NOTES FROM THE COASTS OF BOHEMIA

The relation between religion and violence has been discussed since at least September 2001 with new intensity. In the middle of the Twentieth Century, shortly after the cataclysm of World War II, politicians, media and average citizens were grasping for new models to understand and relate to the reality around them. The world would be described in political and economical, natural and scientific – but hardly in religious terms. Religion became a category of the past. Some theologians have mourned this, realizing the loss of the Church's position in society and with it also the Church's loss of identity. Others have welcomed the non-religious man and woman of the Twentieth century with partly sincere, partly pretended exuberance, claiming that it is only now that the *real faith*, free from any *religious crutches* could be proven.

Half a century later journalists take tutorials to learn the differences between Shiites and Sunnis, Buddhists and Hinduists – and to a lesser extent also between Eastern-Orthodox, Catholics and various shades of Protestants, who – by the way – provided the world with the term *fundamentalism*. Religion seems to be, much to the surprise of theologians, a vibrant part of these present days. If a few decades ago the Christian apologetics had to argue for the relevance of religion, nowadays it's busy explaining that not every form of religion necessarily produces violence. The connection between religion and irreconcilability and aggression seems to be widespread. The veteran of Israeli politics Shimon Peres, when asked what role religion should play in the peace process in the Middle east, answered dryly: "The least possible."

It is in the present situation that we can fully appreciate the poetic intuition of Czech playwright Karel Čapek who already in 1922 (worth noting: in the same year Karl Barth published his Römerbrief) depicted in his novel *The Absolute at Large* the surprising relation between modernity and religion. In a hyperbolic fiction modern civilization is epitomized by invention of a *carburetor*, a device that converts matter entirely into energy, without leaving any remainder. Due to its utmost efficiency the new technology spreads all over the world. Yet an unheard phenomenon appears wherever the ingenious

device has been installed. In various cultures the most radical forms of their respective traditional beliefs and practices start to reappear, always in close proximity to the factories using the device. It turns out, that in reaching the utmost rationality and consuming matter fully the *carburetor* – and Čapek draws here on an *panentheistic* idea – still leaves a reminder, or we should rather say, a by-product, namely: God. Religion as a kind of zeal igniting people – and eventually driving them to a worldwide conflict: Čapek seems to preconceive Peres literally.

The question "What is the relationship between religion and violence?" could be asked in general. However, we do owe an answer in particular when it comes to the Biblical Jewish and Christian Tradition. The argument that Christian Faith is no religion would be just passing the buck in the present context; as Christians and theologians we have to consider not just our theological starting points, but also their manifold ways of expression throughout history, that indisputably have born features of religion – and very often have used or caused violence. The present issue therefore deals with the question from the point of view of various theological disciplines. In the study on the freak story of a Levite, his wife and the war against the Benjaminites in Judges 19–21, Erik Eynikel shows that the violence seemingly omnipresent in the Bible and frequently carried out by God's people – is nothing else but a travesty of what the Torah really requires of people. Martin Stöhr looks over the Church's history and examines how the idea of exclusive loyalty to Christ's way has yielded the way to the loyalty to the Christian emperor and his agenda. Quoting Pavel Filipi, Stöhr sums up the alternative Church history imposes on us: Columbus (imperial Christianity) or Comenius (responsible Christianity aware of and respecting world's plurality). In a remarkably personal tune, highly informative about the last years of communism in Czechoslovakia, Jan Štefan deals with the question of fundamental non-violence. Having carefully weighed the pros and cons of such an attitude, convinced with Luther that "anarchy is worse than tyrany," Štefan formulates conditions under which the option of violence has to be considered.

All the remaining contribution forms a special unit representing the output of the 2004 Campbell Scholars' Seminar held by the Co-

lumbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, in the United States. Since 2000, Columbia Seminary has been inviting some half dozen theologians and parish ministers each year for two months to consult an urgent theological question. In the Autumn of 2004, seven international scholars and preachers discussed *The Mission of the Church in an Age of Religious Violence*. Each of the participants brings his or her own perspective. The perspective of each of the Campbell Scholars mirrors the past and present of their respective cultures; in this issue the participants from Indonesia, Lebanon, Palestine, South Africa, Germany, Nicaragua and the United States were present. An American, European, and definitely a Czech reader might be surprised by the leftward tendency of some contributions. One could question their balance, in particular when it comes to Israeli–Palestinian conflict. A Jewish partner would probably tell a different story. Yet one thing must not be overheard in those contributions: If both Stöhr and Štefan remind us the inauspicious marriage between the Gospel and power along the centuries, a phenomenon called "Constantinism," then it's indeed the peoples in Asia, Africa and Central America, that have experienced the Gospel of Euro-American provenance as an oppressive power. This is a sad witness that has to be heard without interruptions.

What alternatives other than Constantinism do we have then? Coming back to "Bohemian coast" for a while, Czech readers have recently got the opportunity to read seminal book of American Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder *The Politics of Jesus*, published originally in1972 and translated to Czech in 2004. It is not by chance that David Flusser (1917–2000), the Hebrew University historian of the Second Temple period, pointed out the affinity between Bohemian Brethren and Mennonites in their emphasis on the binding character of "Lord Jesus." It is Jesus's life and his teaching that create the realm of messianic ethics we are encouraged to enter not by faith only, but first of all by following him, i.e. by the overall transformation of our lives. Yoder argues against the majority of the 20th century New Testament scholarship that claims the fundamental unavailability of the historical Jesus. If he is applauded for this by the Christian conservatives, he falls out with them when it comes to the nature of this Jesus. The key terms of his sermons , "kingdom," "gos-

pel," "vineyard," "landlord" etc., do not aim for private piety only, but first and foremost for a confrontation with current rules, values and powers. Those powers, attractive and influential as they may appear, have been exposed in their real nature when they brought Jesus to the cross. Yet it was nowhere else but at the cross, that their defeat took place: Jesus didn't submit to their power and refuse himself to use violence. His disobedience, his refusal to act according to their dictate (for instance by grasping sword), was a breach to their omnipotence. Had the Church throughout history taken *the politics of Jesus* more seriously, there would be no need of an issue of Communio Viatorum like this one, bearing witness to the violence committed in Christ's name.

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JUDGES 19–21, AN 'APPENDIX:' RAPE, MURDER, WAR AND ABDUCTION

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The title of my article clearly shows this is not going to be a cheerful story. The last five chapters of the book of Judges are considered two 'appendices' full of atrocity and violence. The first, Judges 17–18, is about a Levite travelling to the hill country of Ephraim from Bethlehem and ends with the massacre of the inhabitants of the people of Laish. In the second 'appendix,' Judges 19–21, a Levite travels from the hill country of Ephraim to Bethlehem and back; in that story almost the entire tribe of Benjamin is exterminated. There are even more gruesome deeds in the second 'appendix,' which I will discuss in this paper.

That these stories are called 'appendices' implies that they are considered additions in the literary composition of the book of Judges. This is a widely held view in OT scholarship based chiefly on the different perspective of the 'era of the Judges' in the previous 16 chapters of Judges and the viewpoint in the 'appendices.' The previous period is characterised as a time when the people practised apostasy that provoked God's anger, with the result that he delivered them into the hands of their enemies. The people cried to the Lord, he listened to their cries and delivered them by raising up a judge. This cycle of apostasy, punishment, cry for help, and deliverance are an almost uniform paradigm. But in the last five chapters the situation is totally different: there is no apostasy, no cry for help and no deliverance by a judge. Of course, there are similarities between these chapters and the rest of Judges in the use of keywords and motives. Furthermore Judges 1 deals with war against the Canaanites and is followed in Judges 2 by a cultic problem. This is counterbalanced in the last part where we have a cultic problem in chapters 17–18 and a

military story in chapters 19–21.[1] Some scholars conclude that this inclusion is the ultimate proof that the two 'appendices' are an integral part of the book of Judges.[2] But it is plausible that a redactor who added these last chapters deliberately based his composition upon the structure of the first chapters in order to create an *inclusio,* framing the whole book. Furthermore there is an element in chapter 20 that contradicts the seemingly chronological order of the book of Judges. Judges 20,27 says that Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before the ark in those days. This means that the time of these events is only two generations later than Moses and Aaron. This is not in accordance with the overall image of the book of Judges as a period of a considerable number of generations. But enough of this, because the topic of this paper is not the composition of Judges but on 'religion and violence' in Judges 19–21.

Many scholars studying Judges 19–21 start their considerations with a reference to the influential work of Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror.*[3] In this book Trible studied four sad stories of women who were abused and violated. I also tend to start from Trible's views on Judges 19–21, although I realise that feminist theology has developed and progressed making it risky to take her approach as the starting point for my considerations. Those who are not or are no longer charmed by a feminist approach will probably not be interested in my use of Trible's views, and those who are interested will not appreciate my criticism of her. My position is a vulnerable one but I am not alone.

[1] See C. Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," *CBQ* 52 (1990), 410–412; also D. W. Gooding, "The Composition of the Book of Judges," *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982), 70–79.

[2] So Ludwien M. A. van Buuren, "Het raadsel van de 'bijvrouw' te Gibea in Richteren 19," in: *Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en haar Tradities* 19 (2001), 166–167 and G. A. Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17–21 and the Dismembered Body," in: Id. (ed.), *Judges and Method. New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, Minneapolis 1989, 157, who agrees with Mieke Bal in her argument that "the elimination of Judges 17–21 from the so-called authentic material depends on a politics of coherence that privileges a reading focused on male heroes, political nationalism, and military accomplishments," (cf. M. Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry. The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges,* Chicago 1988, 9–16). According to Yee Judges 17–21 form integral part of the Josianic composition of the Deuteronomistic History. She therefor objects to calling these chapters appendices.

[3] Phyllis Trible, Texts of Terror. A Literary-Feminist Reading of Biblical Narratives, Fortress Press, Philadelphia (PN), 1984.

Trible's analysis of the story of the Unnamed Woman in Judges 19–21 is critized by Jan Fokkelman in an article in the Talmon FS as "a curious combination of good stylistic analysis and wrong value judgements. Feminist zeal leads Trible into some fundamental errors: (a) she takes for granted that the narrator is a man (!), and she puts him among all the wicked males on the story because she confuses his recitant art of storytelling with his point of view but this overlooks the fact that the narrator reveals his moral stance unequivocally by disqualifying the men of Gibeah at the very moment that he introduces them; (b) she does not understand the quasi-objective narration and the precise description of horrors is as a much more effective critique of violence than snorting out moral indignation, nor that the narrator is morally in order by the very creation and handing down of this story; (c) she overlooks that the transition from the accidental or the personal to the national level arises out of the event; (d) she ignores that the two men in 19:22 are themselves driven into an appalling predicament, in the face of which the reader should refrain from passing a quick and premature judgement."[4] In the face of such a severe judgement, it is difficult to believe that anything of Trible's analysis is left standing. Let us direct ourselves towards the text and look at some of Trible's comments.

Judges 19: Rape and Murder

The Levite traveled to the house of his concubine (the traditional translation for the Hebrew *plgsh*) to fetch her because she had left him. According to the Hebrew text she left him and went to her father's house because she had committed fornication (the verb *znh* is used). In the Hebrew reading it is the concubine who is responsible for what went wrong. She was disloyal to her husband and therefore her leaving is essentially a flight. The Greek and Old Latin reading

[4] Jan Fokkelman, "Structural Remarks on Judges 9 and 19" in: Michael Fishbane – Emanuel Tov (ed.), *Sha'arei Talmon. Studies in the Bible, Qumran and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, Winona Lake (IN), 1992, p. 40–41. See also the critical article by Koala Jones-Warsaw, "Toward a Womanist Hermeneutic: A Reading of Judges 19–21" in: Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, Sheffield 1993, appeared also in: The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center 22 (1994) 18–35.

tell us that she left him because "she was angry with him." The difference is that in the Greek and Old Latin text the reason for the woman's desertion of her husband is her husband's conduct. She could no longer tolerate living with him and so returned to her father's house. I pass over the attempts of some to harmonise the Hebrew and Greek readings[5] because I believe that for the redactor or copyist of the Hebrew text it was unthinkable for a woman who had no right to divorce to leave her husband. Therefore, according to the Hebrew redactor she must have been guilty (and therefore he changed "was angry" to "fornicated") and fled to her father's house. I think therefore that the Greek reading: "she was angry with him" is more original.[6] Why else would her husband come after her after four whole months to speak to her heart unless it was to reassure her and bring her back (Judg. 19.3)? Moreover, adultery, if that was her sin, was punishable by death (Lev. 20.10; Deut. 22.22) and not by "speaking to her heart."

The lapse of time between her leaving him and his journey to fetch her is not unimportant: four months.[7] In a paper to be published in the memorial volume for Sjef van Tilborg[8] I discussed the metaphorical meaning of the indications of time in the book of Jonah. Jonah says in Chapter 3: 40 days and Niniveh will be turned upside down. One of my conclusions was that the use of four and its multiples (40, 400, 4000, …), especially in relation to indications of time, always implied something negative although some good could follow out of it.

[5] So: Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, p. 87; she follows, HAL,[3] זנה II: "zürnen, hassen," a hapax in the OT, related to the Accadian *zenu*. It is however very unlikely that there is such a *znh* II based only on this dubious text.

[6] It is possible of course that the original Hebrew reading, behind the actual LXX text was תזנח. זנח means to reject Hos 8,3.5; Zech 10,6; Ps 43,2; 44,10.24; 60,3.12; 74,1; 77,8; 88,15; 89,39; 108,12; Lam 2,7 33,1. In Middle Hebrew its meaning is: to detest. The change from ח in ה was then minimal but with serious consequences. "Speaking to her heart" to bring her back to him is exactly what God does in Hosea 2, where Israel is compared with a whore. Therefore influence of Hosea 2 on the eventual reading of the MT can be assumed.

[7] David Gunn and Dana Fewell, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story,* Nashville 1993, 133 raise two possibilities regarding the Levite's tarry to get her: his wounded pride or following Koala Jones-Warsaw: the concubine's secondary status does not rate an immediate response. I argue that the metaphorical use of the number four is decisive.

[8] "On Day, Three Days and Forty Days in the book of Jona," in: *One Bible. Thousand Methods*, U. Berges – P. Chatelion Counet (eds.), Leiden, forthcoming 2005.

In the chapters of Judg. under discussion, four and its multiples play an important negative role: apart from the four months already mentioned, the Levite stayed four full days in her father's house; later when there is a battle between the Israelites and the Benjaminites, the former raise an army of 400,000 men. When the battle is over the 600 Benjaminites that survived hide for four months at the rocks of Rimmon. Later they take 400 virgins from Jabesh-Gilead. Many other examples can be quoted from other texts of the OT where the number four has bad connotations: Goliath challenges the Israelites for 40 days or the rain during the flood lasts 40 days, etc. But there is often – not always – some ambivalence in the use of four and its multiples. It always indicates something negative (e. g. an unpleasant period) but it sometimes gives the prospect of a new and better future: Moses' stay for 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai and Jesus' stay for 40 days in the desert, or the 40 years the Israelites sojourned in the wilderness, etc.

So, after four months the Levite travelled to his father-in-law to "speak to his wife's heart" and to bring her back. But when he arrived at her father's house he did not speak to his wife at all. The conversations were between the Levite and his father-in-law, as was also the eating and drinking together that went on for four full days. The concubine was excluded from all this. And only late in the afternoon of the fifth day did the Levite finally succeed in tearing himself away from the enforced hospitality of the father in law. Literarily, that the day drew towards its close as the action unfolded does not bode well. This "night as danger" motif was elaborated upon by Weston Fields, and it occurs in several biblical stories, including Judges 19–21. In these chapters a total of 16 references to darkness, night, evening, daylight, and morning are used. "This passage uses the atmosphere-charging potential of the danger-at-night motif to the greatest extent"[9] writes Weston Fields and he further points to the association of this motif with biblical destruction narratives. It appears in this manner here in the passage under discussion but also in the story of

[9] Weston W. Fields, "The motif 'night as danger' associated with three biblical destruction narratives" in: Michael Fishbane – Emanuel Tov (eds.), *Sha'arei Talmon. Studies in the Bible, Qumran and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, Winona Lake 1992, 24.

Sodom, of Jericho in Judges 2, and of Samson. Field stresses that in each of these stories sexuality is present in an unusual form (outside the "normal" family relationship).

On their way home the Levite and his party arrived at Jebus, the older name of Jerusalem and the Levite's servant proposed spending the night there, because it was too dangerous to stay in the open field. Trible is correct when she remarks that the woman has no part in the consultation. She belongs to the dumb creatures – like the donkeys – that have to follow the master.

The master was reluctant to stay overnight in Jebus because it was a Canaanite city, not an Israelite one. He proposed to travel to Gibeah in Benjamin or to Ramah. Finally they arrived at Gibeah and sat down in the open square of the city, hoping that someone would invite them to spent the night in their house. But no one did so. It looked as though they were going to spent the night in the open air after all – not a very pleasant prospect – until an old man arrived, himself a foreigner in Gibeah, a fellow tribesman from Ephraim. He invited the whole party into his house and the tense situation changed into a happy get-together much like the one at the concubine's father's house.

But the safe situation inside the house quickly dissipated through a danger that threatened them (again) from outside in the night. The men of the town, specified as "sons of Belial" (often translated as "perverts") summoned the old man to hand over his guest because they wanted "to know him." This is an expression used here and elsewhere for "having sexual intercourse with." This is not new; in Genesis 19 the men of Sodom made a similar request for Lot to bring his two guests outside for the same reason. The narratives of Lot in Sodom and the one here in Gibeah have many common characteristics (even verbally) as is often recalled in publications on Judges 19 and Gen 19, namely surrounding the house and the injunction to bring the guest(s) outside to 'know' him/them. In both stories the hosts act much the same way: they call upon their fellow citizens, their "brothers," not to do such an evil thing and they offer women as a substitute for the male guest(s): Lot offers his two virgin daughters and the old man in Gibeah offers his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine. Though there are more similarities, the differences be-

tween the two stories have also received much attention. For instance, an important difference is that Lot offers his two daughters while the old man in Gibeah offers his guest's concubine along with his daughter.[10] Several scholars have asked how it was possible for the old man to offer his guest's wife to the mob. Phyllis Trible explains this by stating that "the rules of hospitality in Israel protect only males,"[11] a position that has been heavily criticised by many scholars[12] because there is no rule or law in the OT that says hospitality is limited to male guests. Victor Matthews explained the old man's proposal to give away the concubine as the result of the Levite's words when he referred to his wife as "your maidservant" in speaking (in 19,19). The old man takes the Levite at his word.[13] Stuart Lasine on the contrary sees the action as the result of the literary dependence of the story in Judges on the story in Genesis. Because the Lot story acts as a model, the old man of Gibeah must also offer two women. If the story in Judges is dependent on Genesis this may be correct but we must also read Judges in its own right.

In both cases – and this is again a similarity between the two stories – the men of the town did not accept the offer: they wanted to rape the male guest(s). In Genesis the guests are angels and they manage to save themselves by performing a miracle. In Judges the guest also manages to save himself by pushing his concubine outside. The mob which just declined the offer of two women is now satisfied with the concubine alone and they rape her the whole night long. Only in the morning is she released and crawls to the house of the old man where she falls down at the door with her hands on the threshold. This last detail has also received much attention in studies on this chapter because it was the door that protected Lot's guests (Lot went out to the mob and "shut the door behind him," in Gen. 19,6), and similarly it is the door that protects the guest of the old man in Gibea. This door is the border between the cruel world outside and

[10] Another important difference is that the words "ravish them" of the old man in Judges 19 do not occur in Gen. 19,7.

[11] Phillis Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 75.

[12] Jan Fokkelman in: *FS Talmon*, 44; Victor Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," in: *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22 (1992), 9.

[13] Victor Matthews, in: *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22 (1992), 9.

the safe place inside the house where the Levite spent the night (his sleep was manifestly not disturbed by what happened outside; the text continues that "he rose in the morning, and he opened the door of the house to go on his way").

In contrast with the Greek that says that the woman was dead, the Hebrew text does not tell us this when the Levite finds her on the threshold. For Phyllis Trible this is an indication that she may not have been dead already and that her husband took her with him alive and then killed her by chopping her up into 12 pieces that he subsequently sent around among the twelve tribes of Israel. An important argument for Trible's thesis is that the text does not mention the woman's death and that the Levite took "the knife" (with the article) and dismembered her into 12 pieces. Why *the* knife and not *a* knife? According to Trible this is because his knife was already prepared for the moment they arrived home. She refers to the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen. 22,10, the only other text in the OT where "taking the knife" is used and, there, obviously for slaughtering a human.[14] All this seems far-fetched to me. But it is true that the woman did not receive worthy treatment by her husband even after her death. Her body never knew a grave, a major disgrace in old Israel and equal to rejection by God (Is. 14,18–19; 55,15–16; Jer. 8,1vv; 16,4; 22,19).

Let us return for a moment to the gang rape in Gibeah. The question is why the mob was satisfied with the concubine when they had earlier rejected the old man's offer to take two women. This has attracted the attention of several scholars. Ken Stone explains in an anthropological study that the men outside did not want to hurt the old man and his family, but the Levite. Therefore when the Levite threw out his wife to the men of Gibeah, they managed to hurt and dishonour him by raping his wife.[15] Therefore they were satisfied

[14] G. A. Yee, in: Id. (ed.) *Judges and Method*, 165, explains the use of *the* knife, also with a reference to Gen 22, as the knife reserved for ritual purposes. The woman replaces the sacrificial animal. That the woman was still alive when the Levite hacks her up is, according to Yee, seen as a possibility allowed by the text.

[15] Ken Stone, "Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject-Honor, Object – Shame?," in: *JSOT* 67 (1995) 101. See also Katharina von Kellenbach, "Am I a Murderer? Judges 19–21 as a Parable of Meaningless Suffering," in: Tod Linafelt (ed.), *Strange Fire. Reading the Bible after the Holocaust* (The biblical seminar 71), Sheffield 2000, 181.

with the concubine alone. This seems improbable, but a related question is this: what exactly does the outrageous behaviour of the men of Gibeah consist of? Is it the (attempt) to rape the Levite? Or is it the rape of the concubine? In Judges 19,24, where the old man says, "Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing (נבלה)," he certainly means only male rape with "a vile thing." Obviously the old man had fewer problems with female rape. This is often explained by the fact that homosexual behaviour is in itself a crime in OT law, so that male rape is doubly wrong.

In the Levite's account of what happened in Gibea at the assembly in Mitzpah, he called the rape and murder of his concubine זמה 'wickedness' ונבלה 'and outrage.'[16] But was the crime the outrageous deed done to the woman or was it the Levite's honour that was hurt? I think it is both impossible and unnecessary to separate these two. Therefor we need to ask the question again: why were the Gibeahites satisfied with the concubine alone? Perhaps they wanted to humiliate the outsider, the old man who was not a Gebeahite, rather from Ephraim. The strategy of the Gibeahites was to humiliate the Levite by rape and at the same time the Old man by demonstrating his inability of protecting someone under his care. When the daughter and concubine were *offered* to the Gibeahites, they were part of a negotiation process and rejected because they wanted to humiliate the Levite.[17] Later when the Levite shoved his concubine out the door to save himself, it was not an offer in a process of negotiation, but a diversion of the Levite, using his concubine as a living shield. The

[16] See Alice A. Keefe, "Rapes of Women/Wars of Men," in: *Semeia* 61 (1993) 82-83 for a study of the use of נבלה in sexual contexts. See also *ThWAT*. Keefe, 86 n. 5, asks also whether "the outrage of Gibeah" to which many commentators refer when discussing Judges 19 could be identified with the dismemberment of the concubine. That is what the Israelites get to see when they receive a piece of the woman's body and say: 'Such a thing has never happened since the day that the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, take counsel, and speak out.'

[17] Compare this with the situation further in the text (chap. 21) where the 200 men of Benjamin abduct a girl in Shiloh. This act is explained as no violation of the oath that every Israelite made not to *give* their daughter to a Benjaminate because the were not given to the Benjaminites because the latter just took them.

mob took it because it demonstrated that the Levite did not (or could not) protect her.

Judges 20: War

The Levite had cut up his wife and probably distributed the pieces among the tribes of Israel.[18] We read of a similar act by Saul in 1 Sam 11. When he had heard that Jabesh was surrounded and threatened by the Ammonites, he cut his oxen into 12 pieces and sent them through Israel with the message: "Whoever does not come after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done with his oxen." In contrast to Saul, the Levite did not deliver a message *along* with a piece of his wife. His deed could therefore provoke only abhorrence. That this was indeed the effect is obvious in Judges 19,30: "all that saw it said: Thus shall you say to all the Israelites, 'Has such a thing ever happened since the day that the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day? Consider it, take counsel, and speak out.'" I cannot address the question of the literary dependence of Judges 19 and 1 Sam 11 but it is obvious that the position taken on this issue influences the interpretation of both passages.[19]

In Judges 20 the tribes assembled before Yhwh in Mitzpah – for the first time God is named in this 'appendix' – where they discussed the matter with the Levite; his horrifying deed with the body parts had not missed its effect. He gave a very tendentious account of what happened. He said that the people of Gibeah wanted to kill him although he was never threatened with death. Furthermore he said that the people of Gibeah raped and killed his concubine, but he "forgot" to point out his role in all this, namely that he handed her over to them.[20] But his report had the desired effect and all the tribes united

[18] The text does not say that the Levite distributes the parts over the twelve tribes but the twelve pieces and same number of tribes suggests distribution.

[19] S. Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges," in: *JSOT* 29 (1984) 45, says that "Judges presupposes the account of Saul to "highlight the perversity of the Levite's dismemberment of his concubine vis-à-vis Saul's dismemberment of the oxen, and to expose the wrongheadedness of the military action against Gibeah and Jabesh-Gilead, as opposed to the later deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead by Saul of Gibeah."

[20] In the studies on this chapter there is a whole discussion going on regarding whether the Levite did lie before the congregation (Lasine; calls him "an irresponsible liar," in *JSOT* 29, 1984, 48).

to punish the inhabitants of Gibeah. The casting of the lots, in order to share out the different duties in the punitive expedition, showed that the whole undertaking had a religious character. The Benjaminites, who were not present in Mitzpah (according to Judges 20,3) were asked to turn in the guilty men of Gibeah but they did not want to. The solidarity of the tribes with the Benjaminites was too strong. The extradition of the men of Gibea is demanded with the words "What wickedness is this that has been committed among you?" This phrasing seemed to include all Benjaminites in the accusation. Then follows a long battle report of what is clearly a religious war: God was consulted by the Israelites in Bethel[21] before the battle. They inquired of God: "Which of us shall go up first to battle?" The response of Yhwh that Judah has to go first is explained from the pro-Davidic perspective of the whole narrative of Judges 19–21. The chaos described in these chapters is the result of the absence of a king (Judges 19.1 and 21.25).

However, the battle was disastrous for the Israelites: the Benjaminites made an (unexpected?) sally and 22,000 of the 400,000 Israelites fell. After weeping before Yhwh the Israelites inquired of him again but now the question was somewhat different: "Shall we again draw near to battle against our kinsfolk, the Benjaminites?" Before the first battle the question concerned only the strategy. The battle itself was not questioned. Now the battle itself is put in doubt and the Benjaminites are called "our kinsfolk" (lit. "our brother"). Yhwh replied, "Go up against them." The battle, however, went similarly to the first and 18,000 Israelites fell (the total casualty figure for the two defeats is 40,000!). Once more the Israelites wept before Yahweh, but now additionally they fasted until the evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Their ritual involvement in this sacral war became more and more extensive. The inquiry of Yahweh was now performed before the ark of the covenant where Phinehas ministered but their question to Yhwh showed even more doubt: "Shall we go out once more to battle against our kinsfolk the Benjaminites, *or shall we cease*?" Now for the first time in this war the Israelites

[21] Bethel is already an important sacred place in the stories of the patriarchs (Gen. 12,8; 28,11–19) and later one of the principal sanctuaries of the Northern kingdom (1Kgs. 12,29). It is a few kilometres north of Mitzpah.

received a confirmation of their victory: "Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand." Yhwh is now undoubtedly on Israel's side as the battle reports[22] in 20,35: "The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel." Only 600 Benjaminite warriors survived the clash and they hid at the rock of Rimmon for four months. But the orgy of killing and violence did not stop. The Israelites turned against all the remaining inhabitants of Benjamin: all men and beasts and everything else they found were killed. All the towns were set on fire. Although the term חרם is not used in this chapter the allusion to the ban is obvious. Further on in the narrative, in 21,11, it is explicitly used in the punishment of Jabesh-Gilead. There are two kinds of חרם in pre-exilic Israel: the war-ban, in cases of sacral war against other nations (cf. Deut. 20,16–18) and the punitive-ban that was also directed towards Israelites, most often idolaters.[23] Here and in Judges 21,11 (where the word חרם is used) there is no idolatry involved and even in Judges 21,11 there was no order from God to impose the ban. It was the Israelites' own initiative to enforce the ban and it led to the almost total extinction of Benjamin. Also on their own initiative, they swore not to give their daughters to Benjamin (21,1), complicating matters even more.

