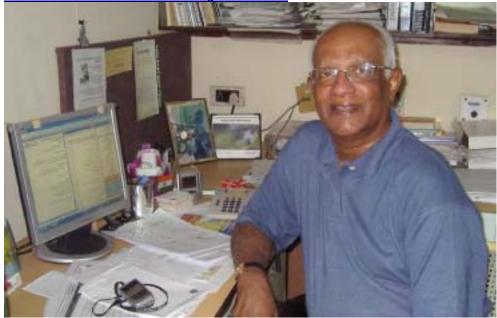
Letter from Victor Karunairajan – Part I



Victor Karunairajan, 201-53 McHardy Place, Brampton, Ontario L6Y 1Z7, Canada: September 1, 2007

Dear Grace Bunker:

Introduction: This communication will certainly descend from the blues. It was intended to check some particulars you had referred to in your report on the Global Ministries website but as I began to write, I felt it may be a good idea to appraise you of some background information that may help us if you could share these with the missionary bureaucrats at the Wider Churches Ministries of the United Church of Christ (WCM-UCC) and the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds (TJCF). This first paragraph was penned after writing this lengthy epistle, as an introduction to explain the reason why this is being addressed to you.

This letter is also for posterity because it includes information that would never appear in missionary annals, Lockwood memoirs, official documents, minutes and reports. It also has some personal data that will help some future researchers to get a wider picture of the missionary enterprise amidst a friendly community that belongs to the Hindu faith and the good relations that exists among the Hindus and the Christians. The Hindus called the missionaries "Iyers" the highest compliment they could have given them which is only reserved for their Brahmin priests. A man called Rufus Anderson never understood this reality and went ahead and smashed up a successful educational project just because it had failed to make Christians out of Hindus.

Another such disaster, though not of the same kind, may be building up force in the pipeline if the authors of a hidden agenda have their way with the support of the WCM-UCC and the TJCF; more specifically, the author and not authors with his unwitting supporters who are pursuing a tiny mouse of hardly any consequence while the wily fox is safely ensconced in the shadows to amass the flowing millions. You are probably aware of what happened at the Colombo Church last Sunday (August 26) when the dissident group led by the Rev Solomon Milton disturbed the morning service with a demonstration of barefaced, unashamed hooliganism virtually pinning down the resident priest, the Rev Daisy Asirwatham to the altar chair. It is evident the Rev Jeyanesan has taken to strong-arm tactics to have his way somehow or other

confident that the dollar flow from his friends in the US would always be there and in turn, he would ride the American Trojan Horse for them to North and East Sri Lanka.

Jaffna College: Your parents the Rev Dr Sydney and Ruth Bunker were ideal missionaries especially during the period the American Ceylon Mission was fusing into the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India. Likewise, at the same time Jaffna College too became a fully national institution. Both institutions progressed from a founding based on great visions that in the mid-20th century had completed a century and a quarter of very impressive achievements. This moment was also marked by two great events. Firstly, it was the coming into being of the Church of South India and the other was the founding of the Jaffna College Technical Institute which had plans under the first national head, Dr W Luther Jeyasingam to achieve a status of a Community College very much like a university; perhaps even a university.

There is something unique about Jaffna College. When the American Mission turned its back following an insensitive report authored by Rufus Anderson and closed the Batticotta Seminary in 1855, it was the spirit of the local people and their determined campaign for 17 years that gave birth to Jaffna College. This reality is often overlooked, and unashamed attempts have been made to give the impression that Jaffna College was just a continuation of the Batticotta Seminary and there are locals who have enjoyed missionary favours who will without any hesitation sing that chorus. Closing of the seminary was a piteous blemish on the missionary endeavour in North Sri Lanka; nothing like that should happen again.

It was my privilege to have been a student of your father and a member of the English Choir that was led by your mother. Your father also encouraged me to join the Wild Life Protection Society of Ceylon and there were many occasions I had joined him on his trips to Colombo and back by road. On those trips your mother would pack peanut butter sandwiches for me as well which even today is my Number One favourite. I enjoyed the first of this treat munching with your dad on the jungle road between Anuradhapura and Puttalam, our first stop on leaving Vaddukoddai after about 130 miles of non-stop driving.

