The Critical Theory of Religion:
Critical Religion in Antagonistic Civil Society

By

Rudolf J. Siebert

Professor of Religion and Society

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Religion and Civil Society:
Towards Discourse and Cooperation among the
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Critical Theory of Religion:  
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Our general theme this year here in Yalta -

Religion and Civil Society:  
Toward Discourse and Cooperation among the Civilizations.

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 Jürgen Habermas and Hans Küng are promoting them on the basis of a global ethos? Religion, which many people in the West, committed to the bourgeois, Marxian and 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.

Post-Secular Society

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society, which has become aware, that religion will probably not disappear over night, as magic and fetishism was once superseded by science and technology, but that it will stay around at least for a while, because science is not able to answer the question of unconditional meaning and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. 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 interest and pleasurable. 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 incompatibility. 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 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 the public sphere and democracy, to citizenship, to different religious or secular audiences. This paper will focus on the situation and function of critical religion in antagonistic civil society in the perspective of the critical theory of religion.

Believers and Enlighteners

Shortly before the most tragic and almost apocalyptic theodicy-event in New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001, which cost the lives of close to 3000 human beings, religious and secular people, believers and enlighteners, the churches and the profane constitutional state and the secular educational establishment and the public in general, differentiated themselves from each other through – among many themes - particularly the question, if and how far we should submit ourselves to a gene-technological self-instrumentalization, or if and how far we should even pursue the goal of a genetic self-optimalization. An intense struggle had come about in civil society and liberal constitutional state concerning the first steps on this way between the leaders of the Christian Churches on one hand, and the spokesmen and women of the organized secular scientific and educational establishment on the other: stem cell research!

Naturalism or Obscurantism

On one hand, the Christian Churches argued in terms of the Mosaic Decalogue or the Sermon on the Mount, but also of the originally stoic and then later on baptized natural law, not only about issues like stem cell research –

You shall not kill - ,

but also about evolutionism and creationism, abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, gay marriage, pedophilia, and euthanasia against the organized secular scientific community and its positivistic and scientistic belief in progress, by accusing it of a crude naturalism, \(^2\) This naturalism supposedly continued to undermine the last residuals of personal and social morality. On the other hand, the secular scientific establishment on its part was afraid of a religious regression into the Middle Ages: a medieval obscurantism and a science-skeptical cultivation of primitive and archaic, mythical and mystical feeling-residuals among the masses of the people living in antagonistic civil society. The dichotomy between the religious faith and the secular experience and knowledge, and the consequent tensions had been growing long before September 11, 2001.
A Religious and a Secular Man

The antagonism between the religious and the secular cuts through all realms of the modern social action system. In recent months, the anchormen and -women of the American television and radio stations told us repeatedly, that the late Pope John Paul II had been a very modern man. But in reality the Pope had a very religious man, who sometimes appeared to be secular and open toward the modern world. Only a very religious man will say, as John Paul II did three hours before his death:

Let me go to the house of the Father,

The Pope had had two opportunities in his life to move into modernity: once when he immersed himself into the works of the mystic John of the Cross, and once more when he studied the works of the formerly Jewish modern philosopher Max Scheler. But in both cases, the Pope returned to St. Thomas of Aquinas, the theological climax of the Medieval Roman Catholic Paradigm of Christianity. On the other hand, since five years the American anchormen and -women have told us, that President Bush junior was a very religious man, and even in St. John’s and St. Paul’s words – a

born again Christian.