Judges 21: War and abduction

This new situation leads to further massacre and violence. Again the people gathered in Bethel and asked Yahweh: "why should it come to pass in Israel that today one tribe should be lacking?," and they wept and made offerings. But either they did not receive an answer, or they did not wait for one. Another oath they had made – again on their own initiative, to put under the ban all who failed to assemble before the Lord to punish the Benjaminites. The oath is offered as a solution to the problem of the almost vanished tribe of Benjamin. Jabesh-Gilead had remained absent and therefore had to come under the ban. An army was sent to Jabesh-Gilead and all were exterminated except for 400 (!) virgins who were spared and given to 400 of the Benja-

[22] Of the battle report we have two versions (20,29–35 and 20,36–48).
[23] See *ThWAT*.

minites. But they were still 200 women short. The Israelites had a solution for that too without breaking the oath not to *give* their daughters to the Benjaminites: the abduction of 200 girls who danced outside the town at the annual vintage festival at Shiloh. Nobody broke the oath because they did not *give* their daughters to the Benjaminites. And the fathers and brothers, who complained to the elders because their goods and honour were damaged and pled for revenge, were asked for generosity. A higher good was at stake, the continued existence of the 12th tribe in Israel. So the Benjaminites seized the 200 girls required. The motif of abduction of the virgins is well known in ancient history (e.g. in the foundation saga of Rome) and some exegetes therefore treat it favourably.[24] But it is interesting to look at the vocabulary that is used in this passage ("lie in wait, ambush" ארב and "carry off" חטף are used in military contexts (cf. Judg. 16,2: the Philistines must ambush Samson, and Josh 8,21: Joshua ambushes Ai). The only other passage where *both* verbs are used together is Ps 10,9: "they lurk in secret like a lion in its covert; they lurk that they may seize the poor." The psalm speaks about jackals who terrorise the poor and against whom God is expected to intercede. In Judges the girls are not rescued by God, when they are carried off by the Benjaminites and experience their first wedding night as if it was a rape. So rape frames the whole story: it starts with rape in Judges 19 and ends with rape in chapter 21.

Conclusion

The second 'appendix' starts and ends with the refrain: "In those days there was no king in Israel" (19,1; 21,25; see also 18,1). In Judges 17,6, early in the first 'appendix,' and in Judges 21,25, the final verse of the second 'appendix,' the refrain is longer: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everybody did what was right in his own eyes." Fokkelman rightly observes: "this is the hermeneutical hint for the reader: the framework within which we are supposed to

[24] See e. g. Karel Deurloo, in: Hanna Blok, e. a. (eds.), *Geen koning in die dagen; over het boek Richteren als profetische geschiedschrijving*, Baarn, 1982, p. 105 calls it "an Artemis-like festival."

interpret the material."[25] The old man in Gibeah who offered his daughter and the Levite's concubine to the mob also uttered the words: "do with them what is right in your eyes" (19,24). Moreover in Judges 1–16, where this refrain is completely absent, there is another refrain: 3 times "the sons of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD," which most often refers to idolatry (2,11; 3,7; 6,1) and four times "The Israelites again did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord" (3,12; 4,1; 10,6; 13,1), also referring to idolatry. Another major difference between Judges 1–16 and 17–21, is that in the former part we find the circular structure of apostasy: God's anger, deliverance into the hands of the enemy, repentance of the people, and salvation. In the final episode (chapters 17–21) a cyclical structure is absent, but "everybody did what was right in his eyes." There was no king but also no judge (anymore) to rescue Israel. The situation degenerated into complete social, moral, and religious chaos. It is clear that the lack of a king and the need for one is thematic in the whole book of Judges. Once the supreme ruler Joshua gives way to tribal autonomy (Judges) things start to go wrong. The judges begin with great heroes, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Debora; and the proudly humble Gideon, all strong ('king like') leaders. But then things start to go wrong, with a culmination in the testosterone-fuelled Samson. The degeneration in chapters 17–21 is in harmony with that and demonstrate the rottenness of the ordinary people reflecting the rottenness of the leaders. Only when the people return to a structure with an autocrat things will turn around again. The reference to the absence of a king is – as said above – propaganda for the establishment of kingship (and more particular the dynasty of David). The 'king-making' follows in 1 Samuel. But this pro-monarchic propaganda is not the only message in the second 'appendix.' If we look from a feminist perspective these narratives are real "texts of terror" to use Phyllis Trible's words again. Not only because of the extreme violence practised against women but also because the silencing of the women. Not one of them in these five chapters is given a voice.

As well, the other violence in the chapters (the violence that is connected to Yahweh) is a travesty of the rules and principles of the

[25] Jan Fokkelman, in: *FS Talmon*, 43.

Torah. In an article entitled "battling against Yahweh"[26] Garry Knoppers compared the following three texts concerning sacral war: Deut. 13, Judges 19–21 and 2 Chronicles 13. They all three concern inner Israelite war. Deut. 13 describes the rules to apply when a city that becomes idolatrous: the execution of the חרם, so that "you do *what is right in the eyes of Yahweh*, your God." 2 Chronicles 13 describes the inner-Israelite war between Abiah, king of Judah and Jeroboam, the king of Israel. The story parallels partially 1 Kgs. 15,7 but is mostly about the conflict between apostasy (by the Northern Kingdom of Jeroboam) and true worship (by the southern kingdom of Abiah). In Judges 19–21 as we have seen the "sacral war" against Benjamin has hardly any religious motivation. It looks more like a punitive expedition that went completely out of control and that ended up in war, extinction, abduction and rape. This is what happens when there is no king. However, the presence of a king is not an absolute guarantee for justice and peace. Already David in his affair with Batsheba and the killing of her husband Uriah (1 Sam. 11), demonstrated that even the greatest of all kings, the standard with which all other Judean kings were compared,[27] was not immune for corruption and abuse of power. When God and his Thora, as in Judges 19–21 are (almost) absent, every man (or every group) does what is right in his own eyes.

[26] Garry N. Knoppers, "'Battling against Yahweh' (2 Chr. 13:2–30)," in: *RB* 100 (1993) 511–532.

[27] The pharseology for the evaluation of the kings of Israel and Judah (in comparison with David) is: "King X did what was right/wrong in the eyes of the Lord:" 1 Kings 3,3; 11,33.38; 14,8; 14,22; 15,5.8.11.26.34; 16,19.25–26.30; 22,53–54; 2 Kings 3,2–3; 12,3; 13,2.11; 14,3.24; 15,3.9.18.24.28.34; 16,2; 18,3; 21,2.15.16–17.20–21; 22,2; 2,32.37; 24,9.19. For the study of these formula see E. Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah & the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, Leiden 1996, 50–122.

ZUR GESCHICHTE CHRISTLICHER GEWALT[1]

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I.

Heidnische Kritik am Christentum sagt: Das Christentum ist staatlich unzuverlässig, weil es eine absolute und kritische Autorität jenseits der kaiserlich-göttlichen Autorität und jenseits der polytheistischen Gewalten anerkennt – den einen Gott Israels und der Völker. Dadurch ist gegenüber allen anderen Mächten jede absolute Loyalität der an *diesen* Gott Glaubenden gebrochen.

Ein Kritiker des Judentums und des Christentums, der neuplatonische Philosoph Kelsos, wirft um 180 nChr dem Christentum vor, es sei „jüdischen, also barbarischen Ursprungs". Zwar seien die „Barbaren imstande Lehren aufzustellen, aber die Griechen seien (ihnen) überlegen, solche Lehren zu beurteilen, zu begründen und in die Praxis umzusetzen". Kelsos beruft sich auf Platon, wenn er darauf hinweist, dass jede geoffenbarte Religion auf eine alte Weisheit zurückgehe und „stets von den weisesten Völkern und Städten und von weisen Männern festgehalten" wurde. Seine Lehre habe „auch Moses bei weisen Völkern und berühmten Männern vorgefunden und sich angeeignet". So gewiss Kelsos eine unnennbare, oberste Gottheit als Grund aller Wahrheit anerkennt, so wichtig ist ihm die göttliche Würde des Kaisers. Daraus folgert er: Was ist denn Schreckliches dabei, unter den Menschen dem Kaiser einen Eid zu leisten? „Ist diesem doch die Herrschaft auf Erden verliehen, und was du im Leben empfängst, empfängst du von ihm!" Wenn diese göttliche, zentrale Macht des Kaisers nicht anerkannt werde, dann wird das „gesamte Erdreich von den wildesten und gesetzlosesten Barbaren beherrscht". Dann erinnert Kelsos an die Ohnmacht des einen Gottes den Juden und

[1] Die bearbeitete Fassung eines im Rahmen der internationalen Konferenz zum Thema „Religion und Gewalt" gehaltenen Vortrags. Die von *Israel Interfaith Association* und von der *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* veranstaltete Konferenz fand in Jerusalem am 2.–4. April 2005 statt.

Christen anrufen. Ihr Gott helfe ihnen nicht. „Statt Herren der ganzen Erde zu sein, ist jenen (d. h. den Juden) nicht ein Stück Land, ja nicht einmal ein Herdfeuer geblieben, während sich von euch (d. h. den Christen) zwar noch immer der der eine oder andere versteckt hält oder flüchtig ist, aber sicher bald aufgespürt und der Todesstrafe zugeführt wird.“[2] Nach dem römischen Grundsatz *do ut des* zahlt Religion sich auch in Erfolg und Machtgewinn aus.

Origenes verweist auf Abraham. Er habe für Sodom gebetet. In der alten machtkritischen Haltung des frühen Christentums vergleicht er Rom mit Sodom und beansprucht für die Christen sehr wohl, für das Wohl Roms zu arbeiten, z. B. durch das Gebet. Auch eine Minderheit sei nach Jesus wie das Salz der Erde (Mt 5,13) nötig, eine Gesellschaft zu erhalten. Die Christen „leisten sie dem Kaiser bessere Dienste als alle Soldaten, die ins Feld ziehen und so viele Feinde töten, wie sie können.“[3] Beten dient Gott umfassend.

II.

Unbestritten ist unter allen Auslegern des Neuen Testamentes, dass die Botschaft Jesu von der Nähe des erwarteten Gottesreiches eine verbindliche Botschaft des Friedens, der Gerechtigkeit und der Gewaltlosigkeit einschliesst. Jesu Auftreten ist gewaltfrei. Er antizipiert Hoffnungen und Inhalte des kommenden Gottesreiches *in der Gegenwart*, zieht sie ins Leben. Die damit verbundene Ethik des Friedens wird in der Bergpredigt als eine Interpretation der Tora entfaltet. Sie ist bestimmt durch die messianische Hoffnung der Propheten auf ein Reich des Friedens und der Gerechtigkeit. Es ist eine Ethik, die von den Nachfolgern Jesu zu leben und zu tun ist. Sie gerät in Konflikt mit dem Grundkonzept des Römischen Reiches: Einheit durch Gewalt und durch Religion.

In der Zeit Jesu und der Apostel wird heftig gestritten um das richtige Verstehen und Tun der hebräischen Bibel. Die Offenbarung Gottes an Israel, ist letztlich die gemeinsame Basis der verschiedenen Strömungen im Judentum, auch der christusgläubigen Gruppen. Aber: Die Bibel Israels *allein* richtig zu verstehen führt später zu dem

[2] So überliefert in der Gegenschrift des Origenes „Wider Kelsos“, 1,2; 7,45; 7,68; 8,69.

[3] A. a. O. 1,9; 73.

christlichen Monopolanspruch, der alleinige Erbe des jüdischen Volkes, das „wahre Israel“ zu sein. Daraus erwächst jene breite christliche Tradition, sich selbst als „Religion der Liebe“ zu deklarieren und das Judentum mit der Rede von einem „rachsüchtigen und gewalttätigen Gott“ abzuwerten.

Diese Position wird früh von dem aus Pontus stammenden Schiffsreeder Markion vertreten. Er gibt sein ganzes Vermögen der christlichen Gemeinde in Rom für die Armen. Gerechtigkeit, Liebe und eine prinzipielle Verneinung jeder Gewalt kennzeichnen seine Position. Er gibt den Anstoss, dass auch die Christen über den Tenach hinaus *ihre* eigenen Heiligen Schriften sammeln. Markion verlangt den Abschied von der hebräischen Bibel. Dort spreche nur der Schöpfergott, der das Böse geschaffen habe. Markion will als Heilige Schrift der Christen *nur* das *Lukas*-Evangelium und die *Paulus*briefe gelten lassen. Das provoziert christlichen Widerspruch. Man will „Mose und die Propheten“, die „Schriften“, die Tora, d. h. die ganze Schrift, nicht aufgeben. Die Kirche bekennt sich zur Bibel Israels als ihrer Heiligen Schrift. Aber sie beginnt nun auch, die Schriften der Apostel zu sammeln und als zweiten, kleineren Teil der Bibel hinzu zufügen – ein Midrasch zum Tenach. Markion wird im Jahr 144 aus der Gemeinde ausgeschlossen. Seine Sponsorengelder werden ihm zurückgegeben. Man muss allerdings sagen, dass nur ein Strang des markionitischen Denkens in der ganzen Kirchengeschichte lebendig blieb – *nicht* sein Pazifismus, wohl aber seine Abwertung der Hebräischen Bibel und Israels.

Wer nun auf Markions Spuren sagt, dass „Krieg“ und „Gewalt“ im Alten Testament dominieren und „Liebe“ und „Frieden“ im Neuen Testament, der übersieht folgende Fakten:

- Im Neuen Testament gibt es – vor allem in Gerichtsszenen und apokalyptischen Texten – Gewaltphantasien, die sich am angedrohten Leiden der Ungläubigen im Endgericht erfreuen.
- Das Gebot, Gott zu lieben und den Nächsten, dem Fremden und dem Feind zu helfen, gehört zum Zentrum der hebräischen Bibel, der einzigen vollgültigen Bibel Jesu und der Apostel.
- Die hebräische Bibel erzählt eine *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* – mitten unter den Völkern. Sie umspannt mit ihren ältesten Teilen

weit über tausend Jahre. Sie ist auch ein Geschichtsbuch und nicht nur die Stimme Gottes. Die hebräische Bibel versucht, – wie die Historien seiner Nachbarn – in einer Geschichtsschreibung *alle* Überlieferungen des jüdischen Volkes festzuhalten:

- Dagegen umfassen die Texte des Neuen Testaments höchstens drei Generationen. Seine Verfasser rechnen nicht damit, dass sie Teile einer „neuen Bibel" schreiben. Das Neue Testament versteht sich nicht als Ablösung des Alten Testamentes, sondern als dessen Bestätigung und Erfüllung.
- Würde man die Christentumsgeschichte auch auf über tausend Jahre bemessen – wie die hebräische Bibel mit ihrer Geschichte des jüdischen Volk – so umfasste das Neue Testament dann eine Kirchengeschichte, die bis zu Ketzerprozessen, Kreuzzügen und mittelalterlichen Judenpogromen reichte.

III. Die Wende seit Kaiser Konstantin ab 313 oder der Wunsch der Christenheit, zu sein wie alle Völker

Im Machtkampf um die Vorherrschaft hat – so die Legende – Konstantin (306–337) eine Vision. Er werde seinen Konkurrenten Maxentius im Zeichen des Kreuzes besiegen. Er siegt. Für Konstantin der Beweis, wer der stärkere Gott ist und welche Menschengruppe als politischer Machtfaktor jetzt zu berücksichtigen ist. Schon 314 verbietet die Synode von Arles Christen, den Kriegsdienst zu verweigern. Theodosius wird zwei Generationen später den „Heiden" verbieten, Soldaten eines christlichen Kaisers zu werden. Arles ist auch jene Synode, auf welcher der Kaiser seine Arbeitsteilung zwischen kaiserlicher und religiöser Gewalt bestimmt. Er erklärt den Bischöfen: Gott habe ihn zum Bischof (*episcopos ton ektos*), „Aufseher der äusseren Dinge" oder – anders übersetzt – der Aussenstehenden, d. h. der Heiden gemacht. Die Bischöfe habe er zu „Aufsehern über die inneren Dinge" bestellt.[4] Wie dieses Wort auch zu deuten ist, es beansprucht die Sphäre äusserlicher Gewalt für den Kaiser und überlässt die innere Welt religiöser Fragen den Bischöfen. Diese sind froh,

[4] Eusebius, Vita Constantini IV, 24.

endlich alle Verfolgungen hinter sich zu haben. Die blutigen Verfolgungen unter Diokletian (284–305) liegen erst wenige Jahre zurück.

Konstantin ist an einer einheitlichen Religion im Imperium Romanum interessiert. Gefährdet erscheint sie ihm und seinen Nachfolgern Einheit durch die anstürmenden Perser, Goten, Vandalen oder Germanen. Diese Situation fragt die zur Staatskirche werdende Christenheit, ob sie sich an der Verteidigung „ihres" Vaterlandes beteiligen wollen. Hinzu kommt: Einheit und Handlungsfähigkeit des Imperiums sind auch durch den regionalen und theologischen Pluralismus in den rasch sich ausbreitenden Kirchen gefährdet.

In ihnen geht zentral auch und immer wieder um ethische Fragen, wie zum Beispiel das Problem des Militärdienstes, des Eides, der Familien- und Sexualethik, der Asketen durch das in Ägypten entstandene Mönchtum. Ständig auch um den Umgang mit den *lapsi*, d. h. mit denen, die in der Verfolgung mit staatlich-heidnischen Kulten kollaboriert hatten. In allen Fragen standen „liberalere" Positionen gegen „rigoristischeren" Haltungen in unterschiedlichen christlichen Strömungen. Aber auch im Streit um einen einheitlichen Ostertermin will sich der Kaiser mit kaiserlicher Autorität im Interesse der Einheit durchsetzen. Folgt der Osten weitgehend der jüdischen Praxis der Berechnung des Pessachfestes, so will der Westen – oft mit antijüdischen Begründungen – die Verbindung zum Judentum abschneiden.

Den Prozess einer einheitlichen Religion geht Konstantin ebenso vorsichtig wie energisch an; vorsichtig, indem er das Christentum zunächst zur *religio licita* erklärt, es also anderen Religionen gleichstellt. Diesen Status einer „zugelassnen Religion" hatte das Judentum schon. Energisch handelt Konstantin, indem er sich selbst die letzte Verantwortung und Autorität für die kirchlichen Synoden zuteilt. Er allein beruft die Synode von Nicäa (225) ein; er leitet sie auch. Der römische Bischof ist entbehrlich, nimmt also nicht teil. Hier beginnt der theologische Weg einer katholischen, d. h. umfassenden Orthodoxie. Nach mehreren ökumenischen Synoden verbindet sie mit ihrem *credo* die unterschiedlichen christlichen Konfessionsfamilien bis heute.

Es ist nicht zu leugnen, dass sich im Wunsch nach einer einheitlichen christlichen Religion auch eine tiefe christliche Sehnsucht aus-

drückt, die dem Gebet Christi folgt (*ut omnes unum sint*, Joh 17,21): „auf dass alle eins seien". Andererseits ist die politische Gewalt nicht zu übersehen, die das Christentum instrumentalisiert und zähmt.

Diesen Prozess vollendet Kaiser Theodosius I (379–395) mit äusserster Konsequenz. In seinem Edikt von 380 ordnet er nach einem Bekenntnis zur Trinitätslehre an: „Nur die, die diesem Gesetz folgen, so gebieten wir, dürfen katholische Christen heissen; die übrigen aber, die wir für toll und wahnsinnig halten, haben den Schimpf ketzerischer Lehren zu tragen."[5] Ihre Versammlungsorte dürfen nicht als Kirchen bezeichnet werden. „Endlich soll sie vorab die göttliche Vergeltung, dann aber auch unsere Strafgerechtigkeit ereilen, die uns durch himmlisches Urteil übertragen ist."[6] Es ist festzuhalten, dass Zorn und Verfolgung der sich herausbildenden katholischen Kirche zuerst den Häretikern, dann den Heiden und zuletzt den Juden gelten.

Die Beziehung zur Mutter Israel wird in unterschiedlicher Schärfe dargestellt. Zentral ist dabei der kirchliche Monopolanspruch, jetzt das „wahre Israel" (*verus Israel*) zu sein. Als Grund dafür wird die Ablehnung, ja Hinrichtung Jesu durch das jüdische Volk genannt. Dieser kollektive Vorwurf *entlastet* die *römische Staatsgewalt* – obwohl Pontius Pilatus im Credo namentlich genannt wird und er *belastet* das *jüdische Volk*. Die christlichen Bündnisse mit der Staatsmacht auf Kosten des Judentums vergiften die jüdisch-christlichen Beziehungen auf fast 2000 Jahre. Der selbsternannte Erbe postuliert den Tod der Erblasserin Israel, die doch seine lebendige Mutter und Schwester ist.

Die christliche Polemik gegen das Judentum beim Auseinandergehen der Wege produziert ein offenes und latentes Gewaltpotential. Es ist jederzeit abrufbar, wie das Beispiel des Bischofs von Mailand, Aurelius Ambrosius[7] (339–397) zeigt, eines Vaters der christlichen Kirchenmusik. Nach einer Prozession zu Ehren der Makkabäer-Brüder, die als Märtyrer und Heilige in hohem Ansehen der frühen Christenheit stehen, verbrennen unter Führung des Bischofs die Mönche

[5] Codex Theodosianus XVI, 1,2.

[6] Zum Ganzen vergl. Hendrik Berkhof, Kirche und Kaiser, Zollikon-Zürich 1947, besonders S. 61ff.

[7] Von ihm. dem Vater der abendländischen Kirchenmusik, stammen so schöne Lieder wie „Veni Redemptor Gentium" (EG 4) oder „Deus Creator Omnium" (EG 485; die in den christlichen Gesangbüchern bis heute in Nachdichtungen lebendig sind.

in Kallinikon (am Euphrat) zuerst eine Kirche von „Häretikern“ (sog Valentinianer), dann die Synagoge. Kaiser Theodosius weist den Bischof an, die Synagoge wieder aufzubauen und die Täter zu bestrafen, denn die „Sekte“ der Juden sei nicht verboten. Ambrosius schaltet sich ein und erklärt sich mit dem Bischof solidarisch: „Ich erkläre, dass *ich* die Synagoge in Brand gesteckt habe…, damit es keinen Ort mehr gebe, wo Christus geleugnet wird!“ Die Synagoge gilt ihm als „Haus der Gottlosigkeit, als Zufluchtsort des Wahns, den Gott selber verdammt hat!“ Der Kaiser gibt klein bei.[8]

In klassischer Weise bündelt Johannes Chrysostomus (354–407) alle antijüdischen Vorbehalte, weil in seiner syrischen Region viele Christen selbstverständlich an den Festen und Gebräuchen ihrer jüdischen Nachbarn teilnehmen. Mit glänzender Rhetorik liefert er in seinem Wunsch nach Abgrenzung allen christlichen Konfessionsfamilien Munition für christliche Attacken auf Juden – bis heute. Unter Theodosius wird eine theologisch korrekte christliche Lehre zum Staatsgesetz. Was eine Irrlehre ist, stellen Bischöfe oder Synoden fest. Die Verfolgung der Häretiker, später der Heiden und Juden, wird zur Aufgabe der staatlichen Gewalt oder des Volkes, dem man Sündenböcke zeigt.

IV. Biblische Herrscher werden zu christlichen Vorbildern

Im Lauf der Jahrhunderte findet ein bemerkenswerter Tausch statt: Seitdem die Regierung christlich ist, argumentiert die Machtkritik der christlichen Untertanen immer weniger mit dem Ersten Gebot oder mit der radikalen Ethik der Bibel gegen die Allmacht des Kaisers. Das Wort aus der Apostelgeschichte „Man muss Gott mehr gehorchen als den Menschen!“ (Ap Gesch 5,29) tritt zurück. Mehr und mehr wird der verkürzt verstandene Vers aus dem Brief des Paulus an die Gemeinde in Rom wichtig: „Seid untertan der Obrigkeit, die Gewalt über euch hat“ (Röm 13,1).[9]

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[8] Zitiert nach Adolf Martin Ritter, *Alte Kirche, Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte in Quellen*, Bd 1, Neukirchen 1994, S. 186.

[9] Es wäre interessant, die Auswahl der altkirchlichen Propheten. und Evangelienlesungen daraufhin zu betrachten, wieweit sie politik- und reichtumskritische Texte den Gemeinden vorenthalten.

Von Karl dem Grossen (768–814) gilt: Er ist der Vater sowohl Frankreichs wie Deutschlands. Zugleich knüpft er erneut an die Tradition des Römischen Reiches an. Das zeigen seine Bestrebungen, die Reichseinheit herzustellen wie auch eine einheitliche Religion in den Dienst des Staates zu stellen. Ein Teil der Sachsen wird mit militärischer Gewalt in die Kirche eingegliedert. Das Reich der Bayern und der Langobarden wird durch Heirat integriert. Karl ist der mächtigste Fürst des Abendlandes. Politische und wirtschaftliche Beziehungen verbinden ihn mit dem Kalifen von Bagdad. Karl betrachtet sich als *rex et sacerdos*, als König und Priester. Wie selbstverständlich bezieht er Gottes Anrede an ganz Israel (aus Ex 19,5 und 6) auf sich selbst: „Und nun, wenn ihr auf meine Stimme hört und meinen Bund haltet, so sollt ihr mir vor allen Völkern mein Eigentum sein; denn mein ist die ganze Erde. Ihr sollt mir ein Königreich von Priestern werden und ein heiliges Volk."

Der Hofstaat huldigt ihm mit dem Titel „König David." Auch in dem Priesterkönig Melchisedek (Gen 14) sieht Karl ein Vorbild für seine Herrschaft. Schon sein Vater hatte sich anreden lassen mit „strahlend leuchtender David". Josuas Kriege werden vorbildlich, auch die Mitwirkung der Priester vor Jericho (So später Thomas von Aquin zu Jos 6,4 und 4. Mose 10,9).[10] Sich Glanz und Autorität von biblischen Gestalten zu leihen, war eine Praxis, die auch andere Könige und Päpste übten. Waren es *vor* Konstantin die Makkabäerbrüder, die als Märtyrer und Vorbilder der Christen verehrt wurden, so sind jetzt die biblischen Herrschergestalten mitsamt ihren kriegerischen Taten vorbildlich, wozu auch wieder auf den Makkabäeraufstand hingewiesen wird.

Die *ganze Bibel* wird mit christlichen Augen gelesen. Dabei ist Afrikaner Augustinus (vor Thomas von Aquin) der grosse Lehrer des Abendlandes. In unserem Zusammenhang werden drei seiner Gedanken wichtig:

- Einmal die Arbeitsteilung zwischen weltlicher und religiöser Macht. Karl schreibt nach eigener Lektüre von Augustinus

[10] Vergl. Karl Hammer, *Christen, Krieg und Frieden*, Olten und Freiburg/Breisgau 1972.

- *De Civitate Dei* an den Papst: Des *Königs „Aufgabe* ist es, die Heilige Kirche…vor dem Ansturm der Heiden und vor der Verwüstung der Ungläubigen draussen mit Waffen zu verteidigen und drinnen durch die Anerkennung des katholischen Glaubens zu befestigen." Des *Papstes Aufgabe* „ist es, mit zu Gott erhobenen Händen wie Moses unser Waffenwerk zu unterstützen!" Augustinus ist fest davon überzeugt – und das gilt bis in die Staatsethik der reformatorischen und anglikanischen Kirchen – ohne Gott sind Staaten „nichts anderes ist als Räuberbanden im Grossen."[11]
- Zum anderen: Die lateinische Bibelübersetzung der Vulgata verwandelt die Einladung Jesu zum grossen eschatologischen Festmahl an die die „Armen und Krüppel, an die Lahmen und Blinden", an die Leute ausserhalb der Stadt, an die auf den Landstrassen, in Zwang: „*Cogite intrare*! Zwingt sie, einzutreten!" Mission mit Zwang scheint legitim.

V. Verachtung und Verfolgung von Juden anstelle der Nachfolge Christi

- Von den Juden sagt Augustinus, sie seien „Zeugen unserer Wahrheit und ihrer Bosheit".[12] Gegen jeden mordenden Judenhass müssen diese Zeugen der Geschichte Gottes allerdings am Leben bleiben.

In der christlichen Konstruktion der Heilsgeschichte sind die Juden ein zentrales Problem. Ihrer Tradition verdankt das Christentum *alles*, was es über den *Gott der Welt* und über die *Orientierung in der Welt* zu lernen gibt. Warum aber schliesst sich das jüdische Volk nicht dem christlichen Glauben an, in dem Juden Jesus von Nazaret Gottes messianischen Boten zu sehen? Die Kirchen hören die jüdische Nachfrage, wo denn die Realisierung der messianischen Hoffnungen in der öffentlichen Geschichte zu sehen sei? Diese Frage wird *weniger mit der Nachfolge Christi* beantwortet als vielmehr mit einer immer

[11] *De Civitate Dei* XXII.
[12] *CChr* 39,744

sublimeren *Christologie*. Die kritische Rückfrage der Juden gilt als illegitim. Haben sie nicht diesen Jesus umgebracht? Ihre Leidensgeschichte unter christlicher Macht und Mehrheit wird als Strafe Gottes gedeutet. Das berechtigt die einen, sich als Gottes Gerichtsvollzieher gegenüber dem jüdischen Volk zu verhalten. Andere nehmen sich daher das „gute Gewissen", den Verfolgten nicht zu helfen. Man könne doch nicht gegen den zornigen Willen Gottes handeln.

