



forgiveness



forgiveness in the catholic tradition
eoin de bhaldrathe o.cist

introducing the series

This paper is the fifth in a series of 15 papers to be produced over a two year period as part of the *Embodying Forgiveness* project run by the Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland (CCCI). Drawing on a broad range of contributors, from a broad range of backgrounds, the papers aim to explore the meaning of forgiveness in the Bible and in different Christian traditions, and to ask about the implications of the practice of forgiveness for our society. It is worth saying at the outset that we have not insisted on a particular definition or understanding of forgiveness among those who will be contributing papers to the series. Rather, our hope is that through this series of papers we will come to a fuller and more authentic understanding of forgiveness and its implications for church and society.

introduction

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matthew 6:12). This phrase is modelled on the covenant formula of the Old Testament: “You will be my people and I will be your God” (see, for example, Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 30:22 and Ezekiel 36:28). When saying this prayer a Christian makes a covenant with God. The Father of Jesus Christ will be our God too if we observe the new law which is to love our neighbour and so forgive people even when they injure us.

According to this prayer God forgives us and we forgive the neighbour. Yet because it is a solemn treaty with God, it is not just as if we offended God only and the neighbour offended us only. Rather, our offence of the neighbour offends God also. So we need forgiveness from God for offending our neighbour. Similarly, those who trespass against us have offended God but need our forgiveness also. So forgiveness must seek to go to the neighbour first and then by virtue of the covenant, God will also forgive us. This is the profound meaning of the simple words of the Lord's prayer.

The first paper in this series noted that Christians often reduce forgiveness to the dimensions it has in modern psychology. However, it seems to me that Christians cannot genuinely offer forgiveness without being convinced that they themselves have also sinned. This dimension is absent from the psychologists' forgiveness so well described in that paper.¹

catholics and protestants

To apply this teaching of Jesus to catholics and protestants in Ireland involves many complicated issues. The first paper also noted that corporate forgiveness is widely advocated by modern psychologists. So it seems we are on the right track when we urge forgiveness between the traditional warring factions at home. We must make sure again not to lose any of its Christian fullness. For catholics in Ireland the words of the Lord's prayer mean that they must forgive protestants who have sinned against them. It also means that they must try to be aware of their own sins against protestants and ask God's forgiveness. This is because we believe that offending others involves offending God. His forgiveness will not be forthcoming unless we admit to ourselves and to God how we have offended others. Once we see our own sins it becomes easy to forgive the sins against us. This is surely what the Lord means when he says that if we see a “mote” or a splinter in the neighbour's eye there is surely a “beam” or a plank in our own (Matthew 7:3-5).

Catholics, then, must first try to become aware of their own sins. This is probably more necessary in the Republic of Ireland as the absence of major conflict may lead us to feel that all is well. Yet we may have structures and attitudes that protestants regard as unjust. Once we are aware of failings, we need to repent in the sight of God. Then we need the forgiveness of the protestants. Having asked for this it will be easy to forgive in turn. If we feel that we have done no wrong, if there is no repentance, it will be difficult to forgive and, as a consequence, difficult to get forgiveness from God.

leadership

One might wonder how an individual could be involved in this kind of repentance. Deciding when a community has sinned is the job of a prophet as we see so clearly from the Old Testament. When one becomes

conscious that one's own community has offended the other, one has a duty to lead people to see this and to try to redress and heal the situation. The rather strange result of this is that those with the least personal guilt can be foremost in repenting on behalf of the community. People with no special authority must usually begin the process but in the later stages, as the community comes to accept its guilt, leaders would need to request forgiveness more formally.

Nowadays we tend to say that a preacher's job is to proclaim the gospel. In earlier times there was more to it than that. For example, when Gerald of Wales came to Ireland after the Norman invasion he was surprised to find that many bishops stayed within the enclosures of their churches and gave themselves to contemplation alone. "Whence it happens," he said, "that they neither preach the word of the Lord to the people, nor tell them of their sins." In the Middle Ages then telling the people of their sins was part of the preacher's job just as was proclaiming the word of God.

