Never be discouraged from being an activist because people tell you that you'll not succeed. You have already succeeded if you're out there representing truth or justice or compassion or fairness or love.

Doris Haddock (Granny D)

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

Elie Wiesel

Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person.

Mother Teresa

Editorial

The Powers that Be *stems from the last WSCF-Europe conference,* Religion, Ethics and Politics: God and the Use of Power, *held in Berlin, Germany. This issue provides a forum to examine how Christian faith demands a radical renegotiation of political relationships and how our faith, as student activists, interacts with power structures. The conference, my first WSCF-E conference, was an inviting community full of discussions about politics, the global political structure, and religion. But, more than that, it was a support network of passionate and active students trying to understand how to seek social justice in what sometimes appears to be a hopeless hierarchy of power, a tangle of political games and economics.*

This past summer, I took a break from my post as the WSCF-E Office and Publications Intern to go home to Alberta, Canada for a short vacation. As it turned out, my visit coincided with the Toronto G-20 meetings. Though my home is across the country, the proceeding events have been stuck in my mind ever since. The world's leading economic state representatives, once again, gathered to discuss economic stimulus, the ongoing effects of the world recession, financial reform, and open markets. Protesters also began to fill the city of Toronto in the name of Aboriginal rights, environmental concerns, poverty, globalization, LGBT rights, human rights, and the list goes on.

The city had been literally divided: a chain link fence and security perimeter locked down the centre. Though I wasn't a personal witness to the security fence, its images and the empty, albeit police ridden, streets were ever present in the news. It was like nothing I had ever seen growing up in Canada. Friends living in Toronto were constantly updating their Facebook walls with images and updates on the life and feel of the now dead and highly secured city.

"Recovery and New Beginnings" was the theme of the G-20, but it was not the theme of the images that were flying around the internet. As Youtube videos and personal accounts of the treatment of many peaceful protesters were passed among friends, I avidly awaited the national newscasts to see how the media would reflect on what appeared to be a war in downtown Toronto. However, in my opinion, this wasn't the story portrayed. Protesters demanding that the agenda of the G-20 be refocused on issues important to those at the edges of society, perhaps bigger than the economy, were not shared with the public. Videos of peaceful protesters being stampeded by riot police, media representatives being harassed, and innocent bystanders being detained didn't make the cut.

For me, the whole idea of these economic meetings is mind boggling. Over 1 billion Canadian dollars were spent on security. According to one account, this could have housed all 80,000 homeless people currently on the waiting list for community housing for over a year at average rental costs. Fitting, seeing as the area cordoned off for the summit is home to one of Canada's highest concentrations of homeless people.

Even with all this money spent, a group of more violent protesters were still able to rampage through part of the city with little police presence. It raised more and more questions for me as time passed: How could the media not speak out against this unbalanced police action? How can governments justify spending this kind of money? Why is it that the same issues are raised by protesters at every G-20 and are still not on the agenda? What does this say about democracy? What does that tell us about Power?

It was more than a fence that was set up to protect government officials from the "violent" protests on the other side. It was a metaphor on so many different levels. A reminder of those who are on the outside. A reflection on how the powerful are protected. A barrier between those who are invited to the table and those who aren't. Those who matter and those who don't. There it was, a wall, built through downtown Toronto dividing us, rather than uniting us, giving power to a few.

After leaving Berlin this spring, I was jubilant, I had met so many wonderful and active students. They were passionate, smart, engaging, courageous, and more importantly they were excited about what they could do! Lectures challenged us to think deeply about Church and State relationships. History reminded us of how easy it is to fall in line with an unjust regime. Participants shared inspiring experiences of hardships. We were all motivated to act, and yet how easily I was discouraged by the way real life played out. But rather than wallowing after watching the G-20 take over my home, I was able to come back to work with WSCF-E more excited about the importance of this Mozaik.

