

**Is Involvement in the Fight Against the Persecution  
of Christians Solely for the Benefit of Christians?**

**“But with gentleness and respect”:  
Why missions should be ruled by ethics**

**Persecution**

**May a Christian Go to Court?**

**Putting Rumors to Rest**

**Human Rights and Christian Faith**

**There Has to Be a Social Ethic**



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The WEA Global Issues Series 3

May a Christian Go to Court?

Thomas Schirmmacher

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# May a Christian Go to Court?



WEA  
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE



**Thomas Schirrmacher**

**May a Christian Go to Court?**



# **The WEA Global Issues Series**

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*Dr. Geoff Tunncliffe, International Director, World Evangelical Alliance*

**Thomas Schirrmacher**

# **May a Christian Go to Court?**

**and other Essays  
on Persecution vs. Religious Freedom**

The WEA Global Issues Series  
Volume 3

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*While this volume does not represent an "official" position of the World Evangelical Alliance we are distributing it to promote further serious study and reflection.*

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# **1. Is Involvement in the Fight Against the Persecution of Christians Solely for the Benefit of Christians?**

## **Why Involvement in the Cause of Religious Freedom Should be a Central Political Issue for Everybody**

The following lecture was given at the Church of the Cross (Kreuzkirche) in Dresden on June 6, 2007, at the annual meeting of the Dresden EAK of the Christian Democratic Union<sup>1</sup> in commemoration of the Augsburg Confession of June 6, 1530. A shorter version was given when testifying to a part of the foreign commission (25 MPs) of the German Federal Parliament.

*[Official version authorized by the World Evangelical Alliance]*

### **1.1. Religion Has Returned to Politics**

The wonderful beauty and vibrancy of the churches here in Dresden are a very appropriate image to symbolize the return of religion to the public square—something that would have been considered unthinkable just twenty years ago. Why? Those 3.3 million inhabitants of what used to be the German Democratic Republic who consider themselves to be ‘authentic’ atheists nowadays are an anomaly. They account for approximately 2.5% of ‘authentic’ atheists worldwide, whose estimated total number is 147 million and shrinking. The total number of atheists represents slightly more than 1.5% of the global population.

Perhaps no other number so clearly indicates just how our world has changed in the last fifteen years and why it remains difficult for many people in Germany to understand what a central role religions are again playing in the future of the world, for better or for worse. For that reason, the question of whether it is possible to stop the global increase in restrictions of religious liberty and to strengthen existing religious liberty has a lot to do with how our political future will look. When the Minister of Defense

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<sup>1</sup> The majority party in Germany.

commented that Germany's freedom would also be defended in the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan, the same applies all the more for the global effort for religious liberty.

When I was in school, the world appeared to become more secular and atheistic on a daily basis. A large number of Third World countries had to decide between two nonreligious blocs, the large Communist bloc, which included countries such as China and the Soviet Union, and the secularized Western countries. Bloc-free countries had to look out for their own politically secular future. For many, religion no longer had anything to do with politics. For some it was a type of folklore, such as the Oktoberfest, which perhaps had some private benefit. For others it meant intellectual confusion.

How different it is today: The atheistic-communistic world has shrunk to include only a few small countries such as North Korea. In China religion has grown enormously, and the leading country in the West, the USA, is experiencing a revival of Christianity such as has never been seen before. The entire Islamic world is awakening religiously, and even Turkey is again ruled by an Islamic party. Additionally, countries such as India and Indonesia are desperately trying to maintain their religious neutrality against Hindu and Islamic political nationalists. Political and even violent conflicts that have a covert or even overt religious aspect have returned and are the order of the day. In religiously torn countries such as Sri Lanka, Sudan, Nigeria, Timor, Israel/Palestine, the Philippines, and Indonesia, civil-war-like conditions are part of the daily agenda.

There is good reason to be reminded that the ideas of human rights and religious liberty were born neither in a world without religion nor in a world of religious harmony but rather in a time of religious wars and their aftermath.

## **1.2. 1789: Two Paths of Progress toward Religious Liberty**

Religious liberty means two things: it means the state takes no steps against particular religions; and it also means that various religions are allowed to peacefully coexist alongside each other. Both of these conditions are prerequisites for many other human rights.

Religious liberty, which was unknown for most of the world's history, has come at great cost and through a painful course of events in the West-

ern world. A first step in the direction of religious liberty was the 1526 resolution of the Reichstag in Speyer. The resolution officially tolerated two (Christian) religions (Catholic and Protestant, meaning Lutheran) for the first time. The 1555 Peace of Augsburg expanded toleration, and gradually this included a third Christian confession, that of the Calvinist or Reformed churches. However, religious wars ensued in Central Europe as well as within France, England, and Holland. After suffering untold numbers of victims, Europe returned to the Peace of Augsburg via the Peace of Westphalia. One hundred years had been wasted. Nonetheless, Europe had had enough of religiously motivated or religiously veiled wars. Additionally, the religion-state system and demographic migrations accounted for the fact that more and more people lived in the 'wrong' regions, meaning regions where a religion other than their own was that of the state. Prussians first extended religious liberty beyond the Christian confessions mentioned in the Peace of Westphalia to include Arminians and others. Key steps were the Patent of Tolerance conferred by Joseph II in Austria in 1781. It gave Jews the first set of liberties, and the Prussian Land Law of 1794 extended rights. Gradually Jews were the first adherents of a non-Christian religion to be included. Still, general religious liberty in Germany has only been in place since 1919 under the Weimar Constitution, and truly comprehensive religious freedom has only been practiced since the acceptance of the 1949 Constitution. This is because the 1848 Constitution developed at St. Paul's church in Frankfurt am Main, which included rights of religious liberty, never came into effect. But let us return to the eighteenth century.

In 1789 two central constitutional documents, one in France and the other in the United States of America, provided the anchor for religious liberty that illuminates an antithesis to the prior history of religious liberty. The modern concept of religious liberty, which we have seen developing in the Christian world over the last two hundred and fifty years, has been achieved along two completely different paths of struggle. Both paths led to the separation of church and state, but they were pursued very differently, as is shown in present-day secular France and in the religiously friendly Germany and USA.

On the one hand, religious liberty was a struggle conducted against the churches. I am thinking primarily of the French Revolution. Coercion that did not allow others their liberty emanated from the Christian (Catholic) church and was supported by it. What its supporters wanted to struggle for, among other things, and what was indeed at least theoretically sought for, was freedom from a religion that forced a person to follow a certain religion. Often this led to a critical stance toward religion in general, eventually

causing all religion to be rejected. In turn this easily led to a situation where other things, such as nationalism, became substitutes for religion. In practice this led to other forms of coercion that did not officially count as religion. But that is another story. The French Revolution did not necessarily lead to a situation where individuals were safer from reprisals than they had been before. Indeed, in this case, what we have is what we might call an “atheistic” or “religiously critical” struggle against the church for religious liberty. The French Revolution achieved religious liberty by pushing religion back in return for a very powerful and drastic state.

At about the same time, there was a completely different development in the USA (and at a later time in Great Britain, Holland, and Switzerland). In the USA, religious liberty was not accomplished against the church or against Christians but by Christians. In the USA, Christians from all sorts of churches, splinter groups, and sects wanted to live in freedom that they had not been afforded in Europe, in a manner that was free from state coercion and free from the grasp of other religious groups. This freedom was set out in the 1636 Rhode Island Constitution to include atheists, pointedly demonstrating that developments in America were prior to those in France.

While in the USA it was Christian theologians and politicians who demanded religious liberty and brought it to pass, the Catholic Church in Europe – influenced by the clash with increasingly secularized European states – did not even recognize religious liberty as a correct stance until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Until that time, at least as far as the standard Roman Catholic teaching represented for centuries by the Popes was concerned, one goal of the church was that as many people as possible in a given country belong to the one true religion. An important task of the state was to ensure that this one church legally, ethically, and morally had the final word. Protestants had already previously changed allegiances from one church to another. Today there is no question that a long time ago the viewpoint of eighteenth-century American Christians already carried the day in churches worldwide.

Evangelicals associated with the Alliance can show somewhat better results since from the beginning, the idea of religious liberty was connected with the Alliance. Evangelicals in Germany have historically been dependent on the conservative Christians in the USA and were always supporters of religious liberty. Even at the time when the Alliance was founded in London in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was in favor of religious liberty. Numerous national alliances grew out of a desire for religious liberty. Primarily Christians in the so-called “free churches” or Christians from smaller churches got together in order to seek the right to exist. At an

early stage, Anglican priests brought in conservative German pastors from the state churches, and the topic of religious liberty was on the agenda at each major conference. In the nineteenth century, an appearance was made before the Turkish Sultan in an effort to support Orthodox Christians. International support from the Evangelical Alliance also came at the end of the nineteenth century for the protection of Jehovah's Witnesses. That, incidentally, would even be associated with difficulties nowadays. However, religious liberty is not partial. The Alliance specifically did not want Baptists to stand up only for Baptists, Lutherans only for Lutherans, and Jews only for Jews. Rather, the idea was that religious liberty needed to be pursued for everyone. The problem the Alliance had in its later history was more its severe restraint in societal and political issues, which has only been reversed in recent decades.

Historically, Christians have been found on both sides of the issue. On the one hand, there have been Christians who were against religious liberty, with apparently biblically based reasons, as long as the state was on their side. The Old Testament seemed to offer several possibilities for such a stance. On the other hand, there was an increasing number of Christians, theologians, and churches, chiefly from oppressed churches, who referred to the fact that biblical faith is a faith that cannot be reconciled with coercion. It cannot be forced or purchased. On the contrary, it has to be a fully voluntary decision.

For that reason, every missional thought that includes an effort to use state power or economic factors to produce Christians or to punish non-Christians has to be condemned. In the meantime, this viewpoint has become that of Christians worldwide. As strange as it may sound, the current viewpoint has been significantly promoted and spread by the ecumenical and evangelical missionary movement.

Even today, Christianity's conflicting prior history is still playing a role in the issue of human rights and in the particular case of religious liberty that we are addressing today. On one hand, we have the fact that the Christian church has had difficulties with the idea of religious liberty. This means that the church has had to see religious liberty asserted against its opposition. This is noticeable, for instance, in colonial history.

On the other hand, we can say that the entire concept of human rights and the question of religious liberty grew out of Christian roots and are a product of the Christian West. Historically, this is not a point of contention. The theological reasons are the following:

1. The separation of church and state, and everyone's subordination under law as the highest binding constitution, began in the Old Testament.

For Jesus, the supremacy of law was self-evident, and this has become accepted throughout Christianity in what was certainly an arduous process. In other cultural and religious milieus, however, this has been achieved only in part, and with difficulty, up to the present day.

Viewed historically, religious liberty is a right to defend against religions themselves. Religious liberty is also just as much a right to defend against the state. Since church and state used to be able to conjointly determine the religion citizens were to follow, individual religious liberty was possible only when the two were separated. A real separation of the two was first achieved for Germany in 1945/1949; otherwise, Hitler would not have been in a position to control the Kirchenministerium (Ministry of Churches).

2. For Christians, the ideas of human rights and religious freedom find their theological basis in all of mankind having being created in the image of God. This applies not only to the adherents of one's own religion. Rather, it expressly applies to all people. That this is not self-evident is seen in a comparison to Islam. Article 24 of the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights is formulated as follows: "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Sharia." Article 25 supplements the statement: "The Islamic Sharia is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification of any of the articles of this Declaration." Human rights are thus valid only in the manner supported by the Islamic Sharia, which does not grant equal rights to people of other religions.

### **1.3. Involvement in the Struggle against the Persecution of Christians Means Involvement in the Struggle for the Freedom of All Religions**

At least three-quarters of all religious liberty violations worldwide are directed against Christians. As far as the killing of people because of their religious beliefs is concerned, the rate is probably in excess of 90 percent. The problem is also growing. In 1999, when, in an *aktuelle Stunde* (a public debate in German parliamentary procedure used to address issues within a limited time frame), the Bundestag was discussing an inquiry by the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union faction into the question of persecution of Christians, the German Federal Government officially replied that it was incorrect to say that the persecution of Christians was on the rise. Rather, the government claimed, it had remained the same, except for the cases of India and Indonesia. This is basically correct. However, it

is to be noted that India and Indonesia together account for one-quarter of the world's population, and, in contrast to twenty years ago when Christians were never killed for religious reasons in these countries, such occurrences nowadays are the order of the day. If the persecution of Christians remains the same on three-quarters of the globe and in one-quarter of the world it is increasing, then there is an overall increase in the persecution of Christians.

The persecution of Christians is not only an issue for Christians, who according to their central statement of faith show solidarity with their suffering fellow believers ("If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." 1 Corinthians 12:26 NIV). Rather, it is an issue for everyone who wants to support the cause of religious liberty. Wherever more religious liberty is achieved for Christians, there is a benefit for all religions and all people.

Being involved in the support of persecuted Christians in Iran and for converts who seek asylum in Germany means at the same time to help the Bahá'í, who are brutally persecuted in Iran too. Their cause for religious liberty is far less well known around the world, and they have practically no lobby. Whoever helps India and Indonesia remain secular states and not give in to the pressure of religious nationalists is at the same time supporting all adherents of all religions. As far as India and Indonesia are concerned, only Christians have at their disposal the infrastructure to publicize the human rights situation in these countries for the benefit of those living in these countries and internationally.

Involvement in the effort for human rights for Christians often directly helps a country's adherents of leading religious majorities. Involvement for the sake of converts to Christianity from Islam in Afghanistan draws worldwide attention to the lot of many Buddhists and Muslims in that country. Only by involvement in the cause against the difficult lot of Philippine Roman Catholics in Saudi Arabia is attention drawn to the suffering of Philippine Muslims in Saudi Arabia. For instance, the religious police in Saudi Arabia persecute adherents of other schools of Islamic law because they pray at the wrong times. If one were to try to pray in Saudi Arabia at the wrong time, he would find himself in jail as fast as if he were to hang a cross somewhere. Sunni Islam has four different schools of law and four different understandings of prayer times. Prayer in Saudi Arabia is allowed only at those times prescribed by the Hanbalitic school of law as accepted by the Wahabis. Adherents of the other three Sunni schools of law, as well as those adhering to the Shi'ite school of law, are persecuted.

The worldwide Christian legal association Advocates International is associated with the World Evangelical Alliance. Advocates International

works for the cause of persecuted adherents of different religions. For example, it is involved on the forefront in various parliaments for workable laws that advance religious liberty for everyone. The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church that takes place at the beginning of November every year brings the ideas of religious liberty and peaceful coexistence among all religions to tens of thousands of local church communities and into the hearts of millions of people worldwide. The motto of the Roman Catholic Day of Martyrdom on December 26 (also known as the Feast of St. Stephen) confirms the same thing: “Active involvement for the realization of global religious liberty is a duty of faith.”

The World Evangelical Alliance’s Religious Liberty Commission has on numerous occasions become involved in peace discussions between other religions. It also reports regularly on violence against adherents of all religions via its global network for the media and parliamentarians. Something similar applies for the global organizations of other confessions. Such an international commission includes affected members who have a very strong interest in seeing that their own countries in general—and not only Christians but *all* inhabitants in particular—live in peace, freedom, and security. These indigenous Christians remind us that one should not see religious persecution and persecution of Christians only within the context of favorite political enemies (or within the context of the major enemies of the USA), as was the case for decades with Communism and since then with Islam.

As a Christian, I have written a book entitled *The Concept of an Enemy – Islam* (original German title *Feindbild Islam*). Many a person is astonished in the face of my critical publications regarding the relationship between Islam and human rights. However, as a Christian, I intend to shield everyone from slander—also from Christian slander—because with regard to Islam, or, for that matter, Communism, the following applies: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16, NIV).

At the same time, there is an additional core reason why politicians and the states that they represent should be involved in the cause of persecuted Christians. Christians, apart from a few exceptions, consistently support the separation of church and state and in doing so support a state monopoly on the use of force. *This means that Christians simultaneously give up the possibility of protecting themselves against violence and persecution. Such a situation can only function as long as the state uses its monopoly on the use of force to protect Christians against others who do not accept this monopoly, but rather see force as a legitimate means in religious strife.*

## 1.4. Why Are Christians So Persecuted?

In the June 6, 2006, issue of the major German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* (*World on Sunday*), Till-R. Stoldt commented that “eighty percent of all those people persecuted worldwide are Christians. Never before have they been more intensely persecuted. And nowhere are they more often discriminated against than in Islamic countries. This is the report of the International Society for Human Rights and the World Evangelical Alliance.” He continues, “No regime in the world wants to be watched when it is taking blood. Most of the time public critique from a Western government is sufficient in order to prevent the killing of converts in Iran, Afghanistan or Nigeria. However, European politicians waver on consistently exercising this power, and promoters of human rights complain about this fact. Nevertheless, solidarity with Christians could aid in this clash of cultures, because Muslim and Hindu governments and aid organizations primarily help only their own people. This selectivity toward those needing help forces the West to also take on those who are ‘not worthy’ of help. This of course is not a reason to copy such selectivity. Rather, it means that in the future we need to be as ardently involved in the case for Christians as for Islamic Kurds, Bosnians, Kosovans or detainees in Guantánamo Bay. Tortured and threatened Christians also turn their hope to Europe because they are slandered and persecuted in Muslim countries as the Western world’s ‘fifth leg.’ However, EU countries ignore this responsibility far more often than the USA does, and they remain in a position of restraint that amounts to an omission of assistance.”

There is really nothing to add to this.

We want to pursue the question of specifically why it is that Christians are most often affected by religious liberty violations. Moreover, reasons for the persecution of Christians are complex, and most often not purely religious. Political, cultural, nationalistic, economic, and personal motives can play an important role. This is made clear even in the Old Testament. In the case of Queen Jezebel, hatred for God and His prophets was mixed with a desire for power as well as with unmitigated attempts at personal enrichment (1 Kings 16-19). In John’s Revelation, in addition to hatred for the church, there are political and economic reasons as well. An additional good example is the artisans, goldsmiths, and silversmiths in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-29), who saw a “danger” to their welfare (v. 27, NIV) in Paul’s successful proclamation of the gospel and therefore instigated a riot. The irritation a slave owner experienced because of lost revenues when a fortune-telling spirit was driven out of a slave led a slave owner to have Paul and Silas taken into custody (Acts 16:16-24). We should always be

aware of the fact that there is often no pure persecution of Christians or restriction of religious liberty, but the persecution is rather the case of an entanglement with existing problems of the respective culture and society.

Please note the following: If an adherent of a hated religion and bearer of a hated skin color is tortured, one should neither play down the racism by saying that in reality there is a religious component at work, nor vice versa. Racism and religious hatred are both detestable, and if they occur simultaneously, they have to be fought on both fronts.

In spite of this qualification, let us return to the question of why Christians are so often affected, and in reality affected very far above the average, by restrictions of religious liberty.

1. Christianity is far and away the largest religion in the world. For that reason, human rights violations relating to religious affiliation are most common among Christians.

2. Christianity is experiencing phenomenal growth around the world, in particular in its evangelical form. This increasingly threatens the position of leading religions in numerous countries.

There is increasing competition between the two largest world religions, Christianity and Islam, and this is occurring at the expense of other religions.<sup>2</sup> However, regarding content, Islam has historically been oriented against Christianity. This is a confrontation that never occurred between Islam and Buddhism. Christianity has adapted to this challenge over the past 1400 years, and in this respect, the confrontation carries a considerable amount of unnecessary baggage.

Only the three largest world religions are presently growing faster than is the world population. The world population is expanding at a rate of 1.22%. Hinduism is growing at a rate of 1.38%, primarily because births are exceeding deaths. Islam is growing at 1.9% for the same reason, as well as because of economic and political measures and missionary activities. Christianity is growing at a rate of 1.25%, whereas highly missionally active evangelical Christianity is growing at an enormous rate of 2.11%. This

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<sup>2</sup> All the following numbers are from David Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*. 2 Volumes. Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 2001, and from updates in the ecumenical International Bulletin of Missionary Research, available at [www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/globalchristianity/IBMR2006.pdf](http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/globalchristianity/IBMR2006.pdf). Numbers from other researchers are similar. Numbers referring solely to Evangelicals are the most conservative, as most estimates reflect significantly higher numbers.

development is making up for the shrinking of Christianity in the Western world. A net increase of 5.4 million evangelicals is being added yearly to the currently estimated total of 255 million evangelicals. This translates to a daily increase of 14,800.

	Adherents 2006	Growth in %	Estimate for 2025
<b>World Population</b>	<b>6,529,426,000</b>	<b>1.22</b>	<b>7,851,455,000</b>
Christians	2,156,350,000	1.25	2,630,559,000
Muslims	1,339,392,000	1.9	1,861,360,000
Hindus	877,552,000	1.38	1,031,168,000
Non-Religious	772,497,000	0.23	817,091,000
Chinese Universalists	406,233,000	0.65	431,956,000
Buddhists	382,482,000	0.9	459,448,000
Tribal Religions	257,009,000	1.21	270,210,000
Atheists	151,628,000	0.49	151,742,000
New Religions	108,794,000	0.78	122,188,000
Sikhs	25,673,000	1.48	31,985,000
Jews	15,351,000	0.92	16,895,000

The point is neither to welcome this development nor to criticize it, but rather to simply make the observation that growth in non-Western Christianity is producing a tension worldwide. Christianity has tripled in size in Africa and Asia since 1970. In each of the non-Christian countries of China, India, and Indonesia, considerably more people go to church on Sundays than in all of Western Europe combined.

That of course leads to all sorts of tensions. In India, for example, Christians have for more than a century made casteless education possible. Millions of casteless people have become Christians, because otherwise no one looks after them. According to the constitution, there is to be a certain percentage of casteless people in all state occupations and state authorities. Suddenly, there are Christians in influential positions everywhere far in excess of their proportion of the overall population in the country. A host of other such examples could be mentioned.

3. Most non-Christian religions have little success to show in missions, or else they conduct very little in the way of missions. Moreover, they often employ political, economic, or social pressure instead of, or in addition to, peaceful attempts at conversion. In recent decades Christianity has un-

dergone a significant development toward renouncing violence and political and social pressure, while at the same time turning toward more content-oriented conversion work and peaceful missionary efforts.

What we had in Northern Ireland until recently makes us aware of what the rule was up to 400 years ago in Christianity. Today this leaves Christians aghast and is completely rejected. In the meantime, peaceful missions work and selfless social involvement have become the trademarks of Christianity. The number of foreign full-time Christian missionaries is estimated at 420,000, while the number of full-time church workers is estimated at 5.1 million.

4. Countries with a colonial history are looking to regain their own identity by recovering traditional religions, and they increasingly use legal means and/or force against “foreign” religions. In India, this means thinking in terms of Hinduism and against Islam and Christianity, in Indonesia in terms of Islam and against Christianity and Hindu-Buddhism, and in Sri Lanka and Nepal in terms of Buddhism and against Christianity and Islam.

5. In many countries there is a growing connection made between nationalism and religion.

When one thinks of India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan alone, one-third of the world population is affected. In Turkey, Turks are expected to be Muslims. Turks who become Christians fight in courts for years in order to have their religious affiliation changed on their passports. Christianity in Turkey, as well as in other places, stands in the way of nationalism. After a difficult path, the Christian faith itself has hopefully taken final leave of the connection between nationalism and Christianity. There are exceptions such as Northern Ireland until recently or quite a few national orthodox churches that have not followed the lead of other confessions, but they confirm the rule.

6. Christianity and a certain group of its representatives have in many locations become vocal and unerring voices for human rights and democracy.

The inherent Christian involvement for the cause of the weak and of minorities, which has not always or in all places been very pronounced, has in many locations become the trademark of Christianity. This is so much the case that Christians have become the classical targets of human rights opponents and tyrants in numerous countries of Latin America and in North Korea, mostly because they are just seen as organized opponents. Moreover, Christians increasingly have global networks at their disposal, which can

often be activated against human rights violations and can produce worldwide reactions in the press.

7. Closely related is the fact that Christianity often endangers well-established connections between religion and industry.

Drug bosses in Latin America that have Catholic priests or Baptist pastors killed, for instance, surely do not do this because they are interested in an opposing religion. Rather, it is because the church leaders are often the only ones who stand up for native farmers or indigenous people groups and therefore stand in the way of Mafia bosses.