Nun kennen die zweitausend Jahre Kirchengeschichte auch Epochen der Koexistenz und der Duldung. Das gilt vor allem für die Zeit vor den Kreuzzügen sowie für die Zeit des Humanismus und der Aufklärung. Das gilt z. B. vom mittelalterlichen Polen, das zur Zuflucht von Juden wird, als in Mitteleuropa die Pest wütet und die christliche Mehrheitsgesellschaft nach Sündenböcken sucht, die angeblich die Brunnen mit der Pest vergiftet hätten. Eine magische Auffassung der Eucharistie ist (seit dem Laterankonzil von 1215) weit verbreitet. Sie führt zu Ritualmordlegenden, die bis ins 19. Jahrhundert Anhänger finden. Zum Opfer der Pogrome werden die jüdischen Gemeinden. Über Europas Grenzen hinaus trifft diese Gewalt Juden und Muslime, aber auch Teile der im Westen weithin unbekannten orientalischen Kirchen auf den verschiedenen Kreuzzügen.

Durch die Jahrhunderte gibt es friedliche Pilgerreisen von Christen nach Jerusalem und ins Heilige Land. Das ändert sich schlagartig. als Papst Urban II im Jahr 1095 in Clermont zum Kreuzzug aufruft. Er antwortet damit zunächst auf den Hilferuf des byzantinischen Kaisers Alexios I (1088–1118). Die gewaltsame Befreiung des Heiligen Grabes schiebt sich rasch als Motiv *vor* die Hilfe für die östliche Christenheit. Das Rittertum steckt durch das Erstarken der Städte und des Bürgertums in einer Krise. Als Ausweg erscheint eine Kombination aus guter Tat des Glaubens, aus Hoffnung auf Beute und aus Abenteuerlust. Die in Massen mitziehenden Armen flüchten mit ähnlichen Zielen aus einer von Krisen geschüttelten europäischen Gesellschaft. Das Kreuz wird zum Siegeszeichen für die einen, zur tödlichen Bedrohung für die anderen. Die Definitionsgewalt – der Beginn jeder Gewalt – hat sie als „Ungläubige" definiert, die unterworfen werden müssen.

1099 beschreibt ein Teilnehmer nach der Eroberung Jerusalems das Blutbad an den Bewohnern Jerusalems, „dass die Unsrigen bis zu

den Knöcheln im Blut wateten… bald durcheilten die Kreuzfahrer die ganze Stadt…plünderten die Häuser, die mit Reichtümern überfüllt waren. Dann, glücklich und vor Freude weinend, gingen die Unsrigen hin, um das Grab unseres Erlösers zu verehren, und entledigten sich Ihm gegenüber ihrer Dankesschuld!“[13]

VI. Gegenbewegungen versuchen, Gewalt einzudämmen

Aber neben der Geschichte von Zwang und Gewalt ist zu sehen, dass in der Christenheit auf biblischem Boden auch Begrenzungen der Gewalt gesucht und gefunden werden. Nicht wirkungslos bleiben die biblischen Hauptworte Recht und Gerechtigkeit, der Barmherzigkeit und des Friedens, sowie die prophetische Botschaft vor allem der Gedanke der Menschenwürde eines jeden Menschen, verankert im Gedanken seiner Gottesebenbildlichkeit. Die Botschaft Jesu ist nicht ganz vergessen. Ich nenne einige Beispiele, Gewalt rechtlich und ethisch einzudämmen:

1. Viele mittelalterliche „Fürstenspiegel“ erinnern die Machthaber an ethische Leitlinien für ihr soziales und politisches Alltagshandeln. Sie sind oft in Anlehnung an biblische Texte formuliert. Diese Regelungen verbinden sich mit antiken Tugendkatalogen und verpflichten auf das Allgemeinwohl (*bonum commune*). Der Herrscher soll die Guten belohnen, die Bösen bestrafen, soll selbst vorbildlich und christlich leben, für Recht und Gerechtigkeit sorgen. Aber auch der umgekehrte Prozess ist zu beobachten. Der Widerspruch zwischen Religion und Politik führt zu dem Wunsch, sich ganz von jeder Ethik zu befreien. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) entwirft schliesslich eine alternative, „ethikfreie“ Staatsethik. Nur der Machterhalt und die Machtausweitung bestimmen das Handeln des Fürsten.

2. Die Begrenzung staatlicher Gewalt durch den Aufbau einer eigenen kirchlichen Machtstruktur bedeutet einen zivilisatorischen Fortschritt gegenüber der antiken Polis, in der Staat und Religion als „Mixtur,“ ohne kritisches Gegenüber existieren.[14] Die Macht des

[13] Regine Pernoud (Hg.), *Die Kreuzzüge in Augenzeugenberichten*, München 1971, 100f.

[14] Franz Rosenzweig, *Stern der Erlösung*, Frankfurt a. M. 1921, III S, 117: „Die antike Polis war ihren Bürgern Staat und Kirche in eins, noch ganz ohne Gegensatz.“

einen findet jetzt ihre Grenze in der Macht des anderen. Die Anerkennung der Autorität des einen und einzigen Gottes gibt der Freiheit gegenüber allen anderen Autoritäten eine Chance. Das ist auch gegen Jan Assmann festzuhalten, der den biblischen Monotheismus für die Geschichte der Gewalt in den monotheistischen Religionen mitverantwortlich macht.[15] In den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Kaiser und Papst sowie in der Theorie, dass die weltliche wie die kirchliche Macht nur dem einen Gott verantwortlich sind, wird immer wieder um Freiheitsräume gegen die Totalitätsansprüche der einen oder der anderen Seite gerungen. Der Kampf des Mittelalters zwischen Kaiser und Papst im Westen führt eben nicht zu dem Gedanken einer „Symphonie" von Staat und Kirche unter dem Kaiser bzw Zaren. wie sie für Byzanz kennzeichnend wird, erst recht nicht zu einem „Caesaropapismus" beispielsweise der Russisch-orthodoxen Kirche bis 1917, sondern zu einer Gewaltenteilung. Der Gedanke einer Einheit von Religion und Staat lebt auch im Westen bis in den Friedensschluss nach dem blutigen 30jährigen Krieg weiter, allerdings schon vielfach gebrochen durch multireligiöse Wohngebiete. „Wer herrscht, der bestimmt die Religion" (Cuius regio eius religio) – das war die Vorstellung vom „Corpus Christianum". Wer nicht dazu gehört, hat minderes Recht oder das Recht zur Auswanderung. Die Lebensformen der orthodoxen Minderheitskirchen zB unter islamischer Herrschaft führen zu eigenständigen Beziehungen zwischen Staaten und Kirchen.

3. Andere Gegenbewegungen entstehen im Mönchtum. Es lebt auf der einen Seite eine radikale Ethik des frühen Christentums – allerdings um den hohen Preis einer dualistisch denkenden, also gespaltenen Kirche. Als Staatskirche dispensiert sie sich durch die Unterscheidung von Laien und Klerus von der Ethik Jesu. Eine besondere, soziologische Gruppe, Klerus und Mönchtum, lebt als Spezialethik, stellvertretend für alle, die Ethik der Bergpredigt. Die Wirksamkeit dieser alternativen Lebensformen ist zeitweise gross. Wenn sie ihrem

[15] Jan Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur*, München 1998; Ders., *Herrschaft und Heil: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa*. München 2000. Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism*, Chicago 1997.

Ideal der Armut und Gewaltfreiheit treu bleiben, werden sie zu Reformkräften der Gesellschaft. Es sei an das Beispiel des Franz von Assisi erinnert.

4. Aus verschiedenen antiken Traditionen übernimmt die Kirche zur Gewaltbegrenzung die Kriterien für einen gerechten Krieg. Das sind seit Augustinus (354–430) folgende:

- Nur eine legitime Regierung kann einen gerechten Krieg führen (*potestas legitima*);
- Es muss ein gerechter Grund (*causa iusta*) vorliegen,, dass Recht gebrochen wurde;
- Ziel kann nur sein, die gebrochene Friedens- und Rechtsordnung wiederherzustellen (*finis pax*);
- Dieses Ziel, die Friedens- oder Rechtsordnung wiederherzustellen, muss den Gegner einbeziehen;
- Die Mittel müssen dem Ziel entsprechen. Die Übel des Krieges dürfen nicht grösser sein als das Unrecht, das er beseitigen soll (*debitus modus*);

Die scholastische Theologie hat diese Ethik verfeinert. Luther und Calvin blieben in der durch Konstantin gezeigten Beziehung zwischen Staat und Kirche. So auch in der Frage des „Gerechten Krieges". Sie fügen allerdings drei Verschärfungen hinzu:

- Einmal den Grundsatz: Wer anfängt hat Unrecht;
- Niemand soll und kann Richter in eigener Sache sein;
- Heilige Kriege, Kreuzzüge oder Religionskriege sind keine „gerechten Kriege". So argumentiert Luther gegen die Türken = Muslime vor Wien mit der These vom gerechten Krieg. Er lehnt jede religiöse Überhöhung dieses Verteidigungskrieges als Kreuzzüge ab. Er weiss, welche Blutspur die Kreuzzüge ins Heilige Land, aber auch die Kreuzzüge gegen christliche frühreformatorische Bewegungen durch die Geschichte ziehen. Zur Ausbreitung der Religion gibt es nach Luther und Calvin kein anderes Mittel als nur das Wort und die Praxis des Glaubens. Gewalt ist ausgeschlossen. Der Christ selbst kann Unrecht und Gewalt leiden – hier argumentiert er mit der Bergpredigt – aber andere darf er nicht leiden lassen.

Bis in die Neuzeit steht die Mehrheit der Kirchen hinter dem Konzept eines gerechten Krieges, obwohl es nach seinen strengen Kriterien selten „gerechte Kriege" gegeben hat.

5. Nicht zu übersehen ist, dass im Mittelalter kirchliche Feiertage die Kriege und Fehden begrenzen – bis zu einem Drittel des Jahres war so für Gewalt gesperrt. Die Synode von Toulouse gebot 1027 für alle Sabbate eine totale Waffenruhe. Solcher „Gottesfrieden" in kirchlichen Fastenzeiten, an Heiligentagen oder in der Passionszeit heisst „Treuga" Dei. Ein Konzilsbeschluss gegen das Töten von Christen begründet das Verbot so: In jedem Christen wird das Blut des Leibes Christi vergossen (1054 in Narbonne). Auch nach der grossen Kirchenspaltung 1054 in orthodoxe Ost- und römisch-katholische Westkirche erweitert die Synode von Winchester (1087) diesen Beschluss und beruft sich dabei auf den griechischen Kirchenvater Basilius: „Wer einen Menschen getötet hat im grossen Kampf, der soll für jeden einzelnen ein Jahr lang Busse tun!" Konkret wird das im Gesetz zum „Ewigen Landfrieden" von 1495.

6. Hier liegen auch die in den mittelalterlichen Ethiken angelegten Entwicklungen eines Rechtes, das den Frieden fördert und schützt. In allen mittelalterlichen Staatsethiken sind *pax et iustitia*, *schalom we-zedaka*, zentrale Aufgaben. Das gilt zunächst für die Monarchen, später für souveräne Staaten, ehe es zum Recht der Völker und Menschen wird. Am Recht der Reformationskirchen wird dieser mühsame Weg deutlich. Der Augsburger Religionsfrieden von 1555 verspricht den Protestanten gleiche Rechte, was erst nach dem dreissigjährigen Krieg verbrieft wird. Das hat Auswirkungen auf die Minimierung von Gewalt. Erste Anfänge von Völkerrecht und Menschenrechten entstehen. Der Dominikaner Franz von Vitoria (ca 1483–1546) kämpft angesichts der spanischen Eroberung Lateinamerikas um eine rechtliche Gestaltung der sog Neuen Welt und ihrer Völker. Der protestantische Jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) entwirft ein Recht für die Völker, das Gottes Schöpfungsplan korrespondiert: „Was Gott will, ist Recht!" Es gilt für Gläubige und Ungläubige, „auch wenn es Gott nicht gäbe! (etsi Deus non daretur)".

7. Zu erwähnen sind die mittelalterlichen Reform- und Armutsbewegungen mit ihrem Anspruch, die Kirche nach der Botschaft Jesu Christi zu erneuern. Ideal der Kirchenreform ist die Gewaltlosigkeit und Armut der urchristlichen Gemeinde. Macht und Mammon, Akkumulation von Gewalt und Reichtum stehen im Widerspruch zur Anbetung des einen Gottes und seines armen Sohnes Jesus. Zu er-

wähnen sind z. B. die Albigenser (Katharer), Waldenser, Wiclifiten und Hussiten. Sie befruchten sich gegenseitig sehr stark, überleben jedoch nur als winzige Minderheiten. Sie trifft die volle Gewalt der Kreuzzüge von christlicher und weltlicher Herrschaft gegen andere, dissentiernde Christen. Diese blutige Erfahrung müssen gelegentlich auch die im Westen weithin unbekannten orientalischen Kirchen machen. Auch hier ertönt der Ruf „Gott will es!“ (*Deus vult!*). Fjodor Dostojewski beschreibt die Antipoden der Gewalt auf der einen Seite und einer Macht der Ohnmächtigen auf der anderen Seite. In einer Erzählung im Roman „Die Brüder Karamasov“ agiert der Grossinquisitor mitten in der Grosskirche. Er müsste auch Jesus verbrennen, wenn dieser mit seiner Botschaft etwa in seine Kirche hineinredet. Sie habe die Sache Jesu gut in die Hand genommen.

Das Ethos der Kirchenreform- und Armutsbewegungen bildet eine Brücke zu den Kirchen, die in und nach der Reformationszeit entstehen. Es sind die historischen Friedenskirchen, z. B. der Mennoniten, Church of Brethren und Quäker. Sie haben im Europa der christlichen Staatskirchen keinen Platz. Sie müssen wie jene auswandern, die vor dem Elend des Hungers, staatskirchlicher oderstaatlicher Repression flüchten. In Nordamerika werden sie um viele christliche Dissidentenbewegungen bereichert. Ihrem Kampf für Religions- und Gewissensfreiheit sowie gegen klerikale und säkulare Gewalt von oben verdanken wir einen entscheidenden Beitrag zur modernen Hochschätzung der Menschenrechte und der Demokratie. In der Unabhängigkeitserklärung der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika von 1776 ist dieses biblisch-menschenrechtliche Fundament deutlich erkennbar – auch in der Menschenrechtserklärung der Französischen Revolution. Obwohl sie gegen eine mit der Macht und dem Reichtum verbündete Kirche antikirchlich sich artikuliert, stehen ihr keinen anderen als die biblischen Begriffe Freiheit, Gleichheit und Geschwisterlichkeit zur Verfügung.

Der Freiheitskampf der Niederländer durch Wilhelm von Oranien (1533–1584) und die Unterdrückung durch Spanien benutzen biblische Motive der Befreiung und der Rechtsgleichheit. Ähnliches gilt von der Anti-Apartheidpolitik in Südafrika. Der Widerstand der schwarzen Mehrheit wie des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen und des Vatikans begründet sich mit der gleichen Würde und den gleichen

Rechten aller Menschen – ohne Rücksicht auf ethnische oder kulturelle Zugehörigkeit. Die weisse Minderheit benutzt neben machtpolitischen und ökonomischen Argumenten auch biblische: Man sieht sich in der Rolle Israels, dem Gott dieses verheissene Land gegeben habe. Die Unterschiede der „Rassen" seien gottgegeben. Der anglikanische Erzbischof Tutu: „Als die Weissen kamen hatten sie die Bibel und wir das Land, letzt haben sie das Land und wir die Bibel!" In der Tradition des Kampfes um Freiheit für Menschenwürde und gegen Gewalt lebt auch die antike, dann christlich adaptierte Ethik des Tyrannenmordes weiter. Ich nenne stellvertretend für viele Widerstandskämpfer in Europa Dietrich Bonhoeffer, der als Pazifist sich daran beteiligte, Hitler mit Gewalt zu beseitigen. Vor genau 60 Jahren wird er im KZ Flossenbürg ermordet.

An zwei engagierte Christen und ihre Arbeit für Menschenwürde und gegen Gewalt will ich in diesem Zusammenhang erinnern. (a) Henri Dunant (1828–1910) gründet nicht nur das Rote Kreuz und den Internationalen YMCA, sondern auch der Genfer Konvention von 1863. Sie bestimmt auch die Anfänge der Haager Landkriegsordnung mit. (b) Peter Benenson gründete 1961 Amnesty International, das sich für alle „gewaltlosen politischen Gefangenen" (*prisoners of conscience*) einsetzt. Grundlage ist die Allgemeine Erklärung der Menschenrechte der UNO.

VII. Eine Entscheidung ist notwendig, welcher Linie sowohl der biblischen wie der kirchlichen Geschichte die Christenheit folgen will

In der christlichen Geschichte sind die Aktionen *gegen Gewalt* eine *Minderheitenposition*. Mehrheitlich findet eine Anpassung an die herrschende Macht statt oder eine Instrumentalisierung isolierter christlicher Motive wie z. Zt. in der Kriegsrhetorik von George W. Bush oder bei den fanatischen Gegnern in Nordirland. Die Ambivalenz in der Gewaltfrage verlangt eine Entscheidung: Welche biblische, welche christliche Linie wollen wir weiter verfolgen? Ich illustriere das Problem am ambivalenten Umgang mit dem universalen Auftrag des Gottesknechtes aus Jes 49,6. Da spricht Gott zu Jakob/Isarel: „Ich will

dich zum Licht der Völker machen, dass mein Heil reiche bis an die Enden der Erde!“

Columbus setzt das Wort als Motto in sein Schiffstagebuch.[16] Er ist auf einer Eroberungsfahrt nach Indien, um Gold zur Finanzierung eines neuen Kreuzzuges zu gewinnen. Wieder einmal soll das Heilige Land von den „Ungläubigen“ befreit werden.

Anders der Pädagoge und letzte Bischof der Böhmischen Brüderkirche, Johann Amos Comenius, er ist auf der Flucht vor der Gegenreformation aus Prag nach Amsterdam. Er formuliert aus demselben Text einen konträren, einen universalen Schluss: Gerechtigkeit sowie Gleichheit aller Menschen und nicht Machtgewinn ist sein Ziel. Er schreibt nach dem Gemetzel des Dreissigjährigen Krieges kritisch zur Gewaltpolitik der europäischen, christlichen Kolonialmächte: „Die christliche Welt umfasst nicht die ganze Welt. Neben uns gibt es noch Hunderte von Nationen… Es ist absolut notwendig mit dem Trachten nach Seemacht Schluss zu machen…, denn der Schöpfer hat allen dasselbe Recht über die Meere gegeben, sodass in Zukunft nicht einfach Privatleute ihre Schätze zu eigenem Nutzen sammeln werden, sondern dass alle, die vor dem Herren auf Erden wohnen, werden essen und trinken und sich wohl kleiden und freudig dem Herren aller Erde loben!“[17]

Folgen wir Christen in Zukunft Columbus oder Comenius?

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[16] Zitiert aus José Miguez Bonino, *Theologie im Kontext der Befreiung*, Göttingen 1977, S. 16.

[17] Zitiert aus Pavel Filipi, „Komenský und der Kolonialismus: Der Brief nach Breda“. In: Jan Lášek und Norbert Kotowski (Hrg.), *Johannes Amos Comenius und die Genese des modernen Europa*, Fürth 1992, 217–222.

NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE IN THE REFLECTION OF A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC[1]

Jan Štefan, Prague (Czech Republic)

1. First of all, I would like to introduce myself. I am a Czech Protestant, born in the 'Second World,' in the time of the culmination of the Cold War. The first 31 years of my life I lived under the so called 'real socialism' in a small satellite country of the Soviet empire. It is now 13 years that I live in a country, which has gone through a transformation towards a parliamentary democracy with a functioning market economy. In 1999 we became a member-state of the NATO. As a citizen I belong to the 'First World,' to the richer Northern hemisphere. Yet there is still a feeling of a inferiority in me, that of a poorer cousin from a post-Communist country. For the first time in my life, and I am 45, I find myself outside Europe. As a Christian I live in a post-Christian country, where Christians as Christians are in a minority, and in which Protestants form a further minority within another minority.

The subject of my lecture is: 'Non-violent resistance.' The subject-matter is thus not the fundamental problem of the Christian's right to a resistance as such. The Apostle Paul says about authorities: "rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad," and he defines their task: "they are ministers of God, attending to this very thing." (Romans 13:3.6) The Christian owes them the kind of conditional obedience, and not that unconditional obedience. "Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:17) After *Confessio Augustana* (1530), 'Christians are obliged to be subject to civil authority' only if 'that can be

[1] Written as a key-lecture for conference *Christian Faith and Violence* held by the International Reformed Theological Institute of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam on July 8–18, 2003 in Djakarta, Indonesia.

done without sin.'[2] *Confessio Scoticana* (1560) goes further than passive disobedience to active resistance against evil and calls 'to save the lyves (sic!) of Innocentis (sic!), to reppresse tyrannie, to defend the oppressed.'[3]

The subject-matter of this lecture concerns then the concrete question of the violent or non-violent resistance. I would like to avoid doing *theology from above,* deductive theology, a dogmatic treatise, which could at most only spice up abstract truths with some stories from the past or present. Yet I also want to avoid doing *theology from below*, inductive theology, through historical, sociological or even psychological research, which could only succeed in establishing some general conclusions from concrete facts. My task is not the text alone, or the context alone, but *the text in context.* I purport to offer you two entries to the troubled history of my country. First, I would like to speak about violence and non-violence during the Reformation and counter-Reformation, and second, on the non-violent resistance against Nazi and Communist totalitarianism. Do not panic, it will not be a lecture on church history. I share the view of Gerhard Ebeling (1912–2001), according to which in the history of churches there is not an increase in the truth of Christian faith, yet there is an increase in engagement with the truth of faith. 'Church history is full of experience, …biographical or institutional.'[4]

2. The Reformation and counter-Reformation in the Czech Lands were characterised by violence on both sides. Yet it is typical that precisely then a fundamental protest against all kinds of violence has appeared, the first great theology of non-violence.

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[2] *CA XVI,3*, in: John H. Leith (ed.), *Creeds of the Churches. A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present,* Louisville 1982[3], 73. In Latin and German: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche,* Berlin 1978[7], 71, 6 and 20–23.

[3] *CS 14*, in: Wilhelm Niesel (ed.), *Bekenntnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche,* Zollikon-Zürich 1938[2], in English 96, 28–29, in Latin 97, 22–24 (without biblical Quotations).

[4] Gerhard Ebeling, *Studium der Theologie. Eine Enzyklopädische Orientierung,* Göttingen 1975, 82, 81. In English: *The Study of Theology,* London, 1979, 79, 78.

2.1 The Reformation

At the beginning of the two centuries of Reformation in the Czech Lands there is an act of violence: the burning of the Catholic priest and master of the university in Prague, Jan Hus (cc. 1370–1415) as a stubborn heretic during the council of Konstanz in 1415. His life achievement, the appeal from all worldly instances of ecclesiastical law to the heavenly Christ who is the fairest Judge, can be interpreted through the framework of Protestantism (Christ as a supreme authority), yet also from the point of view of secular humanism (conscience as the ultimate authority). Hus has refused to take back his controversial theses; he valued the established truth, about which he was willing to lead a dialogue, above his life. Life for him was not the highest value; he regarded life in untruth worse than death. Violence on defenceless truth became one of the typical Czech paradigms.[5]

[5] Hus' death is recalled in the self-sacrifice of a student of history, Jan Palach (1948–1969). He in January 1969 set himself on fire in the centre of Prague, on the Wenceslas Square, with the aim to wake up the lethargic Czech public, which with gnashing of teeth, yet still impotent of resistance, had to watch the demolition of democratic rights and liberties after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The dying Palach has left behind a letter, in which he announces that others are also prepared to die. A day later the beloved poet of the nation, Jaroslav Seifert (1901–1986, Nobel price for literature in 1984) had through the television turned to Jan's friends with the following message: 'You have the right to do whatever you wish with yourself. However, if you do not want that we all kill ourselves, do not kill yourselves.' (Jiří Lederer, *Jan Palach. Zpráva o životě, činu a smrti českého studenta*, Prague 1990, 111.) Is not the wilful destruction of one's own life also an act of violence, violence on ourselves?

Twenty years later a similar message has been broadcasted through radio stations abroad, the appeal of the non-orthodox Marxist professor of philosophy, Milan Machovec (1925–2003). Machovec during the first mass anti-Communist demonstrations in Prague in January 1989 reacted to rumours about similar actions in a somewhat professorial manner: 'it is more difficult to live and work for truth, than to die for truth.'

We note a different approach from Jan Patočka (1907–77), a dissident who has been tortured to death by the Communist secret police in March 1977. In his testament, which he wrote only days before his death, he writes: 'there are things worth suffering for! … things for which one suffers are those which are worth living for… The so called art, literature, culture, etc. are without this a mere industrial process, which will never get any further than from the office to the box office, and from the box office to the office.' (Jan Patočka, What Can We Expect of Charter 77?, In: H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia,* London 1981, 220–223. Another translation: What We Can and Cannot Expect from Charta 77, In: Jan Patočka, *Philosophy and Selected Writings,* Chicago 1989, 343–347.)

The echo of Hus' death has been bigger than the echo of his teaching. The Czech Lands have stood by their martyr. Violence on this individual was followed by violence on the collective: five crusades of Western Christianity (1420–1431) were meant to bring the *Hussite* heretics back to the Catholic faith. The masters of the university in Prague have agreed with military defence, using the theological concept of a just war.[6] Was the newly born evangelical faith destined to be terminated by the swords of mercenaries? The armies of radical Husites, 'God's fighters,' have fought out the right for a hearing at the Council of Basle (1433) for the Husites. They also opened the way for a *multi-confessionalism* in the Lands, which has until then been an unimaginable achievement of Christianity without or against Rome.

After a defensive period the time has come for offensive. The victorious Husites have set out on invasions to the neighbouring Germany with the aim to export Reformation with violence. And after defeating the outer enemy internal rifts have appeared. In the times of the Husite wars Catholics loyal to Rome became the victims of the excesses of radical Husites (between whom one could find women and children fighting).

When we write the *history of victors*, we start to ask elaborate questions: Who started the violence? Who was the perpetrator of violence, and who was its victim? What is a greater violence: the 'status quo' or the effort for its change? The traditional problem of *bellum iustum* have grew into the modern problem of *revolutio iusta*.[7] If we were to write the *history of the defeated*, we would have to start to ask about all the unwritten stories of concrete people: What is more devastating than a civil war, in which world-views or political preferences separate families, neighbours of friends temporarily or

[6] Usually it related to these five conditions:
1. *causa iusta*: war is the last attempt to the renewal of law and order;
2. *recta intentio*: the aim of the war is coexistence with the adversary, not his destruction;
3. *debitus modus*: only morally justifiable means are acceptable;
4. *legitima potestas*: war may be unleashed only by a legitimate ruler;
5. the damages caused by the war cannot surpass the damages suffered before it.
After: Jan Milíč Lochman, *Perspektiven politischer Theologie,* Zürich 1971, 34.

[7] Ibid. 61.

for good? In these wars those suffer the most whose perspective is not determined by the ideological scheme of 'friend-enemy,' 'we-them,' 'ours-theirs': women, children and the elderly.

2.1.1 *Evangelical radicalism* was returning to the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of Jesus and the Apostles, and to an intensively anticipated final coming of Christ to this world. To live eschatologically, with the consciousness of the end of the world, is possible only through an exit from time. From the apocalyptic chiliasm, from the fantasies about the Kingdom of God in the Czech Lands, a community has emerged called *Tábor*, which has introduced some truly eschatological legislations: equality of social or financial status and even that of gender. Yet Christ's coming is delayed, the eschatological tension is decreasing. After times of ecstasy there is a danger that times of anarchy and dictatorship will arrive.

From the point of view of our quest after conceptions of violence or non-violence we can distinguish two forms of radicalism.

2.1.1.1 *Militant radicalism* fights a holy war, the battle of the Lord, in which the enemy is identified with *the* Enemy, the apocalyptic adversary, the Antichrist, the destruction of whom we cannot bring about, but we can at least speed up the coming of Christ.

2.1.1.2 *Pacific radicalism,* on the other hand, gathers a small group of elect and shifts them to a sheltered environment, as into Noah's Arc, the only place where a Christian can survive the time of the flood.

In the middle of the Husite turmoil and confusion, Petr Chelčický (cc. 1390–cc. 1460),[8] autodidact and selfmademan, pronounced the absolute unacceptability of all violence, and this irrespective of its

[8] Chelčický stands in the tradition of *Czech pacifism.* Jan Hus intended to address the Council of Konstanz by a speech about peace *Sermo de pace (*1414*)*, Jan Amos Comenius commended to the warring English and Dutch, and to all Christians and nations of the world, his writing *Angelus pacis* (1667). Chelčický was discovered by the Russian Orthodoxs Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910, 1901 excommunicated); his heritage was continued in the 20th century by the Indian Hindu Mahathma Gandhi (1869–1948, assassinated) and the American Baptist Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968, assassinated).

offensive or defensive character. In matters of faith the Christian is not allowed to reach for pressure by external forces. He never ceased to emphasize the binding nature of the categorical *'Thou shalt not kill'* for all true Christians. I shall not refrain from a skeptical note, namely, that he could write and spread his pacifist treatises only in an environment undisturbed by the inquisition, which has been created even for him by the armed struggle of the Husite armies.

