Bishops did when the Jews were put into concentration camps but what the Bishops did not do. The current French Bishops pass no judgments on those who acquiesced by their silence nor do they engage in an attempt to claim that the current Bishops are guilty of what took place in the past. Rather they say they must be aware of the cost such behavior has had. "It is our church, and we are obliged to acknowledge objectively today that ecclesiastical interests, understood in an overly restrictive sense, took priority over the demands of conscience - and we must ask ourselves why."[35]

What I find remarkable about the confession of the French Bishops is, first, that they were able to make such a confession. To be able to confess the sin of silence, to ask the Jewish people to hear their words of repentance, I think was possible because the Catholic church in France is no longer politically powerful. It has nothing to lose by making such a confession. But that makes such a confession no less significant. That the Bishops made such a confession, moreover, suggests

that the Catholic church in France is sufficiently coherent to know that someone needs to make such a confession. One of our difficulties in Protestantism, for example, is even if we felt the need to confess our sin for the disunion of the church, who would confess it? In like manner, one of our difficulties in coming to any resolution of the problem of race in America is that we have no idea who has the status to forgive as well as be forgiven.[36]

The French confession I also find remarkable because it surely involves the most troubled history Christians share—that is, our relationship with the Jews. Can we hope in eucharistic transformation of our memories of Christian hatred and murder of our Jewish brothers and sisters? To even speak of eucharistic transformation in such a context seems to reproduce the very practice that has justified Christian disdain for the Jew. But speak of it we must, for otherwise we lose the very resource God has given us that makes possible our belief that some day the Jewish and Christian stories, the Jewish and Christian bodies, will be one storied body. We will delight together in the lawful celebration of God's great banquet in which our sins, great though they are, do not determine our identity as God's peoples.

That I believe is the way forward, not by forgetting, but by having our memories transformed through the discovery that our sins cannot determine God's will for our lives. I know of no "solution" to the relations between blacks and whites in America that is not finally the solution of a people who have learned they can pray together. To so pray is not to pretend unity by playing at being pious, but rather it is to discover we

are God's people. I marvel at the miracle that African-Americans do not each day have to refrain from killing a white person. That they do not I take to be not just acquiescence to the social and legal power of whites, but rather a testimony of the depth of God's love that has and continues to sustain them. That love, I believe, moreover, to be the hope that in the future the children of slaves and the children of slave-holders will discover they worship the same God and in so doing can honor their dead without the necessity of vengeance. For do we not believe that the God we worship makes possible even the reconciliation of the dead?

4

IS TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE IN AND BETWEEN NATIONS?

My argument has been unapologetically theological. The possibility of reconciled memory between peoples who have wronged and been wronged by one another is but another name for church. To be such a church takes time and in the taking becomes time in God's very life.[37] God knows such a reconciled history is difficult enough for church. How could we ever think it possible for relations between people who are not church? Would we not be better off in so-called secular contexts to try to secure no more than tolerance? Forgiveness and reconciliation are far too demanding.

Timothy Garton Ash wonderfully makes this point in an article in *The New York Review of Books* about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.[38] Ash notes that one of the criticisms of the Commission is the emphasis placed on forgiveness by Archbishop Tutu. For example, Ash tells the story of Marius Schoon who came home to find his wife and daughter murdered by a South African security service bomb. Schoon objected bitterly to what he calls "the imposition of a Christian morality of forgiveness" that the Commission represented. Or there is the story of a black African woman whose husband was abducted and killed and now sat listening to his killer. After hearing for the first time how her husband had died, she was asked if she could forgive the man who did it. "Speaking slowly, in one of the native languages, her message

came back through the interpreters: 'No government can forgive.' Pause. 'No commission can forgive.' Pause. 'Only I can forgive.' Pause. 'And I am not ready to forgive.'"[39]