Some Americans call him even idolatrously and blaspheming their savior,

in spite of the fact, that the members of all three Abrahamic religions believe in God as the One Creator of the Universe and only Savior of men and nations. However in reality, President Bush junior is a very secular man, who sometimes appears to be religious. He seems to be religious, when he needs - in Machiavellian terms - to legitimate very contemporaneous and entirely profane political goals through non-contemporaneous, completely premodern and traditional religious images and concepts, which may even contradict those goals. He praises religion, when it serves as a means for his secular ideological purposes. Here ideology is understood critically as false consciousness and as masking racial, national, and class interests. Thus, the President praised Pope John Paul II for playing an important role in the neo-conservative and neo-liberal counter-revolution of 1989, particularly in Eastern Europe, in Poland. But when the very religious Pope John Paul II opposed, together with many members of the World Council of Churches, not only the first but also the second Iraq war as unjust, not only on the basis of the Augustinian Seven Point Just War Theory, but finally also on the basis of the first, fourth and fifth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount – you should not kill, and you should not retaliate, and you should love your enemy – not only the first, but also the second Bush Administrations simply ignored and marginalized the all too critical religion, and went on undisturbed with preparing, and initiating, and carrying out the wars anyway. Certainly no truly religious man would ever instrumentalize ideologically his own or other peoples’ religion. The Sermon on the Mount states functionalistically about the false prophets:

You will be able to tell them by their fruits.
There is indeed an abyss between the religious and the secular in the modern world, which is not really overcome even by the greatest Papal funeral, at which the great warriors and mass murderers surrounded the corpse of the Pope, who when alive had warned them continually and most passionately, not to initiate wars, which were unjust by the norms of the Seven Point Just War Theory, not to speak of those of the Sermon on the Mount. Of course, the Pope’s condemnation of the two Iraq wars and the Afghanistan war, was not only rooted in religious sources, but also in secular sources as well. In 1945 the Nuremberg Tribunal had stated that to initiate a war of aggression was not only an international crime, but that it was the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contained within itself the accumulated evil of the whole. In September 2004, the UN Chief Kofi Annan stated, that the US-led invasion of Iraq was an illegal act, that contravened the UN charter. Sometimes critical religion and secular, humanistic ethical or legal statements can be in full agreement.

Dialectical Theory of Religion

In the perspective of the critical or dialectical theory of religion, there is at work in the modern civil society not only the dialectic between the sacred and the profane. There exists also a dialectic in the religious as well as in the secular: the dialectic of religion and the dialectic of enlightenment. The religion of truth can turn over dialectically into religious ideology, which legitimates the domination of slaveholders, feudal lords and owners of capital: into untruth. The religion of love can turn dialectically over into a religion of hate, which motivates anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism, crusades against Arabs and Jews, and other so called infidels, and even against Christians of another paradigm of Christianity, the burning of heretics and witches. In 2004, the former Cardinal Josef Ratzinger and present Pope Benedict XVI had to admit in public discourse with the secular critical theorist, Jürgen Habermas, that there is such a thing as the pathology - and even the criminology of religion. But there is not only a dialectic of religion, but also of enlightenment. Modern enlightenment is the attempt to free people from their fears and to make them masters of their fate. But it is obvious from the history of the 18th, 19th, 20s and 21st century, that secular enlightenment and the bourgeois and socialist revolutions, which it has inspired, can produce even more fear, and can make the lives of people less free and more fateful. There is not only religious, but also secular terror: not only the terror of crusaders and Gihadistst, but also the terror of the bourgeois and the socialist revolutionaries.

Three Future Possibilities

From the three-fold dialectic of the religious and the secular, and its trends and tensions, the critical theory of religion deducts three alternative futures: 1. a fundamentalist society; 2. a secular society; 3. a reconciled society. It is possible, that people may become so much disgusted with the dialectic of enlightenment, that they allow religious fundamentalism to gain power in civil society and constitutional state and education, and resist and push back the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment movements. The separation of Church and secular state may become blurred or disappear completely as it has happened e.g. in the theocratic Iran. Modern enlightenment may regress into mythology again. There is, of course a price to be paid
for such fundamentalist regression. The fundamentalists lose contact and rapport with modern history and all its not only technological, but also cultural advances. It is also possible, that modern people become so much fed up with the dialectic of religion, particularly religiously motivated fanaticism and terrorism, that they move toward an entirely secularized family, society and state, which marginalizes religious voices in public to the point of utter irrelevance concerning all relevant problems of modern and possibly post-modern life. There is also a price to be paid for such totally secularized society. Religion once told people, where they came from and most of all where they were going to, and thus gave them meaning. Modern society comes from the dark and moves into the dark, and thus cannot provide an unconditional meaning any longer. Meaninglessness produces boredom, and boredom has to be overcome by drugs. From the tonnage of drugs consumed in civil society, one can deduct the degree of boredom, and from it the measure of the depletion of the resource of meaning as consequence of secularization. There is finally the possibility, that religious people, who are aware of the dialectic of religion and have repented and thus overcome it, and enlighteners who are conscious of the dialectic of enlightenment and who have reflected upon it and thus conquered it, meet in discourse and try in a new way to reconcile the antagonism between religious faith and world-knowledge, revelation and autonomous reason, and realize this reconciliation in family, society, state, and education. Since 30 years, we have pursued this third future possibility, a postmodern reconciliation of the religious and the secular, in our international course on the

