

Editorial

Conflict and Reconciliation - Towards Jubilee 2000

Today at the end of the 2nd millennium, at the threshold of the 21st century, conflicts abound worldwide. The spectre is so generalised to all corners of the globe that with the end of the Cold War and the Fall of the Berlin Wall many institutes and organisations for conflict resolution have emerged. Former US president Jimmy Carter, the late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, former US Senator George Mitchell, have become household names in conflict resolution. They emerge from retirement to join the palaver, in Northern Ireland, in the Balkans, and in Burundi and the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Africa has had its share of the conflicts. Less than a decade to the end of the 2nd millennium Africa shocked the world with genocide, perhaps unparalleled in the history of humanity - the Rwandan genocide. Rwanda may be the first popular genocide of such proportions in the history of humanity. Rwanda proves that violent conflicts solve no problems! Since the 1994 ethnic Hutu vs. ethnic Tutsi conflict, a war has been raging in the central African region - the first world war fought on African soil. Practically all the countries of the Great Lakes region are involved in the conflict that now engulfs the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The history of the Rwanda-Burundi conflict reveals the socio-economic structures hardened into ethnic-racial structures thanks to colonialism. Other conflicts in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere in Africa show the negative influence of the [diamond] mining companies and multi-national corporations, the determination of the barons of arms trade, the greed and blurred vision of African dictators. All the above inflict even more scars on the African psyche which in turn fuel the conflicts. Memories and emotions have to be healed and re-educated to move the world towards true resolution of conflicts so that men and women may experience real reconciliation. If action is not taken to address the emotions and the psyche of Africans and humans elsewhere in the world, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, the Niger Delta

[Nigeria], Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi will not only persist but will keep on spawning their kind.

The articles assembled in this end of the millennium issue of the *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* narrate the reality of conflict from Biblical times to our experiences in recent times in West Africa (especially Biafra) and the central African region (especially Rwanda). The papers try to plumb the causes of these conflicts, rooted ultimately in the evil inside and outside humans. The papers challenge the Christian church to bear credible and prophetic witness in order to reach the target of reconciliation through the unremitting efforts of conflict resolution.

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