Ash notes that there are no rules for handling these emotional encounters. Tutu, whom Ash describes as a fervent Anglican (even though, as Ash observes, to English ears "fervent Anglican" sounds like a contradiction in terms!) is a person who strongly believes in forgiveness. In contrast, the white liberals on the Commission go for sober brevity and understated sympathy. Ash confesses he prefers such understated sympathy of the white liberals but, as he candidly acknowledges, that is what we should expect because he is a white liberal. Which accounts for the following remarks by Ash:

> The call for forgiveness reflects the overall priority given to "reconciliation." "Truth. The Road to Reconciliation," says a commission leaflet. Thanking de Klerk for his testimony, the Archbishop said it had contributed to finding the truth but "much more importantly to reconciliation" and "the healing of our nation." Later I asked him: Why "much more importantly"? For the simple reason, he said, that exposing this painful truth could so easily lead in another direction. Revelations about how the bombs were planted could tear the nation apart almost as badly as bombs themselves. That's why he keeps harping on the need for reconciliation and ubuntu. Yet taken to the extreme, the reconciliation of all with all is a deeply illiberal idea. As Isaiah Berlin has taught us, liberalism means living with unresolvable conflicts of values and goals and South Africa has those in plenty. Furthermore, the history of past "reconciliations" - between Germans and Poles, for example, or Poles and Jews - reminds us that their

> reconciliation time is measured not in months but in generations. Here there are more than three hundred years of racial conflict to be worked through. Would it not be more realistic to define a more modest goal: peaceful coexistence, cooperation, tolerance?[40]

Ash is right. Reconciliation is a deeply illiberal idea. It is, moreover, an "idea" that is fundamentally at odds with liberal political arrangements. Reconciliation does take time - slow and painful time. All of which is a reminder, as I suggested above, that reconciliation, the refusal to forget, is a counter politics to the world's politics. But that does not mean that reconciliation is impossible for the politics of nations.[41] Indeed I take the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa to be a sign that such a process is possible. Of course that possibility was created by Dutch Calvinism, which in spite of being a church deeply compromised by racism, remained a sufficient witness to the Gospel to make just such a process possible.[42] Whether Ireland has such resources I have no basis to judge.

But I do know that the church is in Ireland. I know that if the church is in Ireland then God is here. So I believe that truth and reconciliation is possible here. Indeed, I believe, even in a society as secular as the United States, truth and reconciliation is even possible between blacks and whites. God never tires of miracles.

NOTES

[1] "This conference" was the tenth anniversary conference sponsored by the Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland. These Protestant Christians are committed to furthering reconciliation with Catholics. I am indebted to them, and particularly to their director David Porter, for providing me with the opportunity to address the conference.

[2] For anyone wanting to get a start on understanding Northern Ireland, I found John White's *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1990) indispensable. Tim Pat Coogan's *The IRA: A History* (London, Harper Collins, 1995) was also extremely informative. James Leyburn's *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962) and James Lydon's *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1998) were invaluable for providing background. On the way back from Ireland I read Robert McLiam Wilson's wonderful novel *Eureka Street* (London: Minerva, 1996) which probably should be required reading for anyone whether they are interested in Northern Ireland or not.

[3] Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), pp. 53-54. Ignatieff notes that it is hardly "secular myopia" to observe that after fifty years of official secularism by the Communist regime, combined with the more effective secularization made possible by economic modernization, the hold of organized religion had been eroded in the Balkans. None of the militiamen he talked to said they were defending their faith, but rather they were defending their families. Indeed Ignatieff suggests that Huntington's argument that the Balkans represent the continuing significance of religious difference shows exactly the opposite. "It was precisely because the religious differences were fading away that they triggered such an exaggerated defense. It was not because religion triggered deep feelings, but because it triggered unauthentic ones, that it helped to unleash such a tumult of violent self-righteousness." p. 55. John White observes, however, that the Catholic and Protestant communities of Northern Ireland are not mirror images of one another just to the extent that the

Protestant community is more fragmented than the Catholic. *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, p. 49.