**Future of Religion,**

in the Inter-University Center for Post Graduate Studies, in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and since five years in our international course on

**Religion in Civil Society**

in Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine. In both international courses we discovered again and again, that the history of religion as well as the history of enlightenment are unfinished projects. How does this three fold dialectic of the religious and the secular and the future possibilities intrinsic to it, work itself out in the contemporary world-historical process and context?

**Collision of Civilizations**

Today nothing makes the global 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 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.

Combination

Of course some friends of the second Bush Administration try to combine the enemy images of communism with that of Islam. Thus, according to John Levine and David Walsh (August 24, 2005/ Source: www.wsws.org) on Monday, August 22, 2005, the Christian fundamentalist preacher, politician and broadcaster Pat Robertson called in the old tradition of fascist radio and television evangelists since Martin Luther Thomas and Charles Coughlin, who always used religious motives, devices and tricks, in order to achieve rightwing political purposes, for the assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Pat Robertson, the Christian fundamentalist politician and broadcaster with close ties to the Bush administration, has publicly called for the assassination of the president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez. Robertson issued his Mafia-like appeal for the US government to take out Chavez on his television show The 700 Club, broadcast to over one million viewers on his own Christian Broadcast Network and Disney’s ABC Family Network. After a ten-minute news clip aimed at portraying Chavez’s Venezuela as a major threat to the United States, Robertson proceeded to make the case for assassination:

He has destroyed the Venezuelan economy, and he’s going to make that a launching pad for communist infiltration and Muslim extremism all over the continent.

“You know, I don’t know about this doctrine of assassination, but if he thinks we’re trying to assassinate him, I think that we really
ought to go ahead and do it. It’s a whole lot cheaper than starting a war... and I don’t think any oil shipments will stop. This man is a terrific danger, and this is in our sphere of influence.

He continued,

Without question, this is a dangerous enemy to our south, controlling a huge pool of oil, that could hurt us very badly. We have the ability to take him out, and I think the time has come that we exercise that ability. We don’t need another $200 billion war to get rid of one, you know, strong-arm dictator. It’s a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with.

Robertson is not simply a crackpot. He was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988 and is a major force within the Republican Party. Robertson and his ilk on the fundamentalist right, like James Dobson of Focus on the Family and Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, hold de facto veto power over the Bush administration’s policy decisions, such as which individual to nominate for the Supreme Court.

**Denunciation**

The Venezuelan government denounced Robertson’s comments, describing them as terrorist.

Venezuelan Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel told a news conference in Caracas,

> It’s the height of hypocrisy for the US to continue talking about the war against terrorism when at the same time you have someone making obvious terrorist declarations in the heart of the country."

Rangel continued,

> This type of statement justifies the Venezuelan government’s worry about preserving the life of its president... President Bush said yesterday that his government rejects all forms of terrorism. The reaction of the US to this presumably religious man will put to the test US rhetoric.”

Chavez told reporters before boarding an airplane in Havana, where he met with Cuban President Fidel Castro,

> “I don’t know who that person is. I don’t care what he said. I prefer to talk about life, about the things we’ve been working on.
Castro, standing beside Chavez, commented,

I think only God can punish crimes of such magnitude.