I hope that The Powers that Be *provides an opportunity to reflect on how we live in this political world. What does it mean to live in solidarity with those at the fringes of society? How can we seek social justice? How can we challenge those in power to be responsible for the whole of society? How would we act if we had more power? Vaclav Havel (Czech playwright, essayist, dissident and politician) once said, "I am not interested in why man [sic] commits evil; I want to know why he [sic] does good". May the articles and contributions in this issue remind you why we do good, why we carry on.*

In this issue, we have included a section reflecting on the Lingua Franca event Religious Freedom as a Human Right *held in Lviv, Ukraine in May, 2009. Also, we have selected two opinion standpoints where the authors have provided shorter personal reflections. Continuing from the last issue we have also added a short editorial from the archives bridging WSCF-E's work from the past to the future. Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Sofie, for her encouragement and dedication to the conference and theme; to Matt, for stepping up when needed; to Rosie, for editing her vacation away; and to Pip, for going beyond his call as illustrator.*

Peace,

Jill Piebiak

The Powers that Be

Opinions

Religious Freedom

Would Jesus Run for Parliament or Lead a Protest?

Markus is a 34-year old Finn with a Master of Philosophy in Philosophy and a Master of Arts in Politics and Contemporary History. He currently lives in Helsinki and works as a Senior Political Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development. He has been involved in politics and public management during his career and has participated in Church life in various ways such as, running a Christian School in Helsinki as chairperson and being a treasurer in WSCF-Europe. The volcanic ash prevented him from presenting a lecture under the same title at the Berlin Theology Conference this past April.

Markus Ojakoski

Had Jesus reincarnated now having the idea to get involved in forming a better world than what is known to us, my advice to him (not that I would advise him to listen to me, really) would be to lead all the Christian churches and movements rather than run for a parliament. It is in this way he might have the biggest possible global influence, as we do not have parliamentary global governing structures. However, my advice includes more than just that, he would have to form a strong network of partisans of several standings *and* use demonstrations, publications, boycotts – all the means. But, I guess, the real intention of the proposed question in the title is to ask *what we should do*. This is what I hope to answer, as well as touch some of the underlying issues too.

There is an easy answer: We should use the most effective measures possible. Sometimes this could mean something as simple as leading a protest. Especially, as many parliaments in the current world order do not necessarily have a lot of room for manoeuvre in the globalised context of competing for markets, taken that in practice one of the main aims seems to be to generate wealth. Though that was an empirical remark (and not a prescriptive one); I want to acknowledge that generating wealth is something that seems to highly influence (Western) democracies' policies.

Even if there is an easy answer, there are some points I want to make:

1. **Politics is a necessary, but not entirely sufficient condition for improving the living conditions of the members/inhabitants of its area of its influence.**
   Most often politics means gaining wealth, if this is what the members, elite or both aim for. This is also a reason why politics needs to become (more) global. Otherwise, its means for controlling society, making differences, and developing are limited. In order to generate wealth there appears to be different routes that work to a certain extent; democracies with different depths of government involvement and non-democracies. However, the attempt to generate wealth is still important but I just want to add that I believe democracies are better at involving other goals of well-being.
2. **Matthew 25:40 and 42 states: "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" and "For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink".**
   This encourages me to think, there is a level of wealth that needs to be generated and a level of distribution *by need* (see later) that must be required. For me, this also brings up a question asking which kind of political thought might not be advisable.

It is obvious, but some forms of coordination will arise regardless of our will. Different motivations will drive people somewhere. Politics is something

that could be a counter-measure of possible shortcomings of the order that would just happen to take place. Politics could also be seen to take place anywhere there is coordination between people's or groups' interests. That is, indeed, inevitable. Yet we need each other to do things better.

I, therefore think that politics is either an obligation or at least something that should be respected by those who are not themselves doing their bit. It is a way to feed the hungry, even though it may be done in a poor manner or serve as means to maintain structures of inequality, discrimination or intolerance. The fact that politics may be used poorly is not a sensible reason to avoid it, but a reason to make it better as it cannot be avoided.

If those who feel politics is implemented badly decide to disregard politics, it will result in such politics which is poorer from their perspective. It may leave politics to those who do not have much common interest in mind, if any.

One should not count on one's supreme knowledge

The generation of our contemporaries thinks that their opinion should matter just because it's their opinion. This is a result of a weird contradictory subjectivism that has a lot of ground. Firstly, it postulates that all opinions are equally meaningful; secondly that anyone's opinion is, as such, meaningful. Equally meaningful unfortunately means utter meaningfulness of all - which might be a sustainable conclusion, but it is not the one a subjectivist would make. And this leads to consequences in politics. Those who think their opinion should count will become frustrated in politics, because this is not going to

happen. Politics is then blamed for the frustration. Engaging in the political world seems to require much more genuine subjectivism. That is, many things must be negotiable and other people's views have to be taken into account.

