Invitation of Papers for the
Fifth International Course on
“Religion and Civil Society:
Toward Discourse and Cooperation
among the Civilizations.”
in Yalta, Ukraine
October 26 - 28, 2005

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September 21, 2005
Dear Friend:

We are writing this letter to you, in order to invite you wholeheartedly to our fifth international course on “Religion and Civil Society: Toward Discourse and Cooperation among the Civilizations,” to take place in Yalta, Ukraine, from October 26 - 28, 2005. It is a sister course to our international Dubrovnik - course on the “Future of Religion.” Our new theme in Yalta 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? That will be the fundamental question of our discourse in Yalta, October 26 – 28, 2005. The following few facts and figures, thoughts and ideas may help to stimulate and give guidance to our discourse, and may inspire our papers.

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 opponents, the critical theorist of society, Jürgen Habermas, and the ecumenical Christian theologian, Hans Küng, Huntington has studied little the inner dynamic and differentiations of the particular civilizations, and religions. Huntington obviously knows little about complex historical connections, flowing transitions, mutual cross-fertilizations, and peaceful living together of civilizations and religions. Thus, Huntington made the prognosis, that the collision between the modern secular Western civilization and the Islamic civilization 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 of communism by the enemy image of Islam, or even combined them and thus made the discourse and the cooperation among the civilizations very difficult.
**Combination of Images**

Thus some friends of the second Bush Administration have indeed tried, not only to replace but also even to combine the enemy images of communism of Islam. On Monday, August 22, 2005, the Christian fundamentalist preacher, politician and broadcaster with close ties to the Bush Administration, Reverend Pat Robertson, has 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. Robertson issued his Mafia-like appeal to the US government, to

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    take out
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Chavez, on his television show,

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The 700 Club,
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broadcasting to over one million viewers, through 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:

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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.
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Robertson continued,

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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.
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Like in the flash of lightening in Robertson’s statements on assassination of a foreign head of a sovereign state become visible the otherwise hidden connections between positivism and neo-positivism, neo-conservativism and neo-liberalism, and fascism and neo-fascism, particularly clerico - fascism. Such type of extreme right-wing rhetoric can, of course, only intensify the tensions among the civilizations and lead to further explosions, like September 11, 2001, and prevent the start of any rational discourse and cooperation among the civilizations.
Terrorism

Reverend 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 up to the present. Robertson and his ilk on the religious and political 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. 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 2005 from 67 percent in April 2005, according to the latest poll by Caracas-based pollster Datanalisis. Washington is hostile to the socialist 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. 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.

McCormack 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 couldn’t control what Americans say. Robertson

is a private citizen,

Rumsfeld added,

private citizens say all kinds of things all the time.

Such kind of apologetics did of course not prevent the American Government to target Fidel Castro, the friend of Chavez, or Dr. Che Guevara, or Dr. Aliende or Sadam Hussein for assassination. Robertson’s assassination threat did not prevent President Chavez to offer to send oil for the poor in the United States who suffered from high oil prices already before the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe. The American Government like the offer from Iran and Cuba rejected Chaves’s offer of help for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Bourgeois nationalism, which finds help from socialist Islamic countries objectionable, seems to be more important than the suffering of the victims. To accept such help could have build bridges among the civilizations. Most recently, in the beginning of September 2005. President Chavez, announced, after American soldiers had appeared on nearby islands, that the American Government planned to attack
Venezuela, and that the country was ready defend itself. Such threats of assassination or war do great harm to the discourse and cooperation among the civilizations.

_Hypocrisy_

Such apologetics as expressed concerning Reverend Robertson’s assassination and war threats is indeed 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.

To 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 class. 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.

Robertson is, what in Israel is called, a Christian Zionist. His books and sermons, combining extreme right-wing politics and eschatological-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. The call for Chavez’s assassination is a serious threat coming from a leading Republican and close ally of the Bush administration. It is in line with the previous attempts of the Bush administrations to destabilize and unseat the Venezuelan government. As is evident in Robertson’s comments, the main issue for the US ruling class is not tyranny or terrorism, but Venezuela’s oil and the preservation by any and all means of the US sphere of influence in Latin America.

