

# Reconciliation – Why Europe?

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## Summary of Presentation

### 1. Introduction: Divided Europeans is a hindrance for the Gospel

### 2. Forces behind conflicts and divisions

- a. Wars, Colonialization
- b. Religious plurality
- c. Major cultural and ideological differences

### 3. Example Case Study – Latvia

### 4. The Church – Agent of Reconciliation

- a. Called to a reconciling mission (John 20:21; 2Cor. 5:18-20)
- b. Called out of the world in order to accept responsibility for the world (Mat. 16:18)
- c. Overcoming the ethno-confessional trap (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14)
- d. Signs of the kingdom of peace in the world

### 5. Healing of Memories (HoM) – Towards a Praxis of Reconciliation

A good praxis of reconciliation involves 3 basic steps:

- a. **Recovery** of what has really happened and healing of distorted memories (John 8:32) by applying the praxis of *catalasso*. The Parties will go back and forth naming and renaming the issues of hurt and injustice until a common understanding of what has happened is established and the parties agree on it.<sup>2</sup>
- b. **Forgiveness**. Where truth is known and agreed upon, where victims and perpetrators are named and injustice is noted, the mediator may suggest and initiate a process of forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>
- c. **Restorative** Justice and Transformation towards a common future. The parties will have to develop a common future, discussing possibilities and opportunities to restore justice and work for better life conditions in their communities, in their countries and beyond.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John W. DeGrouchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2002), 51.

<sup>3</sup> John C.W. Tran: *Authentic Forgiveness: A Biblical Approach*. (Carlisle: Langham 2020), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Lebaron, Venashri Pillay: *Conflict Across Cultures: A Unique Experience of Bridging Differences*. (Boston/London: Intercultural Press 2006), 144-146.

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HoM has been utilised in many conflicts and church divisions in Europe, for instance in North-Ireland, the Balkans, Hungary and elsewhere. See further examples in this regard the work of the HoM Institute established by the Council of European Churches in Sibiu, Romania.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. PRN (Peace and Reconciliation Network) – assisting churches locally, nationally and internationally

The Peace and Reconciliation Network of the EEA/WEA is involved in numerous reconciliation programs all over Europe. We offer training and assistance in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Poland, Belarus, Russia, Moldova, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, Latvia. Further programs are envisioned in Greece, Armenia, Estonia. Our hope is to expand to all countries throughout Europe.

What does PRN offer:

- Formal and non-formal training in theology and praxis of reconciliation, restorative conflict resolution and trauma-therapy.
- Written material for academic as well as church training. Materials are currently available in English, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Bulgarian.
- A Church-Based program called “**Church as Agent of Community Reconciliation**”.
- Trauma Therapy in countries in conflict, refugees, and diaspora communities.
- HoM basic programmes.

## 7. Further reading

**Hauerwas**, Stanley: *The Peaceable Kingdom – A Primer in Christian Ethics*. (London: SCM Press 1984).

**Jones**, L. Gregory: *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995), 102-103.

**Reimer**, Johannes: Dealing with Ethnocentrism in this Generation. In: *European Journal of Theology*, XXVI (2017) 26:2, 154-161.

----- *Wo Versöhnung zu Hause ist*. PRN Praxis 1. (Mittenahr-Bicken: Werdewelt Verlag 2019). Also available in English, Russian, Bulgarian.

----- *Vergeben Leben. Wege zu einer Kultur der Versöhnung in der Gemeinde*. PRN Praxis 3. (Mittenahr-Bicken: Werdewelt Verlag 2020). Also available in English, Dutch, Russian.

----- *Vergeben Leben. Wege zu einer Kultur der Versöhnun*

**Thaden**, Edward C., ed.: *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2014).

**Tutu**, Desmond: *No Future without Forgiveness*. (New York, NY: Doubleday 1999).

**Volf**, Miroslav: *Exclusion and Embrace. Theological exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1996).

Maksim Kirchanov, *Zemnieki, latvieši, pilsoņi*. (Nauchnaja kniga, 2009) Russian.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.healingofmemories.ro/conferences-and-workshops> (2.11.2021).