

A Search for Reconciliation. 1983

(2 Cor. 5: 18-22)

General Theme: ~~God~~ God in the City.

All of us are aware, or should be aware, of the many forms of tension, division and estrangement that exist in our society.

We are also aware of the way in which these tensions and divisions lead to alienation and polarisation which eventually lead to conflict and disaster. If we had the time it would have been very helpful if, as a group, we could ~~not~~ indicate and list the tensions and divisions of which we personally are aware and which personally cause us concern.

We may not be ~~completely~~ fully aware or conscious of the fact that for those of us who claim to be Christians, any ~~our~~ knowledge or awareness of tension & division places upon our shoulders a special responsibility which ~~we~~ we, ~~are~~ in obedience to Christ, are obliged to undertake - namely to act as reconcilers

between people & groups who stand in estrangement or hostility toward one another.

NB.

The need to recognise and effect reconciliation, whenever such need is discovered, forms the very heart of the Gospel. From the moment that man, through his sin, disrupted the harmony between God and man, God initiated his search for reconciliation - first of all to reconcile man to God and thus simultaneously to effect reconciliation between man and man. And the coming of Christ, his preaching and teaching and actions ~~to~~ eventually leading to his death, all ^{portray} the one divine plea: Be reconciled to God. And his crucifixion is the supreme expression and proof of his reconciliation through his suffering and his death he conveyed to us God's divine intention for ~~the~~ mankind and creation: to create shalom; peace, harmony, wholeness, unity. And in this Christians have no option if they wish to be obedient.



Another point which both the old & new Testament bring home to us very clearly in our search for reconciliation is that a Christian can never practise reconciliation in a spiritual vacuum. Prayer, study, reflection in situations of division and conflict are all essential elements in the search for reconciliation - but it could only become real and meaningful if it is accompanied by a concrete deed, a visible act. Christ prayed, studied, spoke and reflected - but he also gave his body!

Could we now look for a moment at some of the situations of tension, division and estrangement in our city. The list is very incomplete but it could help us to add to it.

- 1) Muggings & ^{robberies} ~~thefts~~ - daily occurrences - from small amounts to thousands of pounds. Alarm systems, security measures, security fears excited higher & higher - people getting more estranged and afraid.
- 2) Rates rate of rape on women victims acts of sexual aggressiveness & violence
- 3) Divorce rate

4) Hundreds of other people living in loneliness - and sometimes in serious destitution & poverty.

5) Pass raids continue - almost daily occurrence in our city - breaking up family life, creating bitterness and anger, leading to serious estrangement

6) Brokerage as an accepted practice in many business ventures; ~~too~~ many in commerce & industry setting their own standards of conduct which are in direct contradiction or even conflict with Christian ethical standards of conduct. honesty & responsibility

There are all events & issues which create tension, division & conflict. There are many more. All call for a search for reconciliation in which Christians should take the lead.

Steps to be Taken.

NB.

1. The ^{method} ~~time~~ to gather and assess the relevant facts about a situation or issue which has caused disension, division or estrangement

2. The approach to the person or group who feels being treated unjustly, victimised or wronged. This is one of the most difficult aspects of the search for reconciliation: how does one act to get such a person or persons to open up, to speak out, to trust the person who has ~~expressed~~ indicated his/her concern to ^{try} asking about reconciliation? Surely, one of the most important factors to be taken into consideration is the establishment of a relationship of trust whereby the person or group concerned should be able to express their viewpoint without fear of reprisal or victimisation. Create the opportunities!

3. The ability to listen attentively & objectively to criticism however harsh it may ~~be~~ sound. It is much better and more helpful towards reconciliation if feelings of anger, pain, sorrow & bitterness are expressed than suppressed! Suppression always leads to explosion of some kind.
One's impartiality severely affected

• if one's own interest, own rights and privileges, own material comforts or benefits, one's own prejudices or fears are being threatened or jeopardised!

4. Take one concrete step - undertake one small act of reconciliation. But be aware: No reconciliation ever possible without the removal of real injustice

Prayers.

1. For the rulers of our land - that they may govern in justice, wisdom & mercy.
2. For our ~~country~~^{judiciary} & police - that they may ~~execute~~ implement the laws impartially & mercifully.
3. For all political leaders - ^{& pol. parties -} that they may make just laws, remove all unjust laws and seek to hear and heed the voice of all the people they govern and ~~give~~ give them a just share in pol. power.
4. For all the victims of unjust laws

5. For people of our city:
 - 5.1 - Compassion on victims of injustice
 - 5.2 - The aged, the lame, the
 - 5.3 -