In June, Chavez asserted that the Venezuelan government had

a lot of evidence, not just rumors, that there are people [referring to the US] who think the only solution is to kill Hugo Chavez. We’ve increased our security and intelligence a lot. If that madness happens, they will regret it.

Such an action by the US military or intelligence apparatus would violate an assassination ban instituted by President Gerald Ford in 1976. Since Chavez was first elected in 1998, Washington has repeatedly sought to undermine and topple his government. A mass outpouring of popular support allowed the Venezuelan president to survive a US-backed coup attempt in 2002. After numerous attempts to unseat him through a presidential referendum, a vote was held in August 2004, with Chavez winning a landslide victory that was certified by international inspectors, including former US president Jimmy Carter. According to polls, Chavez’s popularity has soared in recent months, buoyed in part by a rally in the price of oil that has allowed him to increase government spending. The percentage of Venezuelans saying they back Chavez rose to 71.2 percent in May from 67 percent in April, according to the latest poll by Caracas-based pollster Datanalisis. Washington is hostile to the left-nationalist government of Chavez because it has become an obstacle to the drive to privatize Venezuela’s considerable oil resources as a step towards their takeover by American-based energy conglomerates.

American Reactions

In response to Robertson’s appeal, a US State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, blandly told a press conference in Washington that the incendiary remarks
do not represent the policy of the United States.

He continued,

Any allegations that we are planning to take hostile action against the Venezuelan government are completely baseless and without fact.

The White House remained silent, refusing to condemn Robertson. While certain evangelical groups criticized Robertson, noted the New York Times,

other conservative Christian organizations remained silent, with leaders at the Traditional Values Coalition, the Family Research
Council and the Christian Coalition saying through spokesmen that they were too busy to comment.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who has been at the center of provocations against Chavez, told a press conference that the government cannot control what Americans say. Robertson

is a private citizen,

he added,

Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time.

This is the sheerest hypocrisy. If Robertson had been an Islamic cleric calling for the assassination of a Western political leader, he would have been quickly indicted or seized and placed in military detention. Only a month ago, Dr. Ali Al-Timimi, a scientist and Islamic fundamentalist preacher, was sentenced to life in prison without parole plus 70 years in Virginia on charges that he urged Muslim followers to leave the US and support Islamic military efforts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Indonesia and Russia. Yet Robertson faced only a mild rebuke following his comments. No prominent Democrats came forward to denounce his statements or his influence within the Republican Party and the Bush administration. Minnesota Republican Senator Norm Coleman, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, told reporters that Robertson’s statement was

incredibly stupid

and

has no reflection on reality.

On the contrary, the comments have a definite bearing on reality. What irks Coleman is that Robertson has blurted out what Bush administration officials would prefer to discuss and plan behind closed doors. The call for Chavez’s murder, delivered in the language of a gangland boss, has brought into the open the criminal mindset of a large section of the American ruling elite.

Influence

With a net worth of hundreds of millions of dollars, obtained in part from a diamond mining empire in Africa, and control over a number of media and political institutions, most notably the Christian Broadcasting Network, Robertson exercises considerable influence on American politics. His activities

pass under the radar

because the media and the Democratic Party have given him political amnesty, letting previous comments of a similar character to his call for a
hit

on Chavez go by without a response. During the conflict between the White House and State Department in the lead-up to the war in Iraq, Robertson on two occasions suggested someone nuke the State Department. He once described feminism as a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.

During the 2000 election campaign, Arizona Republican Senator John McCain quite rightly labeled Bush a Pat Robertson Republican.

Robertson’s Christian Coalition contributed heavily to Bush’s election and to placing religious fundamentalist policies at the forefront of Republican congressional initiatives. Robertson himself ran in the 1988 Republican primaries, winning the Washington primary, and seemed on course to a possible victory. He pulled out of the race after a number of scandals, urging his supporters to rally behind George H.W. Bush. The resources and organization of his 1988 campaign formed the basis for the creation of the Christian Coalition. According to Robertson’s website,

In 1992, Robertson was selected by Newsweek magazine as one of America’s 100 Cultural Elite... In July 2002, Robertson was presented with The State of Israel Friendship Award by the Chicago chapter of the Zionist Organization of America.