[4] Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (New York: North Point Press, 1997), p. 78. Miroslav Volf provides a profound analysis of this process in his *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996). Volf observes "exclusion can entail cutting of the bonds that connect, taking oneself out of the pattern of interdependence and placing oneself in a position of sovereign independence. The other then emerges either as an enemy that must be pushed away from the self and driven out of its space or as a nonentity - a superfluous being - that can be disregarded and abandoned. Second, exclusion can entail erasure of separation, not recognizing the other as someone who in his or her otherness belongs to the pattern of interdependence. The other then emerges as an inferior being who must either be assimilated by being made like the self or be subjugated to the self. Exclusion takes place when the violence of expulsion, assimilation, or subjugation and the indifference of abandonment replace the dynamics of taking in and keeping out as well as the mutuality of giving and receiving." p. 67.

[5] Aquinas observes, quoting Aristotle, that "those things are most to be feared which when done wrong cannot be put right...or for which there is no help, or which are not easy." Aquinas rightly understands such matters to be about fear just to the extent they remind us that to be so "caught" is to be completely out of control. Thus Aquinas comments that "those evils which, after they have come, cannot be remedied at all, or at least not easily, are considered as lasting for ever or for a long time: for which reason they inspire fear." They do so, I think, because we know the acknowledgement of how such evils constitute our lives is but another name for damnation. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 42, 6. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1948).

[6] Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (New York: North Point Press, 1997), p. 6.

[7] Berry, p. 3. Greg Jones has addressed these issues in a wonderful paper (yet unpublished) entitled "Healing the Wounds of History." I am in Jones' debt for his probing of these issues.

[8] Berry, p. 8.

[9] Berry, p. 92.

[10] Whether racism produced slavery or slavery produced racism is a fascinating but, I believe, unresolvable question. Berry argues that Africans were not enslaved because they were black, but because their labor promised to free us from economic necessities. In short Africans were enslaved because they could not prevent themselves militarily from being enslaved. Berry thinks it likely, therefore, that what we now call racism came about as a justification for slavery after the fact. "We decided that blacks were inferior in order to persuade ourselves that it was all right to enslave them." (pp. 112-113) Such a development becomes a vicious circle as the presumed inferiority of the workers inevitably infects the quality of the work they do which then only confirms the racist presumptions of the overlords.

C. Eric Lincoln argues that racism in America is not the "lingering memorabilia of the slavery. That is a misconception, the recognition of which uncovers new and unplumbed possibilities for its eradication. The truth is that slavery was merely the political institutionalization of a preexisting ideology. It was an existing racism that redefined Indians and Africans alike for ambitious economic and social convenience of Europeans bent on the maximization of a new world of opportunities they were unprepared to confront with their own labor." Lincoln argues the recognition that racism preceded slavery is critically important if we are not to be held hostage to the past. For to believe that racism is a aftermath of slavery tempts us to think that with time it will recede from our consciousness and wither from our institutions. Slavery was ended and we assumed that time would do the rest. Such an assumption has obviously been shown wanting. C. Eric Lincoln, *Coming Through the Fire: Surviving Race and Place in America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 132-133. The extent that Lincoln and Berry actually disagree is not easily determined.

[11] Lincoln, p. 133.

[12] Lincoln, pp. 133-134. For a philosophical exploration that argues that the historian cannot let the dead be left behind, see Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Other* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[13] Lincoln, p. 157. In a similar fashion Amos Elon argues, "I have lived in Israel most of my life and have come to the conclusion that where there is so much traumatic memory, so much pain, so much memory innocently or deliberately mobilized for political purposes, a little forgetfulness might finally be in order. This should not be seen as a banal plea to 'forgive and forget.' Forgiveness has nothing to do with it. While remembrance is often a form of vengeance, it is also, paradoxically, the basis of reconciliation. What is needed, in my view, is a shift in emphasis and proportion, and a new equilibrium in Israeli political politics between memory and hope." "The Politics of Memory," *The New York Review of Books*, 40 (October 7, 1993), p. 5.

