Invitation of Papers for the 30th International Course on “Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations”

30th Anniversary
IUC, Dubrovnik, Croatia,
April 24 – 29, 2006

By

Rudolf J. Siebert
Professor of Religion and Society
Course Director

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan USA
February 9, 2006
Call for Papers
for
the 30th International Course on the
“Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations”

Dear Friend:

We are writing this letter to you, in order to invite you wholeheartedly to our 30th international course on “The Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations,” to take place in the Inter-University Center for Post – Graduate Studies (IUC) in Dubrovnik, Croatia, from April 25 – 29, 2006. We invite you to our discourse because we are convinced that you as a scholar are most competent to contribute to the clarification, understanding, explanation and development of our new topic.

30th Anniversary

This year we invite you for a very special occasion. We celebrate the 30th Anniversary of our international course. We are the second oldest course of the IUC. We have met since 1977 without interruption. We met even during the terrible war years in the protective basement of Hotel Argentina and tried to help the suffering people through money and medicine. In order to celebrate the great event we plan to make an exhibition of pictures from our past 29 meetings. All those of you who have participated in our course through the years are invited to send pictures to the Secretariat of the Inter University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia, Don Frana Bulica 4, HR 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia: International Course on the Future of Religion. Some of our friend will order the pictures and arrange the exhibition. We also plan a common meal on one of the romantic islands around Dubrovnik. Our friend Professor Dr.Gottfried Kuenzelen will give the festive address. We also plan to set aside one morning during which particularly the senior members of our course will present some of their most exciting memories concerning our course. Our Professor Dr. Ott will present to us his book The Future of Religion: Toward a Reconciled Society, containing our presentations of recent years, in one form or the other. He is still looking for a publisher for his excellent book. If you know of a good publisher, let him know. If you have any other good ideas concerning our anniversary celebration, please let us know as soon as possible, so that we can broaden our plans further. Thank you for your consideration.

Presentation of Papers

We hope very much, that you can follow our invitation, and that you can come to the IUC in beautiful Dubrovnik in the last week of April 2006, and that you can join us in our 30th international course on the “The Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations,” and that you can present a paper to us out of the center of your own presently on-going research-activities, interests, competence and teaching, and in the framework of the
general thematic of 2006. Of course, you are also very welcome, if you do not want to be a resource person and to read a paper, but rather prefer to appear as participant and thus contribute as such to our, to be sure, very lively discourse. Our course will be part of a very rich IUC Program of courses and conferences in the Academic Year of 2005/2006. Dubrovnik and the IUC are indeed alive and well and even growing again in spite of all the tragic events of the past decades! We hope very much that the whole region of the former Yugoslavia will soon become part of the European Union, We hope, that the trials in Den Haag will be guided not by the Jus or Lex Talionis and by the motive of retaliation, but rather in the perspective of an international justice, which has its roots in the best ethical and juridical traditions of the world – religions, e.g. the Golden Rule, and which will never be without mercy and the power of atonement and reconciliation.

Publication

Please, prepare your paper out of the material of your present research, in the horizon of our specific theme of this year, and in the context of the present historical situation. It must not be perfect. Nobody is perfect! You can still complete your paper to the level of publication-maturation after you have presented it, and after we have discussed it together, and after you have returned home. Our discourse may help you, to complete your paper, and to make it ready for publication. Finally, we would like to collect our research papers once more for a third volume, following Professor Reimer’s excellent first volume: The Influence of the Frankfurt School on Contemporary Theology. Critical Theory and the Future of Religion. Dubrovnik Papers in Honor of Rudolf J. Siebert. Lewiston, New York, Queenston, Ontario, Canada, Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales, United Kingdom: The Edwin Mellen Press 1993, and of Professor Michael Ott’s second volume The Future of Religion: Toward a Reconciled Society, which has been completed and is ready for publication. We are still very proud of and grateful for my Festschrift by Jim. The book appeared in the beginning of 1993 and was publicly celebrated at the Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo University, and in the IUC, Dubrovnik, in April 1993. I have described the publication of the book in my 1993 – Course Report. Professor Ott, who has taken over the editorship of the second volume from Diana Moxley, who had collected already some of the papers of the previous years, has put together also still some of last year’s papers and has composed them all into a great scholarly book. We are grateful to Diana for the preparatory work she has done. Maybe Jim Reimer will assist us once more with his great publishing experience to bring out our third volume in the not too distant future. The first volume was a great success, and copies can still be found in the book market, and will be available there for a long time to come. We are sure, that also the two following volumes will be equally successful.

