

THE SPACE BETWEEN PASTORAL CARE AND GLOBAL TERRORISM

Ann Belford Ulanov

Abstract: In this twenty-first century, Chaplains work with a background of terrorism, functioning as a remnant, making links between us, within us, with God, we learn our ideas of wholeness too often mean sameness, and God's ideas of wholeness include our particular differences.

Key words: terrorism, linking, remnant, difference and God's unity.

Your work as chaplains in this twenty-first century takes place in the space between pastoral care and global terrorism. In the gap, that you make into a space for meeting and growth, is where your work is located. It is extraordinary to be situating your profession within a background of global violence. In New York City we still feel it, even though the attacks of 9/11 are six years ago. I listen in my psychoanalytic practice to a mother of a second-grader describe how she has purchased gas masks, iodine pills and other items the Red Cross recommends along with planning an escape route. I listen to my doctoral student describe her thesis project of a new interpretation of the Trinity in relation to what sustained the chaplains at Ground Zero. She herself worked as chaplain to the morgue staff where the bits and pieces of bodies were brought for identification. In front of the Fire Station next to my analyst's office, on every 9/11 since 2001 appear heaps of flowers, candles, poems brought by neighbours to commemorate the shift of men killed when the Towers fell down on them. In Scotland you know this mourning first hand and were among the front-line respondents when a plane exploded from the sky onto a local neighbourhood, and when a man deranged and homicidal broke into a primary school.

In our present decade the background of terrorism suddenly erupts into the foreground, pitching us onto the borders of life and death. These eruptions of violence break out randomly, like an autoimmune disease that can attack anywhere at any time. The borders of good and bad that we defined in the cold

war as an iron curtain no longer obtain. We experience good and evil infiltrating one another.

There was astonishing goodness showing up in the horror of 9/11 as there always is in the midst of suffering. In your work as chaplains, you bring goodness to the patient in the hospital, you bring presence to the person in Hospice, to persons in detox centres, to those struggling to find the roots of health in the midst of mental pain. I would suggest that one way to describe the goodness you bring is that in the face of loss, you make links.

You link up the present amputation to the whole person alive in hospital who cannot be reduced to one part. You link up the present incarceration in the prison of alcoholism or addiction to pills with the buried impulse toward remorse, toward gratitude for the gift of life that persists even now and must find a new form. You link up the present story of an elderly person with their original story at the beginning of their life, to aid in making the arc of their whole life complete before they die. You link the person caught in psychological complexes with a story trying to emerge that is bigger, more flexible, no longer caught in earlier trauma. You link up the resource of religion, that great bottomless ground of God whom the thirteenth century mystic Marguerite Porete calls the Source without source, to the particular person's present misery and fragile hope.

When loss strikes us, the great question is how to go on being alive, real, grateful, glad. How to keep loving alive in the face of this wounding hurt, and

now in the face of collective trauma? The psychological and spiritual danger in the face of great loss is that we cease to make links to receive connections to our deeper selves, to our neighbours, and to God. Then all these spaces in which we live collapse into a horrifying gap where we fear we will plunge endlessly without any ground to hold us in being. This is to go dead while still alive. The threat of terrorism with its seeming randomness dislocates all our spaces into gaps, making us fear that nothing holds.

For example, the Taliban blowing up the huge ancient Buddha statues, despite many countries offering symbolic concessions and financial payment to preserve this extraordinary art, destroyed not only the statues, but also the world's habit of cherishing and conserving such symbols. My late husband, Barry Ulanov, said, the only thing that lasts of previous civilizations is their art, and it is through the art we reach again to the spiritual pulse that animated a whole society, and perceive how they lived in the spaces between here and the beyond, between the daily self and the soul, between their sense of their identity and the other. The Taliban sought to destroy the notion of leaving a mark with art, to wreck not only the magnificent statues but also the world's symbol system. They asserted their conviction that symbols of the transcendent were blasphemous, declaring that their story about the borders of life and death was the only story.