During those days with the kind of road conditions that existed and virtually a single track, it was a pretty good effort. Normally, it would have taken four hours but your dad, I think did it in three hours and a half. He timed seven hours to Colombo. At first it was an Austin Cambridge that did yeoman service to Jaffna College and then came the Volkswagen Beetle, the miracle car. I loved it. Along the drive, we would be engaged in lively conversations on so many topics but the one we really loved was wild life.

How we hoped we could come across a herd of elephants at every jungle turn, even a leopard or two but all we saw were monkeys, both species, having their roadside conferences and I suppose making their observations on the human species. On one occasion, there were some buffaloes that performed Satyagraha on the middle of the road. We had to wait till they expressed their intentions from both ends. If the Federal Party had learnt the Discipline of Satyagraha from these ruminants we would have had positive results; their patient peaceful posture was worthy of admiration. We were in their territory and their rights have to be respected. Things are different in Sri Lanka today even for the humans.

What I liked most of your parents and also Dr Robert and Frannie Holmes was that they appreciated my views on various issues, some of them in conflict with theirs. We have had very healthy discussions and politically, I was a socialist. My nature is such and my interests being the welfare of the people who were exploited on the basis of

caste and class, I could not have supported any political party other than the LSSP. I was quite an outspoken member of the community, both of the college and the church. **Privileged College Community:** I did not belong to any of the privileged college and church families neither did I yearn for such handouts as Vellore scholarships and study opportunities overseas especially in the US. My brother Christy Richards who served on the staff of Jaffna College for sometime shared my spirit too. We came from the neighbouring village of Sithankerny. Ours was the only Christian family there. The Cradle of our Culture is Hinduism and we were very comfortable among our people who respected our faith and beliefs.

On my father's side our immediate ancestors belonged to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and they considered themselves very English, something out of taste with me. Being educated at St John's College and Chundikuli Girls College was thought to be of the high class breed; Jaffna College and Uduvil Girls College, middle class or less. I never liked an English surname and when I became a major promptly changed it to Karunairajan by deed poll and your dad was one of the first to comment an approval of it. I chose a challenging surname that means a monarch of grace, something worthy of emulation.

On my mother's side, our ancestors have worshipped in at least seven of the 21 churches of the South India United Church (SIUC) and later Church of South India (CSI). Unlike the CMS, the SIUC/CSI had worshipping members across the whole gamut of the social divisions that exist in the Tamil community; indeed a plus point for us. You will also note that it is this community that first had co-educational schools in the entire country. It was such a liberating force for our women well ahead of the kind of opportunities they even had in the West that they came to the forefront in public life.

In this respect, the Hindu community followed suit but not the CMS or the Methodists and for that matter any other Christian school. In other words, it is something of a pride and privilege to belong to the JDCSI for trail-blazing this revolution. Had not the southern racial and religious fanatics taken over the political reins of the country, Sri Lanka would have moved gallantly on several progressive fronts.

My maternal grandmother who came from a tiny hamlet in Thenmaradchy near Elephant Pass was fortunate to have been sent by her farmer parents to the Girls Mission College at Uduppiddy. Later she became a very good example of an ideal mother, step-mother and foster mother all at that same time and a blessing to so many people. She lived a long life even to have a role in helping to bring up my two daughters, her great-grand children. Although she was a newcomer to Sithankerny after marrying my grandfather, she soon became a leader in the community loved and respected by everyone there.

Since my grandfather was a member of the Chankanai Church, she too became an active participant there. During our childhood years, we would walk with her to Chankanai through the paddy fields on Sunday mornings for the worship service there. It was quite a walk, at least three miles; looking back, they were most enjoyable too. We imbibed in this kind of experience her grit, determination and faith.

On the popular request of the local people her funeral procession from Sithankerny to Vaddukoddai, a distance of a mile and a half for committal rites, was a slow one. Scores of people walked by in the procession as a tribute to her life and spirit. While Christian lyrics were sung along the way, some Hindus also sang sacred verses from their scriptures. When we reached the Cathedral Church, there were Bishop Kulendran and Principal Selliah to receive us to the farewell tolling of the bells to a lovely woman whose entire life was a service to motherhood in all its facets, grand

and great-grand and a good and faithful member of the community. Her mortal remains lie next to the dining section of the President's Bungalow where you would have spent your holidays when your dad and mum were resident in it.