A good example of this process is Brian Lennon's book on catholics and the future of Northern Ireland.² Lennon identifies some of the sins of the catholic community in relation to Northern Ireland. Among those are the sin of blindness (for catholics and nationalists the protestant presence was almost invisible), the sin of ignoring the conflict, the sin of not considering the future of Northern Ireland and the sin of not working for community among all the children of God despite receiving holy communion. This last he calls "blasphemy." As a result, he argues, there is a "group guilt," and so a responsibility to make recompense for what some members of our group have done to others. This is indeed the strong language of the prophet. But it is clear that once a person is convinced that these things really offend God, there is a divine call to preach repentance even to those who resist just as Jeremiah had to do.

Here we would like to offer our own assessment of the guilt of the catholic community. It is not an easy exercise and one can very easily get it wrong. Our conclusions will be resisted by those who believe that we are mistaken but also by those who sense that we are right, but do not feel equal to repentance. Then those who have been offended may think that we are repenting for the wrong things or may not be ready to forgive just yet.

There is the further problem in that the involvement of catholics in the Northern Ireland dispute means that the whole catholic church is in some ways implicated. On a number of occasions the leadership of the whole Roman church has asked forgiveness, even if in a rather vague and general fashion. So we wish to look at those apologies towards moslems, jews, protestants and orthodox. We will then look at the more specific situation in Ireland and at various efforts by leaders to foster repentance.

moslems and jews

The Second Vatican Council endorsed the involvement of catholics in the ecumenical movement. It also issued major statements on relations with the moslems and jews. It will be instructive to look at those first as this will help us to understand the ecumenical documents.

*The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions*³ dealt first with hinduism and buddhism and then asserted that "the Church regards with esteem also the Moslems." The document praises their worship of the one God, and notes with approval their imitation of the faith of Abraham, their honouring of Jesus and Mary and their awaiting of the day of judgement. It continues, "Since in the course of

centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding.” While genuinely acknowledging the Moslem religion, it was inevitable that the enmity of the past would be mentioned. Yet the Catholic Church accepts no blame for this enmity and advocates the forgetting of the past as the recipe for making peace. Though some fathers like John Damascene regarded the Moslems as heretics, the Middle Ages had defined them as infidels and so it was easier to justify war against them. This statement of Vatican II was probably the first positive statement ever on the Moslem faith by the Catholic Church and effectively marked the end of twelve hundred years of war.

The document then deals with the Jews. Even more positive things can be said of them - they are beloved for the sake of their Fathers, they are the good olive tree onto which we Gentiles have been grafted. The Church, on the basis of its opposition to persecution and its shared spiritual patrimony, “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews.” However, as any historian will know, the Catholic Church herself displayed all those things in her day.

A later document also notes the particular persecution of the Jews before and during the Second World War.⁴ There is again no acknowledgement that Church persecution preceded this greatest of all persecutions, nor that it may even have prepared the way for 'the final solution'. More recently, in April 2000, the Pope visited Jerusalem amid intense publicity. Speaking at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial he said that the Catholic Church is “deeply saddened” by “anti-Semitism.” The words were a direct quotation from the Vatican II document. He expressed his hopes for “a future in which there will be no more anti-Jewish feeling among Christians or anti-Christian feeling among Jews.”⁵ This is a common strategy: to insist that there are faults on both sides. There is no repentance and so no request for forgiveness.

catholic fault?

Coming to relations with the separated Christian brethren, a different approach was necessary. For genuine ecumenism, interior conversion is needed, says the Council, in its *Decree on Ecumenism*.⁶ It is not just an optional activity to heal unfortunate rifts, for the very existence of such divisions contradicts the will of God. The Decree notes “deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline” on the part of Catholics, and goes on to say that “we humbly beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that trespass against us.” Here people will recognise an echo of the phrase from the Lord's Prayer with which we began.

Many of the fathers of the Council found it difficult to accept that there was any fault on the Catholic side and this was why it was decided to make reference in this way to faults on both sides. An earlier document on ecumenism from 1949 referred to “Catholic defects” and “Protestant faults” and this was still the attitude of the Council until the new Pope, Paul VI, in his opening address to the second session confessed guilt on the part of Catholics and asked for forgiveness. The Secretariat for Unity then included the phrase we have quoted in the document.