Resource Persons and Participants

Thus, we – the Director, Professor Rudolf J. Siebert, Western Michigan University, and the Co-Directors, Professor Mislav Kukoc, University of Zagreb, Professor Gottfried Künzelen, University of the Federal German Army, Munich, and Nikola Skledar, University of Zagreb, and Denis Janz, Loyola University, New Orleans, and Michael Ott, Grand Valley University, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Coordinators Dinka Marinovic-Jerolimov, Institute for Social Research Zagreb, Diana Moxley, University of South Florida, and Tatiana Senyushkina, Taurida National University, Simferopol, Ukraine, and Petra Hoblaj, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, invite you very personally in the name of the IUC, to join us as resource persons or
participants in our 30th International course on “The Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations” in the IUC Building, from April 25 – 30, 2005. We chose this year's course title once more in a democratic procedure. It grew almost logically out of the texts and the contexts of our previous discourses on the “Future of Religion.” This year’s theme is certainly of highest actuality considering the present world situation: the so-called war against terror.

Addresses: Home, Secretariat, and Hotels.

In case you have any further questions, please address them to me at the following addresses and through the following media. My home address and phone number is:

630 Piccadilly Road  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49006, USA  
269-381-0864 (voice)  
269-381-1935 (fax)  
email: RSieb3@aol.com

If you plan to come, please also contact

Secretariat of the Inter-University Center  
Don Frana Bulica 4,  
HR 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia  
+385 20 413626/7 (voice)  
+385 20 413628 (fax).

For accommodations, please, also contact

Hotel Argentina  
+ 385 20 440 555 (voice)  
+ 385 20 432 524 (fax),

Hotel Lero  
+ 385 20 411 455 (voice)  
+ 385 20 432 501 (fax),

or any other hotel or private pension of your choice in Dubrovnik for room and board. Hotel Lero is the less expensive one. Hotel Argentina is the more expensive one. Most of us will probably stay at Hotel Lero. For further information, please look at my web site: http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org/.

Suggestions

Allow me to make a few more concrete suggestions concerning the content of our discourse on “The Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations” of 2006. One reason for such suggestions is to constitute further continuity between our past 29 courses on one hand, and the coming 30th discourse, on the other. In fulfilling this task of continuity, we are greatly supported by Professor Reimer's book The Influence of the Frankfurt School on
Contemporary Theology, Critical Theory and the Future of Religion. Dubrovnik Papers in Honor of Rudolf J. Siebert, and by Professor Ott’s book The Future of Religion: Toward a Reconciled Society, which he may bring along at least in the form of a completed manuscript for everybody to see. The other reason for the following suggestions is to indicate the possible direction, which our new international discourse on the “The Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations” may, or could, or should take, when we meet in Dubrovnik from April 25 – 29, 2006. The few suggestions may indicate the possible level and goal for the texts that we shall produce in writing or orally in and for the new Dubrovnik – and world-situation, and toward the goal of further human emancipation on the long road from animality to alternative global Future III: the reconciled, free, just and therefore peaceful society, instead of alternative Future I – the totally administered society as predicted by Huxley, Orwell, Kafka, Horkheimer, Adorno, etc., or alternative global Future II – the entirely militarized society continually engaged in conventional wars and civil wars, and in the preparation of ABC wars, and the consequent environmental disasters, maybe in the framework of a collision of religion-guided civilizations as predicted by Samuel Huntington, a disciple of Carl Schmitt, Adolf Hitler’s political theologian and main jurist. These are, of course, only suggestions, and you may feel entirely free, to follow your own dialectical imagination and creativity, and to move in other directions as well, inside, of course, of the wider framework of the general thematic.