Letter from Victor Karunairajan - Part II

Cradle of our Culture: This is the Cradle of our Culture which Rufus Anderson never understood and it seems even a hundred and fifty years later, difficult for some missionary bureaucrats in the US to comprehend. We are not an island but a part of a lovely cultural mosaic that has sustained us for eons of time. It would be very unfair for strangers like Cally Rogers-Witte and Eric Gass to make decisive decisions that could have negative impacts on our people especially when they hearken to people who have hidden agendas that are very suspect and only for immediate personal gains but they are smart enough to approach them and make impressions at the cost of their dignity and pride.

Recently you have spent some time in Jaffna helping with the teaching of English at Jaffna College and Uduvil Girls College. I understand you were resident at Uduvil and Chelvi Selliah, the principal at that time appreciated your work; likewise Noel Vimalendran at Jaffna College too. Chelvi is a day younger to me, both born at Green Hospital, a classmate and a Student Christian Movement colleague. I am proud that she was a worthy successor to Miss Ariam Hudson Paramasamy, affectionately Ari auntie to many of us. My mum's last year at Uduvil as a student was Ari auntie's first year as a teacher and my daughter's first year at school was her last year as principal; I treasure these sentiments a great deal.

Even though both my daughters were born in England when I was on the staff of the Church Information Office of the National Assembly of the Church of England at Church House, Westminster, I wanted my children to have their early years of education among our people and in the socio-cultural ethos of my community to appreciate and absorb our values and aspirations. This has done a world of good to them and they have stable families of their own and can manage their lives in any part of the world.

It was during this time I served as a leader of the parents of Jaffna College, was on the Alumni Committee and also got elected to the Jaffna College Board of Directors. Unlike Bishop Kulendran a veritable saint, his successor Bishop Ambalavanar had his own way of managing the JDCSI, more like a CEO of an American corporation. There was nothing spiritual about him and he didn't even have a trace of the Kulendran halo. It was inevitable sooner or later we were going to be at loggerheads with each other and the consequence was the much publicized Church Membership Case. A book on that which I had delayed for good reasons will now be published soon. It is based on the fundamental right of worship.

My stand on Bishop Ambalavanar and how he conducted his bishopric has been proved right in many instances. The problems we are having today have their roots during the time he headed the JDCSI virtually like an autocrat. He was no respecter of persons, over-sensitive to discussions and intolerant of views in conflict with his own. But he could never tame me and that was hard for him to bear and finally, he acted very foolishly. It was also he who set the pace for an uncivil competition for the bishopric between Daniel Thiagarajah and Selvadurai Jeyanesan; we see the sad consequence of it today.

American Ceylon Mission: While going through several documents on fund campaigns in the US for the work of the JDCSI in East Sri Lanka, I was taken aback to note two disturbing aspects among many others I am investigating now. Firstly, efforts are being directed to an individual working with the JDCSI and not to the JDCSI itself. And secondly, there seems to be a strenuous attempt to revive the pre-1908 American Ceylon Mission. This amounts to seeking a mighty step into the past merely to please certain elements and perhaps even to regain an American hold in the work in Sri Lanka. This is out of step with the progress we have made in Sri Lanka and unacceptable too, particularly in the circumstances of the ethnic nightmare in the country. No American Trojan Horse will be permitted into Sri Lanka.

Just because Dr Cally Rogers-Witte is the Executive Minister of the WCM of the UCC, the successors to the United Church Board for World Missions (UCBWM), it gives her no right to dictate to us using a link that is only ritually honoured as a relationship that we cherish and one which by custom, convention and instruments legal and otherwise has become part of the JDCSI. Equally, the Rev Eric Gass must understand what a fiduciary trust really means especially the spirit of it, the founding principles and aspirations of the TJCF and his obligation to ensure that the work of this trust is a partnership between the Jaffna College Board of Directors (JCBD) and the TJCF. Even on the issue of electing members to serve on the trust, the JCBD must have an equal say. The trust was set up at the request of the founders of Jaffna College who were people from the Jaffna District of Sri Lanka.

A question I have raised for some years now and even discussed with Dr Robert Holmes is as to why the trustees have not thought fit to have an alumnus of Jaffna College, or even more, now that we have a large number of our alumni in the States and Canada holding very responsible and leading positions especially in the spheres of education and management. I have written to Dr Telfer Mook about it a number of times but he never had the courtesy to respond even to my letters which itself is a reflection on the attitude of a trustee to such an issue.