In the discussion of the phrasing Bishop Muldoon, auxiliary in Sydney and of Irish descent, complained about the mention of fault on the Catholic side. Abbot Christopher Butler of Downside replied that most recent historians had emphasised that the Reformation was caused by fault on both sides. Perhaps the echoes of this new research had not yet reached

Australia. Let us follow the lead of the Pope, he said, and admit guilt and ask forgiveness. In fact 133 bishops (out of about 2000) asked that the confession be omitted. This is why we get a less than satisfactory form of words. A confession of this kind should have been more worried about the guilt on its own side. Its effect is weakened when it insists on guilt on the other side. Yves Congar has called the decree a “great and beautiful text.”⁷ Yes indeed, but Michael Hurley claims that it has become a dead letter in the church. It may be a high ideal but, he maintains, it is neglected in practice in the daily ecclesial life.⁸

One of the hardest fought battles at the Council concerned the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*.⁹ In this document we find the acknowledgement that, at times, the behaviour of the church (meaning the catholic church) “was hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel or even opposed to it.” This, again, is a very mild statement bearing in mind that it refers to matters such as the inquisition and the religious wars.

Archbishop Lefebvre was leader of the group that opposed this document. In the end seventy fathers voted against it - by far the highest against any document. After the Council Archbishop Lefebvre broke with Pope Paul VI and began to ordain his own priests without permission. Once, he came to speak in Dublin without agreement of the local bishop and praised Eamon de Valera, Archbishop McQuaid and Cardinal Browne as the three great Irishmen of the century. This was a reference to their strong anti-protestant bias. Lefebvre's movement continues outside the communion of the church and its existence is the main reason why the present Pope has been cautious and dilatory in his ecumenical relations with anglicans and protestants.

persecuted protestants?

These two statements of catholic fault by the Council were, however, headline news. Since then, apology for catholic sins has become more frequent. For example, when the Pope visited Debrecen in Hungary, he prayed at a “monument dedicated to protestant victims of the religious wars.” “It was a reminder,” he said, “that catholics and reformed must continue to seek a healing of memories as part of their common pilgrimage towards unity. All christian communities have martyrs for the faith.”¹⁰

Visiting the monument was an exemplary gesture. However, one must insist that the attitude to martyrs in both communities cannot be equal. Martyrs are indeed the glory of any church, a gift of grace from God himself. But to produce martyrs in another church is a great crime. For this we can only repent in the sight of God and ask forgiveness of the communities to which they belonged. The martyrs of the early church were victims of a hostile pagan environment. Since the middle ages, however, churches whose members suffered martyrdom often produced martyrs in the rival communities. Repenting for the people killed by our side is far more important than celebrating those of our community who were killed. Indeed, the very fact that our side creates martyrs calls into question the genuineness of our own martyrs.

A practical example is the hymn, 'Faith of our Fathers, living still in spite of dungeon, fire and sword'. Those fathers were “chained in prisons dark”; only their children have the holy faith, according to the hymn. While some of our fathers were indeed persecuted, others of our fathers themselves put many more people into prison and chains. More serious perhaps is the implication that anglicans and protestants do not have the holy faith. It was again an attempt to define heretics as infidels.

By coincidence World Youth Day in Paris in 1997, at which the Pope was present, happened to be the feast of Saint Bartholomew. Many thousands of French protestants were murdered on that day in 1572. Pope Gregory XIII had a medal struck to commemorate the event. While French historian Henri Daniel-Rops claims that the Pope was deceived and thought it was a battle rather than a massacre, most other historians believe that the Pope knew well what had happened.