Unfinished Projects

Our new theme “The Future of Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations” is certainly of highest actuality in the present globalized, rather oppressive and troublesome world-historical transition – and crisis – situation. It is dominated by Right-Hegelian, neo-conservatives, or neo-liberals, or conservative revolutionaries, or better still very successful counter-revolutionaries, rather than by deconstructionists, or post-modernists, not to speak of the Left-Hegelian praxis philosophers in Europe and America. We don’t have to start with a definition of religion, or of modernity, or post-modernity. We remember the warning by Friedrich Nietzsche, not to define anything, which has a history and is still moving. Religion certainly has a long history and is still developing. Also what is called civilization – Christian civilization, Islamic Civilization, etc. has a history of hundreds of years, and is still in process. Even the second Bush Administration has found out, that Francis Fukuyama was wrong, when he stated that history had come to its end with the fall of the Soviet Empire. Obviously the Jihadists have started history again. The second Bush Administration continues history for better or for worse into a clash of civilizations guided by Christianity and Islam. It seems that religion and theology as well as modernity and enlightenment are still as communicative and critical praxis unfinished projects.

Religion

Of course, we could – in spite of Nietzsche – start at least with a working definition of religion. The critical theory of religion, which has played an important role in our Dubrovnik discourses since 1977, provides us with several definitions: Religion is the longing for the imageless and nameless totally Other than the slaughterbench of nature and history. Religion is the longing for perfect justice and for unconditional love. Religion is the longing that the murderer shall not triumph over the innocent victim – at least not ultimately. Religion is the longing that the finitude of human life may not be the last word of history. There are, of course,
also positivistic, e.g. functionalistic definitions of religion: religion is the integrative factor of civil society. Religion is the stabilizing factor. Religion is the contingency – experience – management – subsystem of civil society: deprived, of course, of all aspects of wisdom, mysticism, or prophecy, since they would be rather dysfunctional for antagonistic civil society. In order for religion to perform this integrative role for the survival of civil society, it must itself fulfill its pattern-maintenance-, adaptive-, goal-attainment- and integrative- function. A disintegrated religion can hardly integrate antagonistic civil society. We shall also take these positivistic definitions of religion seriously.

**Theodicy Experiences**

During the last year we were hit by one theodicy experience after the other. The dialectical, or positivistic, scientistic definitions of religion are of particular actuality in the face of those theodicy experiences. There was the Tsunami catastrophe which cost the lives of 260,000 people, including 10,000 persons of children. This disaster is much greater than the Earthquake of Lisbon in 1755 and the following tidal waves, which reawakened and intensified the theodicy question in Europe, and elicited and provoked the ridicule of Voltaire in the form of his play *The Candide*, against Leibnitz’s book *Theodicy. The Goodness of God. The Freedom of Man. The Origin of Evil*, and his unbelievable thesis, that ours was the best of all possible worlds. The controversy and the underlying theodicy experiences contributed much to the further secularization of the Western Civilization. We had other theodicy experiences during the last year: The hurricanes in the southern Parts of the United States and the earthquake in Pakistan, which also cost many human lives and meant misery for hundred thousands of people. Up to the present the unresolved theodicy problem deepens the alienation of man from nature and from history, and demands reconciliation in religious or secular form. Voltaire became the father of deism, the heart of the modern bourgeois enlightenment movement: the Deus absconditus, God had left the world, which he had created, to itself. That was the negative bourgeois answer to the theodicy problem. Kant denied the possibility of any positive philosophical theodicy answer at all. The German enlightener Lessing produced the parable of the Three Rings, which declared to be uncertain the truth claim of each of the three Abrahamic religions, including particularly their theodicy answers. From the very start of our course the theodicy was at the center of our Dubrovnik discourse. A possible war among the civilizations would only escalate the theodicy problem. Can the world religions make a contribution if not to a theoretical then at least a practical; answer to the theodicy problem – shalom – or must they remain part of the problem?