Now you have a Rev James Vijeyakumar who probably will not know how to spell Vaddukoddai and where exactly this village is in Sri Lanka. His inclusion in the trustee board was an act of impertinence and an insult to Jaffna College. This Rev Vijeyakumar is also the link man between Dr Cally Rogers-Witte and the Rev Selvadurai Jeyanesan. In the light of recent developments, do I need to say anything more? If these people want the Americans back in Jaffna as a shield and support for whatever agenda they have in mind, let them first understand what has happened to Sri Lanka in recent years and more especially to Jaffna.

We have had enough of the Norwegians who came here as non-governmental workers and got enmeshed into the political quagmire of the country, the consequences of it has not been good; even disastrous. The Ceynor Project that was founded at Karainagar in the neighbourhood of Vaddukoddai during the early 1970s crashed into shambles. Today, to cut a very long tragic story short, Norway supplies arms to both to the government and the Tigers.

Just desserts, Oslo has serious gang problems from Sri Lankan Tamils mollycoddled by Norwegian non-governmental workers. We do not want the Americans to add to this chaos especially with the interest your colleagues at the UCC have shown with the work in East Sri Lanka isolating it as they want from the JDCSI, and where the situation is quite tricky. None of your folks will ever take the trouble to understand the east and is most likely to be led by the very person whom they seemed determined to promote. This would be a micro-microcosm of what Washington does on an enormous scale promoting the interests of people who promptly become powerful

dictators with American dollar flow and destructive to the wellbeing of the countries they rule with iron boots.

East Sri Lanka: East Sri Lanka is a different kettle of fish from Jaffna. The Tamils there don't like the Jaffna Tamils and that was also why the LTTE split with the powerful Karuna Group taking their stand in the east. Furthermore, each of the three communities, Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese are a third of the total population of this province. Amidst this an American Mission supported church managed by Jaffna Tamils will be treated as a hostile presence unless dollars were regularly and generously pumped to powerful forces in the province. There are also Anglican and Methodist Churches in this area and they have been there for many years as well as a number of Christian fundamentalist sects, some quite suspect.

When the Rev Sebastian Anthony of the JDCSI made a serious complaint to the police in the area alleging that there was an attempt to molest his wife, he was ignored and it was evident they were heavily bribed. He had the same problem from the Armed Forces, so corrupt are the agents of law and order and so easily they are bought and American dollars seem to be going a long way already.

Are you going to be part of this corrupt structure? At this very moment with so many problems causing disaster and displacement and of course the tsunami tragedy, people need immediate assistance and any source that can help them with shelter and food would be welcome. Those who eye the dollars to pack their pockets, this is the opportune time for rich midnight yields. Are you going to aid and abet such intentions which I strongly suspect is the hidden agenda of those leading the demand for a split from the JDCSI? They have no doctrinal or canonical differences so why do they want a split?

Court Injunction: You are all, I feel, totally hypnotized by the myth ballooned into epic proportions over the run-up events and incidents leading to the appointment of Daniel Thiagarajah as the JDCSI bishop. Some of you have visualized injustice in this because a court case delayed the process which enabled Daniel Thiagarajah to be eligible for the election. I am sure the Rev Jeyanesan himself will own up that it was a rather unfortunate conduct of his that brought about the court case because an affected priest was determined to prevent his election as a bishop. He found the grounds he wanted and proceeded with the action to seek justice for an act of serious misdemeanor by a fellow clergyman.

The Rev Anthony who hardly speaks or understand English stunned the sessions of a particular Diocesan Council with a shocking finger-pointed accusation against this clergyman. It must be said that at this time this young priest was not on talking terms with the Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah because he had caused his transfer from the Central Province where he and his wife were quite comfortable and happy to serve among his people, to the Eastern Province. In other words, he was not serving the interests of Daniel Thiagarajah by seeking a court injunction against the Executive Committee of the JDCSI.

The demand for separation is not the result of some fundamental differences in faith, beliefs and concepts; even on questions of Episcopate or Congregationalism. It was because of the failure of Rev Jeyanesan to become the bishop of the diocese. He needs to take control because during the last ten years he has had a free hand in the east and vast sums of funds intended to meet the needs of victims of all kinds have flowed in and even now the Rev Jeyanesan is campaigning for more in Israel, some European countries and more heavily in the US. He has to account for all these if he stays within the JDCSI; outside it he will be his own master. It is rather sad that Dr Cally Rogers-Witte and her merry colleagues are unable to understand this reality. Even if

my contention has no base, such a state of affairs and the demand for split to create a new church is not healthy at all.