[14] Michael Ignatieff, p. 186.

[15] Ignatieff, p. 186. Ignatieff's reference to Joyce is to the famous reply of Stephen Dedalus in Ulysses that "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake."

[16] Ignatieff, p. 188. At the very time I was writing this paper Augusto Pinochet was arrested in Britain. Duke is fortunate to have Ariel Dorfman on our faculty. Dorfman is a novelist and playwright who had been an aide in Allende's government and subsequently had to flee for his life when Pinochet took over. Dorfman is obviously a very sophisticated intellectual, which makes his response to Pinochet's arrest all the more interesting. He said, "To see the man that betrayed [Allende] and devastated my life and took the lives of so many people I love, to see that man confronted with his crimes, unable to leave his hospital room, is for me, to restore a cosmological balance to the universe." Dorfman's comment appears in an article by Jason Wagner, "Humbling of a Dictator," *The Chronicle* (Duke University student newspaper) 94/45 (November 2, 1998): 1 and 13. Vengeance is not a disposition to be found only among the uneducated. In a subsequent article Dorfman notes that the trial of Pinochet will not be easy for Chileans because such a trial means they must confront those whom Pinochet tortured and murdered. As Dorfman puts it, "Do we want a nation that does not care about those thousands and is willing to forget them in order to have an uneasy and erratic peace? Or are we strong enough to begin the difficult task of finally, at long last, living in a world without Pinochet?" "Chile's Strange Relationship with Pinochet," *Duke University Dialogue* 13/24 (December 11, 1998): 7. For an extraordinary theological account of Chile under Pinochet, see William

Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

[17] Ignatieff, p. 190. My friend Michael Quirk rightly reminds me that, contrary to the liberal assumption that justice and vengeance are opposites, justice is a "purification" of the moral impetus behind vengeance. Vengeance schooled by justice no longer takes delight in the harm it must do.

[18] George Will, "Race Advisory Report Immune to Time's Passage," *The Herald Sun*, Durham, North Carolina (Sunday, September 27, 1998), A17.

[19] George Will, "Scalia Missed Point But Made Right Argument on Separation of Religion," *Durham Morning Herald* (Sunday, April 22, 1990), Section F. I discuss Will's column in *After Christendom?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), pp. 30-31. A second edition of *After Christendom?* has been published in 1998.

[20] "Peace In Northern Ireland?" *PeaceWatch*, 4, 5 (August, 1998), pp. 4-5.

[21] Fintan O'Toole comments on the same process in his *The Lie of the Land: Irish Identities* (London: Verso, 1997). He notes that Leopold Bloom's observation in *Ulysses* that a nation is the same people living in the same place or in different places no longer holds. The reason is that the Irish face the disappearance of that Ireland under the pressures of economics, geography and the collapse of the religious monolith. "We live in different places, but are we the 'same people'? Only if we can understand sameness in a way that incorporates difference, that brooks contradictions, and that is comfortable with the idea that the only fixed Irish identity and the only useful Irish tradition is the Irish tradition of not having a fixed identity." (p. xv) He continues "the paradox of the Republic of Ireland in the aftermath of the British Empire - its national independence is underwritten by transnational corporations and by a supra-national European Union. Its sovereignty is a power that can be exercised mostly by giving it up." (pp. xvi-xvii) In short, O'Toole is recommending that Ireland should learn to enjoy globalization because, like it or not, Ireland is already lost in that process.

[22] I am aware that this seems an exaggerated claim, but I think there is a correlation between history as science, which turns out to be a form of forgetting, and capitalism. For an exploration of these issues, see my *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), pp. 206-214, and my "The Christian Difference: or Surviving Postmodernism."

Cultural Values 3.2 (1999), pp.164-181.