**Post–Secular Society**

The Question is certainly of highest actuality in the present world-historical transition – and crisis – situation: must there be a collision among the civilizations, as Samuel Huntington has predicted, or can there be discourse and cooperation among the civilizations, as Hans Küng and Jürgen Habermas are promoting them on the basis of a religiously grounded global ethos or of a secular, universal, communicative ethics? Religion, which many people in the West, committed to the bourgeois, Marxist or Freudian enlightenment, had considered a declining force in modern civil and socialist societies, is once more at the center of political, historical and cultural discourses today. Social scientists speak of a post-secular society: i.e. a society, which has become aware, that religion will probably not disappear over night, as magic and fetishism was once superseded by science and technology, but that it will stay around at least for a while,
because science is not able to answer the question of unconditional meaning and moral values and norms, not to speak of the theodicy problem – human suffering. No scientist can tell us – at least not yet – why it is better to love than to hate, except that maybe it may be better for business, or why I should not kill, if killing is in my or my country’s interest or pleasurable for me or my nation. In the context of this post-secular society, e.g. the question of EU accession for Turkey raises fears for some people in Europe over cultural, particularly religious incompatibilities. This seems to be an echo of what Huntington has called the supposed

Clash of Civilizations

between the so-called Christian, or better still secular West on one hand, and Islam on the other. In the USA the religious and political fundamentalist Right is challenging the basis of modern scientific orthodoxy: e.g. by demanding that creationism, or the intelligent design doctrine, should be taught in the science classes of all secular schools together with evolutionism. Elsewhere on the globe, e.g. in countries of the former Soviet Union, religion no less than nationalism has been resurgent since the victorious neo-conservative or neo-liberal counter-revolution of 1989. India and Pakistan and other countries have seen similar developments. To be sure, at the heart of these renewed discourses on religion is communicative action and rationality. Questions arise like: How are religious interpretations of reality and orientations of action mediated in the age of satellite television and the internet? What is the role of the media in cultivating understanding or misunderstanding among the world-religions, and between them and the secular world? How are the mass media continually used or abused in the dissemination or suppression of religious interpretations and orientations in the framework of mass culture and the overall culture industry. Such questions suggest topics concerning the relationship of religion to nationalism, to globalization, to economic, political and military power, to religious terrorism and terrorism in the name of liberty, to modernity, to identity, to reciprocal recognition between individuals, nations and civilizations, to the public sphere and democracy, to citizenship, to different religious or secular audiences. Our course will focus on the situation and function of critical religion in antagonistic civil society in the perspective of the critical theory of religion. Critical or good religion wants things to be changed in antagonistic civil society in terms of perfect justice. Uncritical or bad religion affirms the status quo of the globalizing late capitalist class society, no matter how unjust it may be.

Collision of Civilizations

Today nothing makes the global modern antagonism between the sacred and the profane clearer to the critical theorist of religion, than the US political scientist Samuel Huntington’s new foreign policy paradigm:

The Clash of Civilizations.

Huntington is the student and disciple of Carl Schmitt, Adolf Hitler’s main former jurist and political theologian. Schmitt following Hobbes identified and defined the essence of the political as the identification of the enemy. Schmitt’s disciple Huntington is also Pentagon adviser. Huntington conceives of alternative Future II – the struggle among the cultures, as being unavoidable, and of alternative Future III – the reconciled free and just peace society as being illusionary and utopian. Not only from the New Testament, but also through Schmitt and Huntington, President Bush junior received the strong statement:
Who is not with me, is against me,

which he made, when he started the second Iraq war with the Alliance of the Willing, but without the consensus of the United Nations. Unlike his opponent, the ecumenical Christian theologian, Hans Küng, Huntington has studied little the inner dynamic and differentiations of the particular cultures and religions. Huntington obviously knows little about complex historical connections, flowing transitions, mutual cross – fertilizations, and peaceful living together of cultures and religions. Thus, Huntington made the prognosis, that the collision between the modern secular West and the Islam would be particularly dangerous. In this way Huntington gave ideological support to the neo-conservative and neo-liberal American Administrations, when after the end of the cold war in 1989 they replaced the enemy image communism by the enemy image Islam.