Letter from Victor Karunairajan – Part III

The JDCSI Black Rod: The American Ceylon Mission is now an ornament of tradition which is very much appreciated and cherished but only as something necessary perhaps like the Black Rod in the English Parliament or the Queen's Speech which in reality is not hers but that of the government in office. I don't think such tradition-based symbolic things exist in the US where McDonald Burghers, Burger Kings and Kentucky Fried Chicken rule the roost developing national emblems for future generations of Americans to revere and honour. It is better and much nicer the ACM remains like the Black Rod and as an icon of love and respect for posterity.

However, I gather the worrisome impression that there are a group of people in the US with some links to Jaffna either through their parents having been missionaries or other connections who seem to feel that the American presence even through proxy must be re-established in Jaffna. I have had an occasion to talk to and also write to Dr Cally Rogers-Witte who seems to have the view that the concerns people like us raise do not matter as long as they have their own contacts who will fall in line with their ideas and intentions without a murmur; the "your obedient servant syndrome."

It appears some of you who cannot appreciate the union of churches would rather have the church split. This communication to you was necessitated by a report you had published in the Global Ministries website. There was a reference to children from a school who worked hard to collect some dollars by selling bracelets which they themselves had made and this was given to the Rev Jeyanesan who canvasses funds stressing the American Ceylon Mission aspect rather than what really exists, the JDCSI.

I feel such donations should be given to the JDCSI and not to individuals. I am very interested to know whether that particular school had received any acknowledgement from the JDCSI. I have also learnt with great regret you are among the people in the States who are lending support for a group that wants to secede from the JDCSI and that means from the CSI. People in the US should leave such decisions to us especially since they will not be able to gauge all the factors properly and there would also be a tendency to apply formulas to such issues that are meaningless to us. This was the grievous error Rufus Anderson committed in 1855; even heinous and scandalous I would say.

The future of any nation or people ought not to be glued to the past. I cannot go back to Sri Lanka and demand a return to the past neither should missionary children seek the same where their parents have served with great dedication and distinction. You should be the ones who should tell such bureaucrats like Eric Gass and Cally Rogers-Witte that their stewardship should be dedicated to futuristic goals that will be in harmony with our faith and beliefs respecting the sentiments that the Cradle of our Culture is Sri Lankan and not American.

I thought of writing these lines to you because it has become an American psyche to back the wrong horses in the developing world and what a lot of damage has been done to many countries as a result. I fervently hope that George Bush will be the last

of the terrible enigma that is plaguing the world in the name of democracy and the fight against global terrorism. If you ask me as to who in my view is the global terrorist, my answer will not make George Bush happy.

Incidentally, I must tell you I was quite active in the work of my Filipino friends against President Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos during the time I was in the Philippines. It was a terrible risk more so because I was in the southern island of Mindanao at that time. This couple would have been lynched had not the Americans saved them by carting the Marcos family and its cronies away through the backdoors of the Malacanang Palace; that's the best they could do for Marcos having nurtured, supported and strengthened him as the veritable dictator of the Philippines and who in turn promptly impoverished the country.

In the kind of support the JDCSI dissident group is receiving from the WCM of the UCC and others and from what I perceived in your report published in the Global Ministries website, I gather the impression that you are all on the same track.

Bob and Frannie Holmes: I was always quite free to express my views, often very strong ones, to your father. It is in that spirit this letter is being addressed to you. I have not met you in your adult years but remember you and your sister Charlotte as children home for holidays in Vaddukoddai from Kodaikanal along with Bobby and Carol Lou Holmes. I had a much closer relationship with Bob and Frannie Holmes. He was to me a parent, teacher, counselor and friend and we have shared mail constantly on just about every subject that concerned or interested us. We have played many games of Scrabbles that we loved very much. One night the first four moves were 7-letter words and we always played on a fast trot aiming at least a total score of seven hundred points.