This incident, like all terrorist incidents, alerts us that in this new century and new millennium, the basic question has changed. The question of the twentieth century, I suggest, was being versus non-being. How to secure being in the face of world wars, gulags, holocausts, forced marches and famines, the discrimination against different races, creeds, genders, and toward parts of ourselves caught in the prison of obsessions, anxiety attacks, paranoid delusions. We sought being against non-being, strove to strengthen it, enlarge its precincts with laws, justice and charity.

To the degree we succeeded in enlarging room for otherness, we now have a new basic question: how to live with many others of different cultures, political systems, theological visions, ethnic roots, and devote wholehearted commitment to our own perceptions of what truly matters. How to find the many in the One, and the One in the many is our question of this twenty first century. There are

many stories, many routes to God. How to live with all our heart, mind, strength our own story in the face of and in cooperation with the many other stories?

A shift for your work as chaplains into a freestanding profession, differentiated from yet related to the Church that heretofore was your employer, is a striking example of one story now becoming two. Your location in General and in Psychiatric Hospitals, Learning Disability Units, Care of Elderly Units, Mental Health Clinics, distinguishes you from the clergy serving parishes. You are the remnant in the community, in the front line of emergencies of illness physical, mental and spiritual. Your story will be a different narrative, now to be recognised as distinct.

Babel and Pentecost

Pastoral Care as Chaplains in the face of global terrorism requires looking directly into the space that can collapse into a gap. What is the story that terrorism displays? And what is the chaplaincy story? If it is true that our new century is faced with many, indeed, multi stories, terrorists can be described as insisting on their story as the only one; it must dominate all others as the only sacred truth; indeed, others who do not also identify with it should be killed. The one and only story does not permit any alternate narratives, considers them as dust, whereas your story as chaplains always recognises the irreducible value of individual experience that expands into many kinds of narratives woven with neighbour and cherished by God.

When the space collapses and links between us and with God and with ourselves are destroyed, we can fall into the grip of unconscious archaic energies. Because our psychic energy no longer finds channels through which to fuel our relationships, the energy regresses to less mature forms and manifests in more primitive ways. Instead of housing and directing our psychic energy, it has us in its grip, bypassing consciousness and eschewing consideration, communication, contemplation with others. So we find ourselves, or our neighbour, caught up; the energy burgeons forth in a fit of rage, a panic of anxiety, a self-righteous edict.

Religious images of the Holy are the deepest images in our psyche because they try to picture what mat-

ters ultimately, the alpha and the omega that dwells at the centre of reality. To fall into the grip of that energy is to feel identified with it, so that my story about the place of my group, my theology, my humiliation, my justice, now feels as if it is not only everyone's story but even God's story. For the terrorist insists that everyone must hold his conviction, as if saying: I speak now for all of us in Islam or Judaism or Christianity, and even more, I speak for God (ULANOV 2001, 198). Hence it is my duty to blow up planes, invade schools, to fly jets into office buildings, plant bombs in markets or restaurants or subways to wreak destruction as service to a living God.

The fantasy of spiritual globalism, that there can be only one spiritual truth for our entire globe, is a major expression of this unconscious identification with archaic energies. It is a postmodern version of the tower of Babel. You remember Genesis 11, the generations of Noah journeying east to the plain of Shinar build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens to "make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered." (RSV Gen 11:4b) Babel comes from the Assyrian *bab-ilu*, meaning the Gate of God (PARTRIDGE 1963, 35). The Lord sees they are one people with one language and as the text says, "this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them." (RSV Gen 11:6b) The Lord goes down and confuses their language so that they cannot understand each other's speech and scatters them from there "over the face of the earth." (RSV Gen 11:8) Babel reigns—confusion, hullaballou, pandemonium, very much our exclamations after terrorist attacks.

What are we to make of this story? This Lord is not our hoped for one of unity, binding us all up inside ourselves into a whole person with no parts split off clamouring like strangers at the gate. This is not our desired Lord who knits up the hostilities in our communities to make a whole heart and soul together with love circulating among us. This Lord is not our prayed for one around whom we all join in a song of praise.

This Lord divides, separates, confounds, and restricts our building what we call unity, what we call making a name for ourselves. This Lord sets limits and makes us experience our limitations. This Lord scatters us into many stories, where no one story

dominates. This Lord confuses; thus no human made clarity will prevail as the one and only clarity, the one and only way to say it, the one and only narrative to be acceptable.