8. The peacefulness of Christian churches, which even often appears as true pacifism, invites the use of force since no resistance is feared. On a global stage, Muslims fear American retaliation but not a reaction of indigenous Christians.

Christians who believe in the separation of church and state often demonstrate this in the form of pacifism. Since no resistance is anticipated, Christians become fair game. For instance, I have discussed with church leaders in Indonesia whether they should defend their homes and families against marauding, heavily armed gangs of Jihad militia. Individual Christians have in certain cases defended their families with the use of force. Who in the security of the West can criticize them? Still, Christian churches have in the end agreed on non-violence but sometimes at a price. In Indonesia, incidentally, violence is, for the most part, directed not against Christian missionary activities but rather against 'Christian' (in Indonesia, mainly Catholic) islands on which Christians have for centuries lived undisturbed in their own settlements and are suddenly raided by heavily armed militia.

9. Christians are often equated with the hated West.

To be sure, the West has for a while no longer been predominantly Christian. McWorld or pornography, which evokes images of the enemy for many, have actually nothing to do with Christianity. Churches in the Third World nowadays practically without exception operate independently and are under indigenous leadership. Still, native Christians are unable to escape suspicion. Turkish Christians are suspected of conducting espionage for the CIA. Chinese Christians are viewed as underlings of the USA or of the 'Western' Pope, and despite all the Western monetary support, 'Christians' in Palestine are still considered underlings of Zionism.

10. The international nature of Christianity is regarded as a danger.

As Paul wrote, Christians ultimately see themselves as people who, beyond having their national citizenship, are bound to all other heavenly citizens (Philippians 3:20). According to Jesus, the church understands itself to be multicultural and extending beyond any national borders (Matthew 28:18). This can be seen as a threat, just as can enormous international personal, idealistic, and financial interconnections. Christian theology has for a long time been internationally oriented, with Christian theologians pursuing an ongoing dialogue with their peers from around the world. This situation is seen by Christians as an enrichment. However, non-Christians often view it as an incalculable power factor.

The Chinese government 'cannot' and does not want to believe that no one is directing the millions of evangelicals in house churches in China. Nor can the Chinese government believe the unfortunate fact that these churches often break away from each other on bad terms and go separate directions. That the Pope only appoints indigenous bishops and does not seek to interfere in China's political affairs is something that the Chinese government 'cannot' and does not want to believe. This is in spite of the fact that in Poland the Pope recently prohibited operation of an overly political Catholic radio station. The Chinese government says: A Chinese Catholic church, yes, but one that is subordinate to the Pope, no.

The Chinese government panics at the idea that an influential organization in its country could be run from a foreign country. China has this in common with a lot of countries in the world. It would therefore be sensible for politicians to convey the suggestion that Asian church leaders meet with Chinese politicians and party members and let them know that the large Asian churches, for instance in India, are not being run from the West. Rather, these churches are completely under indigenous leadership. Initially this elicits incredulous astonishment, but it is followed by considerable interest.

As a point of criticism, it should be noted that some of American Christian missions work, and occasionally the manner of those from other countries, can awaken the false impression that there is a sort of worldwide strategy to conquer that is emanating from the USA. Since American Christian television technically, and because of the language, reaches the entire world, this can have a frightening effect. Also, when missionary events continue to use the previously common word *crusade*, it should come as no surprise that many take the word literally.

## 1.5. Religious Conversion as an Expression of Religious Liberty

The classic definition of religious liberty is found in Article 18 of the United Nations' Universal General Declaration on Human Rights:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

What is included in the term religious liberty? It is interesting to note that religious liberty first of all contains the right to change one's religion and worldview! This has to be expressly stated nowadays. Religious conversion is something that generally no one takes lightly, but in the public view in the West, it is seen as an unnecessary cause for trouble. However, the right to convert from one religion to another was the basic design of religious liberty. Why? It was the original experience of Europeans and of Europeans who emigrated to America that when a Catholic became a Protestant he or she, in the best case, had to leave the country and, of course, vice versa as well. Religious conversion within Christianity, as a result of inner conviction, is the primordial cell or origin of the question of religious liberty. The question is, What do I do if out of inner conviction I no longer hold to that which was previously taken for granted or which has been instilled in me?

I have often discussed this with journalists or others who oppose missionary work. They say, for instance, "You can't be surprised if there are problems in Iran when Muslims become Christians. Just leave the Iranians in peace." But then I usually say to them, "For a long time now in Iran it's no longer Western missionaries but indigenous people who evangelize. The result is that for whatever reasons native Iranians leave Islam for Bahá'í or in order to become Christians. Who wants to go there and prevent that?" And secondly, "Am I to then reinstate in our law books a statement that whoever leaves the church loses his job and has to count on other consequences of a civil nature?" That used to be the case. Religious affiliation and civic life used to be closely related. Anyone who in the past became a Jehovah's Witness faced a host of civil consequences.

Religious liberty in our country means that fortunately we have increasingly uncoupled religious affiliation from civil status. Someone can today stand at a public marketplace and propagate something religious (or political) without his employer, who happens to come by, being able to fire him for it. This benefits Christians, atheists, Muslims, as well as adherents of

anthroposophy and was precisely the primordial cell of the question of religious liberty.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the question of religious conversion is mentioned first, and therefore the question of whether an Iranian may become a Bahá'í or a Christian is an essential issue of religious liberty. Where religious conversion is not possible, there is no religious liberty.

In the General Declaration of religious liberty, it is further stated that a person may not only change religion or worldview, but rather that a person may practice the religion or worldview alone or in a community with others. Not least of all, mention is made that a person may spread a religion by means of teaching and worship services.

The belief that religious liberty would be technically possible if each person kept the religion he or she grew up with and did not speak with adherents of other religions is a complete illusion. This would in effect be a prescribed form of forced religion that no adult German would accept for himself.

Every religious community needs conviction or some sort of pressure and coercion in order to keep its adherents. Everyone who has children knows that. Either one communicates convictions of why people should remain with their own religion, or one has some sort of societal pressure that ensures that they will not want to change or cannot change. You can observe this in traditional religions as well as in highly industrialized, secular societies. An unalterable, stable, and unified religious culture is only possible by coercion. If the next generation does not have the possibility to make its own decisions about what it will believe, that in itself is a case where human rights have been violated.

## **1.6. Peaceful Missionary Work as an Example of Religious Liberty**

Peaceful missions work is doubly anchored as a human right. The human right to conduct missions is derived from the right to freedom of expression. This is embedded in the German Constitution as well as in the 1948 United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights. Missionary activity is nothing other than the freedom of expression. Just as political parties, environmental groups, and even advertisers and the media in a country publish their view of things, so the same applies to religions.

In Germany, according to applicable law, as well as in worldwide human rights standards, peaceful missionary work is a part of religious liberty. The attorney Gabriele Martina Liegmann defines it as follows: “The right to freedom of religious confession has to do primarily with categories of speech and the expression of religious content, and it ensures the right to express individual religious convictions to the surrounding world and to plead for them everywhere in public. ... Embraced in the right to the freedom of religious confession is, in particular, the freedom to conduct missions work. This includes the elements of promoting one’s own religion and of winning others away from another belief.”

The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief (Resolution 36/55 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, November 25, 1981, article 6, paragraph d) describes religious liberty as embracing the right “to write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas.”

The freedom of the expression of religion does not just mean that one can secretly pray in his or her own private chamber. Rather, it means the right to present one’s belief to the general public and to try to attract people to it. Gottfried Küenzlen writes along these lines that religious liberty “is not just ‘negative religious liberty,’ the core of which is that no citizen can be forced to make a religious confession or hold membership in a religious or worldview community. It extends to also include a ‘positive religious liberty,’ as this is repeatedly emphasized in the legal literature relating to the Constitution. Precisely due to the dictates of state religious neutrality, positive religious liberty consists in preserving citizens the possibility of asserting their religious and worldview convictions in public life as far as possible.” Thus the secular state behaves neutrally toward religion but not indifferently. Paul Mikat, as he records a comment of the former Supreme Court judge Roman Herzog, summarizes thus: The basic right of religious liberty takes into account the need of people for a worldview and life orientation. Herzog comes to a conclusion worth considering: The liberal democratic state, oriented toward the fundamental principle of human dignity on the basis of the legal recognition of this need, is hindered by an overall indifferent or even disapproving attitude toward churches and religious communities, the most important functions of which include the satisfaction of this basic anthropological desire. One needs to note that such a ‘positive religious liberty’ not only indicates an individual right. It possesses even more a corporate validity, as is evident in related decisions by the German Supreme Court expressly relating to religious communities and their avenues for public activity. Religious liberty therefore includes the

right to public proclamation, societal action, and unimpeded missions work.

Whoever is against Christian missions also has to forbid all Christian worship services—and here one finds that numerous Islamic countries are, for all intents and purposes, consistent—because every worship service is, according to the Christian understanding, an invitation to receive God’s grace. They would also have to deny any Christian childrearing at home and in youth centers, something that Russian Communists understood all too well.

Granted, there have been missions in the past that served as grounds for violence and oppression. Christian and Islamic crusades and colonialism come to mind. The problem here is not the public propagation of one’s own views. Rather, it is the oppression of human rights. The problem, then, is one of violence, and the term “mission” is certainly out of place. We should also not forget that, for instance, the predominant majority of encounters between Christianity and Islam have taken place peacefully within a missional setting as well as one of intellectual and cultural exchange.

I would like to formulate it very briefly: In the future, the alternative is not whether all countries and religions can be won over to restraining themselves from trying to win people over to their religions, that is, whether we can successfully get people to refrain from missions in the sense meant by areligious people—as if atheism isn’t also globally spread in a missional manner. The alternative will be whether we can rally all countries and religions to enable peaceful missions work among each other and to refrain from all violent or societal pressure, or whether the spread and protection of religions will occur by means of violence instead of missionary efforts.

## **1.7. Public Religion as Religious Liberty**

At first glance, when one speaks about human rights, the topic of religious liberty appears to be a very simple issue. This is because of the fact that we have the idea that religion is a private issue. This is at least the case for the Western world. Religious liberty is a good thing, and every person should privately embrace his or her religion. Since most religions practice their official beliefs in buildings of some sort, religions should do what they want in churches or mosques. As long as no other crimes are committed, what they do within their own four walls is no one’s business.

That is, of course, far from reality. Religion takes place in public. People’s religious beliefs influence their public behavior, and considerable

parts of the structure of our society and culture are based on religious convictions and foundations.

Among all human rights, the right to religious liberty belongs to those that are the most difficult to substantiate and to cast into law and compromise. Why? Because religion cannot be limited to a certain part of life. Rather, via the life of its adherents, religion reaches into all areas of public life, such as family and sexuality, the media, education, and art. Even the question of what counts as religion is answered differently by each religion and culture, not to mention the areas of life for which it is responsible.

Conversion to another religion has, for example, its own dynamic in each individual country and culture around the globe. We know from history that religious conversion and worldview change do not just happen in one's living room. Rather, worldviews in people's minds end up shaping society. That goes for Marxism and for Christianity just as much as nowadays in Germany, where there is a muddled worldview mix. Whoever wants to totally privatize religious liberty has to somehow succeed in having people keep their most basic convictions completely to themselves so that they have no desire to put them into practice in public or private life. Sexual ethics, family, child rearing, attitudes toward work, toward law, and toward justice all hang together closely with basic religious and worldview ideas.

Even when globally valid principles are found, it becomes really difficult when one considers that religious liberty hangs together with the entire question of the relationship between religion and the state. This question has occupied us for thousands of years. World history and church history teach us that this is one of the most complicated questions there is, foundationally as well as when we are dealing with concrete application. How do church and state, religion, and politics conduct themselves? *If we tear the two of them too far apart and place them opposite each other, religious liberty is just as much lost as if they are too closely aligned. If religion and the state are too closely associated, that means that a certain religious preference rules the state and is used to oppress others. If religion and the state simply face each other, that virtually leads to an oppression of one or all religions.*

Today's anniversary of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 reminds us that Germany has proceeded upon a stony path in answering this question but that for the present moment it has found a rather happy balance. For this reason, German politicians should increasingly have the courage to promote the idea of religious liberty for all people around the world, theists as well as atheists.



## **2. “But with gentleness and respect”: Why missions should be ruled by ethics – An Evangelical Perspective on a Code of Ethics for Christian Witness**

First plenary statement at the international theological consultation “**Towards an ethical approach to conversion: Christian witness in a multi-religious world**” at the Institut de Science et de Theologie des Religions in Toulouse, France from August 8-12, 2007

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue (IRRD) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) with delegates from the World Evangelical Alliance.

*[Official version authorized by the World Evangelical Alliance]*

### **2.1. Mission corrupted**

“The First Book of Common Prayer” of the Anglican (Episcopal) Church, authorized in 1549, says in its liturgy:

“There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted.”

This is even true of Christian mission, of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, the “Prince of peace”. This is why, for example, the Pope apologized to the Jews and to scientists<sup>3</sup> for using force against them in history, instead of trying to listen to them, convince them by good argument, and live peacefully together with them.

The international ‘Lausanne Covenant’ of 1974, probably the most influential Evangelical document in existence, not surprisingly calls heartily for mission, nevertheless states in article 12:

”At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church.”

Article 13 therefore sees the peace of a country as an important matter:

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<sup>3</sup> When speaking about the Galilei-affair.

“It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference.”

I am very sorry, as is the World Evangelical Alliance, for any case, in which evangelicals, especially those connected with the 128 national Evangelical Alliances, have put undue pressure on other people to call them to conversion or have violated human rights in the name of mission. Evangelicals love the Bible and by using unethical means of evangelism, those who have used such methods were disobedient to God’s word, as the First letter of Peter commands:

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak badly against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” (1 Peter 3:15-17)

Even though the WEA and the national alliances often do not have the influence on their members they would wish to have and surely have no influence on the millions of other evangelicals, who even refuse to go together with the international evangelical bodies, the WEA is willing to use its influence in any way possible to ensure that mission stays away from any misuse of people and never violates their human rights and dignity.

## **2.2. 1 Peter 3:15-17**

Let me return to 1 Peter 3 to give my ideas a biblical foundation. Here you find a complementarity of the necessity of witness, even apologetics (the Greek texts says ‘apologia’, originally defense in a court) on the one side, and respect for the dignity of the other human being in “gentleness and respect” on the other side. The dignity of man does not lead us to hide our hope, but to clearly state, explain, and even defend it, but the clear answers to questions with a bad intent can never allow us to destroy the dignity of the people with whom we are talking. Both sides are complementary, as both are an inevitable essence of our faith.

According to 1 Peter 3, humans do not directly discuss with God when talking to us. Yes, we can be God’s ambassadors and give witness to God’s hope in us. But otherwise, we are also only human beings, saved by the grace of God, not by our own virtue. We want people to gain peace with God, to receive his forgiveness, to trust God as the only truth, but it is not us, against whom they sinned, it is not us, to whom they should bow down,

it is not us, who are the truth and hold the truth in everything we say. Christians are not Doctor-Know-All, but are normal humans, that only know something special as far as they witness to the revealed truth in Jesus Christ and its history as written in Scripture.

Christians see others always as images of God, even if they totally disagree with them. In Christianity, their human rights do not stem from being Christians, but from being men and women, as God created all people and created them equal. There are religions, which only accept human rights for their own adherents, but Christians defend even the human rights of their enemies – and pray for them and love them.

At a time, when especially Islamicists pour violence on many Christians and in which Hindu or Buddhist nationalists go against Christians and others in countries like India or Sri Lanka, it would be easy just to point to the others. But the Christian faith is very self critical – the Old and New Testaments mainly criticize the people of God and not other people. We do want to say with the Pharisee in Christ's example: "God, I thank you, that I am not like the others", but we need to say like the tax collector, who said: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (from Luke 18:11-13). So our first question as Christians is not: What do others do, but, as Peter's letter says, even in the middle of false accusations: Are we gentle and full of respect to our fellow human beings, to whom we try to explain our hope and faith?

I know that many of the delegates – Catholic, Orthodox, Oriental and Protestants alike – come from countries where Christians are under much pressure from a State religion or by politically extreme wings of religions, like those from Algeria, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal or Myanmar. But even as we do not want to hide any crimes in the name of religion, your testimonies show, how important it is and what a testimony it is when we do not pay back but want to react Christ-like to pressure, violence and even martyrdom.

### **2.3. Why Evangelicals?**

Evangelicals always have been highly dedicated to religious freedom, including the religious freedom of non-evangelical churches. When in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pastors of state churches and independent churches in Europe started to meet across borders, thus forming the earliest ecumenical movement, religious freedom in Europe, where religion was still often compulsory, was one of their major goals. In 1852 e.g., a high ranking delegation of the Evangelical Alliance visited the Ottoman sultan on behalf of persecuted Orthodox churches and in this tradition today well

equipped evangelical religious freedom lawyers have run and won cases in the European Court for Human Rights for several non-protestant churches, like the Bessarabian Church or the Greek Orthodox Church. The orthodox churches in Turkey as well as the dying old churches in Iraq today find their greatest help in evangelical organizations, as evangelicals heavily use international media, but also – as in the case of Germany – the help of parliament and governments.

The estimates for the number of evangelicals range from 300 to 700 million; the WEA seeks to serve a global constituency of 420 million. These evangelicals seem to be more often in the middle of the problems, when it comes to confrontations between non-Christian religions and Christianity, and even within Christianity. Why is this so? What does the professor of sociology of religion in me say self-critically about the movement to which I belong?

1. Evangelical groups overall have the highest percentage of Christians who come from a non-Christian background and become Christians as adults or at least as teenagers. Only among sects like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses are there sometimes higher percentages of first generation adherents. The evangelical movement is rapidly growing in Africa and Asia (primarily through the witness of Africans and Asians) and producing a lot of Christians with no local or general history of peaceful interaction within the culture. In Turkey for example, 95% of all evangelicals are converts from Islam. Of course they draw much more attention and threats than the historic churches, which often have paid for their existence the price of never intervening with the rest of the population.

In the Turkish branch of our Martin Bucer Theological Seminary, run under a Turkish board, we have some Orthodox and Catholic students, who otherwise cannot study theology in Turkey, and in our churches there we have members from an Islamic background, who wanted to convert to Orthodoxy, but could not be accepted by those churches for security reasons and therefore ended up in an evangelical church and studying in an evangelical seminary. When Islamicists killed one of our students and two of our staff in Malatya, Turkey, this spring, people of course pointed to the evangelicals, while the real story is more complicated and involves all the churches. I cannot see that Catholics really have any advantage or more rights in Turkey than evangelicals. (By the way: the Turkish state often confuse evangelicals with Jehovah's Witnesses – going from door to door, but they – strangely enough – have given the Jehovah's Witnesses full rights as an accepted religion, which most Christian churches do not have.)

2. Evangelical groups seldom represent old autochthon churches. There are no 'Evangelical' countries like there are Catholic, Orthodox, or Lutheran countries. Even so although they make up hundreds of millions, Evangelicals are not the major religious grouping in any country of the world, perhaps with the exception of Guatemala.

3. Many evangelical groups have large branches within traditional and main line churches. This is the reason why the WEA probably has up to half of its adherents within the mainline churches of the WCC [e.g. evangelicals in the Anglican church] – even though this number is debated. The evangelicals tend to be very active church members and stir up much more discussion in the denominations, hopefully often to the good, but sometimes to the bad.

4. Evangelical groups often have an Anglo-Saxon background and transport the American idea of total freedom of speech and press and total freedom for the individual, as well as less respect for old traditional structures and cultures. But as American evangelicals make up only 8% of all evangelicals in the world, this is rapidly changing.

Religious Freedom in its modern form – not the anti-religious and violent form of the French revolution – but the modern, peaceful form, was, so to speak, 'invented' by Baptist Roger Williams in the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Providence – Prof. Gary Colpepper from Providence College is among us. We are glad about this start, but not all countries are prepared for the form of religious freedom that America, Canada or Australia have long practiced. Christian Western Germany, for example, adopted this kind of religious freedom only in 1949 and even then it was only gradually really accepted by churches and people. And some forms of freedom of speech in the USA even concern Europeans and European Christians, e.g., it is virtually impossible to close a website, no matter how horrible and violent it is. Thus Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' is only available on American (and Arabian) websites.

5. Evangelicals mostly have a very flat hierarchy and non-denominational bodies like the WEA have moral authority but no direct means to get bad sheep to change. (Of course that is no different from the WCC.) As the Bible and the emphasis on a very personal decision for one's faith hold the movement together, the WEA has its major authority through theological teaching and exposition of the Bible, which show that certain things are unethical in light of Divine revelation.

6. Evangelicals recently are very much driven by the enthusiasm of the Majority World ('Two-Third World'), no longer by the Western type of religion.

Asia has become one of the big centers of Christianity and the leading one in absolute numbers. South Korea is second only in number of missionaries in all the world to the USA – be it Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical or Pentecostal missionaries, and India and China have each more full-time and lay evangelists within their countries from all Christian branches than any other countries. And if the vast growing number of Catholics and Evangelicals eager to evangelize China and the whole world get political freedom to do so, this development will rapidly speed up.

The large Christian bodies, whose hierarchies are still often dominated by Western people, cannot just tell Christians in Africa and Asia how they should behave. Only together *with* their enthusiasm for Christ, their deep spiritual life, and their theological and academic insight, can we find good ways for the future.

Let me take as an example India and Germany, the two countries I know the best. From the point of view of an Indian Catholic evangelist, any Evangelical evangelist in Germany seems to be lacking inspiration or vitality. From the point of view of an Evangelical evangelist in Germany, every Catholic evangelist in India seems to be too enthusiastic and putting much too much pressure on people. It is too simple to tell Christians from other cultures to change, if this is more a demand to be like one's own culture, than a demand to be Christlike.

*On the other hand*, evangelical groups are very highly dedicated to defending religious liberty worldwide and are rarely involved as a party in civil wars, and are not connected with terror groups in any way. This should be honored more by other groups!

Some say that the Iraq war is an exception, as the US-president Bush<sup>4</sup> has an evangelical leaning and in the beginning many American evangelicals favored the war, but so did many other religious groups and I cannot see any evangelical motivations and goals in this war beyond what generally is called 'civil religion' in the US.<sup>5</sup> Especially there was no intention to make anyone Christian or to spread the gospel – fortunately. Jimmy Carter was an evangelical too, and like many evangelical organizations in the US, he is a major critic of the second Iraq war. Besides, the vast major-

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<sup>4</sup> Linguist Lisanna Görzt did a research on all radio lectures of Bush for her Master dissertation at the University of Bonn and came to the conclusion, that Bush speaks of God less frequently than most of his predecessors in office, and his religious tones only appear in lectures on Christian holidays such as Easter or Christmas.

<sup>5</sup> See Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz. *America's Battle for God: A European Christian Looks at Civil Religion*. Grand Rapids (MI): Eerdmans, 2007.

ity of the international evangelical community was against the war, knowing to what unrest it would lead and that it would kill any religious freedom in Iraq, as far as it still existed. This surely was no evangelical war.

In countries like Sri Lanka or the historic Catholic islands in Indonesia, there is more and more no longer much difference between the pressure on new evangelical churches and those Catholic and Orthodox churches, who have been there for centuries.

One of the founders of the German Evangelical Alliance, Theodor Christlieb, professor of practical theology and mission at Bonn University, fought for years at the International Alliance conference, through a book in several languages discussed in the British parliament and other means, against the Indo-British opium trade, especially because he saw it as both immoral politics and an immoral way of doing mission, and a wrong mixture of presenting the gospel by using political and military pressure.<sup>6</sup> There are many similar examples which show that Evangelicals have a history of being aware of unethical means of spreading the Christian faith.

## 2.4. From WEA perspectives

Let me add some words from the specific perspective of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

Representing the (WEA) at this consultation are besides myself Richard Howell, general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, and John Langlois, an attorney and former member of parliament of Guernsey, Channel Islands, chairman of the Religious Liberty Commission of the WEA and a long time member of the executive council of the WEA. There also are representatives from Pentecostal churches connected both to the WCC and the WEA, but as they will have the chance to speak for themselves, I will not speak for them.

