

## **York Lecture**

### **Religions and the Politics of Conflict and Peace:**

#### **A Clash of Civilizations or a Clash of the Politics of Interpretations**

Religiously-supported conflicts across the world have generated a new wave of interest in scrutinising the relationship between religion, conflict and peace. Many views have been presented regarding the ideologies, motives and behavioural patterns of religious actors in conflict. There is a tendency to value 'the secular; more than 'the religious' in searching for peace in such conflicts. In fact, the question about the relationship between religion, conflict and peace is fundamentally a question about the meanings of religion in life and society. No religion exists as an abstract category. Every form of peace is not desirable and every type of conflict is not negative. The role of religion in a society is determined by its relationship with centres of power in that society. This lecture will analyse the complex relationship between religion, conflict and peace from theological, interreligious, sociological, political and geopolitical perspectives while critiquing tendencies that reduce religion to simply an irrational force or to a peaceful moral power. Artificial demarcations between 'the secular' and 'the religious' will be critiqued too. A range of case studies will be discussed in reiterating the need for context-sensitivity.

Jude Lal Fernando is Assistant Professor in Trinity College Dublin where he coordinates the postgraduate program on Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies in the Irish School of Ecumenics. He is the Director of the Trinity Centre for Post-Conflict Justice and the coordinator of the Peoples' Tribunal on Sri Lanka. His main areas of expertise are in the role of Religion in Conflict and Peace in Asia. Some of his works have been published in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *Interreligious Studies*, *Oxford Handbook on Christianity in Asia*, *Uppsala University Series on Buddhism among Tamils* and *Routledge Series on Communalism and Globalisation*. He was also the Visiting Professor in Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Sophia University, Tokyo, Tampere University in Finland and Uppsala University in Sweden.