[23] Some may discern the influence of Alasdair MacIntyre shaping the argument of this section. I should certainly like to think MacIntyre has taught me how to think about these matters. This may seem odd since MacIntyre is anything but a pacifist. For my attempt to explore the difference between MacIntyre's perspective on these issues and my defense of nonviolence see Chapter 10, "The Nonviolent Terrorist: In Defense of Christian Fanaticism," in my book, *Sanctify Them in The Truth: Holiness Exemplified*, ibid., pp. 177-190.

Michael Quirk warns me against romanticizing Irish poverty, noting that while their poverty prevented them from acquiring the rapaciousness and affluent unconcern that plagues Americans, it is nonetheless the case that the Irish way of dealing with poverty was emigration. Emigration was, he suggests in a letter, devastating to Ireland because it fomented a strain of passive-aggressive resentment at home and a kind of forgetfulness, disguised as romanticism among the "wild geese" about the mother country. Quirk acknowledges that Irish poverty tempered any illusions they may have had about being a "universal" or "savior" culture, but on the other hand it put a crimp in their natural good cheer that encouraged a kind of self-loathing that authors as diverse as Joyce and McCourt describe and exemplify.

[24] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 135.

[25] Volf, p. 135.

[26] Volf, p. 136. Volf is responding to Gregory Jones' argument in his *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) that it is a mistake to forget. As Jones puts it, "the judgment of grace enables us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to remember well. When God promises to 'blot out (Israel's) transgressions' and 'not remember (Israel's) sins" (Isaiah 43:25; see also Jeremiah 31:34), God is not simply letting bygones be bygones. Rather, God is testifying to God's own gracious faithfulness. Moreover, such forgiveness provides a way to narrate the history of Israel's sinfulness with the context of God's covenant of grace. To be sure, such a narration makes it possible, and even necessary, to forget the sin. But the past itself, the history, is and needs to be remembered so that a new and renewed

future becomes possible." (p. 147)

[27] Volf, p. 138.

[28] Gregory Jones, "Healing the Wounds of Memory," Unpublished Lecture, p. 9. Jones continues in this lecture to explore the profound set of reflections of the relation between memory and forgiveness he began in *Embodying Forgiveness*.

[29] Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 217-218. I left out a paragraph in Jenson's text that is not essential to my argument, but extremely important. Jenson notes that "There is something Barth did not say that must be said, and with emphasis. Simply that source and goal are real in God would not make his eternity a 'duration,' a temporal infinity. He is temporally infinite because 'source' and 'goal' are present and asymmetrical in him, because he is primarily future to himself and only thereupon past and present for himself. It is in that he is Spirit that the true God avoids - so to speak - the timelessness of mere form or mere consciousness. Therefore such paired denials and affirmations as the following must always be to hand: God is not eternal in that he adamantly remains as he began, but in that he always creatively opens to what he will be; not in that he hangs on, but in that he gives and receives; not in that he perfectly persists, but in that he perfectly anticipates."

[30] Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, p. 173.

[31] Christian Duquoc, "The Forgiveness of God," *Concilium*, 184 (1986), pp. 40-41. Earlier in the article Duquoc had observed that "terror results from the combination of violence and the idea" which means no account of violence is adequate that fails to understand that, in the words of Robespierre, "Terror is the emanation of virtue." Thus the wish for a utopia, of a world without corruption, unleashes a world of limitless violence. It is against this background that the politics of God's forgiveness can be seen just to the extent God's forgiveness breaks the link, as Duquoc puts it, between "violence and the idea." p. 39.

[32] Ibid., p. 42.

[33] Ibid., p. 173.

[34] Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, p. 179.

[35] "French Bishops' Declaration of Repentance," *Origins*, 27, 18 (October 16,

1997): 303. For an informative article that surveys the objections against the current Pope's penchant for such confessions, see Avery Dulles, "Should the Church Repent?" *First Things* 88 (December, 1998): 36-41.

[36] A fascinating comparison, I suspect, remains to be made between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and President Clinton's recent Advisory Committee on Race in America. The latter floundered in the therapeutic culture of blame and counter-blame, victim and victimizer. Part of the difficulty is the American sense that we are not part of histories that constitute our moral identities. Therefore most whites in America simply do not believe that we have any history for which we should feel ashamed.