**Ideological Support**

Huntington has given ideological support to the neo-conservative and neo-liberal American Administrations, when they cancelled the peace dividend and rather justified a further high level of armament in favor of what President Eisenhower had called in his departure message the military–industrial complex. Benito Mussolini had called fascism corporatism: a combination of corporate and state and of course military power. Huntington gave ideological support, when the neo-liberal Administrations thus – intentionally or unintentionally – created a favorable atmosphere for the realization of alternative Future I – the totally administered society, and particularly for alternative Future II – the more and more militarized society and further conventional wars and civil wars, and ultimately an NBC war, and the consequential ecological devastation, and thus to postpone indefinitely alternative Future III – a peaceful society, in which personal autonomy and universal – i.e. anamnestic, present and proleptic – solidarity  would be reconciled.

**The Gihadists**

Thus, on September 11, 2001, the tensions in the modern dichotomy between religion and the secular modern civil society and liberal constitutional state became so great, that it exploded. The 19 fundamentalist-Islamic Gihadists, or God-fighters in the holy war for the defense of Islam, were ready for collective suicide and mass murder. Their attack was directed against the infidels of the bourgeois modernity, who supposedly threatened Islam’s all embracing religious way of life, with its enlightenment innovations: the separation of church or mosque and secular state, the privatization of religion, the spreading of the doctrine of natural and social evolution, and a corresponding entirely secular education. The infidels of the younger, socialist modernity were supposed to have done the same, and had supposedly been broken and conquered by the Gihadists and Islam in Afghanistan with the help of the older bourgeois modernity. Now this older bourgeois modernity had its turn to be destroyed! Thus, the Gihadists trans-functionalized four civil airliners into living rockets, and guided them against the World Trade Centers in New York and into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. as symbols of the profane, capitalist Western world. The Gihadists used contemporaneous, very secular and very modern high – tech means, in order to achieve non-contemporaneous, pre-modern, traditional religious goals.
Motivations and Goals

We know through Mohammed Atta’s testament and Osama Bin Laden’s pronouncements up to 2006, that the attacks against New York and Washington D.C. were driven through religious, i.e. Islamic motivations and goals. The Gihadists acted in conformity to the

jus talionis,

which is present in the Koran as well as in the Torah. It says in the Torah:

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stroke for stroke.

It says in the Koran:

Free man for freeman, slave for slave.

But the lex talionis is cancelled in the New Testament: through the fourth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount:

You have learned how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well, And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

There are Jewish and Islamic scholars, who while they consider this commandment to be impractical in national or international politics, would nevertheless recommend forgiveness as a matter of personal charity and interpersonal relations. In a secular perspective this commandment seems to be a matter of utter irrationality until one experiences the insanity of the bad infinity of retaliation and counter-retaliation, terror and counter-terror and the endless curse and spell it puts on generations, e.g. in the Near East. Then it becomes obvious, that the breaking of the lex talionis is by far more rational than to be addicted to it.

Retaliation

The Gihadists thought to know the will of Allah, and to have the right to take the international law into their own hands, and to retaliate for secular Western crimes, which supposedly had not yet been atoned for so far: e.g. for the British bombing of Afghanistan and Iraq in 1920; for the British and American bombing of non-combatants in World War II, particularly in Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki; for the American support for the State of Israel, and its wars, and its decades of occupation of Palestine and all the humiliation and bloodshed connected with it; and for the first Iraq war and its high number of civilian casualties; and the American and British bombardment of Iraq since 1998, etc., etc.. The carnage of military
personal, prisoners, and civilians in the first Iraq war was so enormous, that the Army Sergeant and Green Beret soldier, Timothy McVeigh, received the impression, that his Government had become terroristic. Motivated further by the incidents in Ruby Ridge and Waco, McVeigh turned into a home-spun Rightwing terrorist, and supposedly retaliated terror with terror, and bombed a public building in Oklahoma city, which contained among other things an FBI office as well as a kindergarten, which were both destroyed. Before his execution, MacVeigh called the death of the innocent children in the kindergarten, according to military custom, collateral damage.