The spiritual child of Chelčický is well known throughout the Christian world: it is the minority confessing church, called *Unitas fratrum,* the Czech or Moravian Brethren.[9] The Brethren have rejected the sword, and in their early period they rejected participation on political and economic activities, or even in higher education. Christianity which surrounded them was in their eyes a church only by name. They excluded themselves from the world, and the world has excluded them. They have in fact returned to the status of the early church: they were, for example on the view that a soldier[10] or a rich man[11] can only with difficulties experience salvation. They lived in a half-legal status, for some time even in an illegal one, and they went through some grave persecutions.[12] Yet when their later generations attempted to get out from their voluntary ghetto, they gradually started to drift back to this world, in which the Christian is not vindicated by a flight from temptations (especially that of power and money), but by resistance against these temptations. Their shift into a fully legal status, the entering of a union with the majority Protestant church, resulted in their identity crisis. Ultimately the Brethren took up the sword of defence, which sword also became their doom.

We have experienced a similar return from a half-legal existence after 1989. Allow me to illustrate this in two short stories. It is the year 1983, the culmination point of Brezhnev's power. I am a minister for a month or so, and I am returning on my bike to the parish, where I lived. Front of the parish there is a police car parked. 'It is

[9] Founded in 1467.

[10] Martin Luther gave a positive answer in his tract *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved* (*Ob Kriegsleute auch im seligen Stande sein können,* 1526), WA 19, 623–662.

[11] Clement of Alexandria gave a positive answer in his sermon: *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved? (Τίς ὁ σωζόμενος πλούσιος;)* MPG 9, 603–652.

[12] Persecutions: 1461–1464; 1468–1471.

clear,' said I, 'they are here,' and I dismounted with a feeling of resignation. The Communist state has tolerated the churches with contempt at best, and ministers were kept under constant surveillance. So there was on my side a 'presumption of guilt.' But there was no one in that car. The next day I learned that the son of my neighbour worked in the police, and that he simply came home in his 'company' car.

When by the end of 1989 in the 'velvet revolution' the Communist regime disintegrated virtually overnight, some of the local ministers 'as heroes against their will' had to assist briefly the local governments as mediators, until the situation stabilised. But I did not own a normal suit then. As someone who did not belong to the establishment I did not need such a thing.

2.1.2 *Protestant pragmatism* was decisive for the ways of majority Husites. After somewhat embarrassing attempts to negotiate with Rome for a 'Husite minimum' of the national church, majority Czech Protestantism, which in the 16th century did not form an isolated island of heretics in Western Christianity, have sought the support of neighbouring Lutheranism. It has also accepted participation in the high politics of the religiously divided Europe. In the Czech Lands there existed a *religious tolerance* for a century then, even if it was a tolerance from necessity rather than a principal one. Under Catholic rulers Evangelicals and Catholics lived according to *The Arbitrage at Kutná Hora* (1485) and *The Letter of Majesty* (1609) side by side in peace. Instead of Lutheran's principle*, Cuius regio, eius religio,'* there was the anticipation of the modern ideal of the religious freedom. Every individual, even the serfs could decide whether he/she is going to adhere to the majority Protestant or minority Catholic faith. No one was allowed to be oppressed in his religion, nor to convert to another religion. On one territory here coexisted two confession.

2.2 The counter-Reformation

Yet the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism has not been decided behind the writing desks of theologians or the negotiating tables of politicians, but on the battlefields of power and money the

Thirty-year War. The act of disobedience by the Protestant nobility, the resurgence against the king (1618) who preferred Catholics, and the forced election of a Protestant ruler (1619), lead to a military conflict. From this the Catholic emperor emerged victorious (1620), who soon have introduced a legislation (1627) which was in harmony with the then customary European order: *one land – one faith.* Protestant nobility and citizenry had to make a choice between their faith and their political status and possessions, i.e. either became Catholics, or emigrate to Protestant countries. Peasants had to stay and let themselves be converted to the Catholic faith. This confessional division of Europe was confirmed by the *Peace of Westphalia* (1648), which meant the first appeasement agreement for Czech Protestants: unjust peace, a peace violating the freedom of conscience.[13]

For an outside observer the quick counter-Reformation, which did not hesitate to use all available means of violence, could have appeared as very successful. The Czech Lands, in the course of one or two generations, became Catholic again. They remained such until the present. Take a glance at the panorama of Prague's hundred towers: from the hundreds of churches only two or three are Protestant. As the *Edict of Toleration* (1781) has proclaimed religious tolerance for Lutherans and Calvinist, were no more than about two percents of the hidden non-Catholics to be found.

A negativistic anti-Catholicism, the fear of the Catholic 'big brother' represented until recently a great difficulty in our Ecumenism. It was quite difficult for us to come to terms with the fact that in our own nation, which could boast with a glorious Protestant past, we in the modern age represent an alien body. It was only the common persecution that brought the Czech Catholics and Protestants closer to each other.

However, internally the success of the Catholic Church between the *New-Catholics* was quite superficial. Many of them became Catholics only for the sake of their rulers. Czech Christians became indifferent towards religion, or at least towards the religion represented by the churches. They tried to realise their 'ultimate concern,'

[13] The martyrology of the Czech church describes Jan Amos Comenius in his exile book, *Synopsis historia persecutionum ecclesiae Bohemicae* (finished 1632, published 1647).

put it in the words of Paul Tillich, in some hidden religious forms, be it nationalism, socialism or liberalism. The much desired *one-confessionalism* paved the way for *non-confessionalism.*[14]

3. Czechoslovakia, an island of democracy and prosperity in Central Europe, became the prey of the totalitarian regimes of its big neighbours. We were served out to both great dictators through peace: the *Munich Treaty* (1938) made room for Hitler and home-grown Nazis; the *Conference in Yalta* (1945) made room for Stalin and our native Communists. It was difficult for a Czechoslovak democrat to avoid the feeling of betrayal by the democratic superpowers, which made peace agreements to our expense.

3.1 Against National Socialism

During the autumn of 1938 the small Czechoslovakia was ready to fight the war against the Nazi Germany. Karl Barth (1886–1968) wrote in a letter to his colleague in Prague, Josef L. Hromádka (1889–1969), that he put his hopes in the 'sons of the old Husites.' 'Strange times, my dear colleague, in which one with healthy senses cannot say anything else but that for faith it is imperative to put aside the fear of violence and the love of peace decisively to the second place, and put fear of injustice and love of peace equally decisively to the first.'[15] With his 'Yes' to armed conflict found Barth himself deserted and

[14] In 1965 the Second Vatican Council was summoned to discussed the declaration concerning religious freedom, *Dignitas humanae*. During the debate Archbishop of Prague, Josef Beran (1888–1969), a former Nazi (1942–45) and Communist (1949–63) prisoner, demonstrated to the counciliar fathers what the bill could be for the violence in matters of faith: churchlessness and faithlessness. 'It appears to me that even in my country the Catholic Church is paying painfully for the deprivation and sins, which were in the past committed in its name against the freedom of conscience, as, for instance, the burning of the priest John Hus in the 15th century, or forcing the larger part of the nation to take up the Catholic faith in the 17th century.' (According to: Jan Lehár et al., *Česká literatura od počátků k dnešku*, Prague 1998, 780.)

[15] The following sentence has caused criticism: 'Every Czech soldier, who will fight and suffer, will do so… for us too and, I say this without reservations today, even for the church of Jesus Christ.' A selection from correspondence was published in German by *Prager Presse* 25. 9. 1938 under the title '*Die ihr Gottes Streiter seid…*,' the words of which have been borrowed from the Husite hymn *You Who are God's Fight-*

earned the title of the disturber of peace and warmonger. The extent of the anti-Christian character of Hitler's regime and his plans for the future elimination of the churches was a hidden secret of the Nazi party. One had to had the theological instinct of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) to be able to understand the connections between the 'final solution' of the Jewish question and the 'final solution' of the Christian question. The Czechs did not understand this theological aspect of the holocaust, that is, that the genocide of the Jews represents something not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively different from the planned Germanisation and deportation of the Slavs. The Dutch or the Danish were more sharp-sighted in this matter. The Czech resistance against Nazism often took up the tragicomic traits of the anti-hero figure of Josef Švejk: smile stupidly or impudently to the eyes of your enemy.

3.2 Against Soviet Communism

When 1948 the Communists, with help from Moscow, took power in Czechoslovakia, it was clear that the Americans will not intervene militarily. The majority of the population thought that nothing worse could come than the Nazis, or that there is still a difference between Hitlerism and Stalinism. After Stalin's death many non-Communists believed or wanted to believe in the possibility of reforming Socialism. Many Communists started to work on the democratisation of Socialism. But attempts for a Communism with a human face, which was aimed at by Alexander Dubček from January to August 1968, were halted by Soviet tanks. Leonid Brezhnev (and Lyndon Johnson) were of the view that no one is going to be allowed to experiment with a third way between real-Socialism, and real-Capitalism.

Allow me another story, this time from my childhood. As a ten years old boy I have experienced the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviets. I remember well the morning of 21 August 1968. The

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ers (1420). The entire text has been published in the Swiss *Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz*; later there appeared translations in Czech, French, Dutch and Hungarian. In book form first in: Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme 1938–1945*, Zollikon-Zürich 1945, 58s; critical edition in: *Offene Briefe 1935–1942,* Zürich 2000, Nr. 17, 114s; an extensive documentation, 107–133.

country was overrun by tanks, and I have asked my mother a fairly natural question: 'there is going to be a war, is not it?' My mother, who has experienced German occupation and the Communist seizure of power, answered this way: 'No, there won't be.' She knew that we live in a country where there was not a war for centuries, which is only occupied by tanks of its powerful neighbours from time to time. Winter is approaching, it is necessary to isolate the windows of the house, and to survive in somehow reasonable and moral bearable way.

The Brezhnev era represented the 'pax sovietica.' The Helsinki Accords (1975) did not help us in any way: the Socialist states never meant to respect human rights internally. Was not it possible to point hypocritically to the fact that human rights are not respected even by others? It was an age of double truths and double morals, years of external and internal immigration. Not even the 'Comrades' believed in the inner strength or superiority of Communism.

Some Czech theologians wrote about *the end of the 'Constantinian era,'* about the return to the *pre-Constantinian* situation, in which the more than thousand years connection between 'throne and altar' was finished. Did they mean by this simply a church without privileges, Christian religion without special protection by the state, a not-obvious Christianity? Or did they think about a church ripped of legal guarantees, a church which will again carry the cross and in which blood of martyrs will be shed? But the reality was much simpler than ideological conceptions. In the *post-Constantinian* era classical Constantinianism was replaced by *new-Constantinianism.* The Socialist regime, which was far removed from its original Communist atheism, never really believed in the Marxist thesis, according to which religious beliefs in classless society will fall apart by themselves. They never really believed even in the struggle against the church as the stronghold of reaction, called for by Lenin. The Socialist power structures needed the church: but obviously a church under control, and church in Socialism and for Socialism.

When after 1989 I was asked abroad whether churches were opened in our countries, whether Christian gatherings were stopped and the Bible banned, I had to smile. The churches were legal, and the occasional persecutions were bearable. After the excesses of the years

of Stalinism, which was obviously the stage of intimidation, starting from the second half of the fifties, with a few exceptions, we had to reckon only with some milder interference. As Jürgen Moltmann (1926) has remarked, the persecution of Christians in the 20th century did not take the form of persecution for the confession of their faith, but persecution for the uncompromising obedience of their faith.[16] In contrast with countries like the SSSR, China, Albania or the dictatorships of Latin America, we were not the *ecclesia martyrum*, but *ecclesia pressa*. Khrushchevian and Brehznevian Communists did not intend to wipe out the church, they just intended to make it ghetto-like, they chased it back to the ghettos of churches and parishes, without the factual and medial presence of the public. But even though the church bore the cross of persecution and suffering, which Martin Luther listed between the signs of the true church.[17]

To be a Christian then, if I may say so, was not a standard, but over the standard. The church has represented an alternative, the only permitted, the only tolerated alternative. To be a Christian meant to be non-conformist towards the ruling regime in a significant extent. The very Christian worship, which pointed towards the Jewish-Antique-Christian moral codex, or the attachment to the political and cultural traditions of Western Europe, the mere distribution of hard to get Bibles or the care for desolate church building, all this bore the signs of non-conformism in the sense of not accepting the 'present form of this world' (1 Corinthians 7: 31). Behind this *nonconformity with this world* stood *the conformity with Christ.* The Christians as a human beings with two citizenships, the worldly and the heavenly, experienced every new day their impossibility of being categorised, their being different.

When in the beginning of the seventies I first heard about Jesus' love of enemies, I wholeheartedly agreed with this friend of all people without conditions and exceptions. It made good sense to me, that

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[16] Jürgen Moltmann, *Der Weg Jesu Christi. Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen,* München 1989, 220f. In English: *The Way of Jesus Christ. Christology in Messianic Dimensions,* Mineapolis 1993, 198.

[17] As the 7th *nota verae ecclesiae*, in: On the Councils and the Churches (Von Konziliis und Kirchen)*,* 1539, *WA* 50, 509–653, 642; as the 9th a 10th nota in: *Against Hanswurst (Wider Hans Worst)*, 1541, WA 51, 469–572, 484n).

he does not have any other weapon against his enemies than love without objections and limits. Other than a maximal ethical claim would not be Jesus-like. I have regarded my own decision for the study of theology and ordination for ministry, and later in the years of Gorbachev's perestroika, my preparations for a future academic position, as a certain passive resistance against the Communist regime. This was a less attractive, but not less effective form of resistance than political dissent.

From 1977 the majority of dissidents, from Trotskyites and reform-Communists through Liberals of all types to Christians of both confession, were united under the *Charter 77,* which has understood itself as a 'parallel polis.' The Charter unceasingly appealed to valid laws and to their enforcement. By the approaching end of the Communist era the 'power of powerless' (Václav Havel) picked up on force. This naturally led to interconnections between the life of the church and the grey area of non-conformists of all kinds.

In the middle of 1990 real Capitalism has seized power in Czechoslovakia. The majority of citizens expressed their 'no' in free election to third ways as unnecessary delays in our way towards happiness and welfare. The warnings of Western left-wing groups fell on deaf ears in our country. Consumerism is hard to resist, especially when we are poor and cannot imagine how it could hurt the human soul. Solidarity with the Third World was profaned as pro-Moscowite.[18] Ecological movements were diffamated as harmful for market economy. Anti-globalists were posited somewhere between anarchists and terrorists. It was the American political economist, Francis Fukuyama, who offered an explanation to all this: history has reached its end, in the future there will be no big stories, only private microstories.

4. From September the 11th 2001 at latest, we know that history is not at its end. It is my little walk through the history of the Czech Lands that has reached its end. Let me express a few principal personal words at the finish.

[18] The shadows of the infamous *Christian Peace Conference*?

I am not a theologian of non-violence. The church to which I belong is the union of Lutherans and Calvinists, not the old Church of Brethren, and it is far removed from historical pacifist churches as the Mennonites or Quakers.

I share the views of Martin Luther, according to which anarchy is worse than tyranny, that chaos is worse than dictatorship. The moment, when there is no other option but to reach for violence comes then when the state, which is meant to guard against chaos, itself starts to produce it.

Yet I share the views of Karl Barth that it should not be indifferent for a Christian as to what political system he or she lives in, however different this question might be from the question after salvation.[19] A democratic state, which shares a neutral world-view is closest to a Reformed Christian.[20] Together with Barth I reject principal and absolute pacifism[21] as an escape from concrete responsibility to abstract ideology, as an idealistic-moralistic quest after one's self-righteousness. The Swiss citizen Barth did not interpret the neutrality of his country as the prohibition of interference.

In concrete situations bearing witness to Christ's gospel can once mean violence, another time non-violence.

4.1 If I make a choice *for violence,* I do this with the consciousness that here and now I cannot make a better testimony about Christ, or

[19] Barth has rejected "the assertion that all forms of government are equally compatible or incompatible with the Gospel" with the well-known sentence: 'It is true that a man may go to hell in a democracy and achieve salvation under a mobocracy or a dictatorship. But it is not true that a Christian can endorse, desire, or seek after a mobocracy or a dictatorship as readily as a democracy.' *Rechtfertigung und Recht,* Zollikon-Zürich 1938, ThSt 1, 43. Reprinted in: *Eine Schweizer Stimme 1938–1945*, (13–57), 53. In English: *Church and State,* in: *Community, State and Church. Three Essays,* New York 1960, (101–148), 144s.

[20] See Karl Barth, *Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde,* Zollikon-Zürich 1946, ThSt 20, Nr. 18 and 28, pp. 36, 28. In English: *The Christian Community and the Civil Community,* ibid.: (149–189) Nr. XVIII and Nr. XXIX, pp. 173s. and 181s., or in: R.G. Smith (ed.), *Against the Stream. Shorter Post-War Writings 1946–1952,* London 1954, (15–50), 36s. and 44.

[21] What Barth objects against in classical pacifism is even its legalism. Yet is appropriate to emphasise here that in his ethics of reconciliation what Barth rejects as first is militarism, 'the superstition of the inevitability of war:' *Kirchliche Dogmatik III/4,* Zollikon-Zürich 1951, 488–499; 515–538; 536. In English: *Church Dogmatics III.4,* Edinburgh 1961, 427–437; 450–470; the quoted passage on p. 468.

rather, cannot achieve this by other means, than in precisely this form. The question is then not whether such a thing is permitted to me, but the question as how come that such a strange thing comes to me as a commandment. Then, of course, I do not act with anxiety and fear, but with courage and confidence. (Here I believe is the right place for Luther's *'Pecca fortiter!'*)

4.2 If I make a choice *for non-violence*, then with the notion that I can decide only for myself, that I cannot decide on behalf of my neighbour. I can risk or sacrifice only my own life. To put obstacles in the way of others in their self-defence is again nothing else but violence. In my considerations I have to calculate the concern for those closest to me: my family, friends, colleagues. Paul wrote from the prison: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." (Philippians 1:21–24).

My acts will in both cases be the acts of a sinner, who has no other hope than to believe that God will be merciful to him as to a sinner. But has not Jesus said to the wonder of one of the Pharisees about a sinner woman: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little?" (Luke 7:47)

(Translated from Czech by Dániel Deme)

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN AN AGE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN DECATUR, GEORGIA, U.S.A. CAMPBELL SCHOLARS SEMINAR 2004

Erskine Clarke, Decatur, GA (USA)

Jesus said:

"Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

For over a hundred years a commonplace assumption of modernity has been the steady displacement of religion by a secular worldview. Events of recent years, however, have profoundly challenged such an assumption. Worldwide, religions – especially Christianity and Islam – are growing at remarkable rates and religious passions are fueling intense hatreds. What we see at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not only religious vitality throughout much of the world but also religious violence as a startling and terrifying reality of our age. In combination with powerful economic, ethnic, and nationalistic forces, religion has become a source of violence on a global scale. Christians and the Church have played and continue to play a part in this violence.

What is the mission of the Church in an age of such religious violence?

The Campbell Seminar 2004 will address this question as it builds on the work of previous Campbell Seminars. The first seminar addressed the theme of mission as evangelical hope in action in an age of despair, both the *hidden* despair of those who "have" and the *open* despair of those who "have not." The second seminar struggled with the issue of a common Christian mission in a Church and world marked by deep diversity. The third seminar addressed the mission of

the Church in a world of hungers – both the stark physical hunger of multitudes and the spiritual hunger of the well-fed. All the seminars operated from the conviction that the mission of the Church is a subset of the *missio dei*.

The theme of the fourth seminar invites *social analysis* of the sources of religious violence and *theological reflection* on the Church's confession that God's purpose is to bring the whole creation to well-being (shalom). If older practices of mission were (and are) too often saturated with ideologies of domination, what *new practices of mission* are needed in light of the horrifying violence of contemporary religious life?

Such *social analysis, theological reflection,* and *missiological planning* cannot be addressed by a small "in-house" gathering from one geographical local or theological perspective. Rather, the seriousness of the questions being asked calls for representatives from the global Church to struggle together as the seminar seeks to be of service to the Church and to be a faithful part of God's peacemaking work.

GOD'S RECONCILIATION OF THE WORLD IN CHRIST

Eberhard Busch, Göttingen (Germany)

What is the mission of the Church in an age of religious violence? Seven Christians from different continents met together at Columbia Theological Seminary to raise this question in light of the Word, with the shared expectation that the Word offers signposts amidst the miseries of our time. We also sought clarification of God's promises in a time of religious violence, turning to our contemporaries in the service of God. In my view, the first task of the Church in our time is to remember:

I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth… The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore. (Ps. 121:1.2.7.8, NRSV)

Assertions

We proposed reflecting on the question of religious violence in the light of 2. Cor. 5:19–21: "…in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This message united us as we came together from different situations in the world. It encouraged us to tell one another our particular stories. At the time we were meeting, many houses in the neighborhood surrounding Columbia Seminary had yard signs with the slogan: "War is not the answer." Our hope focused on this: that God, as God is witnessed to us in the Bible, is the God of *reconcilia-*

tion. We saw how necessary and how good it is that in the midst of contemporary messages that have another content, God opens God's heart to us. Without God we are without reconciliation. Amid all the outbursts of violence between nations, between gender and race, between religions, basically people hunger and thirst for reconciliation. We are not able to accomplish what we need because we *ourselves* need to be reconciled. God alone is able to create reconciliation, just as God created the heavens and the earth. God has already proved Godself as the God of reconciliation. Our hope is founded on this faith.

Where reconciliation happens, peace rules. Not so the converse. True peace rules only where reconcilition happens and where therefore "justice and peace join hands" (Ps. 85:10). Where this becomes true, peace is founded on firm ground. We believe this foundation is laid in Jesus Christ (cf. 1. Cor. 3:11). When he was born the angels sang: "Glory to God in highest heaven, and on earth peace…" (Luk. 2:14) And thus we hear in Eph. 2:14.15: "For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us, …that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace." Therefore we are allowed to greet one another: "The God of peace be with all of you." (Rom. 15:33) Or: "…Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (1. Cor. 1:3)

Is God really the God of reconciliation and peace? Do we not find much in the Bible to contradict this? In the Old Testament we find things that differ from what we hear in 2. Cor. 5 and in Eph. 2. To retain our trust in a reconciling God, must we select what suits our purposes and exclude what does not, leaving contradictory texts to the fundamentalists? No, we have to deal with seeming contradiction in another way. Let us make three observations.

First, the commandment God gave humankind after God created the heavens and the earth to "…fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28) is often misused. It does not mean that humans are to rob and worry other creatures arbitrarily. The command is given to those created in God's image. They are asked to deal with other creatures as God does: with the good will to co-exist with them and take care of them. Thus, on the first day of human life, humankind was invited to *rest*

with God (Gen. 2:2, Ex. 20:9–11). By this we are reminded that we have to live together with other creatures considerately.

Second, references to "Holy War" in the Old Testament offend the concept of God as reconciler. But as biblical scholars have shown,[1] this does not mean that we can claim that wars of our making are in God's interest. Conversely, in the "Holy Wars" of the Old Testament the people are not the primary actors; God comes to the aid of God's helpless people when they are in danger of death. Indeed research has shown that the notion of *faith* has its root in this very concept of inaction. The prophet Isaiah sums up this message in the sentence: "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all" (Isa. 7:9, cf. Ex. 14:31). To have faith means to have quiet confidence; not to trust in self-help, but to trust in and to hope for God's rescue (7:4; 30:15, cf. Sach. 4:6).

Third, the Old Testament speaks of God's mercy and love, but not of love at the expense of God's righteousness. God's love does not approve of malice. It is therefore connected with the condemnation of injustice and with the erection of rigtheousness. Because of God's horror of sin, God in anger says an offensive and sharp "No!" to God's own people. In the Old Testament this "No!" is not easy to miss. But what must also not be missed is God's cry to God's sinful people: "How can I give you up, Ephraim?! How can I hand you over, O Israel? …My heart recoils within me… I will not execute my fierce anger…for I am God and no mortal" (Hos. 11:8f.). This same compassion is revealed in the New Testament in a new and more vivid light, yet without abolishing what came before. We cannot understand the message of reconciliation in the New Testament in contrast to the Old Testament insistence on righteousness. Christ, in whom God reconciled the world (2. Cor. 5:19), is the same, who governs the highest tribunal (5:10). We have to understand that God cannot alternate from being kind to being hard. God's justice, and even God's wrath, exist *within* God's everlasting love.

[1] Albrecht Alt, *Kleine schriften zur Geschichte des Volkem Izrael*, München 1953; Gerhard von Rad, *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel*, Zürich 1951.

How then is the Judge our reconciler? Above all, every just reconciliation begins in a way that is often overlooked: as reconciliation to *God*. This can only be done *by* God. God does not need to be placated by humankind through sacrifices. *We* have to be reconciled with God. It must be so, because this is the just judgement, which God at the same time asserts in reconciliation: that we all need it and that we don't earn it; all – not only the unmoral, but also the moral, not only the unreligious, but also the religious people. In grace, God does not let us fall down but reconciles us with Godself. The crucifiction of Christ was itself an act of violence. But we have to understand it in this way: "Even though you intended it for harm, God intended it for good." (Gen. 50:20)

Our estrangement from God's grace is shown in our alienation from our neighbors and especially in actions over against the weak and the poor. Such actions violate Christ our Lord. When people are victims of violence, the culprits are guilty not only in relation to the victims, but also in relation to Christ, because he is connected with them by his love. He declares his solidarity with all creatures and always primarily with those who are despised and maltreated. We cannot see Christ without seeing him as the nearest friend of the victims of violence, and we cannot relate to them without the reality that he identifies himself with them (Matth. 25:40.45).

The gospel declares: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself." (2 Cor. 5:19) God *has* done it. This reconciliation is a work of God, which calls forth our response but which needs no supplementation. We can rely on it without the obligation that we first fulfill some conditions. It is not an *idea* of reconciliation, and thus it does not matter whether ideas about it derive from a deity or from humankind. The reconciliation is a *fact*, bound to a date amidst world-history. Certainly, it is a fact of a special kind. It has happened not *once*, but *once and for all.* "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 21). The reconciliation has happened by an act of justice, in which Christ in his death has put away our injustice, while he in his death made himself alone responsible for our injustice. There is no reconciliation outside of this fact. But thanks to this fact the reconciliation of the world is in force.

But is this reconciliation really in force? Between nations, between the generations, between the genders, between the races, between the poor and the rich, in the whole creation irreconcilability reigns and therefore so does violence – or violence and therefore irreconcilability. When we look to the reconciliation of the world in Christ, such violence and irreconcilability are unfounded. But when we look at the reign of irreconcilability and violence, it seems that reconciliation is only a pious wish or dream. The reality of violence means that God's creatures are exploited and ruined ruthlessly. Violence misappropriates what is God's.

Yet oddly enough, if we investigate violence itself, it makes itself *invisible*. It tries to pose as a justified matter. "Let us not forget that violence never lives alone and never can live alone. It is always interlocked with the lie. Everyone who has proclaimed violence as his method, must unavoidably choose the lie as his principle. And the lie likes to hide itself in pretty platitudes. Violence wants from its subjects only this: the oath of allegiance to its lies."[2] This principle holds even if the liar believes himself to be speaking the truth.

If the reality of violence cannot be ignored, there are other ways to dissociate oneself from it. Arrogance is a useful deception. One can thus insist that particular acts of violence are real, but they are only done by *others*, while we ourselves are innocent. It is true that we perceive injustice, and that violence victimizes many in the Third World. But we do not perceive that we profit from the system and thus are implicated in violence, too. Or, we see on television how others are humiliated and offended, but we "who would never do such things" simply watch, chewing-gum in our mouths, as *onlookers*. And so TV trains us to be onlookers consuming even disturbing images without reflection.

Another distancing mechanism is weakness or a sense that we are helpless. We see violence and are despondent and without protest, as if it is a fate against which one can do nothing. We misjudge the sphere of evil as overly powerful, and in this way imbue it with more power. We become true members of the silent majority. We learn that

[2] Alexander Solzhenitsyn at the end of his speech, when he received the Nobel Prize; published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 15th, 1972.

it would be best to keep our mouths shut. Or we are like the policeman in a cartoon who sees a steamroller driving over a man and whispers: Don't do it again! So irreconcilabilty and violence remain. The more people feel themselves to be weak or helpless, the more strongly the powers rule.