[37] Christian Duqouc ends his article with these words, "Forgiveness is, of course, gratuitous, God does not ask for compensation, but it opens up a new era. Forgiveness would be abstract if this era remained purely interior. This is the sense in which the forgiveness of God, revealed by the person who was victim of a crime, does not stop meaning that God is working in solidarity with the victims of history towards a world renewed, and this not simply by means of reversing the situation but by creating new relationships. The forgiveness of God is the proclamation of the kingdom: it comes about by conversion and not by substituting power for power. The God of Jesus does not impose himself; he is the one who, by dint of a patience that is often insulted, reveals a face quite other than the one our games of violence and our idolatry of power invite." pp. 43-44.

[38] Timothy Garton Ash, "True Confessions," *The New York Review of Books*, (July 17, 1997), pp. 33-38.

[39] Ash, p. 37.

[40] Ash, p. 37. Ash is quite right about the importance of ubuntu for Tutu. See, for example, Michael Battle's fine study, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997).

[41] Paul Ricoeur has explored these issues in a marvelous essay, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," *Philosophical and Social Criticism* 21/5-6, pp. 3-13. Ricoeur argues that what prevents cultures from allowing themselves to be recounted differently is the influence perceived over the collective memory by what may be called "founding events." Memory of such events tends to freeze history in a manner that makes that history incommunicable. Ricoeur does

not try to suggest why this process occurs, but surely one of the reasons is the assumption that we need to keep faith with the dead. The challenge before Europe according to Ricoeur is to acquire the "'ability to recount the founding events of our national history in different ways" through an exchange of cultural memories. Such an exchange is only possible through forgiveness, by which we re-narrate our specific narrative identities. As Ricoeur puts it, forgiveness enables a "mutual revision in which we are able to see the most valuable yield of the exchange of memories. Forgiveness is also a specific form of that mutual revision, the most precious result of which is the liberation of promises of the past which have not been kept." (9) Ricoeur argues that forgiveness in the full sense exceeds political categories just to the extent it belongs to the order of charity. That may be true for "politics" but it cannot be true of that politics we call church.

Ricouer provides a compelling account of the relationship among memories, narrative, and forgetting in "Memory and Forgetting," in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, edited by Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 5-11. All the essays in the first section of *Questioning Ethics* are relevant for what I have tried to do in this paper. Richard Kearney's "Narrative and the Ethics of Remembrance" is particularly important. Kearney observes that fundamentalism arises when a nation forgets its own narrative origins, which suggests that any "solution" to the Northern Ireland problem may require the willingness of the British and Irish nationalists to exchange memories. He observes "genuine amnesty does not and cannot come from blind forgetfulness (amnesia), but only from a remembering which is prepared to forgive the past by emancipating it from the deterministic stranglehold of violent obsession and revenge. Genuine pardon, as Ricouer observes, does not involve a forgetting of the events themselves but a way of signifying a debt to the dead which paralyzes memory - and, by implication, our capacity to recreate ourselves a new future." (27).

[42] I have a hunch that Italy would be a fascinating study for how forgiveness works for the building of a culture. Stories matter, and stories that are the stories that shape a people matter even more. That Alessandro Manzoni's, *The Betrothed* (London: Penguin Books, 1972) is the novel taught to every Italian school child has to make a difference even in a society that was surely once one of the most violent societies in the world.

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pathways

A TIME TO HEAL

STANLEY HAUERWAS

How should we deal with the wounds of history? In a community tormented by its ever present past should we not 'forgive and forget'?
No, says Stanley Hauerwas. Christians are required to confess and remember their sins, but they are also required to remember the sins of those who have sinned against them. Any reconciliation that does not require such a remembering cannot be a reconciliation made possible by the cross of Christ.

Stanley Hauerwas is Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke University.

This is what the Lord says:
'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'
Jeremiah 6.16

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