Policy Change

Shortly after September 11, 2001, we people from diverse religious and secular peace groups wrote to President Bush junior and to Senators and Congressmen in Washington D.C.: not lex talionis, but national and international discourse and policy change. But the – according to his own confession – born again (St. John. - St., Paul) Christian President Bush junior answered the Jihadist’s practice of the lex talionis not with national and international discourse and policy changes in the Near East or elsewhere in terms of the

Golden Rule,

which is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, and which Christianity shares with Judaism and Islam and with most other living world religions, but rather applied – like his designated enemies – also the jus talionis, and continues to do so today. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule states:

So always treat others, as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.

Applying the jus talionis instead of the Golden Rule, the allegedly Christian President did not consider, that the New Testament did not even allow him what the Koran permitted to his designated Islamic enemies: the application of the lex talionis. Also the President did not notice, that the jus talionis, as it is contained in the Torah and in the Koran, is a limiting law, which does not permit that one takes two eyes for one, or two teeth for one, or kills two free men for one, or two slaves for one. Ten thousands of civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq had to die in retaliation for 3000 victims of September 11, 2001. Thus, the President only increased the chance for further and escalating retaliation, instead of breaking the horrible spell of the lex talionis, Today its terror continues in Afghanistan, Iraq, Spain, England, and elsewhere, seemingly for ever and ever, and daily costs precious human lives on both sides. Of course, Christians can and have always sinned against the norms of the Sermon on the Mount, particularly the Golden Rule. But then they had to repent their norm – violations and desist from them and make good the damage they had caused, and they could not continue their crimes: e.g. an unjust war to the point where it is won or lost. After one of my lectures in our international course on

Religion in Civil Society

In Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine, in which I had mentioned the Sermon on the Mount including the Golden Rule, a priest from the Old Church-Hellenistic Paradigm of Christianity, told me that I sounded like Tolstoi, and that Tolstoi did not work. As a matter of fact, Tolstoi was even excommunicated by the Orthodox Church. In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, if
Christians consider the Sermon on the Mount, including the Golden Rule, to be impractical— in spite of examples to the contrary as e.g. Tolstoy, Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, or Mother Theresa etc., then they should be honest enough, to declare Christianity to be a historical failure. But even then, they should not, like Friedrich Nietzsche, negate Christianity abstractly, but should try to reformulate the fundamental questions it once raised, in order thus to prevent further rebarbarization of modern civil society: Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, etc.

**Bourgeois Modernity**

On September 11, 2001, the Gihadists did not attack Christian symbols: e.g. St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York, representing the traditional opponent of Islam—Roman Catholicism, or the Episcopalian Cathedral in Washington. D.C. They rather attacked symbols of bourgeois modernity, as they had attacked before with American help the symbols of the younger socialist modernity in its Russian form in Afghanistan. They attacked modern secular bourgeois symbols, which have absolutely nothing to do with religion: the financial district in New York, which they considered in terms of the Mosaic Decalogue, which all three Abrahamic religions share, to be the hub for organized and institutionalized and globalized usury and stealing; and the military center in Washington D.C., which they looked upon as the hub for organized and institutionalized killing in the interest of colonialism, imperialism and, in general, capitalist globalization. Maybe the fourth plane aimed at the White House or the Congress in Washington D.C., which the Gihadists believed to be the center of institutionalized and organized lying, in order to cover up the stealing, and the killing.