I also bring greetings from the International Director of the WEA, Geoff Tunnicliffe from Canada, who has given his full approval to our process here and expresses the hope that the spirit of Christ will lead us in all dis-

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<sup>6</sup> See my "Christlieb, Theodor". S. 188 in: A. Scott Moreau (Hg.). *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids (MI) & Paternoster Press: Carlisle (GB), 2000; "Christlieb contra Opiumhandel". pp. 105-109 in: Karl Heinz Voigt, Thomas Schirmacher. *Menschenrechte für Minderheiten in Deutschland und Europa: Vom Einsatz für die Religionsfreiheit durch die Evangelische Allianz und die Freikirchen im 19. Jahrhundert*. zugleich Idea-Dokumentation 3/2004. VKW: Bonn, 2003; and my first doctoral thesis: *Theodor Christlieb und seine Missionstheologie*. Wuppertal: Telos, 1985.

cussions and finally will help us to give testimony about Jesus and the gospel to others only in ways that bring honor and not dishonor to God's name.

We need to agree on a code of acceptable conduct in the spreading of the Christian Gospel and what conduct needs to be banned, such as inducing people to convert by bribing them, using harassment, threats or political force, robbing children from their parents or lying about one's own faith. From our point of view these are universal principles and a code should not be directed solely against Evangelicals and Pentecostals (which is a branch of Evangelicalism). As Evangelicals/Pentecostals carry out a great part of all Christian missions, if we want to pursue the black sheep within Evangelicalism/Pentecostalism we only will succeed if the wording of any Code is acceptable to the WEA constituency as a whole. Otherwise Evangelicals will rightly say: "This is one of the long list of statements against Evangelicals". To be frank, many Evangelicals have often had the impression that any warning against 'proselytism' is actually a veto against any evangelism or at least against evangelism by evangelicals, by not differentiating between the many different evangelical groups. In the past it has seemed as if only evangelicals made mistakes in evangelism.

I do not say this, to accuse anybody, but to ask you to give us a chance to be involved and to ask you to understand how we can win over Evangelical 'black sheep' to adhere to acceptable modes of evangelism. In the same way as the Catholic church has moved away from using politics as a means to safeguard or expand the church, so evangelicalism has its own developments leading to our being part of this meeting, and I hope we all are willing to distinguish between the groups meeting here in general, and certain of their wings that create problems in their own bodies as well as with outsiders.

WEA and Evangelicals in general are, for example, very upset about what some American tele-evangelists say from time to time about other religions, including following turmoil in countries like the recent turmoil in India. Think, for example, of Pat Robertson's statement that all Muslims should leave the USA, which was a headline on many major Indian newspapers next day, arguing that if Christians want Muslims to leave 'their' country, why do they object if Hindus want Christians to leave India! I just happened to be in India that day and was shocked. This was a good example of a bad mixture of evangelism and party politics with a very strange and unfeasible political idea (see appendix 2).

I also ask all churches and branches of Christianity to stand together against violent attacks by others. The growing attacks in e.g., India and Sri

Lanka, with anti-conversion laws against Catholics and Evangelicals at the same time, should be answered together and not by pointing to another Christian confession's fault. If there are faults, and most often they are on all sides, we need to find ways to discuss them among ourselves, not through public press accusations and statements.

In countries like Malaysia or India, the Catholic Church, the National Councils of Churches, and the National Evangelical Alliance have already formed joint umbrella organizations, that can speak to the State with one Christian voice and can help to stand together in the middle of persecution.<sup>7</sup>

I propose, in order to get around the whole topic of theological and ecumenical pitfalls, that we keep this strictly a discussion leading to a written code of conduct, where Christians see the borderline between acceptable missions protected by religious freedom and undue forms of trying to call people to conversion, especially through economic and political means. We, then, as the whole body of the largest world religion, could ask other world religions not to follow our code, but to agree on and write a code for and with themselves, setting aside any problem of syncretism among religions and setting aside the problem of Christians needing to agree somehow on missions to non-Christians.

## 2.5. An ethical code

### Improvements in recent Christian history

But let me now leave speaking specifically to evangelicalism and turn to our common task.

Changing one's religion – and the political unrest following it – is not a new phenomenon, but a very historic one, be it famous people like Augustine, be it whole continents (e.g., Southeast Asia to Buddhism, Europe to Christianity or Northern Africa and the Near East to Islam) and it has often played a central role in local and world politics.

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<sup>7</sup> The number of books and study conferences, where the through bodies are presented equally, are on the rise, e.g., in Carl E. Braaten (ed.). *Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's Encyclical Ut unum sint*. Grand Rapids (MI): Eerdmans, 2001, where there is a strong evangelical statement included. See also the ecumenical statements in Harold D. Hunter, Cecil M. Robeck. *The Suffering Body: Responding to the Persecution of Christians*. Milton Keynes (GB): Pater-noster, 2006.

Not changing one's religion was in Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist societies very often more due to the pressure of culture and surroundings, than due to conviction. In history, probably more people were forced to change their religion or to stay in their own religion, than there were people, who freely and knowledgably chose or kept their religion.

In most of the past centuries Christians were often, like most Muslims are today, demanding that other people leave their religion and convert, but not allowing to leave one's own religion, be it Christianity or Islam, punishing apostasy with all kinds of civil results, from losing family, civil rights, reputation and jobs to losing one's life.

We experienced and still experiencing the end of the Constantinian era, which includes the end of safeguarding Christianity by means of the Caesar and forcing people into the church by political, juridical, economical and other civil pressures. Most Christians feel this is not a catastrophe but an advantage. The Christian faith again can live by spiritual means and through the power of the Holy Spirit, and does not need the help of the worldly powers, be it armies, governments or business. Some time ago the Pope closed a Catholic radio station in Poland which was not willing to give up party politics in Poland. I believe that this does not weaken the church but that it strengthens its specific task.

In the overall picture, Christianity and its churches as a whole have taken the right course in the last hundred years, abstaining more and more from violence, from being involved in wars or civil wars, and from using political means or economical pressure for missions. I do not say that there are not still some bad situations, but if you compare the year 2007 and roughly a century ago, today bad situations like Northern Ireland or the so-called Christian terrorist organization 'National Liberation Front' (NLFT) in Northeast India or the Nagaland rebels are at the fringe of Christianity, and the churches or Christians involved are criticized by the vast majority of Christians or churches worldwide, while e.g., in the First World War in Europe many major churches fuelled the war and gave their authority to European countries involved in war as well as in the whole colonial world. Praise God, there no longer is a broad acceptance of violence in propagating its own message in the Christian world. There is just the opposite development as in Islam, where the Islamicist's acceptance of violence to conquer the world makes inroads into the Muslim community even where they lived peacefully with other groups for centuries.

The forced conversion of the Saxons by the German emperor or the Goa inquisition in India are mainly history, and we Christians are glad, because they belong to the darkest pages of church history. Today millions become

Christians every day, who do not come from a Christian background, but do so by pure conviction without any pressure. More people are converting to Christianity than at any time when Christians allowed violent expansion to corrupt its message. What the gun boats of Western colonial powers did not achieve in China, the gospel message achieves nowadays without outside help.

Nowadays it is more the Christian community that suffers hard persecution in certain countries and areas and the number of martyrs is growing daily. Virtually all 'Christian' or former Christian countries grant religious freedom to all religions, while the number of "non-Christian countries" that do not grant the same rights to Christian churches is still high.

The arguments for anti-conversion laws in some states of India (three since the 60s and 70s, some more just recently) and in Sri Lanka are mainly in vain.<sup>8</sup> Besides true or half true historic examples and the devastations by liberation armies with a background in Christian areas the examples they quote do not stand the test of research or belong to the area of conspiracy theories, e.g., Christian missionaries bringing deadly bacteria to Brazilian tribes.

If we want to fight the persecution of Christians, if we want to fight for the right to testify to our faith and practice it in public, we should start even more to ban any means of practicing our faith and witness which violates the human rights of others! And we should ban them together.

### Holding the next generation to one's religion?

We have to see that worldwide developments do not make things easier. Globalization will lead to an ever growing meeting or confrontation between religions, from the private level up to world politics, whether it be peaceful and fruitful, or whether it be senseless or harmful. A higher percentage of the world population changes their religious affiliation every year than ever before. There are three major reasons for this.

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<sup>8</sup> E.g. "Conversion Tactics – Violence". [www.christianaggression.org/tactics\\_violence.php](http://www.christianaggression.org/tactics_violence.php). Andreas Nehring. "Bekehrung als Protest: Zur Bekehrung religiöser Identität der Dalits in Indien". *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 12 (2004): 3-21 proves, that anti-conversion laws are not grounded in any Christian danger whatsoever, but in the protest of the Dalits against Hinduism and the political reaction of those Hindus, who do not want to loose the caste identity of India. See also Yaruvingam Awungshi. *Hinduism and Christianity in India: A Study of Socio-historical Process of Conversion*. New Delhi, India : Uppal Pub. House, 2005

1. Children today often change the profession, life style and music of their parents, even move to totally different places or countries, and many feel less and less obliged to follow the traditions of their forefathers. A growing number of orphans or displaced people even have no chance to get to know their parents' culture and home. In the Western countries parents have to pay for their children's education, even if they do not like the professions their children choose. What started in the West makes inroads into one country and culture after the next.

Religion is no exception here and it can hardly be made the only exception.<sup>9</sup> In the Western world it is just normal that children change religion and political orientation. In other regions of the world statistically this phenomenon is on the rise and often meets cultures that are totally unprepared and experience this as a shock.

2. Globalization including radio, TV and internet confronts every adherent of a specific religion at least in theory with all the many other religions in the world, while 100 years ago the vast majority of the world's population never got into contact with the message of another religion or another confession in their whole lifetime!

At the same time the number of cross religious marriages is growing – to take just one typical area of change -, because young people on average get to know many more possible partners than a generation ago and among them more possible partners from other religions than ever before. In Germany, marriages between Catholics and free church-evangelicals have become common, even though it is still something pastors on both sides do not like at all. So suddenly a Catholic priest and a Baptist pastor, who otherwise ignored each other, have to meet on behalf of a couple.

3. The modern relationship between parents and children and globalization is supplemented by the growing number of democratic states in the 20th century. In a democracy there is religious freedom and religious pluralism. That normally helps small religious communities without any political influence more than the majority religions, who in pre-democratic times often could rely on the help of politics and civil society for at least subtle pressure of the whole culture to stay with the religion in which one was born. Latin America is a typical inner-Christian example, as the long standing dominance of Catholic faith – both in numbers and political influ-

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<sup>9</sup> See the discussion in Paul M. Taylor. *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2005, that discusses the centrality of the right to change one's religion for religious liberty and the human rights in general.

ence – is giving way to a growing group of Protestant churches and different sects and cults, especially in the free countries.

To stir up a little discussion with my Catholic friends: When the Pope blamed evangelicals for stealing millions of sheep in Latin America, I had two questions: 1. Is there someone, that really can control what, e.g., Brazilians do? And as you probably know, it is not American evangelicals, that evangelize in Brazil, but Brazilian evangelicals, and if even the Pope has problems with Latin American bishops, how should an evangelical body really tell Brazilians to stop preaching? 2. Is it really the major danger, that Latin America becomes evangelical? Is it not much more a greater danger that Latin America becomes non-Christian? In Spain the Catholic church loses 2.7% of its members each year, mostly to atheism and non-belief – there are less than half a million evangelicals in Spain. What, if for 20 years all those leaving the Catholic Church would have become evangelical? But – as I said – this is only seen as a starting point for discussion.

Especially in democracies many young people choose their favorite religion as they choose their favorite music style or even cell phone company and have no grasp what major impact this has for society, culture and tradition. In Eastern Europe many churches and religious groups are experiencing this more and more since 1989 and for many it is like a thief in the night.

Often, when a country becomes democratic or extends religious liberty rights, Crypto-religionists will show up, until then hid to which religion they really belong. Crypto-religionists outwardly give the appearance to follow the official religion, while secretly believing and practicing a different one. So when the emperor allowed Protestantism in Catholic Austria in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, suddenly thousands of crypto-protestants showed up and demanded their own public services. On the other side, in totalitarian countries you often have many crypto-religionists. Thus in Islamic countries like Egypt there are many secret Christians, in Shiite Iran there are many crypto-Sunnites. And even in India, there is a large number of crypto-Christians believed to be among the officially Hindu Dalits.

The human rights revolution protecting religious freedom has brought about a religious balkanization and a growing war for souls, which all kinds of anti conversion laws have often tried to stop – usually with no real results.

Things can become complicated in a globalised world. I once preached in our local Salvation Army and met a homeless man wandering through European countries, who had just become a Christian and wanted to know from me what it means to be a Christian in detail and how actually to be-

come a Christian. A Catholic archbishop in Mainz had washed his feet on Palm Sunday, where canon law expects him once a year – in remembrance of Jesus washing the apostles' feet – to call in some unknown people passing by the cathedral and wash their feet. This homeless man was so amazed that the famous bishop would wash his feet that he became a Christian after hating God for two decades. But to whom does he belong now? To the Catholic Church, because the bishop was Catholic? To the Protestant State Church, because he asked me about it and was baptized into it as a child? To the Salvation Army, because we met in one of their services and they were caring for this homeless man? Or does the evangelical point of view count, that the most important thing is that an atheist or at least non-practicing Christian dedicated his life to the living God? Of course it is not I who decides by counseling this man, but he will use his own right to decide for himself. What did he do? He decided to visit all three churches regularly, not to the amusement of the different pastors involved!

I hope that Christians are mature enough to find ways to discuss these things, to find ways to solve these problems in discussion together, and to find basic general guidelines for an ethical code dealing with complicated situations, at least to clarify what should *not* be done.

What we need to achieve as Christians is – from my point of view – the combination of a clear *YES* to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and to prayer, that the Holy Spirit convinces the heart of people, with a clear *NO* to unethical ways of doing it, ways that go against the command and the spirit of our Savior Jesus Christ.

## 2.6. From Lariano to Toulouse

The inter-faith reflection on “Conversion: Assessing the Reality”, met at Lariano (Italy) on May 12-16, 2006. 27 people, representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and the Yoruba religion agreed that a code of conduct for propagating one's own faith should be achieved. The meeting was organized by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, and the Office on Interreligious Relations & Dialogue of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, and was supposed to be the first phase of a three phase process.

The first meeting was supposed to be an inter-faith meeting discussing the whole project in general and give a chance to listen to the complaints of people of four non-Christian religions. The second meeting, which was prepared by a small group meeting January 11-12, 2007 in Geneva, was supposed to be a larger meeting of all branches of Christianity (though

some other faiths could be present as observers to bridge the process from the first to the third phase), trying to achieve the text of a code of conduct. The third phase will be more of an inter-faith meeting again, trying to enlarge the idea of a code of conduct to all religious groups as far as they are willing to get involved.

In my opinion the central result of Lariona is in the following two paragraphs.

"Freedom of religion is a fundamental, inviolable and non-negotiable right of every human being in every country in the world. Freedom of religion connotes the freedom, without any obstruction, to practice one's own faith, freedom to propagate the teachings of one's faith to people of one's own and other faiths, and also the freedom to embrace another faith out of one's own free choice." (Report Lariano 2006, no. 2)

"We affirm that while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating other's rights and religious sensibilities." (Report Lariano 2006, no. 3)

The theme of the second phase was agreed to be "Towards an ethical approach to conversion: Christian witness in a multi-religious world". Thus the main task will be to fill in the details to thesis no. 6 of the Lariano Report: "A particular reform that we would commend to practitioners and establishments of all faiths is to ensure that conversion by 'unethical' means is discouraged and rejected by one and all. There should be transparency in the practice of inviting others to one's faith." (Lariano Report 2006, no. 6)

What actually are "unethical" ways of doing mission and can we ban those ways with the voice of all branches of Christianity?

The theme "Towards an ethical approach to conversion: Christian witness in a multi-religious world" clarifies two things:

#### 1. The second phase is an intra-Christian phase.

The idea is that Christians first of all find a code of conduct among themselves and are willing to bind themselves in applying it also in their relations with other religions. If even Christians are unable to find a peaceful way of doing missions among each other in a way that respects the human dignity and rights of others, how could it be found among the different religions?

But if Christians *can* find a code of conduct, it could bring encouragement to other world religions to find a code of conduct among their own

branches and finally those codes could be compared and possibly built into a code of conduct for all religions.

Christians should start with a self-obligation, not to make a deal with other religions, but because they want to act morally right and Christ-like, and possible mistakes of others do not give them the right to act unethically.

If Christians agree to a code of conduct, they can also start to put it into practice among their own followers. Often local Christians groups – e.g., Catholic or Evangelical – will not always listen to their representatives on a world level (e.g. the Vatican or the World Evangelical Alliance), but a code would be a good starting point for discussion and hopefully put a lot of moral pressure on Christians who combine mission with unnecessary offense to people, or with unethical economic and political pressure.

2. The second phase has a practical and ethical goal, not a mainly theological one.

From my point of view, it should not be the center of the discussion to find a common theological definition of missions because: 1. A lot of good documents have been produced by ecumenical and evangelical study conferences on these topics; 2. ethical standards on how to deal with other Christians and other religions can be put in place even when theological agreement is not yet achieved or cannot be achieved for the time being. The center should be a code of conduct to which we all agree, describing ethically what should never happen in the realm of mission.

Theological and confessional pitfalls should not allow us to be sidetracked from a discussion leading to a written code of conduct, where Christians see the borderline between acceptable missions protected by religious freedom and undue forms of trying to get people to convert, mainly through means in the area of the economic and political world. We then, as the whole body of the largest world religion, could ask other world religions – if not to follow our code -, to agree on a code of conduct for and within themselves, leaving out any problem of syncretism and the Christian needing to agree somehow on the evaluation of non-Christian mission.

A code of conduct that bans ways to urge conversion by unethical means only makes sense if it is not directed against any one group alone. If it is true, what the Lariano Report writes for all religions, then it also must be true for *all* branches of Christianity: “We acknowledge that errors have been perpetrated and injustice committed by the adherents of every faith. Therefore, it is incumbent on every community to conduct honest self-

critical examination of its historical conduct as well as its doctrinal/theological precepts. Such self-criticism and repentance should lead to necessary reforms inter alia on the issue of conversion." (Lariana Report 2006, no. 5)

This obviously does not mean that the second phase should exclude theology and theological questions around missions and ethics. We all would be happy if we move towards a greater agreement in theology and the message of mission during the whole process. But the practical outcome should always be in focus.

Some Christians make a distinction between proselytism (illegitimate) and evangelism (legitimate). Eastern Orthodox writer Stephen Methodius Hayes has written: "If people talk about the need for evangelism, they meet with the response, 'the Orthodox church does not proselytize' as if evangelizing and proselytism were the same thing." However the boundary varies from group to group. For instance the Moscow Patriarchate has repeatedly strongly condemned what it describes as Catholic proselytism of Orthodox Christians within Russia. The Catholic Church claims that it is supporting the existing Catholic community within Russia and is not proselytizing.<sup>10</sup> The WCC once stated: "In the history of the Church, the term "proselytism" has been used as a positive term and even as an equivalent concept for missionary activity. More recently, especially in the context of the modern ecumenical movement, it has taken on a negative connotation" On the other side, proselytism for many centuries has been a positive term like spreading the gospel.

We will have to discuss, whether we can name the problem just in terms of (good) evangelism and mission, and (bad) 'proselytism'. I doubt whether this will really help, at least as long we do not resist the temptation to call what we do 'evangelism' always, and what others do 'proselytism'.

On the other hand there needs to be clarification of language too. Not only, because language of warfare can easily sound like using unethical means in mission – see e.g., the attached "Statement on Mission Language" of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, but also because wrong theological language can lead us into problems.

So e.g., we all agree that we cannot convert someone. We can witness, we can explain to him what conversion means, we can call him to conver-

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<sup>10</sup> "Russian patriarch renews complaints on Catholic 'proselytism'", 5.10.2006, [http://directionstoorthodoxy.org/mod/news/view.php?article\\_id=198](http://directionstoorthodoxy.org/mod/news/view.php?article_id=198) vs. "Moscow's Catholic Archbishop Responds to Alexy II's Accusations". 15.2.2002, [www.zenit.org/article-3698?l=english](http://www.zenit.org/article-3698?l=english).

sion, but we cannot convert him. A human being can only convert his own heart to his creator and this conversion is only possible because of God's grace and the wonderful action of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the saying 'I converted him' easily slips from our lips, even though it is both theologically wrong and can easily be misunderstood by outsiders.

### 3. The second phase includes discussion of human rights in general

A code of conduct – even though formulated by Christians only for the time being – would be of great value in talking to *governments* that want to know how to permit religious freedom legally (including the right to do mission), but at the same time to defend against using religion for suppressing human dignity or unnecessary social unrest.

Many governments are nervous and fear that religions will fuel strife, violence and social unrest. We can help them a lot by speaking with one voice and giving them a practical code from our side.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, besides discussing Christian mission, we also have an ethical-political topic. How can we preserve the human right of religious freedom, while at the same time preserving the same right of others and preserve all other just human rights?<sup>12</sup>

Article 18.2 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says: "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice." We want this to be true for us, but we also want this to be true for others, with whom we engage in discussion.

The American legal expert Natan Lenner wrote rightly:

"No single human right can be considered in isolation; all human rights are interconnected. There may exist tensions between various human rights. For instance, the right to proselytize, with respect to freedom of

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<sup>11</sup> See the excellent discussion in Burkhard Guntau. "Möglichkeit und Grenzen der Religionsfreiheit". *Materialdienst der EZW* 70 (2007) 9: 325-336.

<sup>12</sup> The best discussion of this topic known to me besides the article of Guntau is: Jean-Paul Marthoz, Joseph Saunders. "Religion and the Human Rights Movement". pp. 40-69 in *Human Rights Watch World Report 2005*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005, also separate under [www.hrw.org/wr2k5/religion/religion.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/wr2k5/religion/religion.pdf). See also John Witte, Johan D. van der Vyveer (ed.). *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspectives: Religious Perspectives*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1996; Johan D. van der Vyveer, John Witte (ed.). *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspectives: Legal Perspectives*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1996.

expression, might interfere with other rights equally deserving of protection”<sup>13</sup>

“This is particularly true when proselytism is conducted in places where people are present by force of law and constitute a ‘captive audience’: classrooms, military installations, prisons, hospitals, and the like. Exposing people in captive audiences to undesired or uninvited proselytism may be considered a violation of their rights and a form of coercion.”

“Proselytism involving material enticement (money, gifts or privileges) should be considered a form of coercion and, thus, may be limited by law. Such material enticements exceed the area of freedom of speech and expression. However, the borderline cases are not easy to judge.”<sup>14</sup>

Let me add one thing for the sake of completeness, which is often forgotten: Violence and undue pressure cannot only be used to get people to leave a religion, but also to stay in it! To force young people to stay in e.g., a natural religion in a Brazilian tribe, is as bad as to force them to become e.g., Christians. You also can violate human rights by preventing people from converting to another faith.

### Unethical means

The Roman Catholic Church stated at Vatican II in ‘Ad Gentes’: “The Church strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the Faith, or alluring or enticing people by worrisome wiles.”

What could some of those unethical means be? E.g.:

- Bribe people by money, goods, medical treatment, opportunities or offices, that is, offering people nonspiritual rewards for their conversion.
- Threaten people with civil consequences, putting undue psychological pressure on them or press them for decisions they cannot oversee, e.g., because they are too young or mentally ill.
- Use the authority of a state function while in office (e.g., as police or state school teacher).
- Give or refuse financial advantages (e.g., through banks or in inheritance laws).

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<sup>13</sup> Natan Lerner. “Proselytism, Change of Religion, and International Human Rights”. International Religious Liberty Association. [www.irla.org/documents/articles/lerner-proselytism.html](http://www.irla.org/documents/articles/lerner-proselytism.html).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

– Preach to ‘captive audiences’, who cannot freely leave (e.g., army officers to their soldiers or a prison director to inmates).

The World Council of Churches in “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness” gave the following examples:

“... employing any kind of physical violence, moral compulsion and psychological pressure e.g., the use of certain advertising techniques in mass media that might bring undue pressure on readers/viewers; using political, social and economic power as a means of winning new members for one’s own church; extending explicit or implicit offers of education, health care or material inducements or using financial resources with the intent of making converts; manipulative attitudes and practices that exploit people’s needs, weaknesses or lack of education especially in situations of distress, and fail to respect their freedom and human dignity.”<sup>15</sup>

I quote this, even though I think things can be a little more complicated, e.g., what might be moral and what unethical in media use, can be very different in different times and cultures, or when governments see every social action as undue material pressure on possible converts. But at least the quotation names typical topics we have to discuss.

