

Judah and Benjamin

Evolving a Theology of Peace in Sri Lanka

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The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has been the biggest challenge faced by the inhabitants of this island nation over the course of the 20th century, and now in the 21st century as well¹. Over sixty thousand persons have died due to the civil strife. Millions have been left homeless. Violence, brutality, suicide, and terror have marked daily life. This constant encounter with evil by the youth and the young at the threshold of their lives brutalizes their psyche. It will take many generations to heal from the damages ensued by these acts of violence and the machinery of terror. It has been shown that many of the world's communal struggles are linked to or even created by the Western Colonialism of the last five hundred years. The conflicts in the Philippines, South Africa, Sudan, Palestine-Israel, Guatemala,

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1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the consultation « Sri Lankan Theology: Retrospect and Prospect » organized by the Theological College of Pilimatalawa, Sri Lanka, in June 2006. Since then the nature of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict took the form of a massive armed struggle between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan security forces, during which the LTTE was defeated. As a result about 280,000 Tamils have been reduced to the state of refugees living in camps in the North, and thousands of Sinhalese and Tamils have been widowed and orphaned. The wounds are too fresh to enter into a dialogue with the victims without which there is no possibility for a valid theological reflection. Hence I remain with the present version and with the conviction that however hard it may be non-violent struggles offer a greater future and a deeper spirituality to humanity.