**Eschatological Images**

For the Gihadists,—as symbolically thinking religious people—the symbols of the—particularly after the fall of Eastern European socialism in 1989—intensely globalizing bourgeois modernity, did—as already the Ayatollah Khomeini had stated—embody the Great Satan not only of the Koran, but also of the Torah, and also of the New Testament. Now eschatological images from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Koran forced themselves even on the secular eyewitnesses of the apocalyptic theodicy—happening reflected on the television screens and in the face of the masochistically repeated collapse of the Twin Towers of Manhattan. The language of retaliation, of the jus talionis, which the fourth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount tried to abolish, but in which not only the born-again American President reacted to the incomprehensible happening, received an Old Testament, or better still Hebrew-Biblical sound. It seemed, as if the delusionary assassination of 3000 human beings from different nations and races and classes in New York and Washington D.C. had brought into vibration a religious string inside the otherwise religiously—unmusical, secular civil society and modern liberal constitutional state. Everywhere people streamed into synagogues, churches and mosques. By the way, this underground correspondence did not yet lead astray the civil-religious community of mourners in the New York Stadium into a symmetrical attitude of hate, retaliation, or revenge: a call for the international application of the lex talionis. In spite of all signs of nationalism and patriotism, there sounded no call yet for a warlike opening up of the national criminal law as it happened
later on in the Patriot Act and the general war against terror. No inclination could be felt yet among the civil-religious people gathered in the New York Stadium to actualize the *jus talionis* against any of the Islamic countries. Only later the so called *Satan people* answered in kind, and called the Jihadists with the likewise Biblical term *Diabolical*,

and still continue to do so at present – in February 2006.

**Enlightenment Experiment**

Up to the present, almost six years later, many Americans still have no adequate understanding of the catastrophe of September 11, 2001. The reason for this is not only an inadequate conception of religion in general and of Islam in particular, but also an inadequate conception of modernity and enlightenment, and thus an inadequate self-knowledge:

*Knoti se auton!*

Many Americans believe, that they live in a religious or even Christian country, in spite of the fact that the economic system of the American civil society is completely secular, and that it is characterized by instrumental rationality, and that it is steered over money; and that the political subsystem is likewise entirely secular, and that it is also characterized by functional rationality, and that it is steered over the medium of power. As a matter of fact, the American Republic was from the very start a great secular, modern and enlightenment experiment, and still is. It is true, that the American *Declaration of Independence* contains the name of God. But the God of the Declaration of Independence is the God of the great bourgeois enlightenment: the *Deus absconditus*. He is the God of Deism. He has created the world but has then left it. For all practical purposes, the world is atheistic, and God is acosmic, worldless. That solved the theodicy problem, which had dramatically surfaced through the religious and other wars and through the catastrophe of Lisbon, and others. The God of the *Declaration of Independence* was neither the God of Judaism, Yahweh, nor the Trinitarian God of Christianity, nor the God of Islam – Allah. The God of he Abrahamic religions was admittedly transcendent, but he was – unlike the Deistic God – also immanent: he worked as Reason and Providence in the individual biographies and journeys, as well as in the history of nations, and civilizations and in world history in general. The American *Constitution* did not mention the name of God at all, in order thus to prevent politicians from abusing it, as happens today almost daily in the American civil society under the second Bush Administration. – against the *Constitution* and the consequent separation between Church and state. In any case, a Christian country or civilization would not have annihilated a whole race, and it would not have enslaved a whole other race, and it would not have subjugated large parts of its own race.