Let me give one example of what a code of conduct could contain concerning the use of military force (and that should be in agreement with all Christian bodies):

“The State and its army has the duty to defend peaceful Christians if they become the victims of illegal violence, but it does not do it specifically because they are Christians, but should do so for anybody else becoming a victim of violence. But, at the same time, an army can never have the task to defend Christianity, propagate the gospel or conquer land for Christianity. In history many Christian areas were conquered by armies, but this was wrong, and using an army to spread a religion is always a wrong mixture of the different tasks of the Church and the State.”

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<sup>15</sup> The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness. Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. § 19. 25.9.1995. <http://www.oikoumene.org/de/dokumentation/documents/oerk-kommissionen/gemeinsame-arbeitsgruppe-der-roemisch-katholischen-kirche-und-des-oerk/25-09-95-challenge-of-proselytism.html>; see a similar list: Towards Common Witness: A call to adopt responsible relationships in mission and to renounce proselytism. WCC commission ‘Mission and Evangelism’. 19.9.1997. [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/19-09-97-towards-common-witness.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/19-09-97-towards-common-witness.html).

It is similarly true that Christians may use the legal system of their states to defend their rights.<sup>16</sup> But equally they should not use the laws and the courts to hinder the rights of other religious groups, if they legally and ethically practice their freedom of religion.

I know that in Islam, Hinduism and partly even in the Jewish faith, the religious law applies one-to-one to all worldly things including the state and makes a separation of church/organized religion and state difficult. But even more so I think that Christians should take the lead and in a kind of self obligation declare that they no longer want to use the monopoly of force of the state for churches' purpose.

To be condemned are violence, coercion, threat, harassment and enticement, as are lies and feigning of false facts to win people for Christ, who otherwise would not follow him.

It will not be easy to nail those unethical means down in a concrete code of conduct, especially as historical, religious, cultural, and political conditions are so different in the world, e.g., if you compare Germany, India, Saudi Arabia and Nepal. But nevertheless we should try to become concrete and not to leave everything loose in only general terms.

Is a forced conversion a conversion? I think all Christian confessions agree that a conversion has to be a deeply personal, finally thought through move of the heart. A forced conversion is nothing we want and nothing we can accept. Therefore if people tell us that they want to convert, we should always give them and offer them time for discernment and should not be speedy to baptize them, but be assured that they really know what they are doing. There also should be honesty and transparency concerning what Christian faith means and what is expected of Christians after their conversion. Christianity is not a secret cult but open to the public. We do not have anything to hide (Matthew 10:26-27). Jesus said concerning those who want to become his followers: "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" (Luke 14:28; see vv. 27-33). We have to help people to calculate the costs, not to rush them into Christian churches, only to find out later, that they have been cheated.

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<sup>16</sup> See my "Darf ein Christ vor Gericht gehen?". S. 143-156 in: Thomas Schirmmayer, Thomas Zimmermanns (Hg.). Ein Maulkorb für Christen? Juristen nehmen Stellung zum deutschen Antidiskriminierungsgesetz und ähnlichen Gesetzen in Europa und Australien. Bonn: VKW, 2005. zugleich idea-Dokumentation 12/2005.

Ethics and mission belong together. The Christian witness is not a room free of ethics; it needs an ethical basis to really do what Christ commanded us to do.

When people today see daily in TV that religious groups are willing to use any means to further their cause, Christians clearly have to state what means we never will use – and that if some Christians use them anyway, they have lost their right to call this method Christian. The teenager’s motto from the US WWJD (“What would Jesus do?”) has to guide us especially when we fulfill Jesus’ Great Commission.

## **2.7. Appendix 1: Statement on Mission Language of the Evangelical Fellowship of India**

*[The ‘Evangelical Fellowship of India’ is the Evangelical Alliance of India that is a national member of the World Evangelical Alliance.]*

The national consultation of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India on Mission Language and Biblical Metaphor met at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, 4 – 7 October, 2000, with representatives from across India.

We accept the need to be sensitive in our language to show consideration for others and how they may perceive our words. This applies to what we say or write for any medium at all, including letters, reports, songs, prayers, and material on the Internet, for the boundaries between in-house and public domain are disappearing.

### *Offensive Terms*

We acknowledge that some churches and Christian missions have borrowed offensive secular terms, and over-extended military metaphors from the Bible. For example, the Bible uses “soldier” to illustrate how we should obey God, but not to encourage an aggressive attitude to other people. While we want to avoid inappropriate military language, we profit from Bible metaphors that call us to respect and obey God and those in authority.

However, warfare words, such as “army”, “advance”, “attack”, “battle”, “campaign”, “crusade”, “conquer”, “commandos”, “enemy”, “foe”, “forces”, “marching orders”, “mobilize”, “soldier”, “tactical plan”, “target”, “victory”, “weapons”, have been wrongly used as motivational tools for missions. Other offensive words include “pagan”, “darkness”, and “heathen.” Emphasis on such vocabulary is unloving, inappropriate and

counter-productive. Language that excludes women also offends. We must continuously examine both our attitudes and our language.

### *The Danger of Labeling*

We believe evil in all its forms is in conflict with the rule of God. Evil is our enemy and not people. We object to language that can wrongly label people as enemies, or appear aggressive. Although the gospel call to follow Christ may cause offence and be opposed by some, we must take care to avoid vocabulary that can be distorted to justify that opposition.

### *Our Motivation*

Warfare language is not our motivation for mission. We share Christ because we experience the love and grace of God, leading us to worship and proclamation. As God loves all people without discrimination, so should we. We respect and serve all in words, attitudes and actions, regardless of caste, race, class, creed and gender.

### *A Call to Christians*

We call upon our brothers and sisters to take care not to offend with words.

We also ask the church outside India to be aware that inappropriate mission language not only offends people of other faiths, but also brings harm to Christians here.

### *Words that lead us Forward*

Let us draw our mission terms from biblical concepts. Let us use words like family, relationship, love, welcome, embrace, reconcile, hope, serve, peace with God, promoting justice, offering gifts of life and blessing.

*Rev. Richard Howell, General Secretary  
of the Evangelical Fellowship of India*

*Dr Augustine Pagolu, Honorary Secretary  
of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India.*

## **2.8. Appendix 2: Press release by Reuters on our January brainstorming meeting**

*When Reuters printed my critical notes on Pat Robertson in a press release from 18 Jan 2007 after our brainstorming meeting in Geneva, Tom Heneghan, Religion Editor of Reuters Europe (Paris), confronted Pat Robertson with it and got the strange answer printed at the end of this appendix.*

Christians seek guidelines for missionary work

By Tom Heneghan, Religion Editor

Reuters News (c) 2007 Reuters Limited

PARIS, Jan 18 (Reuters) – Christians are told to make disciples of all nations, but some missionaries have done this so aggressively in recent years that churches now want a code of conduct to spread their faith without antagonizing any others.

A missionary boom in developing countries, often by United States evangelical and Pentecostal Protestants, has brought Christianity into some local conflicts with majority populations that follow faiths such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Overzealous preachers stand accused of linking humanitarian aid with baptism and insulting local faiths. Some local Christian minorities, who lived in peace before the boom, now feel a backlash as suspicion mounts against all Christians.

Representatives from the main families of the world's largest faith met in Geneva last week to discuss guidelines to curb aggressive evangelists and reassure other religions that Christian activists are not simply out to steal their sheep.

“Due to increased proselytism in some parts of the Christian family, the fiber of living together is jeopardized,” said the Rev. Hans Ucko, a Swedish Lutheran in charge of interreligious dialogue at the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC).

Christian leaders at the meeting, part of a three-year effort aiming to produce a code of conduct by 2009, sought a balance that would let them continue spreading their faith without discrediting it and antagonizing other religions.

The meeting brought together an unusually broad spectrum of Christianity, from Roman Catholics and the WCC – which groups mainline Protestants, Anglicans and Orthodox – to the World Evangelical Alliance and Pentecostal leaders.

### *Aid Evangelisation*

Tensions over missionary work have flared up over the past decade or so in several regions, most notably in Africa, South Asia and in the Muslim world, as globalization opened up new avenues for religions to spread their views.

“India and Sri Lanka are two countries that have become very sensitive to this issue,” said Monsignor Felix Machado, the Vatican's representative in the discussion.

Hindu nationalists in India have passed anti-conversion laws in some states to stop what they say are missionaries bribing poor people to get baptized. In Sri Lanka, Buddhist nationalists have campaigned – so far in vain – for similar laws.

“Aid evangelization” – helping disaster victims if they become Christian – frayed nerves in post-tsunami Indonesia to the point that Jakarta blocked a U.S. evangelical group from placing orphaned Muslim children into a Christian-run home.

The post-tsunami aid rush to Indonesia showed not only Christians help the poor with a possible double agenda. Radical Islamic groups also turned up in mostly Muslim Aceh province.

### *Fire and Brimstone Sermons*

Catholics and mainline Protestants have long accused well-financed evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries of angering majority faiths in the developing world.

By discussing the issue for the first time, both sides saw this problem was less pressing than the tensions created by fire and brimstone sermons broadcast over satellite television, said Thomas Schirrmacher of the World Evangelical Alliance.

“The main problem is the international, almost exclusively American media,” he said. “They are not linked to local churches and have no idea what effect their broadcasts have.

“I was in India when Pat Robertson said all Muslims should leave the United States,” he said, referring to a prominent U.S. televangelist. “The Hindus said they agreed that Muslims should leave India too – and take the Christians with them.”

A spokeswoman for Robertson said “The 700 Club,” where Robertson has made his most controversial comments about Islam, was only a small part of his satellite broadcasting and most of it was “both culturally sensitive and relevant.”

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### 3. Persecution

#### Persecution and Mission

Persecution has often been related to the growth and mission of the Church. Tertullian's famous words: 'The blood of the martyrs is a seed of the Church.' (*Apologia* 50:12ff) forewarns the Roman emperors that their opposition will only enlarge the Church. Jesus, when warning His disciples of future persecution had prophesied that it would turn them into his witnesses (Lk 21:13). Paul shows clearly that his imprisonment and suffering do not hinder the Gospel but further it (Phil 1:12-26).

And indeed, the first organized persecution of the first congregation in Jerusalem only led to the dispersal of Christians into the whole Roman Empire and the beginning of Christian mission to the Gentiles. The first Gentiles were converted in Antioch, not by the apostles but by 'normal' Christians who had fled Jerusalem (Acts 7:54-8:8). The International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne (1974) noted: "Persecution is a storm that is permitted to scatter the seed of the Word, disperse the sower and reaper over many fields. It is God's way of extending his kingdom."

So persecution often accompanies mission, for "Missions lead to martyrdom, and martyrdom becomes missions" (Hans Campenhausen in his study of the Early Church). Jesus warned his disciples that they were going out as sheep into the midst of wolves (Mt 10:16; Lk 10:3). The universal spread of Christ's Church has always been accompanied with the blood of the martyrs and world mission is 'mission beneath the cross'.

Johan Candelin rightly observed however that persecution does not always produce church growth, although persecution grows because some of the fastest growing churches in the world exist in countries without religious liberty (Candelin, 1999:16-17). According to Candelin, 300 mill. evangelicals worldwide live with the threat of physical persecution and the vast majority belong to fast-growing evangelical communities, such as in China.

The collapse of international Communism and the fall of many dictators may have resulted in a decrease in direct persecution in some places. However the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism, the growth of political Hinduism and the rise of new dictatorships in Africa are all global factors giving rise to new growth in attacks on christian churches and individuals.

## Mission to Persecutors

Following OT tradition (e.g., Job 31:29; 42:8-9), the NT exhorts us to pray for God's grace for persecutors and to give testimony to them (Mt 5:44, Lk 6:27-28; 1 Cor. 4:12). The most impressive testimony is Jesus' prayer that God will have mercy on his persecutors (Lk 23:34). The first Christian martyr, Stephen, prayed similarly (Acts 7:60). Both requests were heard, for some of the persecutors were later converted (the Roman officer in Lk 23:47; Paul in Acts 9:1-18). Church history contains many descriptions of dying Christians, such as Polycarp, who pray for those tormenting them.

The modern Church has its own examples. In 1913, the Indonesian evangelist, Petrus Octavianus, described a missionary in the Toradya area in Southern Celebes. Five tribe members wanted to kill him, but permitted him to pray first. He prayed aloud that they would be saved. Three of the murderers were banned to Java, were converted in prison and returned to Toradya, where they founded a church which later (1971) became the fourth largest church in Indonesia with over 200,000 members. Let us also not forget the five missionaries shot to death by the Aucas in Ecuador in the 1960's. Several of the murderers later became pillars of the Aucan church.

Many who began as persecutors of Christians have later become believers themselves. The best known is, of course, Paul, who frequently referred to his former persecution of the church. (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13+23-24; Phil 3:6; 1 Tim 1:13. See also Acts 9:4-5; 22: 4+7-8; 16:11+14-15).

## Jesus, Mission, and Persecution

To speak of Jesus is to speak of Mission, but at the same time to speak of suffering and persecution. The prediction of His death accompanies His whole earthly ministry. (e.g., Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 10:17-19; 26:2). The details of the Passion narratives take up the longest sections of the Gospels. Paul consistently presented Jesus as the archetypal martyr and as an example for all Christians, so it is not surprising that the Early Church's documents on martyrdom considered Jesus to be the prototype of the martyr.

Jesus is the actual object of all persecution. For this reason, Jesus asks Saul, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14), and identifies Himself as, "... Jesus whom you persecute" (Acts 9:5; 22; 8; 26:15). The true reason for Christians' suffering is Christ, since it is the focus on him which justifies the opposition: "The clearer the Church recognizes Christ and testifies of Him, the more certainly it will encounter the

contradiction, the confrontation and the hatred of the Antichrist” (Martin Luther). Jesus Himself frequently reminded the disciples that they would be persecuted for His sake while preaching the gospel (e.g. Mt 10:22; Mt 16:25; Lk 21:12).

Without the offence of the Cross there would be no mission but also no persecution. (Gal 5:11). Paul accuses his opponents of being circumcised only to escape persecution (Gal. 6:12+14). The ‘Word of the Cross’ is ‘foolishness’ to unbelievers (1 Cor. 1:18), an impediment to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23), but the centre of salvation history. (1 Cor 1:23; cf 2:2). The message of the Cross is thus the glory of the gospel as well as its foolishness (1 Cor. 1:17-25; Gal. 6:11-14).

### The Holy Spirit, the Real Missionary, and Persecution

Without the Holy Spirit, all mission is futile and comes to nothing. But since mission and persecution are closely related, the Holy Spirit also plays a vital role in the experience of persecution. He is ‘the Comforter’ (John 16:16+26), and gives Christians the strength to endure persecution, even to rejoice in the most difficult conditions (1 Pet 4:14). The Spirit of Glory, which had rested on the Messiah (Is 11:2), brings His glory to those who seem to have lost all glory, such as Stephen, whom Luke describes as “... being full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:55) during his defense and his execution, as he saw the Glory of God in Heaven.

Jesus promises wisdom to the persecuted when they stand before their judges and have to give testimony, and the Holy Spirit will give them what to say (Lk 21:12-15, Mt 10:19-20). William Carl Weinrich notes that Jesus seldom spoke of the Holy Spirit’s function, but when He did so, frequently described Him as helper and comforter in persecution (Mt 10:17-20; Mk 13:9-11; Lk 21:12-19). No wonder Paul attributes his endurance to the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Thess 1:6-7). The Early Church was constantly aware that only the Spirit of God could provide the persecuted with wisdom and strength to endure.

### No automatic blessing from persecution

Nowhere are Christians encouraged to seek persecution or martyrdom. This is in contrast to those who justify self-destruction (e.g. suicide bombers) on religious grounds. Neither does persecution automatically lead to church growth or to a purer, stronger faith. The experience of the German Church under the Third Reich and under Communism, for example, has led to neither a more intense reflection about persecution nor to revival or

church growth. Even when persecution is fruitful, however, its results are never automatic, but always due to God's sovereign grace.

Jesus' parable of the sower (Mt 13:3-8+20-22) identifies wealth and egoism. as just as dangerous to faith as persecution and pressure. Western Christians tend to glorify persecution, and believers under persecution tend to glorify liberty and wealth. The faith of the one suffers under persecution and pressure, the faith of the other is suffocated by worldly concerns and the deceit of wealth. Also in the west persecution comes in many forms and is much wider than physical abuse. Thus christians are persecuted at work for upholding christian values and christians who take a stand against secularism are exposing themselves to ridicule and abuse. The Church is called to help and support such christians, as well as those suffering more obvious physical opposition.

It is an unfortunate fact of ecclesiastical history that persecution can also engender conflict and division between Christians. An appropriate, if terrifying, modern example occurred in Korea, when the Japanese rulers (1910-1945) required all Koreans to kowtow to Shinto shrines in order to honor the Japanese Emperor and the sun goddess. After long resistance, in 1937 and '38, most Christian groups surrendered to the increasingly intolerable coercion, but were strongly divided (particularly the Presbyterians) on the significance of the required ceremony; was it a religious rite or merely a cultural formality? Sixty years later, the issue remains unresolved and the breach is still evident, even though the original problem is long gone.

### Christians persecuting Christians

Prophets and true believers have always been persecuted by institutional religious authorities. Israel itself persecuted the OT prophets, as well as Jesus and the apostles. Jesus compared the spiritual leaders of His day with those who had murdered the OT prophets (Mt 5:10-12; 10:23; 23:21+34; Lk 11:49; 13:34; 21:12; John 5:16; See also Stephen in Acts 7:52; Peter in Acts 2:23; and Paul in 1 Thess 2:14-15; Gal 4,29).

Christians today also persecute both fellow Christians and others. We need only remember the forced conversions in the Middle Ages, the colonization of Latin America, the Crusades, the oppression of heretics, the Inquisition and the Jewish pogroms. Ever since 4<sup>th</sup> century, the term 'martyr' has been expanded to include Christians killed by other 'orthodox' Christians. Throughout history denominations have produced collections of martyr histories from their own traditions, whilst at the same time denying the ugly truth that all denominations also persecuted Christians of other persuasions.

The fact that Christians themselves are martyred in the name of the Christian God, as dreadful as it is, is not foreign to Scripture. The holy books of no other religion depict their followers so negatively as the Bible does the people of Israel and Christians. This honest and sometimes severe self-criticism is integral to both Judaism and Christianity, in contrast to other religions.

### The State, politics and Persecution

We must avoid defining persecution in merely pious terms, since it can arise when Christians take certain ethical or political positions. Recent Catholic theology, particularly Liberation Theology, sometimes has applied martyr terminology to political martyrs and resistance fighters. It is quite proper that persecution sometimes has a concrete political aspect, especially when criticism of rulers initiates the persecution. There is a long tradition of political critique giving rise to persecution, from the OT prophets to people such as Athanasius, Thomas Becket, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King and Archbishop Oscar Romero. Christians are normally loyal citizens, who seek the welfare of their state, country and people, but whenever the State tries to force them to dishonor God, and especially seeks to suppress their mission, they must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29; 4:19).

It is, of course, difficult to conjecture in advance to what extent we can cooperate with governments during periods of persecution, and when we must begin to resist. In world mission this question has to be decided anew by Christians in each context. We certainly need a new evaluation of the possibility of breaking State laws and resisting the powers for the sake of the Gospel. Peter and the apostles preached the Gospel in spite of the State's prohibition (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29) and were frequently arrested and punished as a result (Acts 12:1-2; 12:3). In the face of Roman opposition, Christians referred to Jesus as Lord (Gr. 'kyrios') and king (in opposition to an imperial edict, Acts 17:6-7; 4:12). They followed OT examples (e.g. Daniel in Dan 3; priests in 2 Chr. 26:18; the Egyptian midwives in Ex 1:15-20; Rahab in Josh. 2). Rather than condemning their dishonesty, the NT presents them as role models of faith (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25). Note that these examples do not concern only idolatry or recantation of the Gospel, but any infringement of God's Law (murder, etc.). Such resistance assumes, however, that the State has required us to transgress against God's Law.

There has never been a persecution solely on religious grounds, since there is always a confusing blend of religious concerns with cultural and

social problems. Political, national, economic and personal motives may also play a role. In Revelation, hatred for the Church is augmented by political and economic issues. Another example is the Ephesians craftsmen who instigate a riot, because they consider Paul's mission work a threat to their welfare (Acts 19:23-29). In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are imprisoned after exorcising a fortune telling demon out of a slave girl, because her owners are angry at the loss of their profit (Acts 16:16-24).

There is actually no difference between those 'persecuted because of their faith' and those persecuted for their 'active support of justice'. In Revelation, the Anti-Christian government (the Beast) oppresses the saints... "they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Rev 14:12; similar 12:17). Both obedience to principles of justice and truth, as well as loyalty to Jesus, equally attract hatred. And as world mission is a primary commandment (Mt 28:18-20) and includes teaching all aspects of God's commandments (Mt 28:20), oppressors may name social or ethical issues as the reason for their opposition, but the real reason is our faithfulness to the mission mandate. Christians know the true reason for persecution: the world hates them as it hates their Lord (Jn 15:18ff), and therefore persecution will always be closely associated with missionary obedience.

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## 4. May a Christian Go to Court?

*Translated by Richard McClary*

Is the use of some kind of conflict resolution tied to legal process sensible and justified (e.g., witnesses, defense, judges, independent appraisers, mediators, legal transcripts)? Many Christians object, at least in theory, to going to court or to using the methods of a constitutional state. They object all the more that Christians go to court against each other or use the methods of the constitutional state in connection with Christian activities or churches.

In the following I would like to initially show how Paul, as a matter of course, utilized the legal process of his day and age. Thereafter, by means of 1 Corinthians 6, I would like to show that Paul is also acquainted with an inner-church legal process.

In looking at 1 Corinthians 6, one of most commonly used arguments against the use of legal means among Christians will also be addressed. In addition to 1 Corinthians 6, there are above all two statements by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount which serve as arguments for the view that a Christian is not allowed to take legal action. For this reason they, too, should be more closely examined in connection with 1 Corinthians 6.

### 4.1. Paul Makes Use of Law and Legal Process!

When Peter (1 Peter 3: 15-17) calls upon Christians to always be ready to “give an answer” (Gk. *apologia*), this applies first of all in court. This is due to the fact that *apologia* is the classical technical term for a plea, or speech for the defense, before a court. For this reason Peter wishes that Christians see that they will be accused, because otherwise the courts will really get them. Christians should have a clean conscience. If they do evil, then the state is the servant of God in order to lawfully punish Christians. There is not a trace of a thought in either case that it is basically questionable as to whether a state is a constitutional state and has a court system, or whether Christians are accused of something by other Christians of the state or they themselves file suit.

The Book of Acts reports to us a wide variety of collisions that the Apostles and Evangelists had with courts and judges. Acts also presents the defenses made by the Apostles and Evangelists in front of courts. Nowhere

is there a hint that they should have remained silent. When Peter and John were put in prison by the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22), they answered the finding in front of the court (Acts 4:19-20). The same thing (Acts 5:29-32) happened with the second arrest (Acts 5:27-42), although this infuriated the judge (Acts 5:33). The indictment, imprisonment, and stoning of Stephen are presented in detail (Acts 6:8-8:2), the largest part of the report being taken up with the longest address in the New Testament, that is, Stephen's defense before the court (Acts 7: 1-53). Stephen's defense becomes an indictment against the judge and also causes great anger (Acts 7:54).

Whether only Jews were involved in the first persecution of Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45-52) or whether they also called upon the Romans for help is an open question. It is also an open question as to whether Paul's words against the Jews (Acts 13:46-47) constituted a defense, or apology, before the court. In any case, both Paul and Barnabas were driven away and moved on to Iconium. They also were persecuted in Iconium, from which they fled (Acts 14:1-7). In Philippi the Jews again instigated a persecution by the Romans, this time for financial reasons (Acts 16:16-40). After their supernatural release and the conversion of the 'jailer,' Paul sees to it that their wrongful torture and confinement (Acts 16:21-23), which is an insult to a Roman citizen, is fully retracted (Acts 16:35-40). With this he no doubt wanted to benefit the jailer or the newly started church and his/her reputation. Paul says: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out" (Acts 16:37). Paul's famous speech at the meeting of the Areopagus is, of course, not held in the confines of a court case, but it is nonetheless to be understood as an apology or defense before the city leaders.