Socialism, Islam and Christianity

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 neo-liberals before him, on the enemy image of socialism, while the enemy image of Islam is still of greatest actuality. Sometimes the Muslim nationalist Sadam Hussein appears in the Western press as a socialist. The best way for Robertson to compete with both, socialism 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 Jesuanic 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 the State of Israel before the destruction of the second temple in 70 and of Jerusalem in 135, or the Roman Empire, or today the American Empire: and neither murder, assassinations, or 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 of heaven, but rather to alternative Future I – the totally administered society and to alternative Future II – the more and more militarized society. They were preparing fascism in the name of anti-fascism, and anti-communism, and more recently anti-Islam. Future I and II make impossible the discourse and cooperation among the civilizations.

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 socialist 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. 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 contradictio in adjecto. Sirico has completely forgotten the horror and terror of prefascist liberal nationalism, fascist nationalism, and post-fascist neo-liberal nationalism of the 20th and 21st centuries, and that the European Union paid with two world wars and over 60 million casualties its victory over nationalism, and that nationalism as such is not a medieval, or a Catholic, but - like the nation state, or religious or political fundamentalism - a very modern phenomenon. But Sirico does remember, that – not the Rabbi Jesus – but the medical 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 Robertson’s uncritical with his critical nationalism. For the critical nationalist, 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, Robertson as well as 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, and 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.

**Ideological Support**

Huntington gave 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. He gave ideological support, when they thus – intentionally or unintentionally – created a favorable atmosphere for the realization of alternative Future I – the entirely bureaucratized society, and particularly for alternative Future II – further conventional wars and civil wars, and ultimately an NBC war among the civilizations, and the consequential ecological devastation, and thus postponed indefinitely alternative Future III - peaceful civilizations, 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 bourgeois 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. The breaking of the jus talionis could contribute substantially to the discourse and cooperation among the civilizations.

**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. 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 civilization. The campaign followed the Future I motto:

War is Peace  
Freedom is Slavery  
Ignorance is Strength.

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 Chukow’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 crusaders continues up to the present – September 2005 - with the support of many foreign volunteers from other Islamic countries.


**Alienation of the Civilizations**

The second Bush-Administration, instead of conquering the terror campaign of the Gihadists, helped its expansion in Afghanistan, in the Near East and around the globe, and thus the further alienation of the civilizations. Further tragedies followed the Afghanistan and Iraq war: on Bali, in Casablanka, in Riad, in Istambul, in Madrid, in London, in the Egyptian resort town of Sharmal El Sheikh. In Madrid, on March 11, 2004, and in London on July 7, 2005 the massacres touched Europe, and became a warning signal for all European countries, including those who had not participated in the Iraq war, that the world crisis had dramatically sharpened. The tensions of the worldwide antagonism between the religious and the secular had led to permanent explosions. This was so, because the war against two Islamic countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the decades of Western application of double standards in reference to the degrading and despising occupation policies of the State of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories under disregard not only of the Mosaic Decalogue and the 613/614 Mitzvoth, but also of all UN – resolutions, had thrown the whole Islamic world into indescribable rage and fury, embitterment, and hardening. In 2004, a high official of the Sharon Cabinet in Jerusalem saw a picture of an old Palestinian grandmother, who crawled on the dirty floor of her bulldozed-down home and searched for her pills: she reminded him of his relatives in Auschwitz. Now Huntington’s clash of civilizations appears as self-fulfilling prophecy. On July 24, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI offered a public prayer in Rome, that God might stop the terrorists. God may not do that without the so-called Christian West removing the factors, which have produced the religious terror of the Gihadists in the first place, and which continue to do so: particularly the secular terror, e.g. the massacres of Talibans after the siege of Kunduz in Afghanistan, or the torture and humiliations of prisoners in Abu Ghraib, and at Gutanamo Bay, and the bombardments of open towns and villages in Iraq, which produce high numbers of civilian casualties, the so called collateral damages, e.g. in Felujia, and the use of cancer-producing down-graded uranium in weaponry in Basra and elsewhere, without cleaning it up afterwards, etc.