Pastor Jean Tartier, president of the French Protestant Federation, asked Pope John Paul II to offer some recognition of what protestants suffered in the famous massacre. Without mentioning the words 'catholic' or 'protestant', the Pope said that it was "an event of very obscure causes." More positively, he said that "christians did things which the gospel condemns."¹¹

This latter was apparently a reference to the passage in the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* - the Declaration which so upset Archbishop Lefebvre. It seems that there was an effort not to alienate Lefebvre's sympathizers in France. Perhaps this explains why the Pope's statement was so low key and even ambiguous. Tartier later said that he would have wished the Pope to ask forgiveness of the protestants of France. This should have been easy as the precedent was there in the *Decree on Ecumenism*. In any case the fact that the French church was caught unawares shows that we have a long way to go in apologizing and asking forgiveness. There is a serious need for more local effort in owning up to the wrongs of the past.

orthodox

In May 2001 the Pope visited the Greek orthodox bishops in Athens. He asked forgiveness from God for all the times catholics had "sinned" against the orthodox. In particular he mentioned the sack of Constantinople (1204). The catholics regret it, while it still causes "suffering to the spirit of the Greek people." It was a case of "the mystery of iniquity" at work in the human heart¹² - he means the heart of the latin christians. Here we have full repentance with no eye on the faults of the other side. This is consistent with the Roman policy of proceeding slowly with western ecumenism but forging ahead towards the east.

When elected, John Paul II said that reunion with the orthodox must be complete by the year 2000. However, some might feel that now they are further apart than ever. Important as it was, perhaps this apology was not enough. For many orthodox what they perceive as the problem of catholic proselytisation remains a serious barrier to relations between catholic and orthodox. The example of the east should serve as warning that reunion in the west will not come about without much heart searching and endurance.

In a formal ceremony on the first Sunday of Lent of the year 2000 the Pope inaugurated a new Roman policy on asking forgiveness for catholic sins, while the Vatican's International Theological Commission published a corresponding document.¹³ In his homily on the occasion the Pope identified christian disunity, violence in the service of truth and hostility to other religions as "infidelities to the gospel committed by some of our brethren." Insisting that we must purify ourselves of every feeling of rancour and revenge the Pope argued that recognizing the sins of the past makes us conscious of "the compromises of the present."¹⁴

The accompanying document was composed by a body under the supervision of the Congregation for the Defence of the Faith, which was

known as the Holy Inquisition until it changed its name in 1910. So as one might expect some of their apologies are rather vague. Though extremely cautious, the document does contain the following statement:

In the period from the close of the [Second Vatican] Council until today, resistance to its message has certainly saddened the Spirit of God (cf. Eph 4:30). To the extent that some Catholics are pleased to remain bound to the separations of the past, doing nothing to remove the obstacles that impede unity, one could justly speak of solidarity in the sin of division (cf. 1 Cor 1:10-16). In this context the words of the Decree on Ecumenism could be recalled: "With humble prayer we ask pardon of God and of the separated brethren, as we forgive those who trespass against us."¹⁵

So the Pope is saying that Catholics who do not work for ecumenism have "solidarity in the sin of division." To me, it looks as if this was a personal insertion by the Pope, as its tenor is different from the rest of the document.

Looking back on almost forty years of Catholic repentance, we seem to have a progression. We ask the Muslims to forget the past; we are sad that the Jews were persecuted; we apologise for offending the Protestants but remind them that they have offended us; finally, we acknowledge genuine sin against the Orthodox.

It would not be quite fair to say that different treatment is proposed for the different groups. Rather, in the last half century the Roman Church has learned how to take repentance more and more seriously. For all their vagueness, those apologies do set a standard, and it is for historians and local leaders to become more specific on what is involved. The following represents my own understanding of the things for which the Catholic Church needs to repent, especially in Ireland.

fighting the heretics

After enduring persecution from the Roman Empire, the young church became fascinated by the increased prestige it acquired after Constantine recognized it. About fifty years later church leaders were advising the Emperor Theodosius to destroy paganism. More ominously, Augustine urged the Empire to use the army against the Donatists. They were in error, he believed, even though they were still his brothers in Christ. They should be forced to come in, he said, like those brought to the wedding banquet from the highways and byways. Perhaps his most far-reaching initiative was to re-introduce Cicero's theory of the just war, managing to persuade himself and many others that it was in accord with the teaching of Christ. Our medieval teachers in the West followed Augustine and even developed some of his more unhappy trends. The practice of excommunication for killing was curtailed, allowing the Pope to preach the first crusade. Soon St Bernard was justifying the Military Orders who became the church's standing anti-Muslim army.