His books and sermons, combining extreme right-wing politics and apocalyptic theology, have contributed to the political atmosphere which nurtures right-wing terrorist elements and actions such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and attacks on abortion clinics.

**Premonition**

Robertson has, nevertheless, at least a premonition, that ultimately not Islam, with its emphasis on usury, but socialism with its stress on the value theory – use-, exchange- and particularly surplus-value - remains the most dangerous opponent for the American and global bourgeoisie, and that he may thus very well concentrate, like all fascists and liberals before him, on the enemy image of communism, while the enemy image of Islam is still of greatest actuality. The best way for Robertson to compete with both, communism and Islam, would of course be, to act for once as what he pretends to be, a genuine Christian, and as such to follow the Mosaic Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount, which both prohibit murder, and thus
assassination and war, and not as a clerico-fascist. If Robertson was a true Christian, the well-paid television evangelist would be driven not by American nationalism and bourgeois class consciousness and interest, but rather by a Messianic longing for the totally Other: what Jesus called during his trial before the mass murderer, the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilatus.

Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.

Jesus’ kingdom was entirely other than at that time the State of Israel or the Roman Empire, or today the American Empire: and neither murder, assassinations, nor wars would take place in it any longer. From the 1930s on the Rightwing Radio- and later on Television Evangelists did not lead people to Jesus’ completely other kingdom, but rather to alternative Future I – the totally administered society. They prepared fascism in the name of anti-fascism, and anti-communism, and now anti-Islam.

Critical or Uncritical Nationalism?

The Roman Catholic Priest and President of the Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Robert Sirico, counseled Reverend Pat Robertson and all the other Evangelicals through The Detroit News of September 3, 2005, to rethink nationalism.

Catholics and Evangelicals had substantially contributed to the reelection of President Bush junior in November 2004, after he had already as Governor of Texas executed 150 prisoners against Catholic teaching and Papal intervention attempts, and after he had initiated two wars, which had been characterized as being unjust on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount and the Augustinian Seven Point Just War Theory not only by Pope John Paul II, but also by members of the World Council of Churches, and which by that time had cost already the lives of over 1000 American soldiers and of close to 100 000 civilians. After the Presidential election, Catholics and Evangelicals concluded even a closer, more formal alliance, in order to continue their nationalistic political cooperation: my country, right or wrong! Sirico, the Catholic, of course, hates the socialists Chavez and Castro as much as the Evangelical Robertson does, in spite of the fifth commandment of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, which demands not only the love of the neighbor, but also the love of the enemy, in imitation of God and also of the Nazarene himself. Sirico agrees with Robertson’s goal, that Chavez and, of course, also Castro, and the Chinese communists, and all other socialists, must be removed from power, no matter if they have been voted in democratically or not, or if they have strong popular support or not. Sirico differs from Robertson only concerning the means.
Natural Law

Following the Medieval Roman Catholic Paradigm of Christianity and the traditional, premodern, first Stoic and then baptized natural law, including the Augustinian Seven Point Just War Theory, Sirico wants to use war against Venezuela or Cuba, etc, only as a last resort: defensive, proportional and limited. Thus Sirico recommends trying first cultural exchange, moral example, diplomatic pressure and free trade as tools, in order to oust Chavez, or Castro, or other socialists, including the Chinese communists, and to bring the old bourgeois nationalists back again. Thus, such ousting is to be done in the name of bourgeois and even Christian, or Catholic, or Evangelical nationalism: a contradicio in adjecto. Sirico has completely forgotten the horror and terror of prefascist liberal nationalism, fascist nationalism, and post-fascist neoliberal nationalism of the 20th and 21st centuries, the Lateran Treaty with Benito Mussolini and the Concordat with Adolf Hitler, which is still valid in Germany today. He has forgotten, that the Europeans paid with two world wars and over 60 million casualties their victory over nationalism in the form of the European Union. He has forgotten, that nationalism as such is not a medieval, or a Catholic, but rather - like the nation state, or religious or political fundamentalism - a very modern phenomenon.