Does God accept our blindness for God's Work? Never! Because God who has acted in former times continues to work for reconciliation and peace today, already shown, for our advantage. In the Holy Spirit God comes to us, revealed in Christ, speaks to us, acts with us – not only with us, but with many before us, beneath us, after us, and so also with us. We cannot be Christians alone, but only together with others, in a community in which everyone has his or her own gifts and tasks. Through the Holy Spirit, God in Christ comes not only *to* us, but *into* us, and becomes the center of our life and rules it. The Holy Spirit always acts in ways that unite us with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We, however, are not the aim of God's ways with us and with the world. What is true in Christ is still not yet really true in us. Though God has done the reconciling, we need forgiveness of sins every day. And still we sigh, and struggle, and suffer. We suffer deeply, because we cannot see the fulfillment of what we already believe. There stands the message of the Saviour, yet here before our eyes is so much that is hopeless and frightful. It threatens to defeat us, and we doubt and despair: even "the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's children to be revealed" (Rom. 8:19). Into this situation "the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness" (Rom. 8:26). God sends the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. So the Spirit saves us, and is the light. Even when the light becomes dark for us, it "shines on the dark, and the darkness has never mastered it" (John 1:5). The Spirit saves us by giving us hope. Therefore, the spirit moves us again and again to go onwards in the direction of the aim of all ways of God.

The aim is the *redemption* of those who God in Christ has reconciled with God's self. Then God will come in another way, but not as any other than the Reconciler at the cross. Therefore faith in God and the hope of God belong together. The hope of God is not a product of human imagination, but the consequence of the truth of reconcilia-

tion. And faith itself is the seizing of promise. In the fulfillment of the promise we will see what we now believe: The ruling *Lord* on the highest throne is the "*Lamb*" who will be "the shepherd" of all people (Rev. 7:15–17). The result of his rule is "boundless the peace" (Is. 9:7), and "then the wolf shall live with the sheep" (Is. 11:6). Then there is "no temple" needed (Rev. 21:22), and then around the throne of the Lamb is a countless crowd without separation: "They shall be his people, and God Himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain" (21:3.4).

Can we then do nothing? Yes, we can do something. What we must do first is cease arrogant dissociation from the perpetrators of violence. In solidarity with those who commit violence, we have to confess our *own* sin. It may be that we have directly acted with violence, or it may be that we profit from its practice, or that we sit back and watch. One way or another we stand before God as those who have to ask God's forgiveness. And as much as we think that *others* are violent, we too must confess that *we Christians* were and are violent, too.

God's forgiveness does not permit us to twiddle our thumbs. It urges us to give powerful witness to God's reconciliation in Christ. It calls us to participate in God's work, especially in the lives of those who suffer from violence. "The Word became" not "a Christian," but "flesh" (John 1:14). In this Mission of God (17:18), Christians must take part in witnessing to Christ(15:27). We can practice our solidarity in different ways: by words and by actions, by our solidarity with the oppressed, by our resistance against oppression, by our own suffering as we resist. While every religion recommends peace, the crux is to agree that peace exists only where the *other* in his or her otherness is not our enemy, as we thought, but a fellow being for whom we have to pray and whose very existence we must recognize as a source of enrichment in our own lives. Such recognition will teach us to give up wrong generalizations: *the* women, *the* men, *the* Christians, *the* Muslims, *the* Jews – or *the* Americans, *the* Arabs, *the* homosexuals, and so on). Instead, we will see our *concrete* neighbor. We cannot eliminate violence. But we must act in the situations that present

themselves to us, small and large, as messengers of God's reconciliation to the whole world.

We may rejoice that there are Christians who are living the message of reconciliation right now in different places in the world, perhaps in scarcely recognized ways. We are also saddened by the many Christians who continually evade this task. And there are comforting signs of God's liveliness among non-Christians who resist violence with nonviolence and who take care of the victims of violence. They help us see how to make peace. Perhaps they are adherents of other religions or those who live in a secular way. But we need not pause to ask them *why* they work against violence and for its victims; it should be enough for us that they do it. We Christians should be happy about it and should work together with them!

A PALESTINIAN VIEW

Fahed Abu-Akel, Atlanta, GA (USA)

I. Mission of the Church at Pentecost

I.1. Pentecost

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said to his disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the Earth." Jesus made it very clear to his disciples that there is a difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Israel. Why? Because the Kingdom of Israel needs military, economic, and political power to survive, but the Kingdom of God needs the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of his disciples; that power helps them to be a witness to the new reality of his resurrection in their own Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, the Church was born as the people of God received the power of the Holy Spirit that gave them power to be witnesses of the good news that Jesus Christ is alive in the midst of a violent world, in the midst of the Roman occupation of their land, and in the midst of persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. The book of Acts records the history of the early church as it moved from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

1.2 The Early Church

The early church lived and survived without any military, economic, or political power. In fact, it was a minority church and a persecuted church for the next three hundred years. After Jesus, it was a church that was built in the houses of believers and catacombs without any security from the State. The early church adopted several names: disciples of Jesus, the people of the way, believers, and in Acts 11:26

"the disciples were for the first time called Christians." Later in the Patristic writings we discover another name for the early Christians: "the hospitable people". In an age of religious violence, we must never forget the early beginnings of the church, and we must teach our people our humble early history of the Christian faith and church.

II. The Changing Mission of the Church after Constantine

II.l The Constantinian Era

From Jesus to Constantine, the church survived on the love of God in Jesus Christ, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to give its members power to survive persecution, prison, and death. With the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity, however, the church of Jesus Christ in the West began an ongoing struggle with its relationship to the State. It must not be denied that structural violence has been part of the Church. The Church participated with the State in acts of violence from Rome, the Crusades, Portugal, Spain, England, France, Russia, Germany, and finally in the U.S. The state managed to marry the church, using violence and military might for its economic and political purposes: "hence the development of the misuse of power by the powerful as a divine of God to those who resist it." The usurpation of the name of God, Jesus, and Christian religion in the cause of violence has been often repeated in history, and it is still being acted out now in the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem and in the birthplace of the church in Jerusalem, Palestine.

III. How did I experience religion and violence in the name of God?

III.l. 1948 Exile of the Palestinian Nation

As a Palestinian Arab Christian, I saw and witnessed this violence firsthand in the place of my birth. I grew up, along with five sisters and two brothers, in a Palestinian Arab village called Kuffer Yassif,

25 miles northwest of Nazareth in Galilee, Palestine, where my father was a farmer and my mother worked with him. As a four-year-old boy, the only thing I remember about the war between the Palestinian Jews and Palestinian Arabs was leaving our home with my father, sisters, and brothers, and I still remember looking for my mother. I looked and looked for her, but she was not with us. She was standing on the top flat roof of our house waving her hand as we left her at home. We went with my father east to the mountain to flee from the war. We went up to the village of Yrka, a Druze village, where we were put in a makeshift refugee camp in tents. We stayed there several months and then came back home to our mother, who was still at home alive. She had not fled with us because she was strong in her faith in Jesus Christ; she had told my father to take the children because he could protect them. She said to him, "this is our home, our church, our land. If they want to kill me, they will have to kill me as a Palestinian Arab Christian woman in my home," and she refused to leave. She lived to be 86 years old, and my father lived to age 96. During that time, the destruction of four Palestinian Arab villages next to my village took place, and their people became refugees. With the creation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, much violence against the indigenous Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims took place; more than 400 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed, and more than 800,000 Palestinian Arabs became refugees. They were put in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, the West Bank, and Gaza, and some became displaced in Israel. This historic violence and injustice against the Palestinian people has been justified on a biblical basis by both Jews and Christians espousing political Zionism.

IV. Zionism as a Political and Liberation Movement

IV. 1. History of Zionism

In 1896, Theodor Herzl, the father and founder of modern Zionism, wrote a book called *The Jewish State*, in which he outlined four steps to liberate the Jewish people of the world from anti-Semitism and

Christian domination. The political, cultural, and religious systems of his world in Europe discriminated against the Jewish people, using the name of God and the Christian faith to support their violence against Jews. Herzl proposed four steps for resolving "the Jewish question:" make the Jewish question real among the Jewish people of Europe; make the Jewish question an international issue; begin Jewish immigration to Palestine; and establish the Jewish State in Palestine to solve the Jewish question in the world. His dream was accomplished through a sequence of historic events.

The Zionist Movement

In 1897, one year after he wrote the book, Herzl established the first Zionist Congress in Basel. During that First Zionist Congress, the delegates adopted Herzl's four steps to liberate the Jewish people. So the first step and goal was accomplished – to revive the Nationalistic Ethnic Jewish idea of liberating the Jewish people to become the masters of their own destiny and future. Political Zionism became a liberation movement in the minds of the Jewish people.

The 1917 Balfour Declarations

A letter from the Secretary of State of Great Britain, Lord Balfour, promised the Zionist Congress "that they can go to Palestine and establish a home land for the Jewish people without harming the local people." This declaration made the Jewish question an international issue and the *New York Times* heading declared, "American Jews dancing in the streets of New York dreaming of a Jewish homeland." The goal was to go to Palestine and establish a State in the land without asking questions about what would happen to the native indigenous Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims. The ethical and moral questions of injustice against the Palestinian people were not raised.

Jewish Immigration to Palestine

When Herzl wrote *The Jewish State*, there were 40,000 Jewish people in Palestine and more than 700,000 Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims. World War I took place, and the Ottoman Empire that controlled Palestine and the Middle East was forced to leave. The new colonial powers of Great Britain and France controlled Palestine

and the region. The League of Nations was created, and in 1922 it gave Palestine to Great Britain to administer the affairs of the occupied Palestinian people. Under the British Colonial Mandate over Palestine from 1922–1947, more than 400,000 Jewish people immigrated from Europe to Palestine. They began socialistic Jewish *kibbuzim* to work agriculture on less than 2 % of the land. Both the Christian colonial power of Great Britain and the military wing of the Jewish people called *Hagana* and *Irgun* used the name of God, religion, and violence to uproot the Palestinian people out of their historic land. The Palestinian Arab Christian could say, "I have a church 2000 years old in this land." The Palestinian Arab Muslim could say, "I have a Mosque that is 1300 years old in this land." The new Jewish immigrant said, "my claim is older than both of yours. I used to have a Jewish temple 3000 years old and on that basis, I have the right to displace you, in the name of God, and take your home, land, business, church and Mosque." The drama of God, religion, and violence became real because it became a personal part of my life journey, as 90 % of the Palestinian people became refugees and were exiled out of their historic land by force.

The Holocaust and the Creation of the State of Israel

As a result of a dictator, Adolph Hitler of Germany, and his Fascist and Nazi action to kill the Jewish people of Germany and other countries, the Holocaust against the Jewish people was taking place in the name of the State and a false Christian God against innocent Jewish people, and the world was silent. After World War II and the defeat of Hitler, the discovery of the worst inhumane, barbaric, and Nazi action of human beings against human beings was witnessed with Death Camps. The sympathy of America, England, France and the World moved to support the fourth goal of Herzl to help establish the State of Israel in Palestine, to establish a Jewish State that had more Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims than Jews. The majority of more than 1.5 Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims were farmers. Their lives focused on enjoying farming the land and loving their families and their faith as Christians and Muslims. The indigenous Palestinian population did not know the global picture of what was taking place in Europe and around the World.

The new Jewish immigrant population in Palestine had already experienced both world wars and had witnessed the major powers of Europe in industry, education, art, music, and military might. The goal of the new Jewish immigrants to the land was to determine how to force the Palestinian people out of their land, take it, and then establish the new Jewish State on the same land.

In 1947, Great Britain said we are leaving Palestine, so the U.N. in Resolution 181 divided historic Palestine into two states, one to be a Jewish state and one to be an Arab state. On May 14,1948 in Tel Aviv, Ben-Gurion declared that Israel was established as a Jewish State. Eight minutes later, President Truman of the U.S. recognized the state of Israel, and the rest of the world followed, giving the state of Israel recognition. As the world rejoiced and celebrated the creation of the Jewish state, they closed their eyes and became silent about the Palestinian death and destruction. At the same time, the Palestinian people began to deal with losing their land, homes, businesses, churches, and Mosques and began asking the question, "how do I survive in a refugee camp in a strange land?" The Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims, who became stateless overnight, began to pay the price for the sins of Christian Europe against the Jewish people. This drama of God, religion, and violence continues against the Palestinian people even today.

From 1948–1967, Israel said to the Palestinians and the Arab countries "I do exist," while all the Arab countries said to Israel, "you do not exist." In June, 1967, the Israeli military power, with the best American arms and technology, defeated Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in less than a week. During that war, Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza from Egypt and occupied the West bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. In June 1967, the U.N. introduced Resolution #242, which called for the exchange of land for peace, meaning that each Arab country that recognizes Israel and makes peace with Israel, will in return give them back the land that was occupied during the Six Day War. In 1973, there was another war between Egypt and Israel, and the U.N. introduced Resolution #338 that said the same thing as Resolution #242 – exchange land for peace. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter made the historic peace between Israel and Egypt based on both the U.N. Resolutions #242 and

#338, which became called the Camp David Accords. Finally in 1993, Israel and the PLO signed an accord that said that between 1993–1999, both Israel and the Palestinians would negotiate politically the following issues:

1. Illegal Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza
2. Water Resources
3. Palestinian Refugees
4. Jerusalem
5. Creation of the Palestinian State and the West Bank and Gaza.

About four million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem are living in 22 % of original Palestine. They are asking the question, 'can we live in a demilitarized Palestinian State on 22 % of original Palestine?' Israel is saying, 'no, we need to negotiate the 22 % of the remaining Palestinian land.' Since 1967, Israel, acting against the U.N. and International Law, had already built 250 Jewish settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem and moved in 300,000 Jewish people to these settlements. Israel controls every Palestinian village and town and has built more than 250 military check points to control the movement of the Palestinian people in their own land. The condition of the Palestinian people under the Israeli military occupation is a classical laboratory for conditions that create violence:

1. Four million people have been occupied since 1967 in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

2. As a result of occupation, 70 % of the people are unemployed.

3. 60 % of the Palestinians are under the age of 30.

4. Palestinian schools and universities are closed most of the time because of curfews.

5. Palestinians buy electricity, water and phone service from Israel. They are under the complete mercy of Israeli military occupation power.

6. 97 % of the Palestinians are civilians; 90 % of the Israelis are military trained.

7. The Palestinian people are under complete military order that restricts their movement from village to village and town to town. That means any time they want to move, they need to get a permit from the Israeli military governor, and without that permit, they can-

not pass any Israeli military checkpoint in the West Bank, Gaza, or East Jerusalem even to go to a university, hospital, or school.

V. The Effect of Christian Zionism on the Mission of the Church in Palestine/Israel.

The basic teaching of Christian Zionism is that the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The land of the Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem belongs to the Jewish people, and the presence of the Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims in the land is against the will of God. They must be removed from Palestine for God's will to be accomplished. With the creation of the State of Israel, the clock began ticking toward the end time and the battle of Armageddon. The battle will take place in Palestine in the plain of Jezreel. The battle will take place and Christ will rule for 1000 years. After the rapture of the true Christian believers, the final judgment is going to take place. And than the end time will close in. The *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins has a framework based on the following questions: Are we living in the end times? Current events are told in Scripture... and what do they mean? This book makes it clear that the doctrinal foundation for the Left Behind series is free premillennial dispensationalism, a system of theology that divided history into seven dispensations, with the final era being 1000 years of the earthly reign of Christ. All of this is being preached on a regular basis by our Christian television evangelists such as Rev. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, and preachers in the Southern Baptist churches, Pentecostal churches, and most new growing independent churches in the U.S.

VI. What is the Mission of the Church in this Military Violent Context?

VI. l The Mission of the Palestinian Christian Church

One hundred years ago the Palestinian Christian Church comprised 30 % of the Palestinian Arab population. Today there are fewer than 2 % as a result of war, occupation, and economic hardship. The Palestinian Christians are immigrating out of the land. Their mission for those who remain must focus on the following questions:

1. How can one survive on the land and continue to witness to the love of Jesus Christ?
2. How can one stay faithful in worship, Bible study, and prayer as the people of God as a sociological minority?
3. How can Christians suffer with the Muslim Palestinians under occupation, and through their suffering, learn to forgive?
4. How can they stay faithful in the teachings of Jesus to love and forgive and begin teaching nonviolence in the midst of violence?

VI.2 The Mission of the American Churches

American churches can help prevent future violence by engaging in any number of missions that would affirm the Palestinian Church. The establishment of sister church relationships would help Palestinian Christians know they are not forgotten by their American sisters and brothers. American congregations could send members to visit the Palestinian Church, to live with the people, and to experience their suffering under occupation. Armed with such experience and relationships, American congregations could confront the American Jewish community on issues of justice for the Palestinians and help the American Jewish Community support sharing the land of Palestine with the Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims. It is particularly crucial that American churches educate themselves and challenge the distorted theology of Christian Zionism, with its assertion that Palestinian Arabs do not have the right to the land. Instead, the divine right proclaimed by many Israelis and Christian Zionists must be reconciled with the human rights of the Palestinians. The Ameri-

can church could also help Palestinians Arab Christians recover their unity in Christ and support their ministry of reconciliation and peace. The American Church could strengthen interfaith dialogue that does not bypass the Palestinian issue. Finally, just as the mission of the church in years past focused on evangelism, education, and medical mission, future mission of the church must focus on issues of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

THE MIDDLE EAST CONTEXT

Gabriel Habib, Alexandria, VA (USA)

I. Middle East Christians

Middle Eastern Christians continue their presence and witness despite internal, contextual, and international problems they have faced since Pentecost. Presently there are about 15 million Christians in the Middle East, grouped into five families of churches. Two percent are in the Assyrian church of the East (Nestorian); 58 % in the Oriental Orthodox churches; 22 % in the Eastern Orthodox churches;16 % in the Eastern-Rite Catholic churches; and 2 % in the Protestant churches.

A. Christian Problems

Throughout their history, Middle Eastern Christians have endured ongoing violence, including violence aimed at eliminating their new religion, violence caused by inter-Christian divisions and ignorance, and violence from other religions. The following is a brief summary:

1. *The persecution of the early Christians.* Persecution of the first Christians, mainly by the Romans, led to their *martyrdom* until the agreement known as *Edict of Milan* in AD 313.

2. *Christian divisions.* These included the first heresies such as *Gnosticism*, *Marcionism*, and *Montanism*. They were later dealt with in Nicea in 325 AD (against Arianism); in Constantinople in 381 AD (against Apollinaris); in Ephesus in 431 AD (against Nestorianism); and in Chalcedon in 451 AD (over the Christological issue that divided the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches). In 1054 a formal division took place between the Eastern and Western Christians, and in 1517 the Protestant Reformation started in Europe.

3. *The Western Christian Missions.* These included the Catholic missions beginning in 1552 and the Protestant missions from 1806. Mainly because of Western ignorance of the spirituality, history, and

culture of the Middle East, those missions failed to convert Jews and Muslims. They then oriented themselves toward the local churches, converting some of their people to their respective denominations. Consequently, *they further divided* the local churches. Moreover, because the Western Christian Missions were sent to the region during the period of Western colonialism, many people of that region started to regard some local Christian communities as the *fifth columns* of Western political and cultural powers.

4. *The Islamic expansion of 636 AD.* Some historians conclude that the Christian divisions of the fifth century led some *non-Chalcedonians* to open their cities without any resistance to Islamic military expansion, which they regarded as a means of liberation from oppression under the Byzantine Empire. About 80 % of Middle Eastern Christians were then converted to Islam, some by conviction and others out of fear of violence. The Arabic language then spread to the whole region.

B. Common Monotheistic Problems

Various problems encountered by Middle Eastern Christians find a mirror in the experience of Middle Eastern Muslims. Muslims have also experienced violence from another Islamic power (the Ottoman Empire), and Western Christians have shown through the Crusades, repeated missions, and colonial intervention by supposedly "Christian" nations that their religion can be used toward violent ends. Again, a brief summary must suffice:

a) *The Crusades.* The crusaders came in waves between 1099 and 1187. During their campaigns they massacred Jews, Muslims, and Orthodox Christians indiscriminately.

b) *Ottoman domination.* During the Ottoman domination of 1517 to 1917, the regime legalized the *Millet* and *Dhommi* systems, which turned the various religious communities into socio-political entities. This increased inter-religious tensions and made them lose hope of attaining a possible pluralistic society.

c) *Foreign intervention and colonialism.* Because of its geographic position between continents and its natural resources, the Middle East has always been of economic and political interest to foreign states.

In this respect one recalls the intervention of the Greek and Roman Empires, the Crusades, the Ottoman Empire, European colonialism, the superpowers of the cold war, and today, American intervention.

I mention the above realities because many American Christians still ignore the fact that through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians of the Middle East continue to exist despite all these tribulations. American Christians seem to think that Middle Eastern Christians disappeared through Islamic expansion. Some Western schools of theology make an unjustifiable jump from the early period of the Church to the era of the East-West Christian division or the Reformation.

Today, Western evangelicals coming to the Middle East consider the Christians of the region not sufficiently "Bible-centered" or "mission-centered," and therefore not "born again." Recently some Western evangelicals established the *International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem*, preaching that the State of Israel is the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. This was done as if the Bible contains only the Old Testament and not also the New Testament, with its dual aspects of continuity and discontinuity. They behave as if only the printed book counts, and not the way this book has been lived by Christians in the region since Pentecost.

II. Important Characteristics of the Middle Eastern Ethos

A. Religion and Politics

In the collective identity of the people of the Middle East, human beings are simultaneously political and religious. Religion and politics are interrelated in the sense that every political action has a religious implication, and vice versa. Accordingly, religion is an integral part of the fabric of society. This means that the power of religion and the power of the State are always in both tension and harmony. For Judaism and Islam, the State is supposed to be religious, while for Christianity religion only bears a prophetic attitude toward the State. This profound difference can be explained in part by the fact that the Middle East was largely unaffected by the industrial and French revolutions, the Enlightenment, Nihilism, and Marxism.

B. The communal identity

In the Middle East, human beings are not primarily identified as *independent individuals* as in the West. The political identity of the citizen is unknown apart from his or her religious identity. Thus, people are regarded as members of a community, which can be a family or a religious community. Jews sees themselves as the *Chosen people,* Muslims as members of the *Umma,* and Christians as part of the ecclesial community or the *Church.*

C. Crossroad of cultures

Because of its geographical position between continents, the Middle East has been a crossroad of cultures whose people have suffered a *schizophrenic way of life*. The region experienced the convergence of foreign monotheist and Semitic cultures. Some areas acted as transit zones, while other areas remained isolated and consequently preserved ancient languages, religions, and culture. This contrast between seclusion and openness to outside influences is characteristic of the Middle East and explains why a modern secular cultural outlook can exist alongside traditional religious view of life. Cultural changes coexist with conservatism and the *New* has a dynamic relation with the *Old.* This situation has been both destructive and very creative.

III. Modern Contributions of Middle Eastern Christians

In addition to their witness in the fields of education, development, and humanitarian service, Middle Eastern Christians participated actively in the following developments in their region:

a) *The promotion of modern Arab Nationalism.* In the early twentieth century, Christians participated with the Jewish and Muslim intelligencia who studied in London and Paris to promote a pluralist State, or the concept of *nation-state* against the Ottoman systems of *Millet* and *Dhumm*, which had been in existence for 500 years. Their aim was to establish a form of government that would overcome the status of religious minorities by separating the state from religion,

and by securing political and religious freedom. Most of the rightist and leftist political parties or movements that emerged later in the region were founded on these assumptions. At that time the local Christians thought of promoting with the Jews and the Muslims an *alternative* to the ethnocentric and theocratic states, whose exclusiveness was then considered a hindrance to human rights, freedom, justice, and peace.

b) *The promotion of the Ecumenical Movement.* The Ecumenical Movement was a response to the call from Jesus Christ, the "Living Hope," that his followers should always be united. It was promoted to recover Christian unity for credible witness, and to demonstrate that the Oneness of the Triune God is not only transcendent but also a historical reality that was made manifest through the incarnation of Jesus Christ through the unity of his body, the Church. This movement became a sign of hope, not only for Christian unity beyond the ongoing divisions, but also for reconciliation between all created beings. The movement was made possible by the collective memory that Christ was made incarnate in the Middle East so that his followers could transform hatred into love and politico-religious conflict into justice and peace between all people and nations.

IV. Recent Developments in the Middle East

A. Return to Ethno-Religious and Religious Nationalism

Among the economic and political tensions and instability in today's Middle East, one must mention the following: 1) oil, 2) the intervention of small and big foreign powers, 3) the cold war, and 4) hot wars carried out by proxy. In addition there is the extreme poverty of the Middle Eastern masses, despite the accumulation of oil resources, of which a major part is spent on arms and on products from industrial countries. More important, however, are the explosive tensions that are growing between *secular* and *religious ideologies* and between the *universal* and the *particular* in the ethnic, cultural and religious traditions of the people of the region.

Various forms of moral and physical violence result from these

destructive tensions, which radically question the *identity* of the people, including the Christians. In fact, the ongoing tensions seriously challenge the Western secular concept of power and the secular nationalist understanding of society and of Church-State relations that have prevailed since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. This tendency started after the end of the cold war and is an effect of the Israeli policy of "Balkanizing" the Middle East. It was also exacerbated by ongoing American policy. This development is seen in the following trends:

1. The establishment of Israel

The first trend of the early twentieth century was the Zionist Movement. Understandably and legitimately, that movement wanted to liberate the Jews from European anti-Semitism and particularly the experience of the Holocaust. For this reason it labored toward gathering the Jews of the Diaspora in the land of Palestine to establish there "a people without land in a land without people." Unfortunately, this ended in settling the Jews in the Holy Land where sizable Muslim and Christian communities were living. Accordingly, the Middle Eastern Jewish partners withdrew from the nationalist movement in order to participate in forming Israel on the basis of *religious ethnocentrism.* The Zionist ideology challenged the *plural* nature of modern nationalism, on the ground that it separates *religion and ethnicity* from the State, establishes equality between Jews and Arab Palestinians (or Jews and Gentiles), and denies the Jewish concept of their being the "chosen people" in the "Promised Land." Accordingly, Muslim and Christian Palestinians have no identity and home in the land of Palestine. Moreover, that ideology revived the concept of *divine right* against the *human rights* of the Palestinians and in opposition to the universal notion of human rights formulated by the International Declaration of Human Rights. Unfortunately, the memory of the Holocaust also made Israel transform fear into aggression against the Palestinians. Consequently, Israel's ideology or philosophy of existence and its behavior in the region have projected some problematic ethical principles, including "might makes right," *fait accompli*, and the elimination of the *other* instead of dialogue. Today some Jews are increasingly challenging the present Israeli ideology

and policy regarding the Palestinians. In this respect one may refer to *B'Tselem* in Israel and to Jewish Voices for Peace in the U.S.A.

2. The Islamic Revivalist Movement

The Islamic Revivalist movement is striving to reestablish the Islamic *Umma* or State based on Islamic law and not on the laws elaborated by Western democracies, which, they believe, are not compatible with the Islamic faith and were brought to the Middle East by Western colonialism. Consequently, they are calling all Muslims to withdraw from modern nationalism in order to rebuild their present societies and states on the basis of the Islamic law, or *sharia.* In such societies, Jews and Christians are regarded as "people of the book" and therefore, can live in peace as minorities or *Dhummi* within the abode of Islam or *Dar Al Islam.* Unfortunately, this does not necessarily provide enough protection to these minorities because Muslims, like Christians, may at times be weak in their faith. They often seek "positive laws" to help them become worthy of God through internal *Jihad* and protect themselves from any wrong behavior they may have toward non-Muslims, who could then be reduced to second class citizenship. However, it is important to mention that while the majority of the Muslim *Sunni* and *Shi'a* tend to agree with this movement, they are increasingly becoming open to the reinterpretation of their faith or *Ijtehad.* Most of their leaders have also made clear statements against the so-called "fundamentalist" trend and its use of violence, which according to them is not related to authentic Islam. Moreover, a reformist movement is developing in Iran against Khomeini's interpretation of Islam and disputing the clergy's presidential role as sole intercessor between man and God. Accordingly, the reformers are calling for a return to the clergy's traditional role as guardians of the faith. Some people are supporting the reformist ideas of Khatami and others are calling for *Islamic Democracy*, though the logical result of their prescriptions would dismantle the current system. As the student leader put it: "We want democracy without prefix or suffix. That means no Islamic or religious democracy. The two are incompatible." However, there is no clear orientation about the future Iranian system.

3. The cultural implications

The return to the ethnic and religious nationalism is having cultural implications that are making people in the Middle East feel like victims of a conflict, mainly between two cultural trends, which seem to be leading them to suffer a social tension between plurality and particularity. The first trend is toward so-called Western culture, which considers that the value of the human being is intrinsic. Such a culture has led to the creation of a model of nationalism based on the principle of separating the state from religion. Many people consider that the values of Western culture or the concept of nation-state were internationally transmitted by Western colonialism and were later legitimized by the decisions and claims of the United Nations. The second trend is in opposition to the Western culture. Its supporters consider that Western culture has promoted a secular humanism that has invested power in the human to the extent of marginalizing and even eliminating God through materialist, nihilist, and other atheist philosophies. Therefore, they want power to be re-centered in God.

Exaggerated forms of these emerging religious and cultural trends are asserting God's power in the world at the expense of human beings who can be eliminated through violence in the name of God, such as in fundamentalist Islam or in the name of the "chosen people" in Israel. This is using religion as a cause of war and violence instead of a factor for justice and peace.