Letter from Victor Karunairajan – Part IV

Jeyanesan posted in the East: The eastern front was opened up by Ambalavanar despite other protestant churches being active there and the very ambitious Rev Jeyanesan was put in charge. He, a man empowered by Ambalavanar would never have come under the discipline of another and Bishop Jebanesan is an extremely soft man. Though retired from his bishopric responsibilities, until his death Ambalavanar held Jebanesan tight in his tentacles. Bob Holmes would have been able to interpret this reality to the missionary bureaucrats in the US and the Rev Jeyanesan would never have become Prince Charming in your midst.

A good priest's primary duty would have been his loyalty to the order to which he committed himself. If he had plans to breakaway, he should have stayed faithful to his church to the very end; even leaving it should have been after due consultations with his superiors. He would have also submitted his accounts and whatever else that were not his but that of the JDCSI. None of these happened and I have the heavy feeling that the WCM of the UCC never impressed on the Rev Jeyanesan the need to uphold such obligations and decencies for implied in the position he held with the JDCSI was a contractual commitment.

He did none of these but worse, dared to take with him assets that belonged to the JDCSI. How could the WCM of the UCC support this man's actions? I think for reasons best known to the WCM of the UCC, it lost its balance and took a stand that can never be justified unless of course they are part of a conspiracy to perform a foul

action. Dr Cally Rogers-Witte in my telephone conversation with her July 10, 2007 gave me the impression that the Rev James Vijeyakumar is the one who was familiar with the Rev Jeyanesan and his plans and she was dependent on his advice.

I have seen two letters, one written by the Rev Eric Gass and the other by Dr Cally Rogers-Witte and both to Bishop Thiagarajah. The impression I gathered was that they were haughty as if written by a master to a slave and both disrespectful of the traditions that have developed during 190 years. They had the stamp of a colonial characteristic with the conqueror instructing the conquered as to what is in store and be hearkened accordingly without a murmur.

I am really agonized that such an American psyche presently being perpetrated in several regions has come to plague even the mission fields. As long as the Dollar Craze prevails, this will have currency among people who care two hoots for dignity and pride. The Rev Jeyanesan may fit in with the types the WCM of the UCC and the TJCF expect but he is not the man for us. We created Jaffna College when the American Ceylon Mission closed the Batticotta Seminary and we have the potential to strengthen the JDCSI even more as a powerful force in our community despite the rebellion of a class-conscious minority hooked unsuspectingly to what we believe as the hidden agenda of the Rev Jeyanesan.

Conclusion: In conclusion, let me share with you my convinced view that I am not impressed at all with the demands and claims of the dissident group. I have in my reviews described this activity as using the chain saw to cut down a banana stem or employing the sledgehammer to smash a tiny fly. If the Rev Jeyanesan wishes to start his own church, he should have made his move credible in respect of creed, canon and codes of belief with which he is comfortable and how he found these in the JDCSI in conflict with his tenets.

Unless of course, he was assured by some forces in the US, ignorant of what has happened over the years especially since 1907, a hundred years ago, that he will inherit the American Ceylon Mission at the mere expression of his wish. If this is real, the incredibility of such an assumption by these folks in the US is astonishing and mind-boggling. This is the type of highway banditry that marked the early settlements from Europe in the land of the native Indians who themselves were hunted into near extinction along with their precious resources by the so-acclaimed heroes of those days and the rampaging cowboys.

All that the Rev Jeyanesan wants are dollar funding from overseas and the material assets of the ACM, a body that is now a part of the JDCSI and managed entirely by it. Bishop Ambalavanar attempted to make the church a corporation and now the Rev Jeyanesan wants to proceed from there and consolidate his guru's dreams sans creed, canon and code of belief. We have to exorcise the ghost of Rufus Anderson from the portals of the Wider Ministries of the United Church of Christ and other organizations in the US who are contemptuous for reasons best known to them of the Church of South India.

As I said earlier this communication has a two-fold purpose. Apart from asking you to share my concerns with your colleagues at the WCM of the UCC and the TJCF, this document is also for posterity. Since you have placed your reports on public view through the Global Ministries website, perhaps on others too, I am sure you will have no reservations about this being brought to public view and be given to certain archives who value such documents.

Communications of this type are a rarity but important for sharing and searching for solutions to serious problems that affect people and communities with peaceful intent and for the good of any society. This is also intrinsic to our Christian faith. Basically

the situation placed before us – you in the US and us in Sri Lanka - is which option we have: Will it be the Redeemer Christ for our salvation or the Den of Robbers for our worldly pleasures against which Jesus took the whip?

Yours very sincerely,

Victor Karunairajan