When the Reformation came the great temptation was to fight the new heretics in the same way. However, since the new groups inherited the same Augustinian theology, they were clearly going to fight back. From about 1560 to 1590 the Roman Church went through thirty years of madness as it encouraged war against the Protestants. Gregory XIII, who rejoiced at the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day, also paid for the army that James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald brought to Ireland in 1579. Yet the spiritual payment offered to the Irish was more serious.

When Pope Urban II preached the first crusade at Clermont he offered a

plenary indulgence to all who took part. Now Gregory XIII offered the same indulgence to those of the Irish who would fight against the heretics. In his letter to the archbishops of Ireland he urged people to help the army of James Fitzmaurice in any way. All who were contrite and who confessed their sins would receive “complete remission of all their sins.”¹⁶ The Pope stated that it was the same full remission of sins that was promised to those who “fought against the Turks” or those who “fought to recover the Holy Land.” In those last two phrases one will easily recognise that the recovery of the Holy Land was the original occasion of the plenary indulgence. Fighting against the Turks was a later application. The war to which Gregory was now applying his favours was against “the English who have deserted the holy Roman church.” At the time this was not taken very seriously in Ireland because the catholic-protestant divide was still not quite clear. Moreover, when the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588 the Popes became lukewarm towards the armed campaign. Trends had been set for the future, however, and the strong words of Gregory XIII were never officially revoked. By the time of the 1641 rebellion against English rule, the two sides in Ireland were thoroughly polarized. The rebels, known as the Confederate Catholics, wanted the return of land and the full recognition of catholicism. In 1645 Cornelius O'Mahony wrote in support of the Confederate side.¹⁷ In this work he quotes from Gregory XIII's letter of 1579 to the archbishops of Ireland.

Referring to the massacres associated with the rebellion, O'Mahony reports the protestant claim that 150,000 of their number were killed between 1641 and 1645. “I believe that you killed more than that” he responds, “and I wish you killed them all.” He goes on to urge the Irish to do just that or else to expel the protestants from Ireland. One has the impression that the Popes granted the indulgences to those who joined an army to fight the heretics. O'Mahony, however, speaks of it as if the killing of any protestant merited the indulgence. This preaching on the killing of protestants must have survived a long time in the minds of ordinary people. As we know, this massacre of 1641 in particular has left a deep impression on the protestant psyche. To this day the drowning of protestants in the Bann at Portadown is portrayed on some banners carried by the Orange Order.

from religious war to republicanism

Some time later the catholics in France took away almost all liberty from the Huguenots and expelled large numbers of them. This set the context for the battle of the Boyne. King James was defeated and with him the catholic cause was lost in Ireland for the next few centuries. After this the Irish catholics suffered greatly under the penal laws and lost almost all of their land to the protestants. If the catholics had won the battle of the Boyne, Louis XIV of France would have been the controlling power. Protestants would have had every reason to fear the same harsh treatment the Huguenots received in France.

In fact the Irish penal laws were modelled on those enacted against the Huguenots in France. One very obvious example of this concerns the building of churches. Under the Edict of Nantes, and other treaties, a protestant church could only be built on the outskirts of a town while the Catholic church was to be in the centre. Driving around Ireland one sees in virtually every small town a church building belonging to the established church in the centre with the catholic church on the perimeter of the town. So this Irish provision was a mirror image of the position of the French Huguenots.

French politics was to change drastically with the Revolution and the

republican ideology was to pass over into Ireland. It was the same groups, catholics and protestants, still at enmity. But the catholics now said they wanted a republic in Ireland rather than just the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. In our own day the catholic paramilitaries are republican. They deride protestants who still have explicitly religious motives and who, they say, kill catholics as such. This reached the ultimate farce when the IRA claimed that they did not kill protestants as such but as something else, generally as 'cogs in the British war machine.'