**The Non-Concluded Dialectic**

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, there are obviously hardened and petrified religious orthodoxies not only in the Near East and the Far East, but also in the West. There are hardened orthodoxies in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and in their particular paradigms, as well as in other world religions. Whoever wants with Küng or Habermas, and against Huntington, avoid alterative Future II - a collision of civilizations and conventional wars and civil wars, and finally a third world war, has to remember, that the dialectic of the occidental process of modernization and enlightenment and secularization has not yet been completely decided and concluded. On one hand, the present American war against terrorism is no war at all, since a war can take place only between nations, and not between a nation and a global Islamic movement, of which Alcaida is only a small part. On the other hand, in the religious terrorism expresses itself also the fateful-speechless collision of cultural worlds, which must develop a common language, beyond the silent and dumb force of the religious terrorists, as well as of the secular rockets, directed against them.
Already years ago the great Iranian leader Chatami wished, that the Americans had more communicative rationality, so that one could talk with them. Americans appear as being completely overcome by instrumental rationality. They continually speak about either tools or weapons of all kinds in terms of functional rationality, instead of language-mediated relationships between persons or nations or civilizations. In a Frankfurt newspaper Chatami expressed his appreciation for the great accomplishments of modernity, but also insisted on Islamic identity. Should there not be a possibility of reconciliation, or at least mutual openness? However, neither the Christian-Democratic nor the Social-Democratic German Government answered Chatami. The answer came finally from Jürgen Habermas, when at the occasion of receiving the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 2001 in Frankfurt’s St. Paul’s Church, he spoke on the old theme of faith and knowledge, and recommended an open dialectic between the religious and the secular, between Islam and the secular West.

Crisis Situation

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, without doubt, the post-secular civil society finds itself in an awkward and thorny key-situation for the new formation of the international relations: of the relationship between the secular West and Islam; and also of the relationship among the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, the options have become quite clear: either alternative Future II - rivalry of the religions, collision of the cultures, wars among the nations and civilizations, or alternative Future III - discourse and cooperation among the cultures and peace among the civilizations. Küng has stated rightly many times: There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without discourse among them. There will be no discourse among the religions, without foundation research in the religions. In this research, religious and secular public education should and can cooperate. Religious thinkers like Hans Küng, or secular thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, are fully aware, that such discourse is the most fragile form of mediation among the religious communities as well as between them and the secular world. Every encounter in the secular and disenchanted life world of civil society among members of different faith communities as well as between them and secular people, demonstrates concerning each topic discussed – wars, death penalty, stem cell research, abortion, gay marriage, euthanasia etc. - the vulnerability of such discourse through different forms of irrationality and collective insanity: be it nationalism, or racism, or religious or secular fanaticism. But such discourse is, nevertheless, the only healthy alternative to alternative Future II – the more and more militarized society, more and more conventional wars and civil wars, and finally the clash of whole civilizations, and a third world war with real weapons of mass destruction on all sides. An American public opinion poll of July 24, 2005, discovered, that 6 out of 10 Americans firmly believe, that a third world war is unavoidable, and that it will break out in the not too distant future.