We cannot craft this unity; we cannot author this oneness. Instead we are given many stories, from many places, scattered over the earth. We are forced to recognise that our finite perceptions and plans do not capture the truth of God, who transcends them and is undefineable, unknowable from our side (BARTH 1963, 120). This God sets limits; before this God we must experience our limitations.

This yearning for one story, for one truth, one unified source of bread, of government, of faith, forges the power of Satan's temptations to Christ in the desert. Unity and oneness are not ours to make. The other side of globalisation is annihilation. The oneness that we would construct always goes into abstractions, away from our specific, different locations in culture, history, political styles, gender identifications, race and creed. The one of us who is different gets pushed out of the group. The abstract one universal truth for all abandons the ground, the earth, and soon becomes totalism which violates the particular which is where we live. The unanimity we would invent tyrannises over our many differences.

Your ministry links up the particularities of a person's life and suffering with the infinite God reaching toward them in and through those very personal details. The marvel of God is that each of us is cherished in particular; none of us is an exchangeable object where God will take Harry if Joe does not respond. God wants each one, Harry and Joe in the particulars of their lives. God will make up the wholeness out of each of us as the parts, the different parts brought together in God's vision, not ours, not the terrorists'.

If my sense of the question for the twenty-first century is accurate, it includes how we give all heart, mind, soul, and strength to commitment to truth, to God as we see it. We give in particular with who we are toward God as we have heard God revealing Godself to us in community and history. We respect that others seek the same. So unity, then, is not sameness, nor is faith exclusive. It is particular. I love this One, knowing that I know God only in God's unknowableness.

Moments of unity happen, but we do not produce them, we strive toward them if we allow many stories to be told. But there are moments of oneness. Acts 2 of the New Testament describes the moment of Pentecost when suddenly a rush of wind fills the house where Jesus' followers assemble and tongues of fire rest on each one and they all speak in other tongues as the "Spirit gave them utterance." (RSV Acts 2:4b) At this sound the multitude from every nation come together and everyone hears their own language being spoken.

What stands out is not only a unity created by the Holy Spirit, but people of different languages notice, hear, are amazed that their language, different from all others, is now being spoken by their neighbors who have their own different language. There is room for all differences in this unity. Particularity and unity happen at once. Particularity is not blotted out nor blurred. Parthians and Medes, Elamites and those from Cappadocia remain particular from concrete locales, but they hear each other speak in their own native tongues. Particularity persists and is transcended simultaneously. What we share in common is our differences.

This is God's unity, the unity God's Spirit creates that includes all differences among us, that graces us for a moment. In the Babel story, God is the author of diversity; in the Pentecost story God includes all the differences into flowing communication. God's unity does not abstract but permeates difference. In such a moment we all experience the power of the same origin point, the same mysterious source. This is what you chaplains do when your work succeeds. You link up details of different lives, different stories, the personal story and Christ's story and a mighty wind rushes in and fills the house, a tongue of fire appears and for a moment the same language, the primary speech, is spoken between you and the one suffering, between the two of you and the long line of fellow and sister sufferers, between all of us and the gracious God who steps into our suffering and brings the balm (ULANOV, ULANOV 1983).

The Remnant

In the space between pastoral care and global terrorism where we find ourselves in this first decade of our new century, chaplaincy partakes of the remnant. Aware of the horrors of destruction that terror-

ism manifests, the remnant remains as scraps, fragments, yearning to respond with heart, mind and soul to God as commanded. The remnant does not survive destruction out of its own merit, nor because of its own resources. You who see struggle and sorrow in your work as chaplains, who witness the fragility and strength of people reaching for new life in the midst of their old life crumbling around them, know in your bones that to see this remnant in others and link up to it and draw strength yourselves from it, is to draw on the unfathomable God in that moment who links to us in Christ stepping into our suffering embodying the remnant in his person.