Tyrannicide

But Sirico does remember, that – not the Rabbi Jesus – but the medieval natural law affirms the idea of killing of tyrants, but only after every other alternative has been exhausted, and with some assurance, that the cure would not prove worse than the disease. As a matter of fact, the permission of tyrannizide is rooted in the first of the four natural laws: the inclination, and the right, and the duty to preserve life. Thus, ultimately Robertson and Sirico agree after all: Chavez, or Castro, or the Chinese communists, etc. could be assassinated or made war against, if nothing else works. Sirico wants to replace Reverend Robertson’s uncritical with his critical nationalism. For the critical nationalist Sirico, Christianity does not regard every enemy of the nation state as worthy of execution.

Thanks be to God! We all, believers and humanists, are really happy about that. Of course, Reverend Robertson as well as Father Sirico are both, like their predecessors in the 1930s and 1940s – e.g. the radio evangelists Reverend Martin Luther Thomas or Father Charles Coughlin - and like Opus Dei today, very well paid by the bourgeois power elite for their uncritical, or critical nationalism. That is also most helpful financially for Evangelical and Catholic parishes and dioceses alike. But it is obvious, that any form of uncritical or critical nationalism will necessarily undermine and destroy any discourse or cooperation among the civilizations, and thus will promote not only the trend toward alternative Future I – the authoritarian, totalitarian, totally administered, one-dimensional, and technocratic society, but also toward alternative Future II – the collisions, assassinations, and wars among civilizations, and thus will weaken the tendencies toward alternative Future III – the reconciliation of the civilizations and an autonomous as well as solidary, and friendly, and helpful living together of human beings. Of course, the whole modern history of the West proves most conclusively, that there is not such a
thing as critical nationalism. To deny this would mean to suffer from extreme amnesia. While the Detroit News published Father Sirico’s opinion about critical nationalism, it did not allow space for his critics. That is what the Jeffersonian free flow of information and thought has come down too after 200 years: the neo-liberal endangerment of the freedom of the press!!!

**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.17

**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.18 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, 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, 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 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.

Gihadist 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 retaliated 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 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. 22. 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, 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, Paul) President Bush junior answered the Jihadists’ 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 also 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, 23 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 have 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 - inspite 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 Gihadists with the likewise Biblical term

diabolical,

and still continue to do so at present – in August 2005.

From the First to the Second Iraq War

Already immediately after the inglorious end of the first Iraq war under President Bush senior, and one decade before the second Iraq war, a small group of entirely secular neo-conservative, or neo-liberal ideologues and power-politicians, - conservative revolutionaries, or better still counter-revolutionaries all of them – had started to prepare ideologically a preventive war for oil reserves, American hegemony, and Israel’s security. 27 After President Bush junior came into power in January 1999, the small neo-conservative group planned the second Iraq war with great precision. The Bush Administration, lead by the small group of conservative revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries, used the unheard – of, outrageous retaliatory mass murder by suicide-ready Gihadists on September 11, 2001 as an occasion, to attack first Afghanistan, and then to threaten war against Iraq, the secular government of which had no share in the religiously motivated Gihad attacks on New York and Washington D/C. The Bush Administration bombed Iraq months before it asked Congress for permission to use force. By giving and receiving this permission, Congress and President violated the American Constitution. The Philadelphia Constitution answers the first point of the Augustinian Seven Point Just War Theory by saying, that only Congress has the authority and the right to declare war. In reality the first or the second Iraq war were never formally declared by Congress or President, as e.g. the first or the Second World War. Wars are obviously becoming more informal.