Mutual Openness

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, it is obvious, that the explosion of the antagonism between the religious and the secular, which happened on September 11, 2001, and which has continued ever since in the form of retaliation and counter-retaliation, terror and
counter-terror, concerns more than just the separation of church and state, religious and secular education, or the privatization of religion, or creationism versus evolutionism, or vice versa, or stem cell research, abortion and euthanasia. We must admit, that in the present world - historical situation no real reconciliation between the religious and the secular, revelation and autonomous reason is possible. Precisely, therefore, we suggest, that the discourse between the religious and the secular should at least not be closed up fundamentalistically, or scientistically and positivistically. To the contrary, we suggest an open dialectic between faith and knowledge, revelation and enlightenment, in order from there to derive guidance also for the relationship between church and state, religious and secular education. Such openness does not hope for the return from mysticism to religious orthodoxy, or from secular enlightenment to mysticism. The secular may concretely supersede the religious: the secular may not only critique the religious, but it may also preserve, elevate and fulfill it in alternative Future III – the reconciled society.

**Golden Rule**

We start our fifth international discourse in Yalta once more from the conviction, that the world - religions have an important role to play in the establishment of peace among the civilizations. We are also convinced, that the world-religions can have this positive function for peace among the civilizations only, when they enter discourse with each other, and explore together the moral values and norms which they may have in common, and the possibilities of their application to different civilizations. In such discourse, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, Muslims or Bahai may find out, that they share - if also in different formulations - at least one ethical norm: the Golden Rule. Already in the present transition period from modernity to post-modernity an open dialectic between the religious and the secular, revelation and autonomous reason, faith and knowledge can make possible the cooperation between religious and secular people, believers and enlighteners toward a project world ethos. It could be centered in the Golden Rule, The Golden Rule embraces not only the whole Hebrew Law and the Prophets, but also the New Testament and the Koran. Also many enlighteners and humanists have no problem to accept the Golden Rule as the foundation of a global ethos. The Golden Rule states in its Chinese form:

Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.

The Golden Rule says in its Hindu Form:

This is the sum of duty: do nothing to others, which would cause you, pain if done to you.

The Golden Rule teaches in its Buddhist form:

A state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must be so for him also; and a state which is not pleasant or delightful for me, how could I inflict that on another?

The Golden Rule of Jainism says:
A person should treat all creatures as he himself would be treated.

The Golden Rule says in its Jewish form:

Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you.

The Golden Rule teaches in its Christian form:

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.

The Golden Rule states in its Islamic form:

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

One may even extend the Gold Rule to non-human living beings: men would do to animals, as men would have animals do to them: e.g. pull the ox out of the fountain even on the Sabbath. If men would not like to be eaten by sharks, or lions, or bears, they should not eat them neither. Before Noah all people were vegetarians. If men would respect animal rights in terms of the Golden Rule, could they still establish zoos, or keep domestic animals, not to speak of having huge slaughterhouses?

**The End of the Lex Talionis**

The Golden Rule in all its different forms can conquer the jus talionis, which separates the civilizations. The practice of the Golden rule would be the end of the lex talionis. The analysis should not stop with the realistic assertion, that the Golden Rule can not be practiced, and thus the lex talionis can not be broken, Men like Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, and Archbishop Romero and many others have practiced the Golden Rule even in its extreme form, by following the first, fourth and fifth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount. It is rather so, that the psychoanalytical and critical sociological and critical theological analysis must begin precisely with the question: why is it not possible for some people to practice the Golden Rule, and why must they remain under the spell of the mythological jus talionis, when others can liberate themselves from this ban and do to others, as they want to be treated. In any case, who does not want to lose his eye, should not take it from his brother. Who does not want to be stolen from, should not steal, or engage in usury, or colonialism, or imperialism. Who does not want to be murdered, should not murder, or engage in war, or torture, or terror, religious or secular. Who does not want to be lied to, should not lie and engage in false advertisement, or false propaganda, or ideology understood as false consciousness, the masking of national, or racial, or class interests, shortly the untruth. Whoever does not want his personal autonomy or national sovereignty to be violated, should not attack that of other persons or nations. Whoever does not want his own country to be devastated by natural or historical agents, should not devastate other peoples’ countries: otherwise New Orleans of August/September 2005 and the surrounding states, cities, towns and villages suddenly look with their thousands of wounded and dead, and refugees, and
homeless, and hostages, and fires, and shootings, and killings, and rapes, and disorganization, and chaos like Hiroshima, or Dresden, or Baghdad, or Basra, or Kabul. Who does not want other life forms to intervene into his own, should also not intervene into those of other people. Whoever does not want other nations to have, or to use weapons of mass destruction, should also not have, or use them himself. The Israelite, Hebrew, Jewish, Christian and Islamic prophets and the Hebrew psalmists, would have said: repent! As one hurricane after the other - Katrina, Ophelia, Rita - are approaching, hitting and damaging the Gulf coast and Eastern coast of North America, the President sees in them entirely natural events, as every secular modern man would do. But the born-again President, nevertheless, also ordered a day of prayer for the whole nation after the hurricane Katrina and declared the suffering from the storms to be undeserved.