This is, indeed, frustrating, I can tell. One manifestation of this current underlying moral trend is the fact that people do not want to make full commitments to a particular political party. We could live this way (and so could the parties), but, as long as there are democracies, there will be structures and parties. And such it is those *in the parties* who will make the *final decisions*. I think those who make final decisions have often more influence than those who just try to persuade the decision-makers. Non-commitment may make theoretical sense for an individual that thinks s/he holds supreme wisdom, but even then it does not make practical sense. I think then, non-commitment has weaknesses both practically and theoretically.

It is also a bit funny to try to replace representative democracy by, let us say, public votes. The questions will often determine the answers, and some questions are asked, some others not. These matters are complex and intertwined. If we ban the political parties, some other set of division will arise.

Theoretical weaknesses of having supreme knowledge comes back to Rhetorics. I have not met a person who would disagree upon the rule of justice (from Chaïm Perelman) in which a being in a same essential category must be treated in a similar manner. But there are some minor questions remaining. Could we agree upon the given category to be given? What does similar manner mean? Just as an example, are humans and apes in the same category? Let us say they are somehow similar social beings. Thus, as a conclusion, "similar manner" might mean that apes should not be separated from others. But we might not give them voting rights.

I think those who make final decisions have often more influence than those who just try to persuade the decision makers.

What does similar manner mean among people? Is it a similar manner, if people receive the same income, or not? Is it not also a similar manner if everyone receives a share according to one's output? Or by their need? Or by their input/effort? I have the tendency to be truly humble having faced such questions, even if I am sure everyone should receive something according to their needs. Some argue that it is easier to allow everyone to receive a minimum if some receive something according to their output. How can one claim to have supreme knowledge on these, very basic, issues?

Can one person, alone, make a difference?

It is not easy to discover the truth in all its glory. What would be beneficial, I presume, is a dialogue. If a dialogue has taken place, then will come the time for implementing the results. We are indeed talking about forming a place in politics.

The question about whether or not a single person can make a real and lasting difference in society is a simple and strong no (even charismatic revolutionary leaders need certain circumstances and certain behaviour of others). I do not even desire for a single person to be allowed to make such a difference. That would not be a dialogue. It would not be democratic. It would not be treating people in a similar manner. Making a difference in the world, or within a community, should be a common manoeuvre. Unfortunately, we as individuals or as a whole do not hold any supreme knowledge and thus people should not have a say over others. But through dialogue and politics we can make a difference.

All those who are participating in the dialogue will determine the result; at least if this dialogue is any good. Regrettably, it will never be a perfect dialogue from anybody's perspective, it may be better or poorer, but hopefully it will be for something. If such politics is replaced by another order, there is no reason to assume that would be any better. If one disregards such politics (or politics generally), it does not help one's causes. One cannot make the best out of it without formal politics/decision-making. At the same time, other means count as well. Any protest or other form of debate trying to influence politics and human behaviour may greatly influence the dialogue.

To briefly conclude:

- Everyone should be involved in some form of societal discussion to aim for what is best for our fellow humans (and perhaps other beings)
- It is rather damaging to one's cause (such as making a better world) to disregard parliamentary politics and/or political parties
- Perhaps there are not definite inclusive truths in politics, not even for Christians – this is a basis for dialogue that we should aim to make as good as possible

Suggested Readings:

Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford, 1958).

Chaïm Perelman, *L'empire Rhétorique. Rhétorique et Argumentation* (Paris, 1977).

Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *La Nouvelle Rhetorique. Traité de L'argumentation* (Paris, 1958).

Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

The Sovereign Power versus the Christian Power

Jomar Cuartero

Jomar Cuartero is a fresh graduate from the University of the Philippines – Diliman where he finished his degree in Comparative Literature and is currently teaching history and politics classes in college. He has been actively participating in various political campaigns, advocacies and projects that call for the liberation of the people from the cancer of their political system. Someday he wants to go to the countryside and be a peasant volunteer.