B. Foreign intervention

Instead of helping to resolve tensions in the Middle East, the superpowers have encouraged and exploited them for their own economic and strategic purposes. In this regard, we could refer to the ongoing American policy of support for Israel and of the "crusade" or "war against terrorism" or "the axis of evil," which many Muslims consider to be a war against them and their religion. Arab memories of the Crusades more than eight centuries ago remain real and politically relevant. In addition, instead of helping the situation, the American media plays an exacerbating role. For this reason, local public opinion in the Middle East remains deeply resentful of western po-

litical and military intervention. This has been manifested again in widespread Middle Eastern opposition to the American-led war to change the Iraqi regime and redraw the political map of the region.

On the other hand, the globalization process seems to be the extension of a Western, mainly

American, political, economic, and cultural ethos aimed at opening access to resources and markets everywhere. As a result people are called to embrace a *materialist* path to happiness. Accordingly, the "god of globalization," the market, offers a kind of secular salvation to people who used to go to temples, mosques, and churches to feel a sense of spiritual security. Therefore, for those who yearn for spiritual values, the task ahead is to articulate an alternative value system that would lay the foundation of an order whose primary goal is not the maximization of profits, as pursued by the U.S., but the submission to God's will. For them, the struggle against *money-theism* has to be anchored in a God-centered view of life, *monotheism*.

The people of the Middle East have reacted strongly to the present American policy, which appears to be based on self-economic interest, self-centered security, and solidarity with Israel at the expense of the Palestinian people. Therefore, it is exacerbating the use of religion for violent ends.

Hope for the Future

The Middle East has always been a mosaic of religious, ethnic, and cultural communities who have experienced wars between each other, causing great human suffering and destruction of life and property. However, despite their occasional use of violence to assert their particular identity and because of the importance of religion in their life, the people of that region have always longed for peace, which for them is "inclusive of justice and rooted in the Divine Truth" as mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud.

For their part, Middle Eastern Christians believe that God entered history in their region through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ not by accident, but in order to transform ongoing fears, hatred, divisions, wars, and violence, into hope, love, unity, and peace with justice. For this reason, they are trying to help each other deepen their spiritual

quality and to recover their Church unity for credible witness within monotheism. They are also promoting inter-religious dialogue with the aim of helping monotheistic people 1) liberate themselves from past traumas and mutual misconceptions about each other; 2) discover in their respective heritages spiritual values for common living in equality, mutual respect, freedom, justice, and peace; 3) find a relevant socio-political formula that is neither secular nor ethnocratic nor theocratic but respectful of religion, and religious, ethnic, and cultural differences; and 4) prove that religion is not a source of violence and war, but a call for love, reconciliation, and peace.

Finally, Middle Eastern Christians are hoping that U.S. churches will transform their mission to the Middle East into partnerships with them. Equally important is the hope that U.S. churches will develop a prophetic attitude toward the powers involved in the present dynamics of international wars, including U.S. power. Such a shift would help promote an ethos of cooperation through dialogue instead of domination and elimination of the Other, whoever the Other is.

ON THE "VIOLENCE OF LOVE"

Violeta Rocha, Managua (Nicaragua)

Holy God, the earth cries out for peace.
Send your Spirit to heal the violence that stains your beloved creation.[1]

The awaiting of the world for peace and reconciliation

How can one be a Christian in a world of violence and injustice? What role does Christianity have to play? How can one hope that the forces of reconciliation and peace are really working transformation in our world? These are the great questions for the people of Latin America who not only live in poverty, but who are also, in the majority, Christian believers. Poverty brings social disintegration, conflict, disease, landlessness, the migration of labor under conditions of great inequality, uprootedness, and abuse of the environment by the rich as well as the poor. Women, despite their pivotal role in the family as heads of households and in social and economic life, are very often the most disadvantaged and vulnerable group along with their children. Women also face extreme violence manifested in different ways and sometimes justified by religious rationales.

In the study *Christianity, Poverty, and Wealth* conducted four years ago, one of the issues considered was excessive wealth, seen largely as the accumulation of material possessions and power by a privileged few, while so many others lived at levels of poverty described as sinful, shameful, and scandalous.[2] Justice and peace have no role in the actions of wealthy people and nations. Religious violence is

[1] Catherine Taylor, a Campbell Scholar, composed this universal cry for peace for morning prayers for peace at Chapel on October 4, 2004.

[2] Michael Taylor, *Christianity, Poverty, and Wealth: The findings of 'Project 21*,' Lancaster 2004, 70.

closely linked with political, economic, and social situations determined by the use of wealth and power. A new imperial sovereignty is emerging according to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire*. "In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a de-centered and de-territorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers."[3] Within this framework, Christian believers in Latin America are living out their faith, despair, and expectations. According to Jon Sobrino, violence in Central Ameria (and I would add, in other countries in Latin America) does not have religion as its origin, but injustice!

To properly reflect on the theme of this Campbell Seminar – the mission of the Church in an age of religious violence – is to explore the following assumptions: 1) to understand violence in its broader aspects and the urgency of overcoming violence in order to live together; 2) to understand religion in relation to the whole question of violence; and 3) to provide some clues to overcome this violence.

1. Violence and the imperative call to live together

Living together is a subject in itself that is as old as humanity. The first biblical experience of living together brought disruption, followed immediately by the assassination of a fellow brother. Is the human condition inherently violent? Jewish political philosopher Hanna Arendt proposes several critical ideas to which I will refer briefly. Arendt proposes the present as a disruptive phenomenon between the past and the current situation. We see, live, and know the present. We may say that this analysis of the present points to the dangers posed to the human condition in terms of survival, since possibilities for future generations are scarce and limited. Arendt's *vita activa* designates three fundamental human activities: labor, work, and action. Each is fundamental because each corresponds to one of the basic conditions under which human life exists. Of these three human activities, I emphasize the third: action. Arendt defines

[3] Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. xii.

action as "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things, which as a matter of fact corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."[4] Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history. Labor and work, as well as action, are also rooted in natality insofar as they have the task to provide and preserve the world for, to foresee and reckon with, the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers. I distinguish two important inputs from this reflection:

1. Human actions have a political dimension, where the right to life (broadening Arendt's proposal), and not death, is the main political category.

2. In addition to the conditions of life on earth given to human beings, we also create our own human conditions, in that we are responsible for our own actions. Are we, then, creating or collaborating with violent actions? How can the human condition be oriented to peacemaking?

It is a very long learning process to build peace into different levels of our lives.

Arendt, in her book *On Violence,*[5] distinguishes violence from power, strength, force, and authority. For her, *power* corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert.

Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence of somebody who is "in power." We actually refer to a person's being empowered by a certain number of people to act in his or her name. Power is, therefore, thinking in terms of command and obedience. *Strength*, on the other hand, designates something singular; it is the property inherent in an object or person and belongs to its character, which may prove itself in relation to other things or persons, but is essentially independent of them. *Force* should be reserved, in terminological language, for the "forces of nature" or the "force of circumstances," that is, to indicate energy released by physical or social movements. *Authority*, however, is

[4] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago 1958, 7.
[5] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, New York 1970.

vested in persons – there is such a thing as personal authority. Finally, *violence* has an instrumental character. Like all mediating conditions, it always stands in need of guidance and justification by something else, and it is not the essence of everything. It is important to accept that power and violence, though they are distinct phenomena, usually appear together. According to Arendt, power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course, violence ends in power's disappearance.

Other concepts of violence could be helpful as we seek to understand the reassertion of religion as a political force and as a justification of violence:

a) Violence is the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others.[6]

b) Philosophically, violence can only be defined as the silencing of questions. That may happen in brutal forms, as when a philosopher concludes he has reached the origin of all obscurity: an example is Descartes' *cogito*. Obviously, metaphysics has not always been the origin of violence; but it is the case that the moments of greatest violence in history have always been justified by well-structured metaphysical pretenses.[7]

c) The question of religious violence, therefore, is first and foremost a human question, a social and anthropological question, and not a directly religious question. Following arguments from René Girard, human beings are more competitive than aggressive. His article "Religion and Violence"[8] affirms: "In addition to the appetites we share with animals, we have a more problematic yearning that lacks any instinctual objects: desire. We literally do not know what to desire and, in order to find out, we watch the people we admire: we imitate their desires."

d) At the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, violence against women was described as follows: "By violence in

[6] Manfred B. Steger and Nancy S. Lind (eds.), *An Interdisciplinary Reader Violence and its Alternatives*, New York 1999, 5.

[7] Gianni Batiko et al., "Weak Thought and the Reduction of Violence: A Dialogue with Gianni Vattimo," *Common Knowledge* 3, Durham, NC 2002, p. 455.

[8] René Girard, Religion and Violence, *The Hedgehow Review* 1, 2004, p. 8.

relation between the sexes, we understand any kind of violation of physical and/or mental integrity which is connected with the gender of the victim and the perpetrator and which is exercised by exploiting the balance of power between men and women present in existing structures."

First assumption: I want to offer some insights in relation to the question, what is violence? If we consider human beings capable of acts of violence, it is absolutely true that we are also capable of acts of peace and reconciliation. Our actions are political actions! Since classic theology, the human condition has been dealt with rather selective attention. We have a wide theological inheritance in respect to it, particularly in respect to sin and judgment, life and death, hope and despair. As mentioned above, Arendt proposes to see the present as a disruptive phenomenon between past and present. We see, live, and know the present! We may say that this analysis of the present points to the dangers posed to the human condition in terms of survival, since possibilities for future generations are scarce and limited. Arendt affirms that the human condition is the point of departure, and public spaces are the location from which word and action are exerted. Arendt's proposal fits the critical principle of Christian theology: word and action. Further, she claims that human co-existence (pluralism) is based on freedom and politics. We do not exist singularly but in that which is plural. This phrase condenses a great challenge to the issue of reconciliation. That is why democracy is intimately related to those public spaces where freedom should be present in order to participate. If we regard reconciliation and peace as a revelatory action of something new, as Arendt points out, we would say that there are coincidences and overlaps from theological and biblical perspectives.

2. Religion and its relation to the whole question of violence

When speaking about the mission of the church in the age of religious violence, we confront a wide spectrum of concepts of violence. Different forms of violence are conceptualized as acts, processes, or relationships. It is important to keep in mind that violence may or

may not have explicitly religious objectives. Among the research of diverse specialists in religious studies, the relationship between religion and violence has been the subject of rapidly growing interest and concern to social scientists studying a broad range of religious groups and traditions. In recent decades, religion has emerged as something of a "dark force" in human affairs. What is religion?

Religion can be understood as a key issue in defining social and human consciousness and their pathology (Marx and Freud). From this perspective, religion is patently normative, arbitrary, and metaphysical, and exploits the mythical, the ritualistic, and the emotional.

Religion has been regarded by sociologists as a "pre-sociological" theory of society, and the sociology of religion when conceived as such must inevitably be a discipline in which central epistemological questions are at issue. Religion has a function in society by summoning evaluative and affective dispositions, and by diffusing appropriate motivations, encompassing a very wide range of human experience. It is particularly important to understand that religious discourse is elaborated and that religious language is often highly ambiguous; it provides not only descriptions, but also evaluations calling and evoking particular types of emotional response. In this way, too, many studies in this field show that some people are dealing with the relationships and impact of various religious movements on science, education, and media; family and interpersonal relationships, law and order, policies, economic structures, and violence.

On the other hand, the explicit and manifest function of religion is to offer humankind the prospect of salvation and to provide appropriate guidance for its attainment. Bryan Wilson affirmed that the function of religion is to maintain social cohesion. Religion provides occasion for reunion, the reassertion of social solidarity, and so, sustained social cohesion, and it solemnizes the social order, providing a basis for what sociologists used to call social control. We can understand the function of religion in conferring identity to individuals and groups, or in reinforcing the sense of identity derived from other associations or affiliations. This sense of identity or "sense of belonging" is more evident in Latin America, specifically when we are talking of poor people in the Pentecostal churches and Neo-Pentecostal movements. In the midst of societies where experiences of

exclusion are the bread of daily life, this "sense of belonging" provides the feeling of being included. Unfortunately, these feelings are not expected to last.

Each religion claims that it is the most complete system and expression of ultimate truth with warranted and necessary practices, and complete legitimacy. Monotheistic religions like Christianity justify exclusivity, hierarchy, and chains of authority throughout the church, which claims to be the universal church. In keeping with traditional religious values, religion justifies violence in order to combat irreligion (atheism or secularism) or defends divine values as determining positions of church leadership, worship, and liturgy, thus providing ideological support for violence against women. The institutional power of the doctrinal definition has been dominant and often produces new forms of violence such as the misuse of religious knowledge, manipulation or misuse of information, and the use of religious experience for political power. Foucault says that whenever power is exerted, resistance is also a response to power. This is the reason we see many examples of resistance trying to transform situations of domination – specifically that of violence against women – in the last two decades in Latin America.

Religions are based on something that is given to human beings wherever they live. Religion offers revelation, a particular kind of experience, which always implies saving powers. Revelation and salvation can never be separated. Human beings receive revelation in terms of finite human situations. Paul Tillich refers also to a revelatory process in which the limits of adaptation and reception in a distorted form must be subjected to criticism (the mystical, the prophetic, and the secular). Tillich's contribution is very helpful in stating that religion can be this only if it is at the same time a judgment on itself, a judgment which must use the secular as a tool of one's own religious self-criticism. It is precisely in this dimension that history of religions does not exist alongside the history of culture and it helps to keep some distance of religious absolutism. From the perspective of the history of religion the holy (sacred) is the basis for the universal religion within the finite; the holy is also open to secularization. According to Tillich, the secular becomes empty and becomes the victim of what he calls "quasi religions." Quasi-religions contain some

elements of religion, but they are without the depth and the richness of genuine religious traditions. This could be true in relation to "civil religions" present in different societies. It is obvious that theological thinking of Tillich can be questioned, but at the same time it is an open perspective in relation to history of religion and culture.

We cannot forget Karl Barth, who made a distinction between religion as a human activity and faith as the event in human life, a product of the work of the Holy Spirit and also God's gift. For Barth true religion is the unavoidable reflection of the most profound experience of human life, the miracle of faith. Barth's criticism of religionism is precisely that it understands Christian revelation as one of many religions, though perhaps as relatively the best of all religions, and loses sight of the uniqueness of the Christian revelation and of its superiority over human religion. Barth considered Christian revelation a particular, concrete, and rational event, nothing less than "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." It is important than his concept of revelation requires human understanding. This knowledge of God through Jesus Christ made possible the reconciliation. The revelation itself is part of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ because it means the restoration of the communion of sinful humankind with God. It is possible to live together reconciled and in peace!

Second Assumption: Today we know that there is a revival of religious ideologies. People find in these religious ideologies more meaning than in old secular ideologies. On the other hand, according to empirical research, we find that in countries of the "first world" traditional religious practices are declining, specifically church attendance, although new forms of religiosity (spirituality) appear. Contrary to this experience, in Latin America religious fervor is growing and at the same time new ways of worship and new symbolic dimensions are emerging in the midst of very precarious and unsafe realities. In both instances we are challenged to contribute religious practices that promote peace and are able to recreate relationship with God, between genders, among generations, among minorities, among nations, within ourselves, and with our environment (*oikos*) broken by violence, power, and intolerance.

We live in an age of violence, and religious violence is a face of this broken world after the last most violent twentieth century. Religions are still alive and it contents and it praxis are manifesting in different ways, some of these options are very dangerous, other are narcotic, and fortunately there are other possibilities to heal the social body, nature body, and women and men. For many people around the world a better definition of religion could be the witness of faith instead of religious trappings in which some religions, including Christianity, are considered superior to other religions. These feelings do not allow for the coexistence of religions in our plural world. Christianity has also theologically legitimated violence in different periods of our history. Painful memories remain in Latin America with Gines de Sepulveda and Francisco Vittoria, European theological thinkers who supported the cross and sword, conducting genocide, sexual harassment, and despair. But there was always redemption by the true Gospel in Fr. Bartolome de Las Casas, and Fr. Antonio de Valdivieso who raised a prophetic voice to show the love and grace of God toward humankind.

Religion becomes violent when it feels that it cannot stand against some emerging cultural pattern of society. Some actions, such as terrorism, are radical fundamentalist reactions against the conditions of the modem world such as a) the separation of church and state; b) the dignity and human rights for women; and c) individual religious freedom.

Edward Schillebeeckx, in his article in *Concilium,*[9] mentioned the thesis of Merleau-Ponty, who claims that religious violence is intrinsic to the nature of religion. Is there an intrinsic connection

between religion and violence? Or is religion inherently violent? These are provocative questions that ought to provoke different responses. We believe religion affirms human dignity and life: religious faith can help to contain, prevent, or overcome violence in a variety ways. Religion can become an element of stability and peace. Believers from Latin America and other parts of the world are chal-

[9] Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel, "Religion as a source of violence?," *Concilium* 4, London 1997, 131.

lenged to a readiness, a commitment, and a passionate practicality motivated by the Holy Spirit: *Come Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile!*

Conclusions

Liberation Theology has taught Latin Americans to do critical theological thinking. A renewed rapport with biblical literature and a call to develop a new praxis takes us to "liberating religion," which brings continuity between actions and words. The Letter of James, which has been questioned over many centuries and probably today continues to be somewhat disdained, has something to say to the theme of the mission of the Church in an age of religious violence. Elsa Tamez[10] says postmodern readers can consider this letter at the beginning of twenty-first century as an anachronism discourse, because the letter does not take into account the complexities of life. James affirms that "pure, unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world" (1,27). James encourages us to understand religion as practice and as an option for those excluded and abandoned by society. At the same time religion must be critical of excessive wealth that exerts violence against others. James is still calling us to be congruent in our words and actions, our faith and deeds; this position assumes a political solidarity that seeks to recreate a world (*aeon*) where men and women live together from a holistic perspective. All kinds of violence – against human beings and against the environment – are unacceptable! The God of Christianity calls us to live life in abundance; all acts of violence should not only be criticized, they should also be overcome. We suggest some clues to help us overcome violence:

1) Religious violence occurs at different levels. There are many studies connecting religion and violence that involve a variety of issues and relationships requiring diverse theoretical explanations. This spectrum of research and experience could be very helpful in understanding this phenomenon.

[10] Elsa Tamez, *El mensaie escandaloso de Santiago*, San Jose 2002[2].

2) Religion and violence are increasing in the twenty-first century in the context of a unilateral superpower that presents itself as a reliable source of social peace and ethical truth. Religion could contribute with an active spirituality of resistance to construct real peace and reconciliation. It is also imperative to unveil this imperial force and liberate reconciliation and peace as real forces working in our world to transform it.

3) To imagine any future, near or far, requires hope and creativity that can transform a violent and broken world that is now in danger. Christian hope is not only for the future, but hope for the present and the past.

4) Over the centuries, the just war tradition has served a variety of purposes. Essentially, the just war tradition makes two claims: that war can be justified morally to appeal to values served that are commensurate with the harm caused; and that the use of force within war is a rule-governed activity whose violence is subject to ethical assessment and direction. In other words, war is to be judged duly for just cause and just methods. This position presents violence as a morally legitimate option, but war is not inevitable, and we can hope for other ways to resolve conflicts.[11]

5) If violence is undesirable and peace desirable, the churches are privileged sites for change in social, cultural, and religious practices. Churches are also places where it is possible to construct equal relationships among genders, generations, ethnicities, nations, minorities, and with the environment. Churches are called to change their mentality (Rom. 12,2).

6) Religion has a public dimension that exerts a social function and is called to take ethical responsibility in responding to human problems at all levels: society, politics, economy, and international order. We must insist on interfaith dialogue, and we must continue intra-faith dialogue!

7) Romero's thought is very pertinent: **"**We have never preached violence, except the violence of love, which left Christ, nailed on a cross, the violence that we must each do to ourselves to overcome

[11] Maria Pilar Aquino and Dietmar Mieth, "The Return of the Just War," *Concilium* 2, London 2001.

selfishness and cruel inequalities among us. The violence we preach is not the violence of the sword, the violence of hatred. It is the violence of love, of brotherhood, the violence that wills to beat weapons into sickles for work."[12]

[12] Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*, San Francisco 1988.

MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN AN AGE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE: CALLED TO BE THE CHURCH

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To ask "What is the mission of the Church?" is really to ask what is the nature and function of the Church. In the New Testament, the Church is called the *ekklesia,* which means "an assembly which has come into existence through a call."[1] In the New Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used to describe the church of Jesus Christ. According to our Christian faith, it is God who calls the Church into existence. Those who accept the call receive the gift of grace of salvation and become the *kyriake,* which means those who belong to the Lord. They become the Lord's assembly through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior they are united with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and with each other. Those who are called to be the Church, to belong to the Lord God, are those who receive the promise of salvation. The salvation God gives by grace alone through the work of Jesus Christ was not intended for persons as individuals, but for the people of God as a whole. The term "children of God" was first meant to refer to the whole fellowship of believers, i. e. those who have faith in God. However, because every person who has faith in God becomes a member of the household of God, each and every faithful member receives his or her part of the grace of salvation. Therefore, the people of faith must not stand alone. One must not be separated from the others. It is these children of God that the New Testament calls the *ekklesia,* the assembly of the people of God, who are called to be a *koinonia,* a community and an instrument of God's continuing work of salvation for the whole of God's creation.

[1] It is the genius of the leader of "the people in the process of becoming a nation," (Israel) to utilize the divine experience in Sinai to develop the doctrine of the "promised land."

In the Old Testament we find the term 'the people of God.' In Deuteronomy 7:6, it is mentioned that Israel is a people holy to the Lord God, the people who were chosen by God amongst all the peoples on the face of the earth, to become God's people. In the Old Testament, this holy people of God is called the "the Assembly of God's people" *(qahal* Yahweh), which in Greek is translated into *ekklesia*; it is repeatedly said that it is God who has called Israel to become God's people (cf. Isaiah 41:9; 42:6, 43:1, etc.) It was not because Israel was a good nation, it was not because Israel merited being chosen; it was because of God's own free will. God wanted Israel to be "a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in the darkness." (Isaiah 42:6–7). God made a covenant with his people, Israel. It was on the basis of this covenant that God promised that Israel would be saved.[2]

The New Testament Church understands itself to be the continuation of the people of God or the Assembly of God of the Old Testament. However, the church in the New Testament is not exactly the same as the Assembly of God in the Old Testament. This is clear, for instance, in Matthew 16:18–19, which states that Jesus will build his *ekklesia,* the Church, on the rock (i.e. the solid confession that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the Living God) and "the powers of death (the gates of Hades) shall not prevail against it." So the New Testament church is called on the basis of "faith in Jesus Christ," as confessed by the apostle Simon Peter. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are called together to be members of the community or the *koinonia.* They are called to be the Church, to be *kyriakel.* Thus there is continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament and at the same time also discontinuity.

The word *'kyriake,'* which means "those who belong to the Lord," was not used in the New Testament itself, but was used in the time after the apostles, to describe the church as an institution with polity and rules.[3] According to Karl Barth, "The church is an assembly that has come into existence in a definite place. And on the other side, it is

[2] Karl Barth, *Credo,* New York 1962, p. 137.
[3] Harun Hadiwiyono, *Iman Kristen*, Jakarta 1973, 295–296.

the place where an assembly has been held, and is to be held again and again."[4] Thus the church has a double meaning. First, it is an assembly of people who have been called into existence in a definite, particular place, and second, a place where such an assembly of people usually meets. In this place, the church, people assemble not only to meet one with another, but also to meet with God. There are many terms used in the New Testament to describe the church. Paul Minear's *Images of the Church in the New Testament*[5] describes close to a hundred different uses and applications of the term. Important as these may be, I suggest we look at how the contemporary church understands itself, and how the Church understands the nature of its calling or the nature of its function.

The Church as Koinonia

The Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Canberra in February 1991, approved a document entitled *The Unity of The Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling.* In it, the Assembly says:

> "The purpose of God according to Holy Scriptures is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Christ Jesus in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God. (Eph. l). The church is a foretaste of this communion with God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the one church to live as a sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation. The purpose of the church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom."[6]

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[4] Karl Barth, *Credo*, loc. cit.

[5] Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Louisville 1960.

[6] Michael Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit, Official Report of the Seventh Assembly*, Geneva 1991, p. 172

The church is called to be *koinonia,* a community to manifest the unity of God in Christ. This call is universal, because it is the same time a gift of God to the whole of humanity. The universal Church is the *koinonia* in faith, life, and witness that includes all those who have faith in Jesus Christ – in the past, present and future. It includes all faithful believers in Jesus Christ regardless of place and time. It is the "communion of saints" *(communio sanctorum).* This church, the communion of the saints, is holy and at the same time catholic. The catholicity of the church is grounded and found only in and because of the same confession of faith that "Jesus is the Christ, son of the living God." (cf. Matt. 16:16; Mark 8:29) And it is holy only because it is catholic; as Barth says, "it is *sancta,* it is even *ecclesia,* only where it is in essence and in will decisively *catholica*."[7] Without that same common confession – that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, Lord and Savior – the church is no longer holy; it is even no longer *ekklesia.*

The church exists, or was called into existence, not for its own sake, that is, not just for the benefit or the salvation of its members but in order that "by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God." (Eph. 1) "The church is a foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, enable the one church to live as a sign of the reign of God (the Kingship of God) and servant of the reconciliation which God promised and provided for the whole of creation."[8] The church is called to be a community, a *koinonia,* so that it becomes a sign, an active sign, to witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ, which is given to God's creation, and to witness to the reign of God that also applies to all God's creation. Hence, the church is called to function as a *koinonia,* in order to become *martyria.* Therefore, the task or the function of the church is to become witness in the larger community in the world. Through its life and activities as a *koinonia,* the church must become a witness of the salvation of God. The church must become *martyria,* a living sign of the community under the reign of God, no longer

[7] Karl Barth, Credo, p. 139.
[8] Michael Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit,* p. 172.

under the rules of human nature and selfish interests. It is given the new life in Christ. In the daily life of the church, as a community, Christ who is the head of the church, is also the Lord of the church. He reigns over his body; therefore, the members of the community must live a new life based on his loving kindness, on his ministry, in serving the reconciliation that God has given. Paul admonished the Colossians to live this new life in Christ.

> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.[9]

It is through this kind of love for one another, which permeates the whole life of each member, that the whole community, the church as *koinonia* can become a living sign of the reconciliation with God and with one another that must radiate throughout the community at large and throughout the world wherever the church is called into existence. This is the *witness* for which the church was called into existence. There cannot be *koinonia* without *martyria. Koinonia* and *martyria* are inseparable functions of the church.

Without *martyria*, the church ceases to exist. Furthermore, the church as a *koinonia*, is also called to serve *(diakonia)* and to be a "servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation." Like Christ himself, who "came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," the church is called to be a serving community for the sake of the whole of God's creation. (Cf. Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45). In other words, the church, the koinonia, must be willing to witness, with all the risk, to become *martyria* by serving God's reconciliation with the whole of humanity through Jesus Christ, thus to become a servant of reconciliation, for the sake of Jesus Christ. The reconciliation is not only between God and the whole humanity, but by virtue of this reconciliation, the whole

[9] Col 3:12–14 (NIV).

of humankind should be reconciled one with another. Therefore, the ministry of reconciliation *(ten diakonian tes katallages)* is another function of the church that cannot be separated from the other two inseparable functions of the church, the *koinonia* and the *martyria.* Thus *koinonia, martyria* and *diakonia* are the three inseparable functions or missions of the church. They are the identity and the *raison d'etre* of the church. The church is a genuine *koinonia* only if it fulfills the functions of selfless *martyria* and *diakonia*; and the *martyria* of the church is genuine when it is done through *diakonia* within the context of the *koinonia*; and the *diakonia* is pure when it is served by the *koinonia* and for the purpose of *martyria.* (Note: *Diakonia*, in the sense of social service, is part of and is an outcome of the *diakonia* of reconciliation).

This universal church, which is perceived as the invisible church, manifests itself in the reality of our lives through the 'visible churches,' i. e. through the local churches or congregations. Members of the local churches are also members of their local communities, but they are called out from their communities (families, clans, nations, races, cultures, etc.) through their conversion by the Holy Spirit into the faith in Jesus Christ, and sanctified and strengthened spiritually through the sacrament of Holy Communion (the Eucharist) in the *koinonia*. And thus "God calls the churches to be that part of humanity that is empowered by the Holy Spirit to be at the same time fully united and entirely respectful of the diversity of persons, races, and cultures. The church is to be catholic, that is, one in the whole of humanity. This diversity must be encompassed by the unity so that it does not become division; and unity must be enriched by diversity so that it does not degenerate into uniformity."[10]

However, in its historical existence since the beginning of the church in the New Testament, this one universal church has suffered from disunity and schisms, which today result in the various denominational or confessional churches. The WCC 7th Assembly recognizes this and says:

[10] WCC Commission on Faith and Order, *"Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness," Draft of a working Document*, Dublin 1992.

> "The calling of the church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, color and to bring all people into communion with God. Because of sin and the misunderstanding of the diverse gifts of the Spirit, the churches are painfully divided within themselves and among each other. The scandalous divisions damage the credibility of their witness to the world in worship and service. Moreover they contradict not only the church's witness but also its very nature."