This theodicy is certainly true for the poor classes and the children, who do most of the suffering. However, the Hebrew Bible speaks of a God, who hardened the heart of the Pharaoh, as one plague after the other strikes his country, because he was unwilling to set his slaves free. The Lutheran Christian Hegel taught, that world-history is world-judgment. The Black Muslim Malcolm X declared after the assassination of President Kennedy, that the chickens are coming home to roost, and he was then assassinated himself. No religious man, being aware of his sinfulness, would be entirely sure, that his suffering was undeserved: no Antigone, and no Job. As one hurricane after the other hit the coast of North America, entirely secular members of the second Bush Administration had the impression, that they were under attack and that somebody was after them. A believer from the Abrahamic or prophetic religions would have no difficulties to affirm this. The wars against Afghanistan and Iraq may have cost the lives of up to 2000 American soldiers and 100 000 noncombatants or civilians. Recently, i.e. September 2005, mothers, wives and children of fallen American soldiers have appeared on television and have asked President Bush in public to explain, for what purpose their sons and daughters and husbands and fathers had to die in Iraq, and not to sacrifice more young men and women for his mistake. There has of course existed at least since Noah and the great flood and since Abraham and Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah the awful theodicy problem, the antagonism between God’s infinite Power, perfect Justice, and unconditional love on one hand, and the injustice that the innocent and good people, who do not deserve their suffering must suffer with the bad and evil people, who deserve it, on the other. There are e.g. the 90 innocent orphans and ten nuns, who drowned in the hurricane of Galveston, Texas, in 1900; the thousands of innocent children, who were swallowed up by the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean on Christmas 2004; and the hundreds of innocent children who got lost in the hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and along the American Gulf Coast in August and September 2005.

**Egalitarianism**

The Golden Rule implies a true egalitarianism among individuals and nations and civilizations, without which there cannot be any true discourse and cooperation, or any personal and social morality. Whenever the Golden Rule is not actualized, the lex talionis will take its place. If we do continually do to others, as we would not have them do to us, then there will necessarily be endless retaliation. Wars of revenge can not be won, except through the total
annihilation of the other, the enemy. If the wars of retaliation are not directed against another state, but rather against a worldwide religious movement, then - since they are no wars at all in the first place - those non-wars can be won even less. There remains only either the practice of the Golden Rule, and thus the inclusion of the other, or cold, universal despair, and finally alternative Future II: a third world war among the civilizations, a la Samuel Huntington. Hans Küng, has presented such project world ethos, centered in the Golden Rule, to the World - Parliament of Religions as well as to the United Nations, and found full and universal acceptance. While Huntington’s prophecy of the clash of civilizations has admittedly and unfortunately at this moment in world history the tendency to fulfill itself, we, nevertheless, side with Küng’s project World Ethos, and the discourse and cooperation among the civilizations: shalom!

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For further local information concerning meeting place, schedule, hotel reservations, air and bus connections, etc., please contact Professor Tatjana Senyushkina, Email – tsenyushkina@yandex.ru.

We hope very much to see you in Yalta in October 2005.

Best wishes,

Yours truly,

Rudolf J. Siebert

and

Tatjana Senyushkina

Directors

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