From Athens Paul travelled on to Corinth, where the Jews accused him in front of the Proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12-17). Paul wanted to offer a defense. However, the Roman judge let him go since no offence against Roman law was at issue (Acts 18:14). Admittedly Paul did not intervene when out of anger the Jews struck one of their own in his presence. In Ephesus Paul was also driven out after Demetrius – again for financial reasons – instigated an uprising against him (Acts 19:23-40). Due to the fact that there was no true charge, all participants were in danger vis-à-vis the Romans (Acts 19:40). Paul travelled on (Acts 20:1).

The last eight chapters of the Book of Acts almost completely revolve around Paul's unlawful capture and his defense before various Roman judges. Upon Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-23:22), the Jews first

beat Paul. They stopped when the Roman army intervened (Acts 21:32). Paul expressly asked the officer twice for the opportunity to give a defense (Acts 21:37,39). The officer granted Paul's request after questioning him. His defense (Acts 22:1-21) caused an uproar (Acts 22:22), such that the officer had Paul taken away. When Paul had been bound in preparation for a flogging, he called upon his rights as a Roman citizen: "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" (Acts 22:25; comp. 27-28). This prevented the flogging. On the following day, Paul wanted to begin his defense in front of the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1). However, the High Priest had him struck on the mouth (Acts 23:2), whereupon Paul denied him his office and protested sharply in charging him as follows: "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" (Acts 23:3). On account of the murderous conspiracy, Paul was placed under the protection of 200 Roman soldiers and was brought to Caesarea to the Roman Governor Felix with a letter explaining the situation (Acts 23:25-33). The legal seesaw between Felix, his successor Festus, and Herod Agrippa II is described in detail (Acts 24-26), whereby Paul's repeated, new defenses play a central role (Acts 24:10-21, 24-25; 25:8, 10-11; 26:1-29). Since Paul was to be taken back to Jerusalem, he makes his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision (Acts 25:11,21). In the end, Agrippa is of the opinion that Paul could have been set free (Acts 26:32) had he not 'called upon' the Emperor (Acts 25:25). At this point Paul could be viewed as having possibly miscalculated the use of legal means. This is, however, not to say that his means would have been inadmissible.

A description of Paul's transport as a prisoner across the Mediterranean to Rome follows (Acts 27: 1-28, 16). Having only been in Rome a short time, Paul calls the leaders of the Jews, who know nothing about the situation, to see him. To begin with, he defends himself for having appealed to Caesar as a Jew (Acts 28:19) as a way to preliminarily work against the charges of the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 28:17-28) and to wait on his trial (Acts 28:30-31).

One pundit of Roman history, the British scholar Adrian N. Sherwin-White, by the way meticulously demonstrated that the author of the Book of Acts had exact and detailed, specialized knowledge of Roman law and the state system. In Sherwin-White's classic *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*<sup>17</sup>, which has been reprinted numerous times,

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<sup>17</sup> Adrian N. Sherwin-White. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963. pp. 48-185 (reprint, e.g., Grand Rapids (MI): Baker,

Sherwin-White also demonstrated that the author reliably passed down the historical particulars relating to Paul's cases and 'quasi-cases' as well as the official designations of the respective participants. Sherwin-White and William M. Ramsay have clearly shown that Luke himself correctly renders titles, ranks, and other Roman terminology, also in cases where they were only used for a short time and in a geographically limited manner. Luke always gets the situation right with respect to the correct time and place,<sup>18</sup> at least where this can be verified. In Acts 13:7, for example, Luke names the proconsul, Sergius Paulus (*anthypatos*). This is correct, since Cyprus was a senatorial province in 47 A.D. The designation would have been incorrect for an earlier or a later time.<sup>19</sup> In Acts 23:34-35 Felix is prepared to listen to Paul's case after he hears that Paul is from Cilicia. It was only at this time that Cilicia was a part of the province of Syria that was subject to Felix. Beginning in 69 A.D., Cilicia was its own province, and Paul would have been transferred there to the governor if this had occurred at such time.<sup>20</sup> At that time, such details were only accessible via firsthand experience or via witnesses. It was not as it is today, where after the event such details could be checked and reconstructed in archives and literature. With recourse to the investigations by Sherwin-White, R.P.C. Hanson writes the following: "The accumulation of facts strongly suggests that in the Book of Acts we are dealing with an author who lived during the first and not the second century; additionally, that namely at least parts of his narrative stand in a close relationship to a certain slice of history, from approximately 41 A.D. until approximately 70 A.D. It can be isolated to the time of the end of Claudius' rule and the beginning of Nero's rule. It appears probable that he had something of a close relationship to this pe-

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1978; 1992); comp. the appeal to law for Roman citizens in the earlier work Adrian N. Sherwin-White. *Roman Citizenship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.

<sup>18</sup> This is compiled in an impressive manner in F. F. Bruce. *The Acts of the Apostles*. London: IVP, 1952<sup>2</sup> (reprint 1976). pp. 15-16; Edward M. Blaiklock. "The Acts of the Apostles as a Document of First-Century History". pp. 41-54 in: W. Ward Gasque, Ralph P. Martin (Hg.). *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays presented to F.F. Bruce on his 60th Birthday*. Grand Rapids (MI), Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970. pp. 46-50; W. Ward Gasque. "The Book of Acts and History". pp. 54-71 in: Robert. A. Guelich (Hg.) *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Festschrift für George. E. Ladd*. Grand Rapids (MI): W. B. Eerdmans, 1978. pp. 54-58; Donald Guthrie. *New Testament Introduction*. London: IVP, 1970. p. 354.

<sup>19</sup> W. Ward Gasque. "The Book of Acts and History". Op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> Adrian N. Sherwin-White. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. Op. cit., pp. 55-57.

riod of time, either through sources or through personal experience. This conclusion is imposed upon us by the facts of the case.”<sup>21</sup>

## **4.2. Inner-Church Legal Process (with Particular Attention to 1 Corinthians 6)**

The highest level of church discipline,<sup>22</sup> that is, holding discussions with others and exclusion (Matthew 18:14-17), requires an orderly, inner-church legal process. This means there should also be trustworthy judges, a clear and recognizable system, witnesses, and the opportunity to appeal.

In a church discipline proceeding against an elder, this is explicit: “Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. I charge you, in sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism” (1 Timothy 5:19-21).

As in a court case that takes place outside of the church, what one is dealing with here is an “accusation” and not wild rumors or suspicions. There have to be, as in the case of court proceedings outside the church, and on the basis of Old Testament provisions, “two or three witnesses” available. In addition, the judgment should be carried out in a manner that is impartial (or “without partiality”) and is not reached “with favoritism.” The Old Testament principle is termed “without respect to persons.”

The New Testament not only has an inner-church legal process for questions of church discipline, but one for disputes between Christians in general. Thus, one can read in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11: “If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people? Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believ-

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<sup>21</sup> R. P. C. Hanson. *The Acts*. The New Clarendon Bible. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1967; Everett F. Harrison. *New Testament Introduction*. Grand Rapids (MI): Wm B. Eerdmans, 1971<sup>2</sup>. p. 249.

<sup>22</sup> In this connection, see the more extensive section 57 in my *Ethik*. Vol. 5. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition. 2003).

ers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

*First Corinthians 6:1-11* has often been used to teach that Christians are not allowed to go to court. Surely the Old Testament as well as the Sermon on the Mount teach that Christians should rather waive their rights (see below regarding the Sermon on the Mount), be it whether one cannot foresee the outcome of a court proceeding, the dispute is not worth it, or one would rather allow himself to be disadvantaged. *First Corinthians 6:1-11* does not teach, however, that Christians may not take court action. There are two points to take into account:

The context speaks to a case where both of the parties in the legal suit are members of the church. If one of the two parties in the dispute does not belong to the church, the church is not in a position to be able to rule over the situation. (The church can, however, judge the behavior of the Christian who is a party to the dispute, up to the point of church discipline.) “What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13a).

The court of secular authority, in this case the Romans, should be avoided because it is “ungodly” (1 Corinthians 6:1). Ungodly, worldly courts should even be avoided where this entails a personal sacrificial loss (Matthew 5:40). Only when a church member is declared to be a “pagan or a tax collector” can he be brought before a secular court.<sup>23</sup>

At this point, Paul assesses secular courts rather negatively. On the basis of the sinfulness of man, he anticipates much injustice in legal process. He does not indeed hold Christians to be sinless, but he nonetheless believes that there are enough wise and just judges in the church. Today often the exact opposite opinion is held. Secular courts, in the eyes of many Christians, have a better standing than do the correction procedures found within

<sup>23</sup> Also in Rousas J. Rushdoony. *Institutes of Biblical Law*. Phillipsburg (NJ): Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973, p. 741.

the church, the more so as scarcely anyone in the church would know how to apply God's just laws, and for that reason, just, wise men in our churches are largely absent.

Incidentally, it should be pointed out that Paul, the author of 1 Corinthians 6, had to go before court on numerous occasions, as we have already seen in much detail.

If both parties belong to the church, they should not bring their dispute before a secular court because an inner-church court is significantly more just. The alternative to a secular court is not the absence of legal action. Rather, it is court via those people who in any event will at one point judge the entire world. Christians should not have their legal disputes with other Christians before secular courts but rather before wise men in the church.

“Historically the command can be derived from Judaism.”<sup>24</sup> The Old Testament not only has the secular death penalty but also exclusion from the church and pursuit of an inner-church manner of legal process. As a result, the following is found in Psalm 1:5: “Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.” Regarding the covenantal decision in Ezra 10:3 to no longer marry foreign women, in Ezra 10:8 we read the following: “Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the officials and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.”

That the church can pronounce judgments and impose punishment becomes increasingly clear in the New Testament. Paul writes in this connection to Timothy: “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The early church<sup>25</sup> also acted according to the command in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. “Since the Roman state religion, that is also to say the municipal or provincial cults, pervaded the entire dispensation of justice, from New Testament times onward the ancient church began to develop its own legal arbitration, which beginning in 318 A.D. Constantine officially recognized

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<sup>24</sup> Lukas Vischer. *Die Auslegungsgeschichte von 1Kor 6,1-11*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der neutestamentlichen Exegese 1. J. C. B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1955. p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Comp. the history of interpretation and application of 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 Elisabeth Herrmann. *Ecclesia in Res Publica*. Europäisches Forum 2. Peter Lang: Frankfurt, 1980. p. 72-92 und Lukas Vischer. *Die Auslegungsgeschichte von 1Kor 6,1-11*. Op. cit. According to *ibid.* p. 6, the biggest exegetical problem in the history of the church is the question of who the unjust in 1 Corinthians 6:4 are. In my view, there is no question that secular judges are meant.

for civil disputes ... The highest goal of this court of arbitration was not to find and dispense justice but rather, according upon the admonition of the Apostle, to achieve reconciliation among the disputants by waiving one's rights."<sup>26</sup>

It was only after Christianity was raised to a state religion and this manner of legal process officially recognized that, contrary to the biblical notion, this manner of legal process could also be called upon in the case where one party was not in agreement to do so or was not a Christian. At this point, the sense of not going before secular courts lapsed.<sup>27</sup> Until the fourth century, this manner of legal process was conducted by a court that was internal to the church. After the political turn, however, the church courts were recognized as an official court<sup>28</sup>, such that in the end invoking this court was possible as long as one of the parties so desired.<sup>29</sup>

The inner-church manner of legal process nevertheless continued to be a component of many churches. Predominantly free churches and pietism found 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 difficult. Lucas Fischer writes: "... whoever expects a changed and profound understanding of our text in the interpretation and practice of pietism will find himself disappointed."<sup>30</sup>

In pietism one finds in the interpretations of 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 no word referring to the state or to an internal church court. Rather, one only finds calls to not quarrel.<sup>31</sup> The examples of Johann Albrecht Bengel and John Wesley demonstrate this.<sup>32</sup> The biblical text was 'privatized' in pietism, as is the case with many other biblical statements.

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<sup>26</sup> Rudolf Freudenberger. "„Noster municipatus in caelis' (Tertullian de corona 13,4): Der Weg der Alten Kirche zwischen Verweigerung und Anpassung gegenüber Staat und Gesellschaft". *Theologische Beiträge* 14 (1983) 6: 275-286, here p. 281-282. Freudenberger assumes that in 1 Corinthians 6:1ff Paul sees the adjudication of the Jewish Diaspora as an "emergency decree." In my view, this does not fit with the circumstances which Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 6:1ff as a comprehensive theological justification for inner-church legal practise.

<sup>27</sup> Text of acknowledgement from 318 A.D. in Volkmar Keil (Ed.). *Quellensammlung zur Religionspolitik Konstantins des Großen*. Texte zur Forschung 54. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1989. p. 146-148; comp. Rudolf Freudenberger. "„Noster municipatus in caelis' ...". Op. cit. p. 282.

<sup>28</sup> Lukas Vischer. *Die Auslegungsgeschichte von 1Kor 6,1-11*. Op. cit. p. 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-91.

The more unjust the legislation in a country becomes in biblical terms and the more unjust court decisions are, the more necessary it is to have an inner-church legal process in order to resolve disputes between Christians. In this way, an awareness is also maintained that the church has clear standards for making judgment in the Word and law of God. The church has to continually ask herself how God would like decisions to be made, and in this manner, she must learn to differentiate God's judgment from the judgment of anti-Christian states. In addition, an inner-church legal process is an example for the state, because the church demonstrates the results which follow when God's laws are employed.

A missing inner-church method of legal process in most of the churches in the world has hollowed out the Christian sense of legal consciousness and has largely hushed Christian critique of state legislation and legal process. The church itself no longer knows how it would have to decide in God's name. It is only seldom that the church has the required wise men who can bring order into the lives of other Christians.

### **4.3. Does the Sermon on the Mount Teach Us to Waive Legal and Defense Rights?**

#### Reconciliation Instead of Court Cases in the Sermon on the Mount

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny” (Matthew 5:21-26).

Many commentators think that at this point Jesus tightens and internalizes the commandment against murder by forbidding unfounded anger expressed in swearwords toward another. However, a one-sided exegesis of the Old Testament law, that only observed actions, was a mistake of the teachers of the law like some Pharisees or Sadducees. In fact, the Old Tes-

tament itself differentiates clearly between sin and planning sin, condemning thereby an evil plan and the internal sin, as explicitly as does the New Testament. In the entire Old Testament, it is never a question of purely external fulfillment of the commandments. Rather, the OT always has to do with serving God with his or her entire heart.<sup>33</sup> Just as internal lust is the activator for adultery (see the next section), anger in the Old Testament is the activator for murder: Rage plans murder (Esther 5:9), anger is cruel (Proverbs 27:4a), fury pursues his brother with a sword (Amos 1:11), in anger men are killed (Genesis 49:6-7; Deuteronomy 19:6), and “a king’s wrath is a messenger of death” (Proverbs 16:14a), to mention only a few examples.

When Jesus calls upon people to first reconcile and then to go before God, that is by all means nothing new. The idea that reconciliation and love are practical consequences of repentance is found in the Old Testament. Old Testament sacrifices did not magically have an automatic effect. Rather, they presupposed the correct internal attitude.

The call to reconciliation in the Sermon on the Mount does not, however, replace state authority. State authority has to administer justice without respect to persons.<sup>34</sup> Reconciliation should take place on the way to court (Matthew 5:25). Similarly, one reads in Proverbs 17:14: “... drop the matter before a dispute breaks out” and in Proverbs 25:8: “do not bring hastily to court for what will you do in the end if your neighbor puts you to shame?” This is also clear from the parallels in Luke 12:57-59: “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

### ‘The Thing with the Cheek’ in the Sermon on the Mount

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to

<sup>33</sup> Particularly also according to Walter C. Kaiser. *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids (MI), 1987. p. 128-133.

<sup>34</sup> Comp. to this rather Reformed view of the same statement from a Lutheran point of view in Detlef Löhde. *Bergpredigt und weltliche Ordnung*. Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung H. Harms: Groß Oesingen, 1985. 14 p.

go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:38-42).

Here Jesus quotes the so-called *lex talionis* or *ius talionis*<sup>35</sup> However, Jesus is not concerned with contrasting the Old Testament’s “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” with love in the New Testament as much as this is ingrained as a formulation for the entire brutality of past times in the consciousness of large segments of the population. The Pharisees and teachers of the law, whom Jesus was addressing, derived the general right of revenge from this phrase, also including private vengeance.<sup>36</sup> But is this understanding to be found in the Old Testament itself?

There is no doubt that in the Old Testament the state has the right to mete out just punishment and exercise vengeance. In the Old Testament, the legal tenet “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-21; Deuteronomy 19:21) applies, which “is not, for instance, a rule for a person’s behavior towards another person but rather only with respect to the dispensation of justice ...”<sup>37</sup>

*Lex talionis* is a legal tenet which 1) expresses in the form of a byword that every wrongdoing deserves just punishment. However, at the same time 2) it has a restrictive function, since according to it the penalty may never be more weighty than the deed (the principle of proportionality). And 3) as a general rule, it was not employed in a literal fashion, such that as punishment someone would have lost his eye or tooth,<sup>38</sup> especially since the word ‘for,’ translated from the Hebrew word ‘tachat’<sup>39</sup>, actually means

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<sup>35</sup> Lat. ,lex’ = law; ,ius’ = justice; ,talio’ = retribution, corresponding punishment.

<sup>36</sup> Eugen Hühn. *Die alttestamentlichen Citate und Reminiscenzen im Neuen Testament*. J. C. B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1900. p. 8-9 clearly demonstrates that the Pharisees incorrectly took a judgment made by a judge and conferred it upon private life; he demonstrate further that at the beginning of the section Jesus was not actually quoting the Old Testament but rather the interpretation of the Pharisees and, however, astonishingly draws no further conclusions.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Noth, quoted according to Johann Jakob Stamm. “Der Weltfriede im Alten Testament”. pp. 7-64 in: Johann Jakob Stamm, Hans Bietenhard. *Der Weltfriede im Alten und Neuen Testament*. Zwingli Verlag: Zürich, 1959, here p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Also according to Walter C. Kaiser. *Towards Old Testament Ethics*. Op. cit. pp. 72-73; Walter C. Kaiser. *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove (IL), 1988. pp. 72-74; Pinchas Lapide. *Die Bergpredigt*. Op. cit. pp. 133-135.

<sup>39</sup> In Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:20. In Deuteronomy 19:21 there is merely the preposition ‘be.’

‘instead of.’ That means that it should actually read “eye instead of eye.”<sup>40</sup> As a general rule, this legal tenet limited the level of punishment to compensation in financial or similar terms. On the basis of the same legal tenet, a slave also had to be set free if the master hit a male or female slave in the eye and destroyed it or knocked out the tooth of a male or female slave (Exodus 21:26-27; comp 21:23-25). In a few limited cases, however, the punishment corresponded directly with the wrongdoing. This was the case with murder (if there were witnesses), in which the death penalty applied and for which reason the wording “life for life” (Exodus 21:23) is used (comp. 1 Samuel 15:33). That “fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Leviticus 24:20) was not literally carried out is shown, for instance, in Leviticus 24:17-21. For the life of an animal, for example, one had to “make restitution” with another animal or like consideration (“life for life,” Leviticus 24:18). The longest version of *lex talionis* is found in Exodus 21:23-25: “... you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”

This type of ‘vengeance’ is nowhere rescinded in the New Testament. In Romans 13:4 the authorities remain “... God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.” The authorities have this position, although Paul just a few verses later speaks about the commandment to love (Romans 13:8-10). The state has to judge impartially and administer justice without respect to persons. In our text, Jesus does not at all touch upon this duty of the state. Rather, he presupposes it by mentioning a legal suit (Matthew 5:40), as he earlier does with a reference in Matthew 5:25 (“judge,” “officer,” “prison”).

From this, however, there is no law of private vengeance that can be derived. David did not kill Saul in spite of the injustice suffered and in spite of the favorable opportunities he had (1 Samuel 24:4-8; 1 Samuel 26:7-12). The Old Testament points this out numerous times. Instead of this, it is considered as a virtue to pacify in the case of a dispute (Proverbs 15:18) and prior to a lawsuit to achieve reconciliation (Proverbs 17:14). One should not repay evil (Proverbs 20:22), and there should be no joy over the fall of an enemy (Proverbs 24: 17-19). “Do not seek revenge ... but love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). This applies not only with

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<sup>40</sup> Particularly according to B[enno] Jacob. *Auge um Auge: Eine Untersuchung zum Alten und Neuen Testament*. Philo Verlag: Berlin, 1929; comp. Roland Gradwohl. “Auge um Auge?”. *Friede über Israel: Zeitschrift für Kirche und Judentum* 78 (1995) 2: 53-56. In Abraham’s offering a ram is sacrificed “instead of” (Hebrew, tachat’) Isaac (Genesis 22:13).

respect to Israelites but also to non-Israelites:<sup>41</sup> “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself ... (Leviticus 19:34).

The statement in Matthew 5:39 to “not resist an evil person ...” is often understood to mean that Christians are principally not to defend themselves against evil, as if every attempt at self-defense, which the Old Testament allows,<sup>42</sup> were forbidden. For a start, the demand from Jesus presupposes that the Christian differentiates between good and evil. What is at issue here is in no manner an ethical indifference with respect to whatever happens. In addition, there are two significant limitations regarding the prohibition against resistance:

David Hill has made reference to the fact that the word for resist (Gk. *anthistemi*) can generally mean ‘resist’ or ‘take actions against someone,’ but that here the legal meaning captured in rabbinic writings is to be accepted and that legal resistance is at issue.<sup>43</sup> The statements of Jesus would in such case be that a Christian should not seek justice upon the legal tenet of *lex talionis* but rather let injustice be done to him. For the sake of peace, a Christian is not in the position to waive a court case. Rather, a Christian has to allow even that which is unrightfully demanded of him to a greater extent than required.

Even so we are still talking about the question of what is meant here by the word evil. Naturally, not every type of evil is meant at this point. Otherwise the Christian could not even resist the evil in him- or herself. It has to do with the evil that is described in more detail in Matthew 5:39-41. This is to say that it is evil in the form of insults, false demands, and coercion to which a person is subjected.

A person can understand evil here in the sense of “the evil one” or “evil.” Theodor Zahn assumes that “the evil one” could only mean the devil.<sup>44</sup> Christians, however, are to expressly resist the devil (1Peter 5:9; James 4:7; Ephesians 6:11-17). David Hill rightly represents the viewpoint

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<sup>41</sup> Ernst Jenni. “,hb/lieben”. p. 60-73 in: Ernst Jenni, Claus Westermann (ed.). *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. vol. 1. Chr. Kaiser: München & Theologischer Verlag: Zürich, 1978, here column 68 significantly holds from a historico-critical point of view that Leviticus 19:18 is an addition, because he cannot conceive of the idea that the commandment to love was not only referring to Israelites.

<sup>42</sup> Comp. this justification in Section 61.2 of my *Ethik*. vol. 6. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. 2003.

<sup>43</sup> David Hill. *The Gospel of Matthew. The New Century Bible Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids (MI); Marshall, Morgan & Scott: London, 1972. p. 127.

<sup>44</sup> Theodor Zahn. *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. Op. cit., p. 250.

that “the evil one” meant here is the legal opponent and that “evil” refers to the legal dispute, such that the question of the translation as a person or a thing in the final instance would be immaterial.<sup>45</sup>

To be hit with the back of the left hand on “the right cheek” (Matthew 5:39) was an enormous insult. A Christian, however, lets himself be insulted twice rather than going to court on account of it. This is also well-founded in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 50:6 the coming Messiah reports that he did not resist the disgrace of being slapped. Rather, he offered his cheeks<sup>46</sup>, and Lamentations 3:30 calls for the following: “Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace.”

## Conclusion

Attempting arbitration, mediation, and, yes, reconciliation is biblical and, as far as Christians are concerned, should always be prior to a course of action that involves legal means of the state. An individual’s readiness to receive the short end of the stick should always be present. Reason demands that one be in the clear that legal means often, but not always, can lead to a desired clarification of the situation.

All of these reminders of mitigation do not set aside the necessity for law and lawful procedure. It is not an antithetical matter but a question of complementarity.

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<sup>45</sup> David Hill. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>46</sup> Pinchas Lapide refers to this. *Die Bergpredigt*. Op. cit., p. 128.