The remnant has certain tasks in this moment. What stands out as foremost is to witness what is happening. What is happening is that our version of unity where we ascend to the heavens gets destroyed. We get caught in the grip of our images of what should be, our versions of the God who should preside over all humanity. Hubris, inflation, seeking to dominate with our interpretation are not allowed, the text tells us; God's wrath levels them, this other side of God that protects against one story tyrannizing as the only story. The judgement that levels us tells us always to open, look, hear, link toward the God who cannot be defined or confined in human designations. We are to take what God offers, the diversity of many stories that together make up the whole, the unity that God bestows in moments of linking, connecting, feeling God's love flowing, communicating between us in our own languages.

The remnant feels simultaneously God's judgement and grace. We continue to yearn for the unity that underlies all diversity, the infinite that surpasses but fulfils all our finite plans and hopes. We long for the single principle that harmonizes justice and strife into a durable Absolute beyond all change. But deep down in the places of the human soul, we glimpse that this is our image, not the God our image links us to. Diversity is God-given. In Hindu mythology God is all the different stories folding into one another (DONIGER 2004).

God's judgement moves us to offer our image of justice, our image of love, our picture of health or what this relationship should be, into the hands of the living God. This sacrifice of our vision of the good is a wrenching, deep suffering. You feel it when pastoring those in your care, wishing for them a release, a happiness, a breaking through, and wit-

nessing that it does not happen. Only by giving that up, letting our version go, can we turn to see what is happening, what is there breaking in, bringing a whole new picture. The remnant's witnessing includes sacrifice, and receiving the new.

In the space between pastoral care and global terrorism, a remnant consciousness brings with it a necessary vulnerability because all the evil spirits are loose; even Red Cross helpers or peace-keeping U.N. workers are not safe from attack. We feel fear, and we hope that it is the beginning of wisdom. We are aware of being wounded, that we can be wounded, that we are in danger of being wounded. A remnant consciousness means extending our awareness to these ominous forces, to the bad, to imagine about evil in the sense of "serpent thoughts", the wiseness of the serpent that Jesus counsels (WILLIAMS 2002, 211-12). At the heart of Christianity is the wounded God, the God who takes our worst destructiveness into himself and rises from the death it inflicts. We witness that destructiveness does not totally destroy.

Serpent thoughts mean carrying the tension that our story conflicts with the stories of others, and that part of the other's story is to destroy mine. We imagine the harm we can do to others, and we accept that the other also is quite capable, even willing, to do harm to us. We thus sacrifice our wish to believe in total goodness, ours or the other's. Jung calls this facing our shadow, those affects and behaviours, attitudes and wishes that we would disown as bad, and usually project onto our neighbour in exact proportion to how unconscious we remain of them existing in ourselves. A remnant consciousness means taking serious note not only of shadowy aspects of ourselves but also in our neighbour, because the one we project onto usually has a hook, a something analogous to our shadow stuff that attracts our hurling the bad into them. Bad is also there and the serpent in us spies it.

This serpent perception applies to religion as well, and to our actual work as chaplains, teachers, counselors. These are activities for the good, but they can, we see again clearly now, also be used for the bad. Religion to shame, humiliate, to coerce, to divide up groups into warring enemies all in the name of God is a human construction. The source of religion in the "Source without source" pulls us to

transcend even the faith constructions we so carefully build (PORETE 1993, 45).

The new departure point comes with Mary who bears into the world the revolutionary One who brings the end to all religions. Her co-operating spirit, her co-responding spirit, her sturdy, daring willingness to house the new and bring it into the world, not unlike Abraham's willingness to leave the known country to journey into the unknown, these two show the remnant consciousness. In it we are aware of life being created right now, ongoing moments of making present, what the thirteenth century Buddhist Dogen calls the "logic of presencing" (cited in KOPF 1999, 284).

In our scraps of faith in the Holy, from these remnants we find the new shoots spring. We witness the new not destroyed but enduring and breaking in, in resurrected forms; we suffer sacrifice of our old and treasured visions of the good as we have built it; we bear the tension of serpent thoughts about the ominous forces in ourselves and in others that can blunt our hearts and minds; we co-respond to the generous outpouring of the unknowable God making known the depths of the human linked to the depths of the divine.

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Ann Belford Ulanov is Christiane Brooks Johnson
Professor of Psychiatry and Religion at Union
Theological Seminary and a psychoanalyst in pri-
vate practice in New York City.