Deism

Unlike the Augustinian Just War Theory, which is still a religious document, the American Constitution is a product of the secular bourgeois enlightenment, and is as such an entirely secular document. 28 While the Declaration of Independence uses the name of God twice in the spirit of deism, a construct of the enlightenment, the American Constitution does not mention it at all, obviously in order to prevent secular politicians from abusing it. Both
documents are rooted in Rousseau’s and Voltaire’s deism. For deism, God has admittedly created the world, but then had left it to itself. For all practical purposes, in deistic view the world is as atheistic as the God is acosmic. Thus, deism differs not only from the Trinitarian God concept of Christianity, but also from the not only transcendent, but also immanent God idea of Judaism and Islam. Deism does not know any longer of the Christian incarnation as reconciliation between the Infinite and the finite, or as mediation between the religious and the secular. Deism is more secular than religious, in spite of the fact that it still holds on to the Supreme Being, a virtuous life, and immortality. The passionate enforcement of a virtuous life drove Robespierre, one of the leaders of the French Revolution, to terror. There is not only a religious, but also a secular terror; revolutionary, state and nihilistic terror. Robespierre became the victim of his own terror: he was guillotined. The bourgeois revolution terrorized and swallowed up its own children. Here the enlightenment agrees ironically with the Bible:

Jesus then said: Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.\textsuperscript{30}

That precisely is the lex talionis, which at least in Christianity is to be broken.\textsuperscript{31}

**Project Iraq Freedom**

The Bush Administration started the second war against Iraq – Project Iraq Freedom following Project Dessert Storm - after having failed in its efforts to gain the consent of the World Security Council and after an almost Orwellian or Huxleyan lying campaign concerning the reasons for and the goals of the war.\textsuperscript{32} This campaign pointed more toward alternative Future I – the totally administered society and alternative Future II – the entirely militarized society, than toward alternative Future III – a free and just society.\textsuperscript{33} The campaign followed the Future I motto:

\begin{quote}
War is Peace
Freedom is Slavery
Ignorance is Strength.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

It remains inconceivable for the rest of the world, why Prime Minister Tony Blair from the British Labor Party supported this campaign. The second war against Iraq began on March 18, 2003 with an intense bombardment of Baghdad: an open city, and thus in violation of the Geneva Conventions. The war continued with massive military force for three weeks against international law and against world public opinion. The war was won very fast, but only apparently so. The Iraqi military, trained in General Zhukov’s dialectical warfare, had decided long before the American invasion started, not to resist with obsolete weapons the invading high-tech army in open battle, but dissolved its forces and reorganized them for partisan warfare: as once the Spaniards did successfully against Napoleon, and the Russians against Hitler, and General Giap and the Vietnamese against the French Foreign Legion, which consisted to a large extend of former SS troops, and finally against the American army. This Iraqi partisan warfare against the so called
continues up to the present – October 2005 - with the support of many foreign volunteers from other Islamic countries.

**Good and Bad Religion**

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, the time of the crusades is over once and for all. Only bad religion can continue ideologically to support new crusades: be it against Islam, or socialism, or against anybody else. Bad religion affirms and legitimates the status quo of antagonistic civil society, no matter how unjust it may be. Bad religion is mere ideology as false consciousness, and as masking and legitimating of gender, racial, national and class interests. Shortly, it is the untruth. Good or critical religion concretely negates the status quo of globalized late capitalist society, and demands, that things become otherwise: that alternative Future III – the free and reconciled society – should be prepared. Good religion is driven, and supported, and strengthened by the unstoppable and unsatisfiable longing for the totally Other, for what once was called in the Abrahamic religions Infinite Power, Perfect Justice, Unconditional Love, and Absolute Truth: shortly, the longing, that the murderer shall not triumph over the innocent victim, at least not ultimately. It is the longing for the good and true Infinity, which is never far distant, and which appears in the most insignificant finite ciphers and semblances in the midst of the bad infinity of global late capitalist society. The totally Other, or the Absolute Truth, or the good and true Infinity is the radical, but nevertheless determinate negation of that, what on earth and in finite life is called untruth, injustice, human abandonment, and alienation: not only of man from himself and among individuals, but also between the genders, and among the races, the nations, the classes, the civilizations, and the religions.