## 5. Putting Rumors to Rest

*Translated by Richard McClary*

### 5.1. Putting Rumors to Rest!

“Whoever has gossiped knows (and we all have done it, because nothing interests us more than the human element), that the appeal of rumors about the private lives of our neighbors, friends and colleagues lies in speculation. Speculation can be correct, but it can also be wrong. And speculation appears to grow with a dynamic that does not seem to centre on truth content but rather on the rate of dissemination. Gossip exercises its greatest power when it begins to move along on its own. This is due to the fact that, in the case of gossip, the decisive proof is: If everyone is saying it, there must be something to it”<sup>47</sup>

Everyone knows that malignant gossip at the expense of others is incongruous with love, and it is for this reason the New Testament, in an old Luther translation, warns about someone who “secretly maligns” and spreads “malicious gossip.” Slander is not reconcilable with the character of the church of Christ, and it truly destroys all sense of community in the family, at work, and in society. Who is allowed to live in the sanctuary of the Lord? It is whoever “... has no slander on his tongue ... does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman ...”(Psalm 15:3).

Malicious rumors and slander belong in a list of those attitudes and actions that are directed at our neighbors and that we normally immediately and clearly denounce: “... envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers ... (Romans 1:29b-30a); “... quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder” (2 Corinthians 12:20b); “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind (1 Peter 2:1; comp. 2 Corinthians 12:20; 2 Timothy 3:3).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Tissy Bruns. “Das Gerücht”. *Die Welt*, January 22, 2003. p. 8 (lead article).

<sup>48</sup> Comp. the meaning in the political public eye: Lars-Broder Keil, Sven Felix Kellerhoff. *Gerüchte machen Geschichte: Folgenreiche Falschmeldungen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006 and Christian Schertz, Thomas Schuler (Ed.). *Rufmord und Medienopfer: Die Verletzung der persönlichen Ehre*. Berlin: Ch. Links, 2007

### **The Command against Slander (Examples)**

James 4:11-12: “Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it.”

1 Peter 2:1: “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”

Exodus 20:16: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Deuteronomy 5:20: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Exodus 23:1: “Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.”

Leviticus 19:16: “Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD.”

Proverbs 30:10: “Do not slander a servant to his master, or he will curse you, and you will pay for it.”

Proverbs 11:13: “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”

Proverbs 20:19: “A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.”

Psalms 101:5: “Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.”

The biblical legal process stands or falls with the Ninth Commandment. People are allowed to act as witnesses against other people. In order to guarantee impartiality, they have to bear witness before people who are under oath before God’s law (elders, judges), and there have to be multiple witnesses who speak.

It is not forbidden to testify as a witness against another. What is forbidden is to give false witness or perjury. It is indeed legitimate to extend this prohibition to all sorts of malicious defamation, in the same way that the prohibition against murder encompasses murder with words.

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(awakens, however, the impression that only the politically conservative camp works with rumour campaigns). Regarding the legal side of protection of honor from a Christian perspective, see Thomas Zimmermanns. *Meinungs- und Pressefreiheit*. Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2006.p. 34-43.

### **The Two Most Important Texts in the Old and New Testaments against “Unwholesome Talk”**

Eph 4,29-32: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.<sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (NIV).

Deuteronomy 19: 15-20: One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offence he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, then do to him as he intended to do to his brother. You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you.

## **5.2. Do We Need a ‘Rumor Commissioner?’**

Where can a person go in our church communities to air grievances about false rumors? What can our churches do in order to stop the rumor mill? As a rule, nothing. The victim has to pay the other back in kind, taking care of it himself while at the same time not being too hard on the party involved, lest he be seen as unspiritual.

It would be correct to identify those who initiate rumors, ask for evidence and, if necessary, make it publicly known that an investigation of the rumors has led to determining their falsity.

The value of trusted third parties and trusted panels stands the test of time. Studies conducted at Swedish schools by Dan Olweus have demonstrated that violence in schools drops drastically if there is an official trusted third party and a personal and anonymous contact telephone number to which a victim can turn.<sup>49</sup> If an institution has a women’s representative, harassment of women is reduced simply by the existence of such a position. It does not take someone continually denigrating others but rather

<sup>49</sup> Dan Olweus. *Gewalt in der Schule: Was Lehrer und Eltern wissen sollten – und tun können*. Bern: Verlag Hans Huber, 2002<sup>3</sup>. p. 77.

the simple knowledge that a victim can turn to someone and that the issue will be handled responsibly. That is often enough to deter the offender.

The same applies to a church community. If the members of the church know that rumors will not be taken lightly and that members will be held responsible for them, the number of rumors will automatically decrease. In addition, a perpetrator becomes a reluctant perpetrator when there is the danger of his becoming the 'victim' instead. Such would be the case if it is found out that his rumors came out of thin air or that in bad faith he made confidential information public.

Paul also wanted wise men from the church to mediate conflicts arising in the congregation (1 Corinthians 6:1-11). When, in a letter to a church, Paul publicly admonishes Euodia and Syntyche to end their quarrel at last and to "agree with each other in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2b), he expressly asks Syzygus to act as a mediator (Philippians 4:3). Paul is well aware that a quarrel can be so bitter that without public admonishment and without a trusted third party acting in an intermediary fashion, a settlement is not possible.

Paul knew all too well the everyday dealings with good and bad reputations: "... through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown" (2 Corinthians 6:8-9a) and could sometimes let bad rumors about himself rest: "But what does it matter? The important thing is that ... Christ is preached" (Philippians 1:18a). Having said that, justification against slander and against the allegation of false motives takes up astonishingly much space in Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 9:3-27; 2 Corinthians 1:12-24; 2:17; 3:1-3; 4:1-6; 2 Corinthians 10-12; Galatians 1:10-24; Galatians 2; comp. also Romans 1:9-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). He wrote the following to the Corinthians: "This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me" (1 Corinthians 9:3; comp. 2 Corinthians 12:19). Yes, Paul swears before the church in the face of reproaches and rumors that he is not guilty, and he calls again and again upon God as his witness (2 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:5; 2:10; Romans 1:9; Philippians 1:8).

The point is not to put the spotlight on himself and commend himself, "For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends" (2 Corinthians 10:18). It has to do with good arguments and the clear language to rebut false allegations and malicious gossip.

**Paul swears before the church that the rumors and slander are not true.**

2 Corinthians 1:23: “I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.” (comp. the context in 1:22 and 23b-24).

Romans 1:9 = Philippians 1:8: “God ... is my witness ...”

1Thessalonians 2:5: “... nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.”

1Thessalonians 2:10: “You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.”

The thought that a person is not allowed to vindicate himself when incorrect facts or thoughts are insinuated is completely foreign to the Bible. Whoever teaches that a Christian has to silently bear all rumors about himself or herself has the burden of proof to demonstrate where in the Bible this silence is demanded. A Christian can and will often find it wise to abstain from vindicating himself or herself, for instance in order to prevent further escalation. However, to say that abstention is the only option and that in all cases silence has to be maintained is neither biblically justified nor is it liveable in the real world.

### **What can an individual do against rumors?**

- \* Inquire more often and scrutinize the source of certain information. Negative information about others, which provenance is unclear and hurts others, is not to be further propagated. This breaks the rumor chain.
- \* When questionable sources are involved, let the partner with whom one is speaking know about one's own disapproval of rumors. Investigate the truth of a rumor by asking the source and, where necessary, the person affected by the rumor.
- \* Listen to all involved parties (or witnesses) before making a judgment.

Have serious conversations with people identified as sources or as those who spread rumors.

Speak as often as possible with people known to spread rumors, and let them know where you stand on rumors.

**Which preventative measures can the church take against rumors?**

\* Preach and teach on the topic of rumors, and call for repentance and reconciliation.

Repeatedly convey that it is a matter of one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20).

\* Preach and teach that in the Bible an accused person always has the right to present his view of things and to have the case checked by honest, uninvolved individuals (Deuteronomy 19:18). A person does not have to, but may, defend himself (e.g., 1 Corinthians 9:3).

\* Upon the occasion of communion, point to the fact that people should reconcile with each other and excuse themselves for spreading rumors prior to taking communion (Matthew 5:23-25).

\* Make public whom one can address if a person in the church who is the subject of rumors is suffering and wishes to have a discussion, or have the rumors stemmed, investigated or set right.

Repeatedly offer that the church make an intermediary available. (See Philippians 4:2-3.)

\* Set out a comprehensible way of showing how and by whom rumors can and may be investigated. This begins with the question of whom a person can and should initially address (e.g., house group leader), includes the question of who is allowed to conduct an impartial investigation, and ends with the possibility of setting things right in the context of a small or larger group, according to how broadly spread the rumor is.

**What can the church do against rumors in a concrete case?**

\* Go through the just-mentioned steps in the following order: intervention, investigation, involvement of a trusted third party, confidential committee, etc.

\* See to it that in the end, the buck is passed to the person who is the source of the malicious gossip, not to the victim.

\* Give victims of rumors the opportunity to inform the same framework or audience to set things right, that the rumor covered.

### **5.3. Talking about Others?**

A misunderstanding is to be resisted at this point. Many people think that rumors are best fought by no longer speaking about others when they are not present. In this, a rumor is wrongly seen as the equivalent of speaking about someone. This is an illusory stipulation.

First of all, the Bible nowhere forbids talking about others. Rather, it forcefully presupposes conversations about others. Parents can only fulfill their parental responsibilities of bringing up their children if they talk about their children. Elders have to corporately consult about church members. Good advisors not only give other people advice; they also look for good advice relating to themselves. The question: “What would you advise Mrs Meier to do?” would be forbidden otherwise.

Also, the stipulation to no longer speak about others is completely illusory. One would want to say as Paul does: “In that case you would have to leave this world” (1 Corinthians 5:10b). Business people have to speak about their clients, teachers about their students, doctors about their patients, and the police have to look for witnesses. Each time I recommend a doctor, a store, a restaurant, or a musician to a friend, I speak about other people, and in some sense I make a judgment about them. We would not be able to speak about whether the violin virtuoso played well, whether the meat from the butcher is fresh, whom we want to vote for as Chancellor, and what we thought of the last sermon. Absurd!

On the other hand, slander does not mean speaking wisely about others. Rather, it means that a person either

1. disseminates things that are not true;
2. disseminates things that cannot be documented;
3. makes things public that could only be privately and confidentially known (e.g., from a friendship or on the basis of its being an official secret or a secret conveyed in confession); or
4. specifically disseminates things in order to hurt others and not for the benefit of the relevant party.

## **5.4. Justice and Peace**

In the Bible, justice and honesty are conducive to peace. True ‘shalom’ is not achieved by ignoring problems but rather by seeking advice, entering into intensive conversation, engaging outsiders, and seeking justice.

Many Christians think that seeking justice and engaging a neutral intermediary or responsible leader would cause tension and conflict and make federal cases out of small problems. The Bible sees just the opposite. Seeking justice produces peace, and where justice is neglected, even the tongue “... corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (James 3:6; comp. vv. 5-8).

For example, the fact that marriage is a covenant and has an external legal structure is not at the expense of the internal, invisible relationship. Rather, the external structure protects and fosters the internal reality.

Justice and peace in the Old and New Testaments are often encountered together as conceptual pairs (e.g., Psalm 72:3,7; 85:11; Isaiah 32:17; 48:18; 60:17; Romans 14:17; James 3:18; Hebrews 12:11). Justice brings about peace, and injustice brings about strife. “The fruit of righteousness will be peace” (Isaiah 32:17a), writes the prophet. The psalmist rejoices: “... righteousness and peace kiss each other” (Psalm 85:10a). And James writes: “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:18). God has a vintage manner of interacting with us. According to Hebrews 12:11, “discipline” by God is not comfortable at the time. Rather, it is “painful.” But to those who are trained in it, discipline “produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.”

First Expose and Admit; Then Forgive

In the Bible, reconciliation and forgiveness are not achieved when problems are ignored but rather by laying open the facts. God forgives us if we acknowledge the facts, albeit not blindly. This means that open dialogue is required and only then can a new start ensue.

As Christians, our problems are not solved by suppressing, ignoring, glossing over, or justifying guilt, mistakes, shortcomings, and misunderstandings but rather by uncovering what wants to remain in the darkness: “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11).

Clarity will only be achieved, and a new start enabled, by forgiveness and reconciliation, where, as with Zacchaeus, a serious reversal includes amends and setting things right.

Grace in the Bible does not mean to act as if nothing ever happened but rather to receive just deserts after investigation, disclosure, and determination of guilt. Where allegedly nothing has happened, no grace is required.

I find it splendid to not have to continually prove that I am faultless. Such an affected life tears us apart mentally. Permanently working on masks and cover-up maneuvers costs time and strains our nerves. In most cases, it does not work in the end. Jesus died substitutionally on the cross for my sins and failings, and for that reason, I can admit them to him as much as to the world around me. If my faults have already been admitted, then it has to be easier for me than for people without Jesus to admit who I really am.

However, what is decisive for my relationship with Jesus is that my faith begins with self-criticism. In this respect, my faith fundamentally differs from Islam, which does not really have true self-criticism. It does not have a self-criticism that is understood as recognizing defeat. In contrast, in the Bible faith begins with recognizing one's own insufficiency. It is also not accidental that the Bible does not primarily criticize unbelievers and the evil world but rather believers. Complete books of the New Testament disclose the bad situation in Christian churches.

### **5.5. The Christian Faith: A Religion of Self-Criticism**

In contrast to other world religions, an unsparing self-criticism is inherent to Judaism and Christianity. No religion has a self-criticism such as that found in Old Testament Judaism and New Testament Christianity. The failings of the most significant leaders are disclosed, and all too often God has to call upon outsiders in order to bring his people to reason. The Jewish author Hannes Stein writes in this connection:

“In contrast to the holy scriptures of Mohammed, the Hebrew Bible is not a book but a library. It is a colorful tapestry of narratives woven by a people over the course of millennia. No misdeed by the children of Israel is excluded from this incomparable convolution, no crime by their greatest kings concealed. Paul Badde holds: ‘Including the New Testament, almost every book of the Bible can be understood as a plea, an objection or a critical commentary of earlier history and history current at that time. The result of this historical frankness is that self-criticism in the Jewish-Christian world has been seen as a virtue, as a sign of strength and not as an admission of weakness. In Islam it is different: Criticism of one's own history? Unthinkable, a blasphemy! It would pull the foundation out from under revelation. It would be an insult to the prophet. And thus it is in countries shaped by Islam, there is neither freedom of speech nor debates in freely elected parliaments up until today.’”<sup>50</sup>

In no religion do the followers of their own religion lose out as much as in the Old and New Testaments. The teaching that Jews and Christen are sinners and are capable of the worst deeds is shown quite plainly in the Bible. In the Old Testament, it is not the heathen peoples, nor is it the Romans and Greeks in the New Testament, whose atrocities and fallacious outlooks stand in the centre of things. Rather, it is the alleged or actual people of God.

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<sup>50</sup> Hannes Stein. *Moses und die Offenbarung der Demokratie*. Rowohlt Berlin Verlag: Berlin, 1998. p. 47.



## 6. Human Rights and Christian Faith<sup>51</sup>

### 6.1. Man as Creation and Image of God.

On December 10, 1948, the Soviet Union signed the General Declaration of Human Rights passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The declaration states that all human beings possess the same dignity (Article 1) and forbids all discrimination due to race, color, sex, language, religion or political conviction (Article 2). Because all men have the right to life and liberty (Article 3), both slavery (Article 4) and torture (Article 5) are prohibited. All are equal before the law and may be condemned only according to established law, only after being heard in a court of law (Articles 7-11). All are free to emigrate and to choose their place of residence (Article 13), and to request asylum in other countries (Article 14). Every human being is free to choose his spouse, and the family, as the “natural and basic unit in society”, must be protected by the State and by society (Articles 16+26). The Declaration also demands the right of private property (Article 17), the right to liberty of conscience and religion, which includes the individual’s right to change his faith (Article 18), the right of opinion and information (Article 19), the right to congregate and to form associations (Article 20), the right to vote (Article 21). Everyone has the right to security in social matters (Articles 22+25+28), to labor with just remuneration (Article 23) and to education (Article 26).

Closely related to the idea of human rights is the claim that all people have the same right to be treated as persons – whatever race, religion, sex, political persuasion or social or economic status they may be. What is the basis of human equality, if not the fact that all were equally created by God?. Thus, a Christian argument for human rights must begin with the biblical account of Creation, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he

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<sup>51</sup> Originally published in Russian in POISK: Ezemedel'naja Vsesojuznaja Gazeta [Journal of the Russian Academy of Science]. Nr. 48 (446) 22.-28. November 1997. p. 13; reprinted in Utschitjelskaja Gazeta (Teachers Journal of Russia). No. 2 (9667) 3.1.1998. S. 21 + No. 3 (9668) 20.1.1998. p. 21 + No. 4 (9669) 3.2.1998. p. 22 . Written for the Conference of Evangelical Media People of the German Evangelical Alliance.

them” (Gen. 1:26-27). The fact that Man was created in the image of God plays a major roll in the relationships of human beings to each other. Genesis 9:16, for example, requires murder to be punished, for it injures the image of God. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Genesis 9:6)

Creation exists for the glory of God and has its meaning from God. This fact holds all the more for the ‘Crown of Creation’, Mankind was created according to the divine order of Creation to fulfill the purpose given him by God. God made him ruler over the earth, but also gave him the responsibility for the preservation of the earthly creation. The psalmist writes, “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;” (Psalm 8:6-7).

For this reason, human rights include only those privileges which God has given Man, no other rights which mankind may choose or claim for himself.

Christians may not, therefore, automatically identify the human rights catalogs formulated by western countries with those in the Bible. Scripture prescribes the right to an orderly court procedure according to clearly stated laws, to the hearing of witnesses, to judges who have not been bribed and to legal defense, as we will see. Such legal proceedings cannot, however, be automatically identified with Western jurisdiction. Supposing they could be – with which system? The German system, the British, the French, the American? We all know that these systems are quite different! There is plenty of room for a variety of legal systems which differ due to the cultural and historical traditions of their people, yet still guarantee human rights.

## **6.2. The Christian Roots of Human Rights**

No one disputes the fact that human rights, given to protect the individual, are derived from Christian thought. The General Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, of December 10, 1948, clearly demonstrates its Christian roots. The bans on slavery and torture, the principle of equality before the law, the right to rest and recreation – as seen in the Sabbath or Sunday rest – come from Christian traditions and not by chance are the governments which confirm these rights and anchor them in their constitutions mostly in Christian countries. Even Karl Marx acknowledged this, for he rejected human rights as a product of Christianity (for example, Marx and Engels Works, Vol. 1).

No state and no legal system can survive without a minimum of common, and necessarily ‘metaphysically’ based values. A legal system assumes a value system. The law is derived from moral standards which exist prior to and outside itself.

The guarantee of human dignity assumes that Man is more than that which he perceives about himself. He cannot be comprehended by the means and methods of natural science; he is metaphysically open. The modern State, with its legal system, depends on requirements that it cannot itself guarantee.

### **6.3. Enlightenment or Forgiveness and Repentance?**

According to the philosophies of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, which attempted to found human rights without God and against the Church, all Good, including human rights, could be derived from Nature and from Reason. Rousseau’s identification of ‘Reason’ and ‘Nature’ is peculiar to Enlightenment thought. The attempt to base human rights on Nature has failed, however, for no one can agree on the meaning of ‘Nature’ or on how it’s laws can be discovered. Wolfgang Schild, professor for penal law, writes, “The Enlightenment cannot and must not be the last word, our last word. Its rationality and functionality must be taken to its limits, for social life with a dignity worthy of Man is otherwise impossible. Even and particularly penal law cannot limit itself to rational means in order to achieve peace and order at any price: it requires the recognition of the human dignity—even of the felon—as its fundament and its limit.”

The thought that human beings could be improved by education, and that human ills could be solved by intellectual enlightenment, is a basic problem of Greek philosophy, of Humanism and of the Enlightenment. The Humanist ideal of education owes its existence to the idea that morals could be raised through education, for it assumes that the individual does wrong only because he is ignorant or because he thinks wrongly, not because his will is evil and because he is incapable of doing good on his own strength. These philosophies try to reduce the ethical and responsible aspect of thought, words and deeds to the question of knowledge, which hold a man responsible, only when he knows what he is doing.

Yet we are surprised to learn that doctors smoke as much as laymen do, that people maintain unhealthy life-styles, and that women continually become pregnant in spite of a flood of information about birth control. We all know from our own lives, that knowing the right answer, even being convinced of it, in no way guarantees that we live accordingly. A politician

who vehemently defends monogamy as the foundation of society in Parliament does not necessarily insist on marital fidelity in his private life, and is not immune to adultery or divorce.

The Bible teaches that human sin affects not only our thoughts, but also our whole being, and that above all, our wills, which are opposed to God, lead us to act and think falsely, so that more thought and consideration in itself are insufficient. We must clear up our old, sin-encumbered past. Christians believe that God Himself died in Man's place, when Christ died on the Cross for our lack of love and our egotism. When we acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves by our own strength and our own reason, but rely on Christ's fulfillment of our penalty, we can overcome our evil will by faith in Jesus, and renew our will and our mind according to God's will (Romans 1:20-25; 12:1-3). True renewal occurs when the power of God works in our inner selves; not through educational campaigns, but by God's love and forgiveness.

#### **6.4. Human Rights Precede the State**

Human dignity and human rights are part of man's being as God's creation. Thus, the State does not create human rights, it merely formulates and protects them. Since the right to life belongs to the very essence of the human being, man does not receive them from the government, and no government has the right to decide that its citizens have no more right to live, but can be executed at the ruler's whim. Nor does the State confer the right to have a family, for the State does not own the family, it merely acknowledges the duty implied in the order of Creation to protect marriage and the family.

There are, therefore, rights which existed prior to the State, and there are rights above the State, rights derived from nature, from human nature and from the various types of human society. The government must respect these rights and accept the limitations implied by these natural, divinely given rights of the individual, the family, the employee (or the employer!) and other human social groups.

Since human rights are rooted in a moral code prescribed to the State, this code equally forbids a false appeal to human rights, because it also defends the human dignity of others. No one has the right to express his own personality through murder or arson, for example.

Human rights assume a State with limited powers and a law valid for all mankind, a law which limits the powers of government. Were this not so, man would indeed receive his rights from the State. The individual would

then have only the rights and the claims to protection which his government assured. This is the socialist view, which leaves no place for criticism or correction of a State which has declared itself to be God.

## 6.5. The Meaning of Romans 13

The most important scripture about the role of the State is the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which was written by the apostle Paul, who brought Christianity to Europe and Asia in the first century AD: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to 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 revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay *ye* tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” (Romans 13:1-7)

This text makes it clear that no one who opposes the State on principle can appeal to God’s authorization. On the contrary: he is opposing God’s law, and is rightly liable to legal proceedings (Rom. 13:2). Since the State has the duty to stem and to punish evil, Christians must do good, if they wish to avoid conflict. If a Christian does wrong, he is justly punished by the State. For the government, as God’s minister, has the duty of vengeance (13:4). As a result, the Christian pays his taxes and gives government officials proper respect (13:6-7).

But the question is, who defines what is good or evil? Did Paul leave this up to the State? Can the State declare anything good and demand it from its citizens? No. When Paul spoke of goodness, he defined it according to God’s will, and defined evil as that which was condemned by God’s law. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34).

The Bible thus gives us clear limitations and directions for taxes, military service and the police. John the Baptist, for example, told the tax inspectors and the police (One body served both as police and as military):

“Exact no more than that which is appointed you” and “Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages.” (Luke 3:12-14).

From Paul’s statements, we can derive two essential thoughts:

1. **The government can judge only what people do, not what they think.** It is responsible for good or evil ‘works’, with doing. It is not the duty of the State to control all sin, only those sins whose activity can be observed and which damage public order, which the State has the responsibility to maintain and to protect.
2. **The State may not distinguish between Christians and other people,** i.e. between believers in different faiths, as long as they pursue their beliefs in a peaceful manner. Since God forbids partiality in legal matters, Christians must be punished just as severely as unbelievers when they break the law. The State cannot distinguish between Christians and members of other religious groups, for it may judge only on the basis of deeds.

Human rights are protective; they serve not so much to define the privileges of the individual, as to limit the powers of the State and of other institutions which deal with the lives of individuals. For this reason, Paul limits the State’s duties to specific aspects of life, rather than giving it the right to regulate and penalize all of man’s thought and life.