While all confess Jesus Christ as God and Savior, and each claims to be a right and faithful manifestation of the universal church of Jesus Christ, the three major forms of the Christian church – Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic – neither accept nor recognize the others to be in "full communion" and cannot sit together at the table of our Lord Jesus Christ.[11] The churches are thus in outright disobedience to their calling. They must come under the judgment of Jesus Christ himself, are in constant need of repentance and renewal, and in constant need of grace, forgiveness, and God's mercy.

And yet despite apparent weakness, schisms, and disunity, we are amazed that God, through God's merciful kindness and patience, continues to call the churches, as *koinonia,* to serve and to witness among the whole of human society, because the purpose of the church's being called into existence (which is to serve God and to be a light unto the nations, to proclaim the Gospel, and to witness to the love of God to the whole of creation) has not yet been fully accomplished. As the 7th Assembly of the WCC says, "the purpose of the church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action, and thus point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity, and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom."[12] This is the *raison d'etre* of the church. This is the nature and calling of the church, to be a partner of God in God's mission *(missio Dei).* Therefore, mission is not only an activity of the

[11] This is the formal position or teaching of these Churches. Nonetheless, some Roman Catholic priests and Protestant pastors also welcome other Christians to partake in the Eucharist (the Mass) because they believe.

[12] Michael Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit,* pp. 172–173.

church, not only a program among other things that the local churches do, but the very existence of the church is to be in God's mission, to bring the whole world, the whole creation into the Kingdom of God and into the Kingship of God. The call to participate in this mission of God (the *missio Dei)* is not only an invitation, but it is a command, it is an order of God. Therefore, if and when the church is not actively involved in the mission of God, i. e. to be a "gathering community" to serve and to witness, the church is disobedient to God.

The church in every age and every place must be consistently obedient to this call to mission. It can do so only if the church continuously discerns where God manifests God's self and where God is at work. In doing so, the church, in every age and in every place, must respond to God's manifestation and work through faithful study and reflection on the scriptures and the traditions of the church in the light of the contexts in which God has called the church into existence. The church, the assembled people of God throughout history, has not always been faithful and obedient to this call to mission. It has often deviated from the centrality of God's mission, and has often used mission as a pretext for the church's own domination and power. Therefore the church must constantly be humble and repentant.[13]

The Age of Religious Violence

The "military-industrial-complex" that dominated the greater part of the post-World War II era has created a tremendous gap between the rich and industrialized countries of the North (represented by the Club of 7 most industrialized countries: U.S., Canada, Japan, U.K, France, West Germany, and Italy) and the poor countries of the South (the Club of 77 developing nations of the South). This "military-industrial complex" also intensified the ideological and political gap between the Western block (capitalistic, democratic countries) championed by the U.S. and the Eastern block countries (mostly socialist

[13] Note: According to the ecclesiological doctrine of the Orthodox Church, the Church is the assembled people of God and God is the head of the Church. Therefore the Church as a whole cannot be disobedient to God, because God is the head of the Church.

or communist, authoritarian countries) led by the former USSR, with the rest of the third world countries, the non-aligned nations, suffering as the objects of economic, political, and ideological as well as military ventures of the conflicting parties. This cold war era pushed many nations into the arms race, where "every minute the nations of the world spend 1.8 million U.S. dollars on military armaments,"[14] which means that every day 2,592 billion U.S. dollars are spent on the development and production of arms, including weapons of mass destruction.

It is not by chance that most of the third world countries are economically, politically, and militarily underdeveloped compared to the industrialized Western countries, and that scientifically as well as technologically they are light years away from the industrialized nations. It is the direct result of the blatant economic, political, and scientific policies of the industrialized countries of the North. Superpowers supported, if not directly "installed," military dictatorships, authoritarian, and autocratic governments characterized by nepotism and despotism that are common in the third world countries, especially in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. They were made peons by the superpowers for military, political, and economic gains. Purposefully and effectively maintained to be marginalized economically, these countries are easily manipulated politically for the benefit of the superpowers. Many nations that suffer economically have to take massive international loans from rich Western countries in order to survive. The thrust toward globalization of the market economy and free trade by rich and industrially developed countries that promised to bring economic development to all countries is, in fact, undermining the economy of the weak and poor nations of the Two Thirds World. This economic globalization is further enforced by the World Trade Organization (WTO). These facts pushed these countries even deeper into debts that made them unable to develop. People in the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America have become very poor. Hundreds of millions of them live in abject poverty. In the last fifty years after World War II, poor nations became poorer and rich countries became richer. This is a

[14] *Ibid.*

form of violence that victimizes millions of God's people around the globe. It is not only with the outside (Western) imposition of military, political, economic, and scientific powers that the Third World countries have to deal. Equally important are the cultural, social, and historical problems inherent in many countries of the Third World including corruption, ethnic and/or social class discriminations, the culture of vengeance and revenge, etc.

Throughout the cold war period, for almost half a century, the "military-industrial-complex" exploited the world's resources in such callous and reckless ways, without due consideration of the environment, that the continued existence of the planet is dangerously threatened. The Earth is systematically and continuously excavated, mined, drilled, siphoned, and pumped for its natural resources, to keep the industries, military or otherwise, running and profitable for the sake of economic growth. Human society has caused the Earth to suffer immeasurably: its rainforests are being destroyed, its rich and varied fauna and flora impoverished, its lands bombed, desertified or flooded, the air filled with carbon monoxides, the rain acidified, the ozone layer depleted, the seas contaminated and made the dumping place of nuclear wastes. In short, the earth has been exploited without respect and consideration for its sustainability and its harmony. This is another form of violence done by powerful countries against nature and its ecology, and against God's creation.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the World saw signs of hope when the Berlin Wall, the symbol of ideological and political division in the East (communist, authoritarian) and the West (capitalism, democracy) crumbled in early 1990. This dramatic event was precipitated by the demise of communism in Europe. But the relatively peaceful, although very tense situation during the cold war, suddenly broke into multiple conflicts, not only in Europe but also in many other parts of the world. The Balkan war presented the most cruel and inhuman atrocities in Europe since World War II. In the newly proclaimed independent Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Bosnian Moslems were savagely attacked by the Orthodox Serbian nationalists. The Balkan war continued to spread into Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia. This ethno-religious war has drawn the U.S. and its allies under the United Nations Forces to intervene in the violent

conflict with the purpose of preventing it from spreading further. The facts, however, indicate the opposite.

Not only Europe, but also many countries in Asia saw ethno-religious conflicts. Ethnicity and religion have been used to justify the violence. In Sri Lanka, the war between the Sinhalese Buddhists and the Tamil Hindus has been going on for some time. In India, there has been violent conflict between fundamentalist Hindus against the Moslem and Christian minorities; in Pakistan, there are clashes between Shiite Moslems and Sunni Moslems; in the Philippines, between the Government with the majority Roman Catholic believers against the minority Moslems in the South (Mindanao). In Myanmar (formerly Burma), the military government with the large majority Burmese Buddhists violently oppressed the minority Kayin and Kachin Christians. In Indonesia in early 1990's, Moslems burned hundreds of churches, and in Ambon (Maluku Province), fierce fighting between the Christians and the Moslems resulted in thousands of people killed and hundreds of thousands seriously injured; over one million became internally displaced persons (IDPs). In Africa, in the last few decades we have witnessed the violent apartheid system by the white Afrikaners against black and colored South Africans. We have seen the wars in the Middle East: in Iraq, Iran, and Palestine and in Africa: in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Angola, and Mozambique, as well as the genocide in Rwanda. The list can go on and on. The issue here is that in most of these violent conflicts and wars, each religious group believes that God or Allah is on its side, that "God is with us," that "Allah is with us." Religion has been used to justify acts of violence.

This fact was heightened by the events of September 11, 2001. The attack by terrorists against the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. has made the U.S. government realize that home security is very vulnerable. The reaction of the U.S. government was swift. President George W. Bush declared war on terrorism. The U.S. government believes that Osama bin Laden, leader of the Al-Qaeda group, was responsible for this atrocity. Furthermore, the U.S. government believes that the Taliban government in Afghanistan provided shelter to Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda cells. Therefore Afghanistan was attacked by U.S. forces and the Taliban was destroyed.

And yet Osama bin Laden remains at large. He was not found in Afghanistan. Iraq was the next target by the U.S., and as we know, the U.S. decided to attack Iraq even without the international support of the UN. The U.S. was supported only by the United Kingdom and Australia. This act of aggression was committed by the U.S. out of fear that Iraq provided shelter to Al-Qaeda terrorists and that Iraq had piles of weapons of mass destruction that threatened U.S. security. President Saddam Hussein eventually was captured and put to jail, and his government completely destroyed, and yet the war in Iraq continues. No weapons of mass destruction were found, and neither was Osama bin Laden, the leader of the Al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, the war in Iraq has caused thousands of casualties among troops on both sides, but mostly among civilians. President George W. Bush declared that the U.S. is in a crusade to fight against terrorism and accused the Moslem fundamentalist group Al-Qaeda and the Jamaah Islamiah (an Islamic fundamentalist group, found in some South East Asian countries) to be behind these terrorist acts. This use of the word "crusade" and the blanket accusation against Moslems has provoked even larger opposition against Americans all over the world, especially among Moslem countries. Terrorism is increasing and not subsiding. Fundamentalist Moslems in Asian countries, especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, Pakistan, and the Middle East now have a rationale for declaring *jihad fisabilillah* (war in the way of Allah) based on this U.S. government policy. Religion is used to justify acts of violence both by the U.S. government, the most powerful nation in the world, as well as by militant Moslems. Is this justifiable? In such a situation, what is the role of the Church? What is the mission of the Church in such a violent age, when religion is used to destroy and not to build, to break up communities and not to unite? To this question we now must turn.

A New Paradigm for Mission

From the eighteenth century up to the early twentieth century, missionaries from Western and Northern countries were very much motivated by the great call to mission in Matthew 28:19–20, which became the paradigm for sending missionaries. The early Church of the

New Testament indeed believed that the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be spread around the world. They were so joyful that they believed they had to share this good news. Therefore, they believed that Jesus Himself commanded the call to mission.[15] "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This was the beginning of the missionary movement. St. Paul took this mission beyond Jerusalem and Palestine, and proclaimed it to the Gentiles as well.

As mentioned above, to be faithful to its calling and mission, the Church must continuously discern where God manifests God's self and where God is at work. The Church must also respond to God's manifestations and work through faithful study and reflection on the scriptures and the traditions of the Church in the context in which God has called the church into being. In discerning the presence of God in situations of violent conflict and war, the churches around the world have taken different positions and attitudes and actions. Many, following their church traditions, have proactively opposed participation in any kind of violent conflict. They have done many things to prevent these conflicts from happening or from spreading. Some have done their best to take care and help the victims, providing shelter and care and help with other humanitarian aid. However, many churches also took the opposite position, namely to actively engage in such violence, even invoking God's help, believing that their cause is in accordance with their understanding of their Christian faith. The majority of churches in the world, however regretfully, are complacent with the situation and do not want to be involved one way or another. They believe the Church should be inactive or not involved in such controversies. They are concerned only with the life and missions of their own congregations. Most of the churches still have the belief that the mission of the Church is to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people and baptize those who come to believe in the salvation offered by God through Jesus Christ. What is important is eternal life with God. In this case, the paradigm of the Church's mission is

[15] Cf. also Mark 16:15–18, Luke 24:46–47, John 7:18–21.

the great call to mission (Matthew 28:19–20) that has been the guiding principle of the missionary activity of the eighteenth to early twentieth century. This paradigm of mission indeed caused many thousands missionaries from the West and the North to go to Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the South Pacific countries. Many Christian churches have been established and congregations formed throughout the years.

And yet we believe that the Church is called to continuously discern where God is at work, where God manifests God's self in this contemporary world, where the Church is called into being. The Church must discern God's presence and work not merely by observing and analyzing the context in which the churches are located, but also through the study of the scriptures and the study of the traditions of the Church with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I believe that God also calls the church to be attentively concerned with the millions of God's people who are suffering from wars and violence. The abject poverty suffered by millions of God's people in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, even in some parts of the West, is a form of violence against humanity, and against the will and desire of God for God's people. In Matthew 25:34–46, Jesus clearly calls the disciples to be existentially concerned with the poor in this world. Therefore the mission of the Church today is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit those who are imprisoned and, yes, to visit and heal the sick. In other words, Jesus is calling the Church to be concerned and to minister to the lives of people here and now. God is eternal, and indeed God promises eternal life to those who believe in God. But eternity does not begin after one's death. Eternity does not have a beginning or an end. God's promise of eternal life to the church means also the life *now*, in this world, which includes life in the past and the life in the future. Since we are now part of the *koinonia,* we have already embarked on eternal life. This is the calling of the Church. This is the mission of the Church whenever it sees poverty among God's people.

In a world where violent conflict is rampant, the church is also called to bring an end to violence. The Church's mission is to bring peace and reconciliation. God has reconciled God's self to humanity through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, if any one is in Christ he or she is

a new creation; "the old has passed away, behold the new has come."[16] The church as the body of Christ, as *koinonia,* has been called to witness (*martyria*) to the violent world that, through Jesus Christ, God has reconciled to God's self and God's creation. The Church has been given the ministry of reconciliation; the Church, the *ekklesia,* are the appointed ambassadors to bring peace and reconciliation among all God's people. Therefore the mission of the Church in this age of religious violence is building peace, to bring peace and reconciliation among all people and among the people of God and God's creation. Peace is not only the absence of war. Peace is "a condition of just and harmonious relationship with God, with one another, and with the natural world."[17] The mission of the church cannot be less than this.

[16] II Corinthians 5:17
[17] Joseph L. Allen, *WAR: A Primer for Christians*, Nashville 1991, p. 60.

TO REVERSE THE PARADIGM

Maake J. Masango, Pretoria (RSA)

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Christian Church, violence has been part and parcel of its extension in the developing world. Often Christian theology itself has shaped the people to respond with violence. Many who opposed a God-given missionary approach have been treated with harsh violence to the extent of being tortured or killed. Although some good things certainly emerged from mission work – missionaries created schools, hospitals, and churches – this paper will focus on mission as an agent of cultural and social violence. I will touch briefly on the mission of Crusades and its inherent violence, especially the mission of forcing people to accept the "truth" and a foreign God. I will also share some new challenges the Church faces in the twenty-first century.

Mission

Western Christians have consistently understood mission to be the sending of missionaries to far away countries. Mission was that which the Churches of the West were do to in the rest of the developing world. This understanding of mission has been a welcome distraction for some from the problem of cross-community reconciliation. Some evangelical churches have been passionate about social justice mission in the farthest parts of the world, and yet have ignored similar situations on their own doorsteps. This is not surprising, as it is often much easier to help someone else's problems than to make changes and grasp nettles in an attempt to solve one's own problems. This has been mission by displacement in which Samaria and the ends of the earth have been a substitute for Jerusalem and Judea. Newbigin reminds us, however, that mission is the mission of the Holy Spirit, and

not of human beings. He says, "When the counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the father… he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses."[1]

Newbigin warns that the witness of humans is secondary to the witness of the Holy Spirit. We are only channels, which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, carry out the good news. Unfortunately, the expansion of mission coincided with the political and cultural expansion of the Western world. We have been tempted to forget this truth. Orlandi helps clarify the word mission for us. He says, "For many Christians 'missions' refer to the activities that the church does to communicate the gospel to those who are non-Christian." (Orlandi 2002; 13) Hence, people interpret mission as the conveying of ministry across geographical boundaries or as ministry beyond the national church or denomination.

The missionaries brought with them the extension of power and politics along with religion. In South Africa they used force to convert African people. Many who refused lost their lives. It is amazing that Islam was not regarded as a religion. Islamic marriages were not registered in our country unless the couple converted to Christianity. Violence began to emerge among South Africans as a result of violence used by those who believed in God. Like the Crusaders, they saw the imposition of their religion as the will of God. No Christian or Muslim can dispute the fact that whenever Christianity or Islam gains power and respect, finally becoming a majority religion, that religion begins to employ violence as a means of conversion. Sudan and 9/11 are typical examples, in which leaders began using civil religion, its power and domination, to oppress weak countries. In South Africa, religious groups of Afrikaners not only legitimated and tacitly allowed violence but also have also provoked and practiced it, encouraging violence by justifying it theologically. Their religion claimed to offer salvation to those who believed in it.

Westerners have not only legitimated and tacitly allowed violence but have also provoked and practiced it, encouraging fantasies of violence even though they knew better. How then can this kind of religion bring salvation and liberation to those who are nonbelievers?

[1] Leslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, Grand Rapids 1994, 22; John 15:26–27

Gaby Habib, one of the 2004 Campbell scholars sums up this kind of mission mixed with violence and power: "Religion has been used as a cause of violence when its mission in the world has been regarded as a dimension of colonial political and cultural powers that dominate and oppress others." (Group discussion Sept. 23, 2004). On the other hand, Haring, in *Religion As a Source of Violence* reminds us that: "Religion tends to resort to violence as soon as its identity is threatened. Their own dissidents are the first to suffer a continual threat of exclusion, oppression, and violent measures."[2] Beyers Neude, an Afrikaner minister in South Africa, suffered from this kind of reaction by simply differing with Afrikaners who were oppressing Africans. The question we need to ask as Campbell scholars is "How does religion deal with dissidents, especially in the age of religious violence, with people who diverge at a central point from the common teaching and practice of faith?"

In South Africa, whites who differed were excommunicated or defrocked from their ministry. After exclusion from the community of faith, they were handed over to the devil. Paul says in Corinthians, "You are to hand this man over for destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:5). Those whites who risked and spoke out on behalf of blacks suffered violence, threats, and even death from their own people. History through the time of the Middle Ages reminds us of how it dealt with the issue of dissidents: "The reactions against dissidents became harsher, the more the reputation, influence and unity of the faith community are at stake. At the latest in the Christian Middle Ages, heresy was understood as a public crime and punished with all the harshness of the law, including the sword and the stake."[3]

The above treatment did not differ significantly from the way in which South African whites dealt with their own dissidents. People were killed because they were differing from the will of God. Religion began to move deeply into ideology that was worshiped as the norm. The reaction from Africa, through the churches, was to articu-

[2] Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds.), *Religion As a Source of Violence*, Maryknol, NY + London 1997, 81

[3] *ibid.*, 82

late our aspiration from liberation theology, which affirmed our human dignity. The Church played an important role in shaping our faith and hope in God who liberates the oppressed. As the oppressed in south Africa sought to live their faith in the midst of violence, they reread the scriptures, which became a source of power. The Bible reminded them that they were also created in the image and likeness of God. The very same religion that oppressed them brought the good news of salvation. It became a transforming power, bringing freedom to all God's children. As the oppressed claimed their dignity in God, the oppressors found those very claims liberated them, too. Through the gospel, South Africans were able to transform themselves – and the whole world – through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This miracle of seeking the truth became a healing power that led to reconciliation among black and white South Africans. It also brought peace and a new model of relating to each other in the world that was ruled by racist and violent laws. In short, when the gospel is let loose among the oppressed, it brings hope, peace, and power not only to the oppressed, but also to the oppressor.

The Changing Society

Christianity and Islam both claim to be prophetic religions; they certainty do encourage enthusiasm among the people they serve, and gave them courage that the situation will change. I tis a kind of Utopia. Their aim is to change the world and society. They both seek God's will, and finally as they act out, they are convinced that their actions are in accordance to God's will. Anyone who differs is illuminated in the name of God or Allah – hence the use of the scripture, especially in a violent way in which God dealt with other nations or his own chosen people. Their plans to shape the world appear as the ultimate Utopia of the kingdom of God. They finally experience the word of God's truth directly, to the extent that they see themselves doing the will of God. Anyone of good will ought to understand why they (Christians or Muslims) embark on crusade or *jihad*. Paul actually says, "The unbeliever will come in, listen, fall on his (her) knees and exclaim, God is indeed among you" (1Cor. 14:25). Matthew follows up this matter by saying, "Therefore it will be unforgivable to

close your heart to the truth" (Matt 12:23). In other words, whoever speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. When nonbelievers contradict these argument, believers resort to violence as a way of making them see the light, even though such a reaction negates the teaching of Jesus Christ, who introduced the ministry of forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation.

The same could be said of Islam. Mohammed appeals to Abraham, and thus undermines the claims of the Jews (with Moses) and the Christians (with Jesus as a prophet), despite the original and lasting tolerance toward Jews and Christians (the people of the book). A final alternative presents itself, which can no longer be overcome by human beings. An indispensable claim arises out of the inclusion of Jews and Christians. The Quran had this to say to us: "If they accept your faith, they shall be rightly guided. If they reject it, they shall surely be in schism. Against them God is your all-sufficient defender."[4] One has to ask, does not unbridgeable opposition arise here? As soon as others think they can reject a conviction recognized as God's truth, if they differ you can use violence as a means of bringing them to understand the truth revealed only in your belief. The above argument will help the reader understand why certain people will share certain scriptural passages to justify the truth. We South African blacks suffered from this kind of injustice. The Afrikaners chose certain passages of scripture and ordained them in order to justify the truth as revealed to them by God. Sadly, religion is subject to this kind of hypocrisy. One can certainly see a previous example of this pattern in the Crusaders. Their history will share a different light to why we are experiencing excessive violence in the twenty-first century.

Crusaders and Violence

During the period of excessive violence, Crusaders fell in love with power and spiritual domination of other cultures. They took over everything in the name of the Lord. They were determined to conquer

[4] Surah 2:135–138, quotation from Beuken and Kuschel, 1997, 84.

every person and nation so that they might have light. Those who resisted them and their message were included by force or they were exterminated. They finally labeled these resisters as anti-Christ.

It is frightening how the Crusades justified violence against non-believers. To them, violence could accord with the divine plan, and be pleasing to God, especially when employed as a means of achieving justice. It only required a just cause. Of course this meant that it could only be used in just reaction to intolerable injury, usually taking the forms of aggression or oppression. Its reactive nature meant that in theory, although by no means always in practice, the initiative had to lie with the aggressor. For example, missionary wars were not theoretically permissible. In other words, all rulers, even pagans, were divine ministers, but the Christian Roman emperors were believed to be the special representatives of God, who had put the temporal power of the empire at the Church's disposal for its defense. God could, however, bypass God's ministers on earth by ordering the use of violence personally and directly. This idea of divinely ordained violence came mostly from the Old Testament, but ambivalence on this issue was also to be found in the New Testament. One can conclude that a defining feature of Christian sacred violence was the fact that it was perpetrated on God's indirect or direct authority. The agent involved in such violence was believed to be performing a service to God. This idea appeared early in Christian thought in the Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Paul justified the coercive sanctions at the disposal of the Roman state, "For the power is the minister of God of thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenge of executive wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Romans 13:4 KJV) With the above in mind, can we be surprised when wars follow the patterns of Crusades? Have we not experienced war in Rwanda and the Balkans, and between Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims? The violent clashes in northern India with the Sikhs, the religious war in Ireland for decades now? The fresh violence that occurred at the twin towers, which has symptoms of religious war between Christians and Muslims? Violence seems to lead to tremendous explosions, especially when religion becomes the motive of political action. The reader needs to be aware that religion can also lead to peace. The

only way it leads to violence is when it has national interests or political oppression or it seeks to be an extension of the empire. It creates moments of uncertainty and cultural upheaval. It can also be misused, and misdirected from outside or inside. In that case, it fuels outbreaks of violence.

The twenty-first century is steep in blood and violence, demonstrated by superpowers, which continue to dominate in developing countries. This kind of violence and domination is challenging the church to respond to this misuse of power. This is our calling and our mission. It is hardly surprising that violence is a genuine phenomenon of human history and cannot be dismissed as an occasional deviation. Maluleka (Campbell Scholar 2001) says: "In a world in which violence, death and suffering are being globalized faster than capital, human beings may soon adopt death and killing as a way of life, if they have not done so already."[5] I am sure the reader will not be surprised if Muslims, who were persecuted by Crusaders, resort to using the same argument of the truth, or will of God in order to defend the truth of the Quran as revealed to them by Allah. In fact, justification of the truth comes out whenever people are placed in conditions of oppression that leave no room for alternative. They fight back and connect it to the will of God. This strategy becomes a service to the will of God. The reader can now understand why the president of the U.S. uses civil religion in order to defend the people of God.

September 11

September 11 brought a heavy cloud of global disillusionment, anger, sadness, and despair. It affected the whole world in such a way that developing countries became worried about the use of power when attacking Iraq. "Who is next?" they asked. The words "axis of evil" evoked different reaction from the Islamic world – "jihad" struggle for God was the reaction. The mission of the church is to address the empire as well as those who engage in terrorism. The churches need

[5] *The Ties That Bind: Being church After September 11th.* The Campbell Scholars Seminar, Decatur 2001.

to address the issue of civil religion and give special attention to leaders who are using religious language in fighting this war. Muslims as well as Christians are evoking the name of God in this war on terror while civilians, especially women and children, are being killed. The question to ask is, "Can religion encourage violence? Responding to this question, Houtart says, "In fact, the roots of violence can be found right back in the religious, and that is why religions can also easily serve as vehicles for violent tendencies."[6]

Houtart links violence caused in the name of the Lord with the expansion of empire. The mission was to convert with force, and using the sword when necessary. The Portuguese are a good example as they acted their power in Africa. "A dozen of papal bulls accompanying the Portuguese mercantile enterprise of Henry the navigator in Africa, authorized him to conquer, dominate politically and reduce to slavery the people he met on his voyages to convert and combat the infidel. As for Latin America, the violence with which it was evangelized is known well enough."[7] A clear picture of how religious expansion used violence in Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world, can be seen in the way of mission among natives, which was set on the tone of destruction and violence. The struggle between good and evil was introduced, and it became another source of producing violence, linked to religious expansion. In short, nonbelievers were evil, and believers were associated with good. As for Judaism, Wein tells us "Nothing of human violence is absent from the Bible. Or rather, God is constantly in it, and often as agent."[8] Violence is particularly rife in the time of messianic expectation. The Book of Exodus says to us that "the Lord is a warrior" and that divine intervention caused terrible destruction. (Ex 15:3)

Christianity has positioned itself on the same source and continues to hand over the same religious culture. It has not hesitated to launch holy wars like the Crusaders did, drawing inspiration and energy from messianic currents, which were all the more violent. The results of the above also affected other religions. A classic case can be seen

[6] Beuken and Kuschel, 1.
[7] *ibid.*, 2
[8] *ibid.*, 2

between the fundamentalist Hindus and Muslims on one hand, and on the other hand between superior castes and *dalit* or untouchables, who define themselves as oppressed people. In South Africa it was between blacks and whites; in Latin America, even if guerrilla activity has subsided to some degree, violence is probably not extinct and there is a religious basis to certain struggles waged by the oppressed against the violence of the rich. Our mission in the age of religious violence is to address violence and its root causes of oppression and injustice among the oppressed. Hopefully our mission will lead superpowers to engage in dialogue with weaker countries. Such a process might finally produce reconciliation that will lead to peace.

Social Orders

Violence affects the society in such a way that relationships change. For example, Muslims become suspicious of Christians. As one group works on these assumptions, it finally affects how that group relates to other groups. As religion continues to make an impact on the life of society, it begins to create a new social order. South Africa is a good example. Those who dominate will always say it is the will of God to oppress others. Another classic case is between Israeli-Palestinian relationships on land issue. Jews say that God gave them this land. If you object, they use violence in order to get back what belongs to them by God's will. Beuken says: "The social order is willed by God, and the relationship which exists between the social groups forming society are the fruit of a supernatural will. That usually passes for a kind of naturalization of the social order, nature and its laws being the fruits of divine creation."[9]

No one can touch the Jews. Once you raise the issue of injustice to Palestinians, you are labeled as anti-Semitic. This athmosphere is being created only to reinforce the unequal relationships, which are not based on reciprocal services or regarded as such. That is why the Israeli system based on the relationship between lord (owner of land) and peasant Palestinians (without land) constructed its ideology on the divine order. I am reminded of the Bishop in Brazil who declared

[9] *ibid.*, 4

he was excommunicating the peasant of his diocese who dared to accept land in the agrarian reform, since the right of property was divine origin, and even the church did not have the right to alter it. The above incident fueled violence, especially when peasants reacted with demonstrations, fighting the injustices laid upon them. It is the mission of the church to be a voice to the voiceless. In other words, to fight for the rights of the poor is part of our calling. We should not be surprised with a statement that says, "Christianity is the opium of the people." We should accept the above statement as the truth, especially when we (the church) fail in our mission to defend the poor. The Bishop used religion, his power, and violence in order to keep the status quo. In short, he justified the relationship of inequality as the norm to be accepted and not questioned. One also could trace the above inequality in apartheid South Africa and oppressive Israel against Palestinians.

Culture

Houtart introduces culture through the concept of identity that defines who we are: "This kind of identity can be defined as a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic, national or social group which in turn provided a certain social stability, a status, a view of the world, a way of thinking, in short a culture."[10] At present, religion can be one factor among others, which define group identity. Group identity can be the result of an ethnic belonging, but this again differs from another one precisely by the fact of another religion. In short, cultural issues can also evoke violence especially when connected to religious ideologies. Sri Lanka, with its combination of Sinhalese who are Buddhists, and Tamils, who are Hindus, presents a classic case. In this case religion sided with Sinhalese against the Tamils. The issue of conversion created the tension. They (Sinhalese) felt that their identity was being attacked during the time of emperor Azoka. The Tamils began destroying their culture, especially their language, values, and rituals, which were central to the attack. They also aimed at destroying their religious unity. Religious violence

[10] *ibid*, 5

erupted as a way of preserving their culture. The Buddhist of Sangha considered doing what they did as their religious mission. They resorted to religious violence in order to preserve their culture and future in Sri Lanka.