Frequently catholic clergy at funerals claim that the victim was killed simply because he was a catholic. For a catholic clergyman to make this complaint publicly implies that when our side kills somebody they choose their victim more carefully. We may not agree with what they do but at least there is some kind of objective connection with the security forces. So we come close to condoning murder. We should remember that what protestants do today is what catholics did yesterday. In the past our side did kill protestants as such. There is good reason here for repentance.

After catholic emancipation in 1829 our ancestors immediately began to campaign for Home Rule, as they would now have a majority and could outvote the protestants. This seems to be the more immediate origin of 'the protestant fears' which we catholics find it so hard to understand. As Home Rule seemed to approach more clearly the protestant fears grew leading ultimately to the creation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. The fears still exist. The Opsahl Commission (1993) reported that they encountered "widespread and deep fear and mistrust" among Northern protestants about the catholic church. For them catholicism is not just a religion "but a threatening political system with international dimensions." In particular catholicism and Irish nationalism are seen as "two parts of the same system." This is the consequence of the many hostile actions of our catholic ancestors.

We are all aware of the elaborate systems put in place under the Belfast Agreement to protect the minority. But is it not amazing that in all the struggle for autonomy from 1840 to 1920 not one catholic ever suggested a system even vaguely similar which would protect the minority in a Home Rule Ireland? The catholic refrain was, 'We know we would be a majority but of course we would be most benign.' Even today we are familiar with this tune. Perhaps we would be fair rulers, but could the other side trust us? Even if we were, would the minority perceive us as such? Some kind of power sharing would be necessary and it is blindness to think otherwise.

public repentance

There have been some cases of formal repentance by catholic leaders which we will now describe. They were not very well received and it is clear that more work needs to be done by our 'prophets'. Archbishop Carey of Canterbury, preaching in Dublin, asked forgiveness for "our often brutal domination" of the Irish. A few months later Cardinal Daly preaching in Canterbury asked forgiveness for the many wrongs inflicted on the British, especially during the last twenty five years of conflict.¹⁸ The Archbishop's plea was very wide-ranging, covering the last several centuries. The Cardinal limited himself to the last number of years. At the time he had already ceased to be a ruling bishop, so his words do not carry as much weight as those of the anglican primate. *The Church of England Newspaper* did not report Carey's words. They were also omitted by the English catholic weekly, *The Tablet*. John Waters in *The Irish Times* said he resented the Cardinal's words.

More important, because more appreciated by the protestant side, is the apology by Bishop William Walsh for the pain and hurt caused by the mixed marriage laws.¹⁹ Reaction to this, too, was strong. Mary Kenny in *The Irish Catholic* called it “cultural cringe.” Gerard Sheehy, the most senior priest in Dublin, in the same issue called it a “misleading digression.” I believed that Walsh’s apology was based on some of my own writing, so I wrote an article in his defence for *The Irish Catholic* but they did not publish it. Somewhat later they did publish a positive one by Martin Browne.

For all the negative reactions it seems clear that those apologies are on the right lines. We need to grow and develop in this process of asking forgiveness. We will have reached a certain maturity when the troubled catholics of Portadown decide to erect a monument in commemoration of the protestants drowned in the Bann.

conclusion

At the end of this paper I could go on to compile my list of protestant sins but it would then cease to be repentance and would be just another contribution to four hundred years of sectarianism. To arraign one’s own community instead is a prophetic task; indeed, as we have seen, earlier ages regarded it as an integral part of the preacher’s duty. The catholic church as a whole and the local church need to repent.

The catholic church has asked forgiveness on many occasions since it became involved in the ecumenical movement. Recognising faults of the past helps to improve attitudes in the present. But as we have seen apologies which emphasise faults on both sides are hardly adequate. We should be more concerned about the faults on our own side as these offend God and we need God’s forgiveness above all.