**The State is not to be identified with society,** as the socialist governments have done ever since the French Revolution. In such states, all aspects of society including the family and the Church are subject to the government. Society is more than the State. The State does not have authority over all parts of society.

## 6.6. On the Separation of Church and State

Just as the State may not dominate a church or a religion, it may not itself be subject to any church or religion. The separation of Church and State does not contradict the Christian faith, but arises naturally out of it, for the Bible makes it the duty of the State to enable people to live in peace, whatever they believe. It is the responsibility of the Church and of religion to point to eternity, to provide moral stability and to encourage man’s relationship to God.

The historian Eugen Ewig therefore speaks of the Old Testament Doctrine of Two Powers. Eduard Eichmann, also an historian, writing about the Old Testament division of powers between priest and king, “Along

with the sacred Scriptures, Old Testament views have become common property of the Christian West.”

Jesus confirmed this separation in the words, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Mark 12:17). Because this rule comes from God, Who is above the emperor, the religious institutions of God on earth, the organized People of God, are not above the emperor. The first priority is obedience to God, Who determines and limits what belongs to Caesar. Caesar has no authority to determine or limit what belongs to God. This does not, however, mean that the ruler is dependent on the Church, for God has given him the responsibility for all the people in his realm, not only for the members of one religious group.

The separation of Church and State does not mean that their duties never overlap, or that neither institution needs the other. On the contrary, the Church may advise the government and teach it God’s law, as Jehoida taught Jehoash. “And Jehoash did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.” (2 Kings 12:2). It is sad that the modern Church has given up this critical office and prefers to howl with the pack.

The separation of Church and State does not become a war against Christianity until the State forgets its obligation to God’s law and begins to persecute the faith.

## 6.7. God Knows no Partiality

Centuries ago in the Bible, God made fair judicial proceedings a human right. A just judge is necessary to determine justice, and God is the prototype of the just judge (Deut. 10:17-18; Psalm 7:9+12; 9:5; 50:6. See also Psalm 75:3+8), “for the LORD *is* a God of judgment” (Isaiah 30:18). He is the defender of justice. Those who judge fairly act in God’s Name. The Old Testament tells of the just king Jehoshaphat, “And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who *is* with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.” (2 Chronicles 19:6-7).

A judge must be aware of the fact that God is observing him and stands by the innocent: “To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.” (Lamentations 3:35-36).

For this reason the Bible has many directions concerning just, humane judicial proceedings. Prosecution, for example, requires at least two wit-

nesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Mat. 18:16; John 8:17; Heb. 10:28; 1 Tim 5:18), so that the accusation is brought by two or three witnesses (Deut 10:17-18). Violent witnesses are not to be heard (Psalm 35:11).

The judge's ruling must be completely impartial (Deut. 1:16; 2 Chr. 19:7; Prov. 18:5; 24:23; Job 13:10; Col. 3:25; Eph 6:9), for God is Himself impartial. (Deut 10:17-18). Only wicked judges are partial (Isa. 10:1-2; 3:9).

The ruling is to be made without prejudice (1 Tim. 5:21), after the judge has carefully examined all the evidence (Deut 17:4). "Execute true judgment," God says in Zecharia 7:9; so that the ruling need not be repealed.

"If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that *the judges* may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." (Deuteronomy 25:1). Bribery must not influence the judge's opinion. "A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment." (Proverbs 17:23). God is the great example. "For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:" (Deuteronomy 10:17). "Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." (2 Chronicles 19:7)

Scripture generally approves of gifts, when given to delight or to help others. Sometimes, the Bible realizes, gifts may even be necessary, if people are to achieve valid goals. The wise teacher tells us, "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men." (Proverbs 18:16) and "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath." (Proverbs 21:14). Should an innocent person be confronted with corrupt officials, he has no hope of achieving perfectly legal goals. If he has no opportunity of overcoming this corruption in any other way, he can get his rights with gifts. Only when he buys injustice, is he himself guilty of corruption. He who is forced to bribe others will certainly strive to eliminate corruption, particularly in the Church, or in other religious institutions.

For this reason, there must be no double standard, such as one set of laws for the wealthy and another for the peasants. The Old Testament required the same penal system for both nationals and for foreign residents: (Exodus 12:49). "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour." (Leviticus 19:15). Because God defends "the cause of the poor," (Prov. 29:7) and "the cause of

the poor and needy.” (Prov. 31:8), Proverbs 31:8-9 enjoins us, “Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”

The Bible thus measures the justice of a country by its protection of the weak. Not only the condition of the wealthy or the ruling class, but also the condition of the simple citizens is to be considered. Not only the condition of the State Church is significant, but also the condition of the smaller Christian groups. Not only the condition of the judges with money and power to defend their rights, is important, but also the condition of the poor, the widows and the orphans in court.

God is the Creator and the Lord of all mankind. He wishes us to treat with each other as His image and His creatures—human beings dealing with human beings, not animals with animals.



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## **7. There Has to Be a Social Ethic**

### **7.1. If Marriage and the Church Are Objects of Christian Ethics, Then Why Not the Economy and the State?**

Worldwide there are more defective marriages and families than intact marriages and families embodying God's intention. Nevertheless, we do not assume that for that reason there cannot be Christian marriages or families and that each person is only a Christian in the private sphere. Why? Because marriage and family are creations of God (Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 10:6-9). God created and desires this social institution. That also means that a Christian marriage is more than just two people who privately believe in God and who live together. Marriage is a binding union (Malachi 2:14-15). The same applies to sexuality. While worldwide, sexuality is probably more abused than used as God intended it, the Bible nevertheless prohibits abstaining from sexuality within marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-6), to basically repudiate sexuality (1 Timothy 4:3), or pick holes in a marriage (Hebrews 13:4).

Worldwide, from a New Testament perspective, there are more defective than spiritually intact churches. I do not want to individually judge or condemn the Catholic Church with its 1 billion members or the many large Protestant churches that are Christian by name. But the fact is, they account for the majority of local churches, and most of them demonstrate grave deficiencies from a biblical point of view. It is not a matter of dispute that also, as far as free churches and independent congregations are concerned, not all that glitters is gold. By the way, there were also exceedingly problematic churches in New Testament times (e.g., Corinth or the seven churches in Asia Minor to which an epistle was sent – Revelation 2-3). Nevertheless, for this reason we do not decline to care for and start churches. Why? The church worldwide and locally is a creation of God (Ephesians 1:22-23; comp. 2:10). God created and desires this social institution, and that also means that a Christian church is more than a number of people who privately believe and who decide to do something together.

As far as work, the economy, and the state go, this logic suddenly breaks down for many evangelicals. Even though work, just as much as marriage, was created by God for mankind in paradise, with the intention to glorify God (marriage: Ephesians 5:32; work: Colossians 3:22-23; Ephesians 6:6), and although the Bible clearly teaches that God desires the state and has

installed it (Romans 13:1-7; comp. 1 Peter 2:13-17), and although the Holy Scriptures widely report how justice in both areas is to look and how believing people in leading positions have proven themselves (e.g., for the state: Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Zacchaeus, Cornelius, the Philippian jailor, a mayor of Athens), one tends to say that business and the state are dirty affairs in which, in the best case, Christians can keep their personal faith but in which they have no basic social mandate, not even to mention a divine one.

But even if, as in the case of the two other creation ordinances – marriage/family and the church – there is so much disorder in work relationships, business relationships, and politics that that cannot prevent us from seeing our mandate to achieve better economic and political circumstances. Just as with the family and church, the economy and the state are not areas in which we unfortunately perforce have to work with others, but rather they are basically proving grounds of our faith so desired and created by God.

## 7.2. Does the Law Apply to Individuals Only?

On the basis of a study of the history of Free Evangelical Churches in the Third Reich, Heinz-Adolf Ritter writes: “An expanded teaching with practical instruction for living with non-Christians in society is the precondition to it. Up until now it is missing in churches, because politics has been taken out of the equation and made taboo. The experience of two dictatorships demonstrates that we were not awake enough to political seduction in order to see through it in a timely manner and to take counter measures. Theologically, this means to loosen oneself from the clutches of an individual ethic, in which everyone is left to him- or herself as a matter of conscience with respect to conflicts with the state and ‘the powers that be.’”<sup>52</sup>

Should one agree with him? I say: Yes!

Even when personal salvation is the first and overriding goal of faith (1 Peter 1:9; Romans 5:1; 2 Timothy 3:14-15), this does not mean that there cannot be any further goals. Rather, conversely, all other further goals take their meaning from this point. To be sure, the following is true: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:36), but whoever has averted the damage to his

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<sup>52</sup> Heinz-Adolf Ritter. *Zur Geschichte der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden zwischen 1945 und 1995 – Teil I: Wie die Gemeindeväter nach 1945 mit Schuld aus der NS-Diktatur umgegangen sind*. Christsein heute Forum No. 94/95. Bundes-Verlag: Witten, o. J. (1996). p. 8.

soul once and for all will, in spite of this, or actually because of this, commit himself to the world. The Great Commission according to the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 28:18-20) includes the calling to make “learners” of all people (“disciples”). In the first step, this means that an individual is addressed and repents, because baptism in the name of the triune God can only be done by individuals. Ultimately, this is after all the way that entire “peoples” are to be won, such that a high percentage of Christians in a people group does not contradict personally turning to God. Furthermore, the individual’s turning to God is not the terminus. Rather, it is the starting point of personal renewal and the renewal of the family, church, economy, state, and society and precisely what makes people into learners. When Jesus calls upon his disciples: “... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ...” (Matthew 28:20), the Great Commission ends with the request to communicate the entire spectrum of biblical ethics. Thereby the individual, his everyday life, and his environment will be changed, as well as sinful structures and visible injustice changed in perpetuity. Günter Bornkamm has moreover shown that what Jesus commands or orders is not something new. Rather, he alludes to the Torah, or God’s commands.<sup>53</sup> Gustav Warneck writes in this connection that the Great Commission is not fulfilled with conversion but rather includes the practical implementation of that learned: “Acceptance of the Christian faith has ethical consequences, and therein lies the primary assignment of mission. It gives the baptized person practical instruction on how to draw consequences in his or her life.”<sup>54</sup>

The Bible addresses innumerable questions relating to family, economics, law, and civil and organizational matters. It addresses inheritances, child rearing, education, caring for the poor, debt, inflation, salaries, taxes, prostitution, kidnapping, property borders, restitution, judges, kings, bribery, military expenditures, self-defense, preserving the creation, perjury, abortion, profits, providing for retired people, protecting the blind and the deaf, and much more.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, most sins which the New Testament ex-

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<sup>53</sup> Günter Bornkamm. “Der Auferstandene und der Irdische”. p. 171-191 in: Erich Dinkler (ed.). *Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag*. J. C. B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1964. p. 187; also Jacques Matthey. “The Great Commission According to Matthew.” *International Review of Mission* 69 (1980) 161-173, here p. 170-171.

<sup>54</sup> Gustav Warneck. “Die moderne Weltevangelisations-Theorie”. *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift* 24 (1897): 305-325, here p. 313 (sic).

<sup>55</sup> Comp. the good overview in Gary DeMar. *‘You have heard it said’: 15 Biblical Misconceptions that Render Christians Powerless*. Wolgemuth & Hyatt: Brentwood (TN), 1991. p. 37-39.

pressly mentions are social sins. And that *only* has to do with the individual? (I emphasize *only*, because every Christian ethic naturally begins, as does every change, with the individual and his or her life.)

John Warwick Montgomery writes: “If someone knows what Christianity truly is, he also automatically and by definition knows that to resist social evils and to undertake efforts to reduce human suffering is expected from his followers.”<sup>56</sup> C.H. Dodd adds: “The Christian religion, as Judaism . . . , is an ethical religion in the specific sense that it does not recognize a final separation between worship and social behavior.”<sup>57</sup>

For this reason, every attempt to understand the Bible and the law of God exclusively as instructions for the individual is to be rejected. Change naturally begins with the individual. But the Bible is so steeped in creation ordinances for the communal life of people that the attempt to distill valid commandments out of the biblical law of the Old and New Testament for private use alone is tantamount to abolishing the law.

That society and the relationship to others stand in the center of ethics, that is to say, that ethics not only has to do with personal behavior but rather with relationships between people in small and in big things is not only a matter of the Old Testament. W. A. Elwell lists important topics in New Testament practical ethics. Looking at the composition of the list, one has to continually ask himself how a person could try and comprehend these topics and areas of life as purely personal problems: “Husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7); parents and children (Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21); slaves and masters (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 4:1; 1 Timothy 6:3; 1 Peter 2:18-21); dependence on others (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13); general relationships to others (Matthew 5:43-48; 7:1-5; Romans 12:9-21; 14:13-23; 15:1-6; 2 Corinthians 6:3-10; Titus 3:1-3, 8-11; James 5:1-6; 1 Peter 4:7-11; 1 John 3:10); state authorities (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17); religious authorities (Hebrews 13:17); immorality (Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 4:1-6); marriage and divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:1-16; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40); rumors (James 3:1-12), wealth (Mark 10:17-45; 1 Timothy

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<sup>56</sup> John Warwick Montgomery. *Christians in the Public Square. Law, Gospel and Public Policy*. Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy: Edmonton (CAN), 1996. p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> C. H. Dodd. *Das Gesetz der Freiheit: Glaube und Gehorsam nach dem Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments*. Chr. Kaiser: München, 1960. p. 7.

6:10; James 5:1-3); and the conscience of others (Romans 14:1-4; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13).”<sup>58</sup>

In light of the biblical findings and in light of the social engagement that the church of Jesus Christ understands herself to have as a biblical duty, it is alarming how many Christians who hold to the infallibility of the Bible deny every reference in the Bible to social questions and every biblically based form of social engagement. Of all people, Peter Masters, Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s successor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, spoke in complete contradiction to Spurgeon himself, who had established wide-ranging social work, with the following:

“May the Lord keep everyone in the complete dedication to the work of the Lord and free us from an unbiblical interest in social questions ...”<sup>59</sup>

The interest in social questions is, however, not unbiblical. Rather it is a direct consequence of complete dedication to the work of the Lord. We must not be freed from the interest in social questions. Rather, we must be freed from our own egoism and sin that bring about the social problems in the first place. On the other hand, we have to be freed from the social indifference that prevents us from being committed to doing something about these problems.

Furthermore, Klaus Bockmühl has drawn attention to the danger in the view that there are no divine ordinances for the visible world, since faith only has to do with the unseen and Christians only have the task of saving others from the visible world. “The big danger for the lifeboat or retreat mentality consists in the fact that its representatives unquestionably continue to participate in societal life (and often with great success). Since they view it emptied of all divine instruction, there remains for them nothing other than to buy and sell according to the local customs and so to fall increasingly under the domination of the lordship of the ‘prince of this world.’”<sup>60</sup>

Whoever denies divine ordinances for society has to accept the ordinances of other gods or world views.

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<sup>58</sup> W. A. Elwell. “New Testament Ethics”. p. 273-277, here p. 277 in: R. K. Harrison (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*. Thomas Nelson: Nashville (TN), 1987.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Masters. “World Dominion”. *Sword and Trowel* (Metropolitan Tabernacle, London) from May 24, 1990: 13-19, here p. 21 (emphasis added).

<sup>60</sup> Klaus Bockmühl. *Theologie und Lebensführung: Gesammelte Aufsätze II*. TVG. Brunnen: Gießen, 1982. p. 131.



## **8. Two 'Bonn Profiles'**

### **8.1. Martin Bucer Seminary says Good Bye to Student Necati Aydin**

(Bonn Profiles, 27.04.2007) "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." This text from Luke 10:20 set the tone for the funeral of Necati Aydin on April 21, 2007, in Izmir, Turkey. He was one of three Christians murdered by Islamic extremists in Malatya, Turkey, on April 18, 2007. Ugur Yüksel and Tilmann Geske died with him.

Great applause broke out when the coffin was carried into the church yard at the beginning of the worship service. Spontaneously the roughly 500 mourners belted out the chorus "The compassion of the Lord never fails; his mercy never ceases," taken from the biblical text of Lamentations 3:22, 23.

Shemza, Necati's wife, spoke in very moving but comforting words about the tremendous meaning of her husband's death. "He died for Jesus, because he loved Jesus." In spite of her great love for her husband, and while she looks forward to seeing him again in eternity with God, she said Jesus must be the highest priority in every person's life.

Along with praise choruses, pastors from the entire land of Turkey paid tribute to the martyr. The Academic Director of Martin Bucer Seminary (MBS) in Turkey, Pastor Ihsan Özbek, who is also President of the Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey, forcibly and urgently rebuked the untenable accusations and reproaches which are constantly be raised against the Christian churches. But through a firm trust in the Word of God in the Bible and by means of an unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the church in Turkey will continue its ministry, for the benefit of the people and the country.

The President of MBS Turkey, Pastor Behnan Konutgan (Istanbul), sent a written commendation in which, in his role as leader of the Turkish Bible Society, he described Necati Aydin's ministry of Bible distribution in Turkey. Beginning in 2006, the Malatya team of Zirve Publishing House, led by Aydin, has been able to make 10,000 Bibles available to interested Turks. Konutgan hopes that now, after the tragic murder of three Christians, the word of the church father Tertullian will be fulfilled: "The death of martyrs is the seed of the church."

After the funeral the mourners (including the vice-president and the international dean of MBS who came from Germany for the funeral) traveled by bus under police protection to a Christian cemetery. There Necati Aydin was laid to rest, while the crowd was overwhelmed with emotion.

Necati Aydin was born into an Islamic family in the Izmir area and came to a living faith in Jesus Christ in 1994. For many years he openly and actively confessed his faith, and for this he was repeatedly condemned by Muslims. In 2000 he spent four weeks in jail for distributing Bibles from a booth on the street, even though this is completely legal in Turkey. He was released from jail because no one found that he had done anything wrong. He was not able to enjoy the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, to which he had appealed his case. Necati also played the role of Jesus in a large theater production, which was repeatedly held in major Turkish cities.

A few years ago Necati moved to Malatya, where he became pastor of the local Kurtulus Congregation (part of an association of churches led by Pastor Ihsan Özbek). He also became a staff member of Zirve Publishing House, which is a Christian publisher based in Istanbul with distribution offices in various Turkish cities.

Last October he began his studies at the MBS study center in Ankara, to be equipped for his ongoing pastoral ministry. He is survived by his wife, Shemza, and their two children, Esther (age 5) and Elisha (age 7).

Martin Bucer Seminary is a European theological school with branches in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Turkey, which seeks to make the maximum possible use of local leadership. The study program in Turkey is taught in English and in Turkish.

The president of Martin Bucer Seminary, Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher, wishes to thank the worldwide Christian community for the many expressions of condolence the seminary has received. The solidarity of the students has been overwhelming. The seminary has opened a special support account to assist the survivors of the victims and to help protect the local church. All contributions will be directly sent to those in need, without any administrative fees being deducted.

## **8.2. The Head of the Orthodox Church Meets with Evangelical Theologians: The World Evangelical Alliance Expresses its Solidarity with the Oppressed Patriarch**

(Bonn Profiles, 09.11.2007) The German theologian and sociologist Thomas Schirmacher represented the World Evangelical Alliance in a recent meeting with Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople and Head of the Orthodox Church. Schirmacher brought the greetings of WEA general secretary Geoff Tunnicliffe and assured the Patriarch of the continued public support of evangelical Christians in light of the long term persecuted condition of the Patriarch and his church. For 150 years the WEA has spoken out in favor of freedom of religion, and already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century representatives of the WEA confronted the Sultan of Turkey regarding his persecution of the ancient Christian churches in his domain. Today this function of the WEA is especially pursued by the International Institute for Religious Freedom, which Schirmacher leads. The Patriarch was presented with the recently published *Book of Martyrs, 2007* (in German), edited by Schirmacher's office on behalf of the Human Rights Committee of the German Evangelical Alliance, which describes the problems faced by orthodox and other eastern churches in Turkey. The Orthodox leader responded with thanks for the way German Christians, churches, and the German government have repeatedly given public expression to their solidarity with his church, which has included public visits by former chancellor Gerhard Schröder and current chancellor Angela Merkel. The Patriarch was given the most recent information on the "Code of Ethics in Missions" being jointly developed by the WEA, the Vatican, and the World Council of Churches; he expressed his agreement with the intentions of this document and cited his discussions with Turkish President Abdullah Gül, in which he maintained that the Greek Orthodox Christians are loyal citizens who only want the same rights which are enjoyed by all other citizens. Schirmacher enquired about a recent literary attack on the Patriarch by an evangelical author in the Turkish press and expressed his willingness to try to bring reconciliation in this conflict among Christians.

The second part of the meeting was devoted to problems of theological education, and for this reason Schirmacher (Rector of Martin Bucer Seminary) was accompanied by two other senior German representatives of Martin Bucer Seminary, Vice President Thomas Kinker and Academic Dean Titus Vogt, as well as by Behnan Konutgan, President of the Turkish branch of MBS. They enquired if evangelicals can assist with re-opening

the seminary of the Greek Orthodox Church in Istanbul, which has been closed since 1971. The Turkish study centers of Martin Bucer Seminary (Ankara and Istanbul) have recently opened their programs to students of other Christian confessions.

The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople is the Head of the entire Orthodox Church worldwide, which has about 220 million members. The Orthodox Church honors him with a position above all other Orthodox Patriarchs, but the Turkish government has long restricted his activities and only recognizes him as the leader of the approximately 3,000 Greek Orthodox Christians in Istanbul.

## 9. About the Author

### 9.1. Biography

Thomas Schirmmacher holds a chair in theology (ethics, missions, world religions), is rector of Martin Bucer Theological Seminary (Bonn, Hamburg, Berlin, Zurich, Innsbruck, Prague, Zlin, Istanbul), director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo) of the World Evangelical Alliance and president of Gebende Hände gGmbH (Giving Hands), an internationally active relief organization, as well as owner of a publishing house and co-owner of a consulting company.

Born in 1960, Schirmmacher studied theology from 1978 to 1982 at STH Basel and since 1983 Cultural Anthropology and Comparative Religions at Bonn State University. He earned a Drs. theol. in Missiology and Ecumenics at Theological University (Kampen/Netherlands) in 1984, and a Dr. theol. in Missiology and Ecumenics at Johannes Calvin Foundation (Kampen/Netherlands) in 1985, a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Pacific Western University in Los Angeles (CA) in 1989, a Th.D. in Ethics at Whitefield Theological Seminary in Lakeland (FL) in 1996, and a Dr. phil. in Comparative Religions / Sociology of Religion at State University of Bonn in 2007. In 1997 he got honorary doctorates (D.D.) from Cranmer Theological House, in 2006 from Acts University in Bangalore.

He was pastor of the 'Protestant Society of Germany' in Bonn and Erftstadt, 1982 to 1986, co-theologian of the 'Evangelical Free Church' in Bonn 1992-1998, and 1998-2000 pastor of the Free Reformed Church in Bonn. Nowadays he is active in the 'Church on the Rhine' in Bonn.

Schirmmacher taught Missions, World Religions and Cultural Anthropology at FTA Giessen (Germany) from 1983-1989 and from 1990-1996 ethics, missiology, comparative religions and cultural anthropology at 'Independent Theological Seminary' in Basel ('Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel' – STH Basel). He held and holds different chairs, e.g. 1994-1999 'Philadelphia Theological Seminary' (PA, USA) (professor of missions), 1995-2000 at Cranmer Theological House (Shreveport, LA) (professor of missions and ethics), since 1996 at Whitefield Theological Seminary (Lakeland, FL) (professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics), since 2000 at William Carey University (Bangalore, India) (professor of International Development), and since 2006 at State University of Oradea, Romania.

He is internationally active pro family and against abortion (as director of the Institute for Life and Family) and against persecution of Christians (as director of the Institute of Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance and as director of the Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance and member of the same commission of the World Evangelical Alliance).

He also is involved in all kinds of publishing activities. He has been editor of 'Bibel und Gemeinde' and editor of 'Evangelikale Missiologie', co-editor of 'Contra Mundum: A Reformed Cultural Review', and of 'Reflection: An International Reformed Review of Missiology'. Since 1986 he owns the publishing house 'Culture and Science Publ.' ('Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft'), which publishes scientific books on language, culture, religion and missions, and co-owns Consulting Schirmmacher GbR, a business and educational business company.