South Africa went through the same patterns when the Afrikaners introduced their own culture and language in education. For example, African names were regarded as barbaric. Those who used their African names could not get jobs. Parents started naming their children African and English names. Religion was also involved in humiliating black people. The English names were only used in order to survive. Scripture was finally used to reduce Africans into non-entities. They were regarded as children of the curse (Ham) and were treated as servants (drawers of water and cutters of wood). This religious ideology forced blacks to look at the scriptures again. Liberation theology emerged and started attacking the Dutch ideology to the extent that violence became the norm. Racism, racist laws, and segregation were attacked in order to preserve African culture, dignity, and identity. During the seventies, parents named their children African names only, and they defended their customs and culture. The natives of the land responded to structural violence with violence and demonstrations. They attacked the contradictions of this forced ideology, which introduced different social structures, ethnic conflict, discriminatory laws, and religious beliefs that whites were superior beings. Relationships between black and whites were destroyed because of religion, which created new social orders.

Conclusion

Mission has too often been a one-way process involving the sending and not the receiving of missionaries. This pattern of mission has to change. Sending churches must learn also to receive missionaries. The receiving church should be warned not to do mission by repeating old patterns used by past missionaries; otherwise, they will also become little empires in the long run. We need to introduce an element of partnership. In other words, the sending churches and receiving churches must work out a new pattern of missions in which movement is multi-directional There must be dialogue and exchange of

co-workers who share equal power in the ministry of God's mission. The first chapter of Acts must be reexamined again, especially by the developing countries in the South. Churches in the North are dying, and the center of gravity of Christianity has shifted from the North to the developing countries in the South. There is a big gap between the countries. Two thirds of Christians now live outside Europe and North America. Geopolitics and globalization has introduced a paradigm shift, which needs to be analyzed so that it allow us to change our mission strategies. The main challenge is that violence destroys people and relationships in the global world. The full speed of globalization is challenging us to reexamine the words of our Lord: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Churches in Jerusalem (the North), need to be evangelized, because they are empty. The receiving churches in the South must embark on new strategies of mission work. Mission must begin from the "ends of the earth moving towards the top (Jerusalem)." In other words, the strategies laid out in the book of Acts must be reversed. This paradigm shift will help us address the globalization problem, as well as issues of power, domination, and injustice, which are the products of global civilization. The above problems must be discussed by equal partners in mission. This way of dealing with each other will lead to reconciliation and peace. In recent years the human community has been torn apart by bloodshed – conflict caused not only by political and economic forces, but also by faith-based organizations. The challenge of mission in the age of religious violence is to heal God's people.

Challenges

There are several challenges that the Church universal must embark upon in this age of violence.

1. The mission of the global Church today is to challenge all forms of violence, including the misuse of power, destruction of life, and ecological problems faced by the global world, so that people may become co-workers in the creation with God.

2. The Church must address the issue of war, which destroys the

whole of creation and displaces people as refuges in other counties, especially women and children.

3. The Church needs to reassert the theology that all humankind was made in the image of God, thus correcting people who misuse scriptural verses and quote violent passages in order to justify their own positions of power over others while ignoring passages that deal with justice, peace, and reconciliation.

4. The mission of the Church is to introduce the broken world to a compassionate God who cares for the broken hearted and loves peace – a God full of love, kindness, and compassion, who blesses the peacemakers.

5. The Church must strengthen ecumenical relationships for the sake of its unity and promote an ecumenical agenda, which will lead to interfaith dialogue among religions.

6. Finally, the Church must work sacrificially for peace and justice. These concepts will lead us to reconciliation. Then the Church and all its members will learn to relate to each other as people created in the image of God, a people called to relate to each other.

REDISCOVER THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION

Catherine Taylor, New York (USA)

Most women who take part in the Presbyterian Women's Bible study associate Tuesday, September 11, 2001, with church. On that day women in PC(USA) churches across the country were gathered for coffee, refreshments, and conversation around the Word. The September meeting is the first Bible study of the year, and in my congregation that Tuesday morning the food had already been laid on a bright autumn tablecloth by 9:00 a.m., a full hour before the meeting was scheduled to begin. Sole pastor of the congregation for six years, I had come to church early to prepare for class. After reading my lesson in my study, I made the short drive home to pick up something I'd forgotten. It was while I was in the car that the first report came over local Atlanta radio of a small plane colliding with one of the World Trade Center Towers.

By the time I parked the car back in the church lot and joined the secretary by the office radio, the news was more ominous. It was not a small plane and not an accident. As word of other planes and other attacks came in, the women gathering at the church grew more and more anxious, some huddling by the radio in the church office, others in cars or in a group by the open church door. Only one or two went home to their television sets. The rest agreed that church was where they wanted to be, praying and reading the Word.

Somewhat conflicted and stunned myself (should I be calling members about relatives in New York or Washington?) I led the group in prayer, and through the opening lesson in a study of the Book of Esther, whose words raised the first of many pointed questions about the misuse of power against those labeled "other" by the dominant culture. Finished with the lesson, we prayed again for the unknown numbers of victims and their families, for those who had no idea about the safety of loved ones, and for our unnamed enemies.

Although I did not realize it at the time, the women circled around the Bible on that terrifying day offer a telling portrait of the context of ministry in Atlanta. The colored tablecloth, the sumptuous food, the start of a welcome annual endeavor, even the pleasure inherent in being together all capture the rhythm of life in a small North American congregation and the ease and safety of the US. But in the background of this seemingly peaceful scene lies a deeply felt sense of unease that existed well before the September 11th attacks.

How can I make such a claim? For twelve years I served two congregations in Atlanta that bore many similarities. Both congregations were overwhelmingly white (97 percent).[1] Most members were upper middle class professionals; a high percentage held college degrees. The average income in the suburban church was $60,000;[2] average income in the Buckhead church was much higher. Both congregations had a surfeit of members over the age of fifty, and leaders were somewhat baffled by the dearth of young families and fresh leaders ready to take on congregational tasks they themselves had upheld for so long. Though worried about the lack of younger members, both congregations were nonetheless healthy and well-regarded by sister congregations in the area. Each had at least some members who were active in local mission. And both congregations assigned a healthy portion of their annual budget to PC(USA) world mission efforts, the smaller church giving a larger percentage of the budget than the larger church. Observers would describe both congregations as affluent and thriving, with members who cared for one another and others, and who fit well into the image the city of Atlanta seeks to project of itself.

The state capital of Georgia and self-proclaimed capital of the New South, Atlanta is a sprawling mega-city, the ninth largest in the U.S. by population but third largest in square miles. Blessed with temperate weather and decades of savvy political leadership, it is the second fastest growing city among metro areas with a population over two million. More than half the population surveyed in 2000

[1] Covenant Presbyterian Church in Atlanta and The Church of the New Covenant in the Atlanta suburb of Doraville, GA.

[2] Percept Group, Inc., 1997.

reported being born outside the state.[3] From modest beginnings at the end of a railroad line – Atlanta was first known as "Terminus" – the town grew to become a city of national importance with international aspirations. The 1996 Olympics were held here, and daily flights to Europe leave from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the busiest passenger airport in the U.S.

Atlanta was the home of Martin Luther King, Jr., and a mecca for Black economic empowerment. Strong bi-racial cooperation allowed it to avoid much of the racial violence that scarred the American South in the Civil Rights era, as civic leaders touted Atlanta "a city too busy to hate." It *was* busy becoming the medical, educational, political, and media center it remains today. Yet rapid unplanned growth has contributed to a myriad of typical North American urban problems: blighted neighborhoods, some of which have high rates of violent crime; declining air and water quality; and gridlocked traffic on intown roads and encircling superhighways.

Despite these problems, the quality of life in Atlanta's green suburbs attracts middle and upper class families, and employment opportunities draw people from every economic stratum. Today Atlanta has a well-established and vigorous Hispanic population that will soon have an impact on the city's politics. Atlanta is also a magnet for a stream of illegal immigrants drawn to jobs in construction and landscaping, many of whom ride into town on express buses from Mexico.

Finally, although Atlanta is far too large and complex to be accurately described by any one set of terms, it is still permeated with the flavor of the South and Southern Christianity. It is not simply the number of churches, the prayers and sermons that open meetings of the state legislature, or the ministers intoning God's blessing before football games. A casual "Lord have mercy" spoken under one's breath on the bus or the street in response to a bad news item draws no look of surprise or censure; most often it will bring a sympathetic nod. A prayer prayed aloud with family in a restaurant or at the airport brings no stare, only a practiced pause by waitperson or passerby.

The two congregations I served sequentially over a dozen years fit firmly into the upper economic levels of this cityscape. Yet despite

[3] 2000 Census information.

economic and educational advantages, and the genuine engagement in church life and mission by some, these church members share an array of persistent fears. These fears can be seen as symptoms of a "pervasive ailment" associated with want of meaning in North American life. Writing on behalf of the first Campbell Seminar, theologian Douglas John Hall[4] describes this ailment as "covert despair," a loss of hope at work in the lives of many people in developed societies.

While being careful not to claim too much (every society contains those who are happy and satisfied), Hall speaks powerfully of the emptiness experienced by people who have witnessed and are witnessing the end of modernity. Modernity has passed, or is still in the process of passing, and what is left, says Hall, are increasingly meaningless remnants that have risen up to fill the void. He speaks of four in detail:

1. A technicalized rationalism, rationality deprived of depth and lacking its critical dimensions;

2. Unchecked capitalism, capitalism minus the "invisible hand" and shorn of the philanthropic obligations felt by earlier capitalists;

3. Crass and ever crasser forms of consumerism; and

4. Unlimited exploitation of the natural order.[5]

Even though the once cherished values of modernity have failed, it is not at all clear what will rise in their place, or that the death knell has been heard by more than a few. Most North Americans still live out of old categories of modernity, and many of them continue to enjoy what appears to be the good life. Among thoughtful people, however, the good life is harder and harder to enjoy without at least some hint that all is not well.

There is a growing awareness among North Americans that our use of such a high percentage of the world's resources results in harm to other places and people in the world. Church members who are in any way involved in global mission are aware of this imbalance. A few make decisions not to buy clothing made in sweatshops or to avoid products that involve child labor. Yet it has been my experience

[4] Douglas John Hall, in: W. Brueggemann (ed.), *Hope for the World, Mission in a Global Context*, Louisville, KY, 2001, 83.

[5] Ibid., 88–89.

that most church members feel utterly helpless to take even the smallest steps to counter anything so large as the world economic system. Frank conversation about such matters, usually in the context of Bible study, brings looks of dismay and perhaps earnest prayers for change, but the overall feeling is one of impotence. Prolonged feelings of impotence are unendurable. Thus, many people function with a kind of denial that allows them to go on living well. Even so, such awareness is real and is only one of many factors that can fuel a covert sense of despair.

Image-driven media is another factor that so pervades North American life it is almost impossible to fully discern how it interacts with both overt and covert despair. It is not possible here to do much more than name this aspect of North American – indeed global – life. The ways in which media shapes the content of what it attempts to convey have been well demonstrated, but one cannot attempt to examine the underlying tensions that exist in U.S. culture without referring to it.

In 1985, the late Neil Postman warned that television was a medium suited only to entertainment. Television is most dangerous, he insisted, when it tries to convey any kind of serious content. Television technology itself, with its ephemeral images and snippets of spoken script, is simply not capable of supporting serious analysis or discussion. For Postman, the rise of the television culture signaled the demise of what he refers to as typographic culture, marked by written texts and the time needed to absorb and analyze what they convey. The latter was capable of sustaining high levels of public discourse. Television is not, and its use as a news medium in particular has meant that the content of "news" has been reduced to little more than entertainment.[6] This prescient insight was chillingly confirmed by countless numbers of people who likened seeing televised images of the September 11th attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center to watching a movie or television drama.

Both television and print news media make money by drawing a large audience to sensationalized news stories. Security consultant Gavin De Becker has described the ways in which North Americans

[6] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, *Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business,* New York1985.

are goaded into a constant sense of fear by alarmist headlines and news lead-ins about the latest terrifying crime (identity theft!), disease (Ebola!), or other threat to life and limb.[7] Alarmist language is designed to increase the size of the audience, which the station or newspaper then offers for sale to advertisers. Americans have long lived with inflated fears regarding all manner of things. Many of the standard media tactics in use before September 11 have now been put into play around the issue of terrorism, and some journalists and social analysts suggest that these tactics were skillfully used by the Bush administration in an election year to help it retain the White House.

Media also plays an important role in the U.S. by providing a false sense of scarcity. The consumerism needed to fuel the North American national economy is supported by endless advertisements of more, more, and still more goods. The average American is exposed to three thousand advertisements a day.[8] In the little time they have left between two and sometimes three jobs they hold to make ends meet, lower class Americans are bombarded with images of a good life they are not living.[9] Yet those in the small but highly idealized upper class are presented with the phenomenon of neighbors who have a car for going to work and another just for weekends. Although such observers are likely to be financially secure, they may find themselves wondering why they do not have a vehicle just for the weekends, until the possibility no longer seems decadent. Even those who disdain such choices still have to resist persistent messages of economic depravation and find a way to teach their children that they are not "deprived." Families who seek to be good financial stewards have few places to turn for help. There are far too few voices in the Church – and none in the national media – declaring a standard of "enough" by which North Americans can measure their lives.

Paradoxically, those who live in fear of not having enough are also faced with an overwhelming array of choices in almost every realm of life. Psychologist Barry Schwartz has posited that consumer eco-

[7] Gavin De Becker, *The Gift of Fear*, New York 1997.
[8] Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less,* New York 2004.
[9] Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed, On (Not) Getting By in America*, New York, 2001.

nomy swamps people with too many options.[10] Many respond by trying to investigate every possibility. According to Schwartz, the most unhappy consumers are the "maximizers." Maximizers constantly second guess their decisions, and continually search the economic horizon to see what they missed. They do make good choices, Schwartz reports, but they *feel* worse than other consumers, never satisfied that they have made the best choice available. Schwartz suggests that consumer culture actually breeds maximizers. Happier are the people he dubs "satisficers," who simply arrive at a standard of what is good enough for them and stick to it. In an odd parody of pastoral care, Schwartz offers suggestions for how to go about limiting choices in a seemingly limitless sphere.[11]

This array of fears and tensions – the decay of public discourse resulting from an image culture, the atmosphere of false fear that image media promotes, a deeply felt sense of scarcity amid too many choices, and unending consumerism that mitigates against a concept of "enough" – feeds covert despair and plagues North American Christians at a time when the Church has been disestablished. Eighty-five percent of mainline congregations now consist of churches of 200 members or less. Solo pastors who would like to address the larger tensions of North American life are too besieged with the tasks of simple survival: staffing church committees or councils, cheerleading and training the few stalwart church school teachers, and administering whatever staff may be on hand while doing the study required for preaching and visiting the sick and those who are shut in. Pastors know there is no end to the amount of work they could do. Even when pastors do a fine job of balancing endless demands and

[10] Schwartz, 2004.

[11] The experience of selling our house in 2004 confirmed, at least anecdotally, Schweartz's observations. The buyer went to excessive lengths to find the best "deal" for both his mortage and the cost of a closing attorney, breaking dates agreed upon in the contract and threatening the final transaction. This would be little more than an odd tale except for the stories we heard in response to our experience: reports from friends of outrageous demands on the part of home buyers, deals that threatened to fall apart or finally concluded with no good will whatsoever between parties in the end. True, buying or selling a house is a stressful transaction, but the entitlement and desperation illustrated by these stories reveals the holy status North Americans ascribe to money, and the fear that they do not have enough--a fear that is deeply absurd by world standards.

feeding parishioners through meaningful worship and fellowship, church members know that something precious is slipping away. The esteemed position mainline churches once held in North America is gone. Most church members cannot describe this reality or the factors that account for it, and that makes the loss an even deeper well of unnamed anxiety.

Into such a tapestry of underlying fears came the knife of September 11. My congregation did a good job of offering comfort to one another in the immediate aftermath. Although we were a small congregation many states away from New York City, four church members had relatives who were in direct danger in the attack on the Twin Towers; all of them survived. Not so the six friends of the church treasurer, an investment banker; these friends perished along with their coworkers in a financial firm on one of the upper floors. We organized a powerful prayer service on the night of the attacks, and in the following weeks and months prayed regularly for victims' families. We also prayed for American Muslims and foreign nationals who "looked Islamic," many of whom were subject to persecution and physical attacks. We prayed for our enemies and shared a longing for restraint when the administration chose revenge. We did as good a job of "being the church" around this issue as any congregation of which I am aware. Yet one image haunts me.

One of the women who had been at the Bible study that Tuesday quietly decided to wear red, white, and blue every Tuesday from then on. Later she amended her decision and wore the national colors only on the second Tuesday of the month. Three years later she was still keeping her private promise to the families and victims of the attack.

There is nothing inherently disturbing in this choice. It could be seen as positive and powerful in its dedication and discipline. But the profound *isolation* of her action reiterates for me the despair and helplessness felt by North American Christians today. It raises questions in my mind about the failure of the North American Church to find meaningful liturgical responses to religious violence. How much better it would have been if instead of wearing the national colors privately once a month, this woman had turned to the body of Christ to initiate an overtly Christian response, shared with others in solidarity and faith. It might have taken many forms, including a desire

to reach out to *people* of color with the understanding that we are all in need of transformation. My fear is that for her and for far too many others in the U.S., local congregations have become places of solace only, places to go to for reassurance and momentary uplift in challenging and difficult times, rather than places where meaningful response can be formulated or true transformation begun.

This seminar was charged with the task of envisioning the mission of the church in an age of religious violence. There is little question that in our covert despair and helplessness the mainline North American churches must now be objects of intense mission efforts. There must be a recovery, or indeed the *re*discovery, of the Word that we are participants in God's ongoing reconciliation, both as receivers of the good news and as ambassadors of what we continue to receive (2 Cor. 5). Such a reclamation – or declaration – has the potential, within the power of the Holy Spirit, to revive comatose congregations, and perhaps even banish the despair and helplessness that limit and entrap us today. Mission by North American churches to other places in the world need not cease. In fact, the ability to create ties to other churches around the world may well be the source of reciprocal mission efforts that revive givers and receivers, as long as the giving and receiving is indeed mutual.

RELIGION IN AN AGE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

Erskine Clarke, Decatur, GA (USA)

The late twentieth century saw one of the century's most cherished assumptions deeply challenged. A secularization theory had predicted that modernity would lead to an increased separation of religious and secular spheres and that religion would become not only increasingly a private matter but also increasingly marginalized in contemporary life. This theory that has been associated with Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Sigmund Freud claimed to be not only a description of what was taking place in modern societies but also a description of powerful historical processes that were shaping the future with an apparent inevitability.

From the perspective of the early twenty-first century many aspects of modern society, especially in Western Europe, confirm a secularization theory. Religion has in many places lost its influence over most spheres of social life. Modern institutions and habits of thought – such as science, financial markets, and state bureaucracies – function as if God does not exist. For many, religion has become a private matter with no role in the public square.

Nevertheless, during the last quarter of the twentieth century there appeared throughout much of the world a resurgence of religion. Islam and Christianity, in particular, grew at remarkable rates while a growing interest in "spirituality" could be seen in even the most secular societies. This resurgence of' religion was often linked with an ethnic and national chauvinism and found expression in such divergent movements as "The Christian Right," "Political Islam," "Jewish Fundamentalism," and "Hindu Nationalism." Moreover, it now appears that "secular" and "religious" are not mutually exclusive phenomena but often overlap – for example in religious commitments to the sacred symbols of nationalism or when secular individuals adopt some exotic forms of religious beliefs, such as Buddhism or Pagan-

ism, which influence their worldview. Secularization does not now appear so much to eliminate religion as to displace it, removing religion to a sphere where it can thrive often out of sight of social and cultural elites.

The terrors of September 11, 2001, stand as the most visible and startling challenge to a secularization theory. These terrors did not suddenly appear on a clear late summer's day to announce in blood and smoldering ashes religion's rejection of and revenge for some arrogant assumptions of secularization. Rather, the hijacked planes emerged out of profound social, cultural, and religious turbulence that had been long building like some ominous thunderhead. Various forces, in complex interaction with one another, had created conditions that led to violent eruptions that streaked across the sky to slam into giant towers and the massive Pentagon. Other violent eruptions had already been striking other places, but the strikes on September 11 were so brilliant in their execution and so horrifying in their carnage that they marked a bitter turning point, especially in the West. After 9/11 the twenty-first century would have to take a new account of the role of religion in human affairs. The attacks by the terrorists on that day became an inescapable lens through which questions of religion and modern society must now be addressed. And the most pressing question would be the relationship of religion to violence in an age that possessed many different weapons of mass destruction.

Religion and Violence: Ethno-Religious Violence

Massive dislocations and movements of people during the twentieth century have helped to undermine ethnic identities, removing people from their traditional homes and pouring them into vast urban areas marked by pluralism and much anonymity. At the same time, technological society, with its own worldview and ethos, has been penetrating traditional cultures and threatening to transform them into its own image. In the fall of 2004, downtown Baghdad with its hotels and office buildings looks - except for the war raging within it -much like downtown Atlanta or Seoul or Nairobi or Frankfurt or any other modern city. Mass media and communication technologies have played a particularly important part in transmitting the values of

efficiency and know-how that undercut the values of many traditional cultures. At the same time a globalization of economic activity has been overwhelming many local economies leaving in its wake many places with growing numbers of impoverished people. These transformations have often been accompanied by an entertainment industry that worships sex, greed, and violence. For many people around the world, the technological society, the economic globalization, and the cultural imperialism of the entertainment industry all have a "Made in the USA" label.

In the face of such challenges, ethnic groups have struggled to maintain their identity, often by emphasizing their distinctiveness and frequently by claiming to possess a special status as a "chosen people." Under such circumstances, religion has often been used to legitimate the struggle to maintain ethnic identity – a struggle that has frequently led to violence, especially against ethnic rivals. The struggle for ethnic identity has included the memory of and the stories about the sacred origin of a people. A sacred origin helps to explain in religious terms how a people came to be "chosen" and provides a powerful source of a people's identity. The struggle for ethnic identity has also included claims about "sacred space" – such as the city of Jerusalem or the site of a Hindu temple – that is bound up with the identity of a people. The protection of such sacred space, or the reclaiming of it, or the original claiming of a "Promised Land" – as in North America and New Zealand – has often led to violent conflict.

Because ethnicity and religion are so closely interwoven in many conflicts, these conflicts are called "ethnoreligious." Examples of such conflicts include the state-sponsored violence of South Africa during apartheid, the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Muslim-Hindu conflicts in India and Kashmir, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fundamentalism as a Source of Religious Violence

"Fundamentalism" is a common term used to describe a religious extremism that leads to and supports violence. While there are many problems and limitations with the use of the term, its use is so widespread that it can provide – when carefully defined – a vocabulary

and conceptual framework for exploring the relationship between religion and violence.

Fundamentalism as a descriptive term emerged in the early twentieth century as a way to identify a type of evangelicalism within British and American religious life. This Protestant Fundamentalism drew upon a tradition of scholastic Calvinism that emphasized the role of reason and the importance of correct belief. Certain fundamentals were identified that were said to be essential for Christian faith and life including a belief in miracles, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the inerrancy of scripture, and the physical resurrection of the body. Fundamentalism joined this emphasis on correct belief with a Dispensationalist reading of human history. For Protestant Fundamentalists, history is divided into dispensations – or periods of human history – each of which ends in God's judgment and God's violent overthrow of corrupt and degenerate societies. The present "dispensation of the church" will end, according to most Protestant Fundamentalists, with some apocalyptic event often associated with the reestablishment of the state of Israel over all the lands of ancient Israel and with the biblical Battle of Armageddon. This Protestant Fundamentalism was in large part a reaction against Protestant Liberalism with its accommodations to modern thought, especially Darwinism and moral relativism. The immensely popular Left Behind novels, which portray coming wars and worldwide cataclysms as a part of God's plan for human history, provide perhaps the most vivid description of this type of Protestant Fundamentalism.

During the closing decades of the twentieth century, many commentators broadened this Protestant specific term to include other religious groups that were forcefully and militantly resisting the onslaughts of secularism and the values, if not the technology, of a technological society. For many sociologists and historians the term "Fundamentalism" began to refer to "a specifiable pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled true believers attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular structures and processes."[1] Definitions such as this seek to acknowledge that many

[1] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Lanham, MD, 2000, 86.

pious and orthodox believers of different religious traditions are not Fundamentalists, but simply pious and orthodox believers.

Fundamentalists, understood in this broad sense, resist secularization and the cultural elements of modernity in their various traditions, although they are often adept at using the technology of modernity - for example radio, television, and the Internet. They often feel that they have become aliens in their own land that appears to be threatened by "outsiders" or by traitors such as liberal coreligionists. Such an outsider position reflects a broad dualism in their worldview as they see the world divided between light and darkness, the faithful and the unfaithful, the pure and the impure.

The contemporary situation consequently appears to Fundamentalists to be a crisis period that demands exceptional action on the part of true believers. Under such circumstances, Fundamentalists of many traditions see signs everywhere of an approaching apocalypse that calls them to the act of militancy. The virtues within various religious traditions that call for peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation are regarded as inadequate for the present crisis. Rather, holy zeal and the extreme measures of intolerance and violence are regarded as necessary to meet the impending crisis. In this manner, Fundamentalism of many traditions has become a major source of religious violence around the world as Christian Fundamentalists have encouraged apocalyptic visions and holy wars; as Jewish Fundamentalists have murdered prime minister Rabin, claimed the biblical "Land of Israel" as God-given to the Jews, and savaged Palestine men, women, and children; as Islamic Fundamentalists have launched suicide attacks against thousand of innocent civilians; and as Hindu Fundamentalists have rampaged through Moslem neighborhoods killing and burning in the name of religion.

Secular Ideologies and Paganism as Sources of Violence

Any account of the twentieth century must acknowledge the horrors of wars and genocides that have been fueled by secular ideologies. These ideologies – with their creeds, cults, codes of conduct, and "confessional communities" – have functioned in their fanatical zeal

as sources of unsurpassed violence. One has only to mention the names of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and Mao to be reminded of the untold horrors unleashed upon millions of people by the faithful followers of secular ideologies. A review of the twentieth century reveals that many of the sharp distinctions between "religion" and "secular" become blurred in the light shining from Auschwitz and other places of slaughter in the name of some holy ideology.

The history of the twentieth century thus stands as a warning at the beginning of the twenty-first century. What secular ideologies – with their creeds, cults, codes of conduct, and "confessional communities" – now demand the suffering of those who are regarded as "backward" or "unenlightened?" What holy zeal of a secular ideology now stands ready to unleash war and terror in order to promote its own interest? This is obviously a particularly pressing issue for the United States, the world's "one remaining superpower," with its immense military and economic power.

Re-emergent Paganism in the West as a Source of Religious Violence

Some commentators on contemporary Western culture have taken note of the powerful re-emergence of paganism within the West during the twentieth century as its devotees have attempted to revive the ancient polytheism of Europe and the Middle East. Before World War II, this paganism was closely associated with nationalism and found particularly violent expression in Nazi Germany. Since the 1960s, a "Neo-Paganism" has been closely associated with the rise of environmental concerns and with a spirituality that seeks consolations and inspiration in the natural world. More culturally powerful has been the covert paganism of a consumer society. The worship of wealth, sexuality, and violence that was so closely associated with the ancient gods has become a distinguishing mark of contemporary Western culture. An entertainment industry has become a primary conveyor of the values of this religious phenomenon, and huge shopping malls with their violent video game arcades have become a primary place of worship. Any evaluation of the relationship between religion and violence at the beginning of the twentieth century must

take into account this covert paganism and its cultural power lodged in the media and the mall.

Religion as a Source for Peace and Reconciliation

The dramatic role of various religious movements and traditions in fomenting the violence of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries can obscure the indispensable role religion has played in a number of contemporary peace movements. To mention the names of Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Anwar Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin, and Jimmy Carter is to remember the number of leaders of peace movements who have been deeply religious people. Or one has only to remember the religious and theological presuppositions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, with Archbishop Desmond Tutu as its chair, to be reminded that religious zeal and commitment can lead to not only state sponsored violence but also state sponsored searches for justice, peace, and reconciliation. Indeed, the yearnings for peace and the efforts at peacemaking by great numbers of pious and orthodox believers of many religious traditions offer perhaps the most hopeful sign of peacemaking in our times.

Certain essential questions thus arise from any brief review of religion and violence in the contemporary world. Why is it that religious traditions that have deep impulses for peacemaking so often become sources of great terror and violence? What in religion nurtures peace commitments and what in religion nurtures hatred, intolerance, and violence? And, in particular, what is the mission of the Christian church in a time when so much violence has been encouraged by religious communities?