**Inverse Theology**

In our discourse, we shall presuppose that no matter in which different conceptions religion defines itself in post-secular society and in its struggle with modernity, it has nevertheless contributed through thousands of years to the humanization of man, at least to his more recent stages, on his long march from his departure from the chimpanzees 7 million years.
ago, toward alternative Future III – the realm of freedom and peace. We also presuppose that modern civilization, no matter in which different conceptions it defines itself in post-secular society and in its struggle with religion, mythos and mythologies, the process of demythologization and enlightenment and secularization will continue even into a Post-Modern Age, be it alternative Future I, II or III. If those two presuppositions are true and the modern dichotomy between the religious and the secular can not be reconciled at this moment in history, then the question is, if we could practice an inverse theology of the totally Other than the often cruel laws and necessities of nature and history on the basis of a micrology, which pays attention to small things, locations, events, and experiences, which are not yet prefigured and preformed by globalizing late capitalistic society, and which thus are not yet functionalized or commodified, and which thus are not yet entangled in the guilt connection of the absolute exchange society and in the interest of its survival. The name inverse theology stems from situations in the Middle Ages, when Jews were crucified inversely by Christians, and thus saw the world upside down. This was the price the Jewish martyrs had to pay in hours of infinite pain and suffering for seeing in the light of redemption the world with all its deep antagonisms and discrepancies, as it will lay prostrate on Judgment Day. The SS crucified inversely at least one Catholic priest and one Protestant minister in the torture chambers of the Concentration Camp of Buchenwald near Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Weimar. Such inverse theology would allow semantic and semiotic materials and potentials, like the notion of God, freedom, original sin, Decalogue, Golden Rule, resurrection of the dead, resurrection of the flesh, redemption, salvation, Messiah, Judgment Day, heaven, beauty, eternity, etc to migrate, to be sublated, to be translated from the depth of the mythos into the modern or post-modern secular discourse among the expert cultures, and through it into the communicative praxis of the life world of civil society, and even into the instrumental; and functional activities of its economic and political subsystems in support of its struggle against always new waves of rebarbarization: climaxing in a third world war between the civilizations.

Alternative Futures

The result of such practice of inverse theology may be a new critical humanistic religion, which may even survive into a Post-Modern Age, into global alternative Future III – a reconciled peace-society, which is very desirable, but which admittedly may not be very possible and probable at this moment in history, while global alternative Future I – the totally administered signal society is very possible and probable, if also not very desirable, and while global alternative Future II – the totally militarized society is likewise very possible and probable, but completely undesirable. As we try to modify at least global alternative Future I, and resist global alternative Future II, and promote passionately global alternative Future III, we also work toward a critical religion, which may remind even a reconciled civilization, that it is not ultimate, but that it is finite, relative and transitory, and that its people will still have to suffer and to die, and will warn it that it should not make itself and its societies, or its science, or its technology arrogantly and idolatrously into the Absolute, and will keep awake in it the longing for the totally Other, Perfect Justice, Uncondional Love, shortly the Truth.

General Orientation

We hope very much, that those few concretizing suggestions may give you some general orientation for your own preparatory work for our international course on “The Future of
Religion: From War to Peace among the Civilizations. You can make your own comments and objections to those suggestions and to this general orientation, when we come together in Dubrovnik. We hope very much, that you shall be able and willing to come to our discourse, and that you shall, if possible, present a paper, or papers, concerning aspects of our general theme, unfolded in the above suggestions and orientation, or not. The general theme is broad and gives you much freedom to adjust your paper to it. If you have a hard time to connect your paper to our general theme, we shall do that for and with you in our discourse. Please, let me know as soon as possible, if you shall join us in Dubrovnik in the last week of April 2006, and if you like to give a paper during the week available to us in the IUC Building? Tell me also, if you desire to give your paper at a specific day and hour, and how much time you would like to have. I shall do what I can to give you as much time as possible.

New Sister-Course

In conclusion, I may happily report to you that we met in Yalta in October 2005 in our fourth international course on “Religion and Civil Society: Toward Discourse and Cooperation among Civilizations”, the sister-course to our Dubrovnik course, which from now on will take place every October. We had a wonderful experience: academically and socially. Our friend Tatiana did an excellent leadership – job! Thank you again from all of us! Our next, sixth international course will take place in Yalta in October 2006. From now on we have the opportunity to meet for international discourse twice a year in Dubrovnik in April, and in Yalta in October. You have a standing invitation for both events.

I am with all my best wishes for you and for your dear family, and for your good work, your

Rudolf J. Siebert
Professor of Religion and Society
IUC Course Director
Director of the WMU Center for Humanistic Future Studies

© 2006 by Rudolf J. Siebert. This document may be reproduced in any non-profit form without permission of the author; however, for-profit reproduction requires written permission.

http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org