He has written or edited 74 books on ethics, missiology and cultural anthropology, which were translated into 14 languages. In 2002 he was named 'Man of Achievement' by the International Biographical Center Oxford for his achievements in the area of the ethics of international development.

He is listed in Marquis' Who's Who in the World, Dictionary of International Biography, International Who is Who of Professionals, EU-Who is Who, Who is Who in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2000 Outstanding People of the 21st Century, 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century, International Who's Who in Distance Learning, and other biographical yearbooks.

He is married to Dr. Christine Schirmmacher, professor of Islamic Studies and director of the Islam Institute of the German Evangelical Alliance, and author of a two-volume standard introduction to Islam. The couple has two children.

## 9.2. Books by Thomas Schirrmacher in chronological order (With short commentaries)

### As author:

Das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner: Emil Brunners Bibliologie als Ursache für das Scheitern seiner Ekklesiologie. Theologische Untersuchungen zu Weltmission und Gemeindebau. ed. by Hans-Georg Wüch and Thomas Schirrmacher. Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Weltmission und Gemeindebau: Lörrach, 1982. 54 pp.

[The misunderstanding of Emil Brunner] *A study and critique of Emil Brunner's ecclesiology and of the bibliology and hermeneutics of dialectical theology.*

Mohammed: Prophet aus der Wüste. Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1984<sup>1</sup>, 1986<sup>2</sup>, 1990<sup>3</sup>, 1996<sup>4</sup>. VTR: Nürnberg, 2006<sup>5</sup>. 120 pp.  
[Muhammad] *A short biography of the founder of Islam and an introduction into Islam.*

Theodor Christlieb und seine Missionstheologie. Verlag der Evangelischen Gesellschaft für Deutschland: Wuppertal, 1985. 308 pp.  
[Theodor Christlieb and his theology of mission] *A study of the biography, theology and missiology of the leading German Pietist, professor of practical theology and international missions leader in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Thesis for Dr. theol. in missiology.)*

Marxismus: Opium für das Volk? Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1990<sup>1</sup>, 1997<sup>2</sup>. 150 pp.  
[Marxism: Opiate for the People?] *Marxism is proven to be a religion and an opiate for the masses. Emphasizes the differences between Marxist and Biblical work ethics.*

Zur marxistischen Sagen- und Märchenforschung und andere volkskundliche Beiträge. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1991<sup>1</sup>, 2003<sup>2</sup>. 227 pp.  
[On the Marxist View of Sagas and Tales and other essays in folklore and cultural anthropology] *10 essays and articles on the science of folklore and cultural anthropology in Germany. Includes a critique of the Marxist interpretation of tales and sagas, and studies on the history of marriage and family in Europe from the 6th century onward.*

„Der göttliche Volkstumsbegriff“ und der „Glaube an Deutschlands Größe und heilige

Sendung“: Hans Naumann als Volkskundler und Germanist unter dem Nationalsozialismus. 2 volumes. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 2 volumes, 1992<sup>1</sup>, in one volume 2000<sup>2</sup>. 606 pp.

[Hans Naumann as Anthropologist and Germanist under National Socialism] *Discusses the history of German cultural anthropology and folklore under Hitler, especially the leading figure Naumann, professor of German language, whose scientific theory is shown to be very religious in tone. (Thesis for a PhD in Cultural Anthropology.)*

War Paulus wirklich auf Malta? Hänsler: Neuhausen, 1992, VTR: Nürnberg, 2000<sup>2</sup> (together with Heinz Warnecke). 254 pp.

[Was Paul Really on Malta?] *The book shows that Paul was not shipwrecked on Malta but on another island, Kephallenia, and that the report in Acts is very accurate. The Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is defended with theological and linguistic arguments against higher criticism.*

Psychotherapie – der fatale Irrtum. Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1993<sup>1</sup>, 1994<sup>2</sup>; 1997<sup>3</sup>; 2001<sup>4</sup> (together with Rudolf Antholzer). 150 pp.

[Psychotherapy – the Fatal Mistake] *A critique of secular psychotherapy, showing that psychotherapy often is a religion, and that most psychotherapists call every school except their own to be unscientific.*

Paulus im Kampf gegen den Schleier: Eine alternative Sicht von 1. Korinther 11,2-16. Biblia et symbiotica 4. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993<sup>1</sup>, 1994<sup>2</sup>, 1995<sup>3</sup>, 1997<sup>4</sup> 168 pp. Revised: VTR: Nürnberg, 2002<sup>5</sup>  
[Paul in Conflict with the Veil!?!] *Exegetical examination of 1. Corinthians 11,2-16, following an alternative view of John Lightfoot, member of the Westminster assembly in the 16th century.*

„Schirrmacher argues that from the biblical teaching that man is the head of woman (1 Cor 11:3) the Corinthians had drawn the false conclusions that in prayer a woman must be veiled (11:4-6) and a man is forbidden to be veiled (11:7), and that the wife exists for the

husband but not the husband for the wife (11:8-9). Paul, however, rejected these conclusions and showed in 11:10-16 why the veiling of women did not belong to God's commandments binding upon all the Christian communities. After stating the thesis and presenting his alternative translation and exposition of 1 Cor 11:2-16, he considers the difficulties in the text, presents his alternative exposition in detail (in the form of thirteen theses), discusses quotations and irony in 1 Corinthians, and deals with other NT texts about women's clothing and prayer and about the subordination of wives." (*New Testament Abstracts vol. 39 (1995) 1, p. 154*).

Der Römerbrief. 2 vol. Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994<sup>1</sup>; Hamburg: RVB & Nürnberg: VTR, 2001<sup>2</sup>. 331 + 323 pp.

[The Letter to the Romans] *Commentary on Romans in form of major topics of Systematic Theology starting from the text of Romans, but then going on to the whole Bible.*

Der Text des Römerbriefes: Für das Selbststudium gegliedert. *Biblia et symbiotica 7*. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1994. 68 pp.

[The Text of the Letters to the Romans] *The text of Romans newly translated and structured for self study.*

Ethik. Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994<sup>1</sup>. 2 vol. 883 & 889 pp.; Hamburg: RVB & Nürnberg: VTR, 2001<sup>2</sup>. 3 vol. 2150 pp.; 2002<sup>3</sup>. 8 volumes. 2850 pp.

[Ethics] *Major Evangelical ethics in German covering all aspects of general, special, personal and public ethics.*

Galilei-Legenden und andere Beiträge zu Schöpfungsforschung, Evolutionskritik und Chronologie der Kulturgeschichte 1979-1994. *Biblia et symbiotica 12*. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1996. 331 pp.

[Legends of Galileo and other Contributions to Creation Science, Criticism of Evolution and Chronology of the History of Culture 1979-1994].

Völker – Drogen – Kannibalismus: Ethnologische und länderkundliche Beiträge 1984 – 1994. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1997. 218 pp.

[Peoples – Drugs – Cannibalism] *A collection of articles on cultural anthropology, especially on Indians in South America, cannibalism and the religious use of drugs.*

Die Vielfalt biblischer Sprache: Über 100 alt- und neutestamentliche Stilarten, Aus-

drucksweisen, Redeweisen und Gliederungsformen. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1997. 130 pp.

[The Diversity of Biblical Language] *A hermeneutical study, listing more than 100 specific language techniques in the Bible with several proof texts for each of them.*

Gottesdienst ist mehr: Plädoyer für einen liturgischen Gottesdienst. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1998. 130 pp.

[Church Service is More] *An investigation into biblical proof texts for liturgical elements in Christian Sunday service.*

Gesetz und Geist: Eine alternative Sicht des Galaterbriefes. Reformatorische Paperbacks. Reformatorischer Verlag: Hamburg, 1999. 160 pp.

[Law and Spirit] *This commentary emphasizing the ethical aspects of Galatians wants to prove that Galatians is not only fighting legalists but also a second party of Paul's opponents, who were totally opposed to the Old Testament and the Law, and lived immorally in the name of Christian freedom, a view especially endorsed by Wilhelm Lütgert's commentary of 1919. Paul is fighting against the abrogation of the Old Testament Law as well as against using this Law as way of salvation instead of God's grace.*

Law and Spirit: An Alternative View of Galatians. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 160 pp.

*English version of the same book.*

God Wants You to Learn, Labour and Love. Reformation Books: Hamburg, 1999. 120 pp.

*Four essays for Third World Christian Leaders on Learning with Jesus, Work Ethic, Love and Law and Social Involvement.*

Dios Quiere que Tú Aprendas Trabajos y Ames. Funad: Managua (Nikaragua), 1999<sup>1</sup>; 2000<sup>2</sup>; RVB International: Hamburg, 2003<sup>3</sup>. 70 pp.

[God Wants You to Learn, Labour and Love] *Spanish version of the same book.*

37 Gründe, warum Christen sich für eine Erneuerung unserer Gesellschaft auf christlicher Grundlage einsetzen sollten. Die Wende, 1999. 40 pp.

[37 reasons for Christian involvement in society and politics].

Christenverfolgung geht uns alle an: Auf dem Weg zu einer Theologie des Martyriums. Idea-Dokumentation 15/99. Idea: Wetzlar, 1999. 64 pp.

[The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All: Towards a Theology of Martyrdom] *70 thesis on persecution and martyrdom, written for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on behalf of the German and European Evangelical Alliance*

World Mission – Heart of Christianity. RVB International: Hamburg, 1999. 120 pp. *Articles on the Biblical and systematic fundament of World Mission, especially on mission as rooted in God's being, on 'Mission in the OT', and 'Romans as a Charter for World Mission'. Shorter version of German original 2001.*

Eugen Drewermann und der Buddhismus. Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft: Nürnberg, 2000<sup>1</sup>; 2001<sup>2</sup>. 132 pp. [Drewermann and Buddhism] *Deals with the German Catholic Author Drewermann and his propagating Buddhist thinking. Includes chapter on a Christian Ethics of Environment.*

Ausverkaufte Würde? Der Pornographie-Boom und seine psychischen Folgen. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2000. (with Christa Meves). 130 pp. [The Selling Off of Dignity] *The psychological results of pornography.*

Eine Sekte wird evangelisch – Die Reformation der Weltweiten Kirche Gottes. Idea-Dokumentation 11/2000. Idea: Wetzlar, 2000. 56 pp. [A Cult Becomes Protestant] *Detailed report on the reformation of the Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong) from a sect to an evangelical church.*

Legends About the Galilei-Affair. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 120 pp. *Shorter version of the German book 'Galilei-Legenden' mentioned above with essays on the Galilei-affair and creation science.*

Human Rights Threatened in Europe: Euthanasia – Abortion – Bioethicconvention. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 100 pp. *Updated Lectures on euthanasia and biomedicine at the 1st European Right to Life Forum Berlin, 1998, and articles on abortion.*

Menschenrechte in Europa in Gefahr. RVB: Hamburg, 2001... 110 pp. [Human Rights Threatened in Europe] *Updated Lectures on euthanasia and biomedicine at the 1st European Right to Life Forum Berlin, 1998, and articles on abortion. See slightly different English version above.*

Aufbruch zur modernen Weltmission: William Careys Theologie. RVB. 64 pp.

[Be Keen to Get Going: William Careys Theology] *First discussion of Carey's theology in length, explaining his Calvinistic and Postmillennial background.*

Be Keen to Get Going: William Careys Theology. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 64 pp. *Same book in English.*

Darf ein Christ schwören? RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 140 pp.

[May Christians Take an Oath?] *On Swearing and on its meaning for covenant theology. Taken from 'Ethik', vol. 1.*

Christus im Alten Testament. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 84 pp.

[Christ in the Old Testament] *On Christ and the Trinity in the Old Testament and on 'the Angel of the Lord'. Taken from 'Ethik'.*

Wie erkenne ich den Willen Gottes? Führungsmystik auf dem Prüfstand. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 184 pp.

[How to know the will of God] – *Criticizes the inner leading of the Spirit. Taken from 'Ethik'.*

Love is the Fulfillment of Love – Essays in Ethics. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 140 pp. *Essays on ethical topics, including role of the Law, work ethics, and European Union.*

Mission und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 108 S.

[Mission and the Battle for Human Rights] *The relationship of world missions and the fight for human rights is discussed on an ethical level (theology of human rights) as well as on a practical level.*

The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All: Towards a Theology of Martyrdom. zugleich Idea-Dokumentation 15/99 E. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 156 pp.

*70 thesis on persecution and martyrdom, written for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on behalf of the German and European Evangelical Alliance*

Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift oder Hermeneutik der Demut? VTR: Nürnberg, 2001. 82 pp.

[Inerrancy of Scripture or 'Hermeneutics of Humility'] *Debate with Dr. Hempelmann on the inerrancy of scripture.*

Beiträge zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte: Heiligenverehrung — Universität Gießen — Reformation / Augustin — Böhl — Spurgeon — Brunner. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 200 pp.

[Essay on the History of church and Dogma] *Articles on topics from church history like 'The*

*beginning of the veneration of saints' and on the named theologians.*

Weltmission — Das Herz des christlichen Glaubens: Beiträge aus 'Evangelikale Missiologie'. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 200 pp.

[World Mission – Heart of Christianity] *Articles on the Biblical and systematic fundament of World Mission, especially on mission as rooted in God's being, on 'Mission in the OT', and 'Romans as a Charter for World Mission'. Shorter version of German original 2001.*

Säkulare Religionen: Aufsätze zum religiösen Charakter von Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 140 pp.

[Secular Religions] *Articles on the religious nature of National Socialism and Communism. Includes texts of prayers to Hitler.*

Paulus im Kampf gegen den Schleier!? VTR: Nürnberg, 2002<sup>5</sup>. 130 pp.

*Revised version. See commentary on first edition 1993<sup>1</sup>.*

Paul in Conflict with the Veil!? VTR: Nürnberg, 2002<sup>1</sup>; 2007<sup>2</sup>. 130 pp.  
*Same book in English.*

Hoffnung für Europa: 66 Thesen. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002

*Official thesis and study of hope in the Old and New Testament for Hope for Europe of the European Ev. Alliance and Lausanne Europe.*

Hope for Europe: 66 Theses. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002

*Same book in English.*

*Also available in Czech, Dutch, Spanish, Rumanina, Portugese, French, Russian, Italian, Portugese, Hungarian, Lettish, Latvian.*

ABC der Demut. RVB: Hamburg, 2002

[ABC of Humility] *Notes and bible studies on humility in alphabetical order.*

Führen in ethischer Verantwortung: Die drei Seiten jeder Verantwortung. Edition ACF. Brunnen: Gießen, 2002

[Leading in ethical responsibility] *An introduction into ethics for economic and other leaders for the Academy of Christian Leaders.*

Der Papst und das Leiden: Warum der Papst nicht zurücktritt. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002. 64 pp.

[The Pope and Suffering] *A study of the writings of Pope John II. on suffering and an evaluation of their exegetical basis. Gives reasons why the pope does not resign.*

Erziehung, Bildung, Schule. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002. 88 pp.

[Instruction, Education, School] *The chapters*

*on rising of children, example, education, and Christian school from 'Ethics'.*

Thomas Schirmmacher, Christine Schirmmacher u. a. Harenberg Lexikon der Religionen. Harenberg Verlag: Düsseldorf, 2002. 1020 pp.

[Harenberg Dictionary of World Religions] *In a major secular dictionary on world religions, Thomas Schirmmacher wrote the section on Christianity ('Lexicon of Christianity', pp. 8-267) and Christine Schirmmacher the section on Islam ('Lexicon of Islam', 'pp. 428-549).*

Studies in Church Leadership: New Testament Church Structure – Paul and His Co-workers – An Alternative Theological Education – A Critique of Catholic Canon Law. VKW: Bonn, 2003. 112 pp.

*Contains the named five essays. The first essay is translated from vol. 5 of 'Ethics'.*

Im Gespräch mit dem Wanderprediger des New Age – und andere apologetische Beiträge. VKW: Bonn, 2003. 210 pp.

[In Discussion with the Itinerant Preacher of the New Age] *Essays and reports on non-Christian religions, New Age, reincarnation, manicheism from two decades of apologetic debates.*

Verborgene Zahlenwerte in der Bibel? – und andere Beiträge zur Bibel. VKW: Bonn, 2003. 200 pp.

[Secret Numbers in the Bible?] *Essays and articles on Bible Numeric's, the importance of Hebrew studies, Obadiah, the Psalms and other Bible related topics from 2 decades of studies.*

Feindbild Islam. VKW: Bonn, 2003. 111 pp.

[Bogeyman Islam] *May Arab Christians call God 'Allah'? Is Allah the Father of Jesus? How Political Parties in Germany misrepresent Islam.*

Religijos mokslas. Prizmės knyga. Siaulai (Litauen): Campus Fidus, 2004. 106 pp.

[Secular Religions] *In Latvian: Essays on Religions, Marxism, National Socialism and the devil in Art and Literature.*

Bildungspflicht statt Schulzwang. VKW/VTR/idea: Bonn et. al., 2005. 90 pp.

[Compulsary Education or Compulsary Schooling] *A scientific evaluation of homeschooling.*

Der Ablass RVB/VTR: Hamburg, 2005. 144 pp.

[The Indulgences] *History and theology of the Catholic view on indulgences.*

Die Apokryphen RVB/VTR: Hamburg, 2005. 92 pp.

[The Apocrypha] *History and theology of the Catholic view on the apocrypha and an apology of the Protestant position.*

Thomas Schirmmacher et al. Christ und Politik: 50 Antworten auf Fragen und kritische Einwände. VKW: Bonn, 2006. 125 pp.  
[Christians and Politics] *Schirmmacher and three members of parliament from Switzerland answer questions around the relation of church and state and the political involvement of Evangelicals.*

Der Segen von Ehe und Familie: Interessante Erkenntnisse aus Forschung und Statistik. VKW: Bonn, 2006. 125 pp.  
[The Blessing of Marriage and Family] *Introduction to 200 scientific studies and statistics, that prove the blessing of longterm marriage and stable family.*

Multikulturelle Gesellschaft: Chancen und Gefahren. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2006. 100 pp.

[Multicultural Society] *A history of multiculturalism (especially Muslims and Russian-Germans) in Germany and its political, economic and religious implications for the future of Germany.*

Die neue Unterschicht: Armut in Deutschland? Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2007. 120 pp.

[The New Low Cast] *A sociology of low cast people in Germany, the differences in culture to low cast people one hundred years ago, tasks for churches and the State.*

Hitlers Kriegsreligion: Die Verankerung der Weltanschauung Hitlers in seiner religiösen Begrifflichkeit und seinem Gottesbild. 2 vol. VKW: Bonn, 2007. 1220 pp.

[Hitlers Religion of War] *A research about the religious terms and thoughts in all texts and speeches of Hitler of Hitler, pleading for a new way of explaining Hitlers worldview, rise and breakdown.*

## As editor (always with own contributions):

Patrick Johnstone. Handbuch für Weltmission: Gebet für die Welt. Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1987<sup>2</sup>, newest edition 1993<sup>6</sup> (together with Christine Schirmmacher). 811 pp.

[Handbook on World Mission] *Adapted German version of 'Operation World', a handbook and lexicon on the situation of Christianity and missions in every country of the world.*

Moderne Väter: Weder Waschlappen, noch Despot. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2007. 96 pp.

[Modern Fathers] *Presents the result of international father research, explains the necessity of the father's involvement for his children and gives practical guidelines.*

Sheria au Roho? Trans-Africa Swahili Christian Ministries: Mwanza, Tanzania, 2007. 96 pp.

*Kiswahili-Version of 'Law and Spirit' about Galatians.*

Koran und Bibel: Die größten Religionen im Vergleich. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2008. 96 pp.

[Quran and Bible] *Compares the differences between the Muslim of the Quran as the 'Word of God' and the Christian view of the Bible as the 'Word of God'. A classic on the inspiration of the Bible.*

Christenverfolgung heute. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2008. 96 pp.

[The Persecution of Christians today] *Gives an overview over the persecution of Christians worldwide and presents a short theology of persecution as well political reasons for the fight for religious freedom.*

Internetpornografie. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2008. 156 pp.

[Internet pornography] *Intense study of spread of pornography, its use amongst children and young people, its psychological results and dangers, including steps how to escape sex and pornography addiction.*

May a Christian Go to Court. The WEA Global Issues Series, Vol. 3. VKW: Bonn, 2008. 116 pp.

Gospel Recordings Language List: Liste der Sprachaufnahmen in 4.273 Sprachen. Missiologica Evangelica 4. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1992. 120 pp.

*List of 4273 languages in the world, in which evangelistic cassettes are available.*

„Die Zeit für die Bekehrung der Welt ist reif“: Rufus Anderson und die Selbständigkeit der Kirche als Ziel der Mission. Edition afem:

mission scripts 3. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993. 134 pp.

[The Time of Conversion is Ripe: Rufus Anderson and The Independence of ] *Articles by Schirmacher and by theologians from the 19th century about Rufus Anderson, leading American missionary statesman, Reformed professor of missions and postmillennial theologian – together with the first translation of texts of Anderson into German.*

William Carey. Eine Untersuchung über die Verpflichtung der Christen [1792]. Edition afem: mission classics 1. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993 (together with Klaus Fiedler). 100 pp.

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*German translation of the three Chicago-Declarations on biblical inerrancy, hermeneutics and application.*

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Missionswissenschaft im Zeichen der Erneuerung: Ehrengabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Peter Beyerhaus. Sonderausgabe = Evangelikale Missiologie 15 (1999) Heft 2 (together with Klaus W. Müller und Christof Sauer) (1999) afem

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Patrick Johnstone. Gebet für die Welt. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2003. 1010 pp.

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[Martyrs 2006] *Yearbook with documentation of the present status of persecution of Christians, concentrating on Iran, Iraq, Turkey and North Korea.*

Martin Bucer als Vorreiter der Mission. VKW: Bonn & VTR: Nürnberg, 2006. 110 pp.

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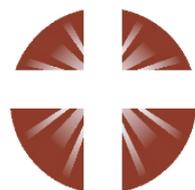
Christians from ten countries met in London in 1846 for the purpose of launching, in their own words, "a new thing in church history, a definite organization for the expression of unity amongst Christian individuals belonging to different churches." This was the beginning of a vision that was fulfilled in 1951 when believers from 21 countries officially formed the World Evangelical Fellowship. Today, 150 years after the London gathering, WEA is a dynamic global structure for unity and action that embraces 420 million evangelicals in 128 countries. It is a unity based on the historic Christian faith expressed in the evangelical tradition. And it looks to the future with vision to accomplish God's purposes in discipling the nations for Jesus Christ.

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**WEA**  
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The “International Institute for Religious Freedom” (IIRF) is a network of professors, researchers, academics and specialists from all continents, which work on reliable data on the violation of religious freedom worldwide and are interested in adding this topic to college and university programmes, especially in the areas of law, sociology, religious studies and theological programmes.

## **Task**

While numerous other organizations such as human rights groups, mission boards and the Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) of the World Evangelical Alliance plus several active RLCs of regional and national alliances provide relevant information and prayer requests or assist on the scene, this institute aims to work on a long-term basis and to insure that comprehensive studies are carried out and made available.

Rather than duplicating existing projects, the International Institute for Religious Freedom intends to organize new projects or make information on existing projects more available. Our fields include:

- the publication of long-term, citable literature (such as books, annuals, journals and legal documentations);
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- Groundwork studies into the legal aspects (such as official legal background in various nations, historical studies, certification of court cases);
- Theological studies (for example, the ethics of human rights, theology of persecution, the history of persecution);
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- Long-term: an international archive or a network of existing archives.

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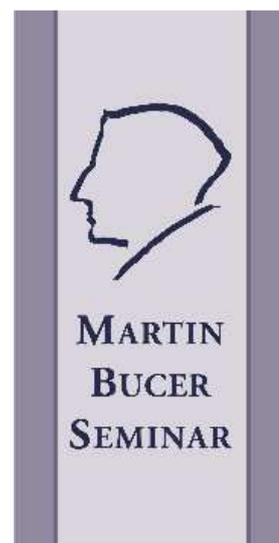
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The work of GIVING HANDS GERMANY is controlled by a supervisory board. Members of this board are Dr. theol. Thomas Schirmacher (chairman), Colonel V. Doner and Kathleen McCall. Dr. Christine Schirmacher is registered as legal manager of GIVING HANDS at the local district court. The local office and work of the charity are coordinated by Rev. Horst J. Kreie as executive manager.

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