At home in Ireland we need to develop a more critical sense of history. If we approach history with a kind of catholic victim culture we will see only one side of the argument. We saw how the contemporary church in France finds it difficult to apologise for St Bartholomew’s Day. So we Irish catholics must eventually apologise for the massacre of 1641. This will be very painful as it would be an admission that the catholic defeat at the battle of the Boyne was in some way justified.

No doubt modern psychologists would agree that realism and mutual apologies would help to end centuries of hostility. Our faith is greater, however. Even with shallow repentance and while still partly in our blindness, we believe that God will come to heal us. Indeed, we believe that this salvation has already come. “God is our peace who has made us one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14). This referred originally to the jewish and gentile converts in the early church. It refers even more clearly to us gentiles who have declared one another to be outside the true faith. As we rediscover our christian brothers and sisters we confess that our mutual hatred has offended God. “We are created in Christ Jesus for the good works (of reconciliation) which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

notes

1. G. McChesney, A. Thompson, *Forgiveness and Psychology* (Belfast: ECONI 2001).
2. B. Lennon, *After the Ceasefires: Catholics and the Future of Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba 1995).
3. *Nostra Aetate* 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (October 28, 1965) at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html
4. Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: 'Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (December 1, 1974) at http://www.ccju.org/ccju_gs.htm
5. 'Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial' *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) 29 March 2000.
6. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 'Decree on Ecumenism' (November 21, 1964) at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html
7. H. Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London: B&O 1968) vol. II, 56.
8. M. Hurley, *Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Second Spring?* (Dublin: Veritas 1998) cf. 28
9. *Dignitatis Humanae* Declaration on Religious Freedom (December 7, 1965) at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html
10. 'Prayer at Debrecen' *L'Osservatore*, 9 May 2001.
11. *The Irish Times*, 25 August; 10 September 1997.
12. 'Address to the Holy Synod', *L'Osservatore*, 9 May 2001.
13. 'Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past' (December 1999) at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000307_memory-reconc-itc_en.html
14. 'Homily of the Holy Father, Day of Pardon' (Sunday, 12 March 2000) at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000312_pardon_en.html
15. 'Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past' 5.2
16. *plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum veniam et remissionem; and again, plenariam peccatorum vestrorum indulgentiam et remissionem.* Cornelius O'Mahony, *Disputatio Apologetica de Iure Regni Hiberniae pro Catholicis Hibernis Adversus Haereticos Anglos* (Lisbon 1645); 40-42. From this comes the common catholic expression, 'plenary indulgence.'
17. O'Malony, *ibid.*; advice on killing heretics 125. Thanks to Joseph Liechty for introducing me to this book.
18. Texts in Hurley, *Christian Unity* pp 65-66.
19. *Ibid.* pp 66-67.

recommended reading*introductory article*

Gary Thomas, "The Forgiveness Factor" pp 38-45 *Christianity Today*
January 10, 2000

theological perspectives

L Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*
(Eerdmans: Grand Rapids 1995)

websites

www.forgiving.org
www.forgivenessday.org
www.forgivenessweb.org
www.forgiveness-institute.org
website.lineone.net/~andrewhdknock/index.html

forgiveness papers already available

Forgiveness and Psychology
Forgiveness in the Bible: Old Testament Perspectives

forthcoming forgiveness papers

Forgiveness in the Bible: New Testament Perspectives
Forgiveness in the Christian Tradition: Protestant Perspectives
Forgiveness in the Christian Tradition: Anabaptist Perspectives
Forgiveness in the Christian Tradition: Orthodox Perspectives
Forgiveness, Guilt and Repentance
Forgiveness, Truth and Memory
Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Justice
Forgiveness - Individual or Collective
Forgiveness and the Individual
Forgiveness and the Church
Forgiveness and Social Groups
Forgiveness and Politics
Forgiveness in Literature and Popular Culture
Concluding Reflections

about the author

Brother Eoin de Bhaldraithe O.Cist. was ordained as a priest in 1963 after joining the Cistercians in 1956. He studied for 2 years in the Benedictine College in Rome and currently works on the farm at Bolton Abbey. He writes on topics such as the eucharist and christology and has also written about various aspects of ecumenism - publishing ideas on intercommunion, mixed marriages, christian peace and the Irish question.

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