The comeback of nationalist and political leitmotif for Philippine film production takes place in one of the masterpieces of Joel Lamangan entitled *Sigwa. Sigwa* is about the first-quarter storm movement that is historically known as the precursor of the massive civil unrest that thundered the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos. The film follows the activists of the 1970s who were bound to take the challenge of transforming the semi-colonial and semi-feudal mode of production of the Philippines by virtue of waging a national democratic form of revolution. This means that their struggle is through an incessant pursuit of building people's organizations that buttresses the people's war that are concretely operating in the form of armed struggle within the material conditions of the countryside.

The two significant characters in *Sigwa* are Cita and Oliver. They fall in love because of the struggles and revolutionary aspirations they have shared in the course of their relationship but it is also the same reason for the two to fall out of love since their devotion to one another requires surpassing the struggle that tests their ideological stamina and the depth of their comprehension of what it means to revolt. As this happened, Oliver left the movement and became a spokesperson for the reactionary regime, betraying everything that was his past and the very history he was part of. While Cita, a woman who prevailed amidst the odds and the tragedy during the struggle, continued to practice and remained in fidelity in the revolution. She gave her life; she remained in the movement as the head officer of a unit of the New People's Army. The New People's Army is the military detachment of the Communist Party of the Philippines known for advancing the armed resistance and vanguard strategy against the reactionary state because it is classified historically as the highest form of struggle in waging a revolution under the pretext of the Philippine material conditions.

The story of the two activists revolves around the measure of strength to pursue and remain having a heart faithful to the event that a new Philippine society can emerge by embracing the life that is oppressed, impoverished, a life-world in the bosom of the masses. The movie is not simply a nostalgic view of the past first-quarter storm but it elicits a problem that is posed to our generation and to our contemporary social view: what does it mean to remain in fidelity to the cause of a grand future that has been promised to happen as we wage a revolution where its retaliation is a life placed at the edge of violence and oppression committed by the status quo? What does it mean to remain Christian in the times where the likes of Cita are still left challenged by the state?

Sovereign power of the state has become the ultimate order that is presumed by the current system as seen and spoken by the likes of Oliver who enunciates the logic of global capitalism that activism is already swept by the tides of our history. Discrediting the historical role of activism, the very praxis of the Maoist line "serve the people", becomes the contemporary war cry of those who surrendered from the struggle that is fueled by profit and exploitation. In the same vein, the philosopher Slavoj Žizek, known for

his militant intervention on psychoanalysis and Marxism, argues the materiality of God as an ontological category for our religious beliefs that has been analyzed for several years. He said,

> … He was made man." What really frightens them is that they will lose the transcendent God guaranteeing the meaning of the universe, God as the hidden master pulling the strings—instead of this, we get a God who abandons this transcendent position and throws himself into his own creation, fully engaging himself in it up to dying, so that we, humans, are left with no higher power watching over us, just with the terrible burden of freedom and responsibility for the fate of divine creation, and thus of God himself (34).

The relevance of Žizek's argument on the predominant view of God simply reinstates the current mass hysteria of the metropolitan theoretical regimes where the hegemonic view is that the world is under a post-political world, centres have been banished to neuralgic points, interstices of power, and by these conditions, these views affect our world view where they have swept everyone with a mass weight of freedom that are taken as fear of broaching the grand narratives and grand scheme of changing things.

Large questions such as "how to change the society?" are obscured into forms of cultural politics, discourse, and civil society, and theory has enlarged its gap away from the practice. Consequently, the material conditions are left to be valued through the capitalist remunerations and our political economy is left with festering wounds of social problems such as poverty, political violence and more. As such, freedom is no longer taken as a challenge to emancipate social classes but freedom as a ground for

polemics are simply experiences where human rights, social justice and global peace become matters of protocol of the gatekeepers of the sovereign; much so, freedom to be duly recognized as consumers of surplus profit. But in this seeming triumph of Fukuyama's discourse that capitalism is the end of our history, how does one assume power? What is the Christian legacy of which has been kept as a lost cause that is necessary to be defended?

The assumption of power can be seen in both Cita's life and in Jesus Christ. These two characters, not exactly the same, but parallel within the limits and scope of the state of things. Christ assumed power through his perpetual critique of the political order, fueled by the Roman Empire as that had massive accounts of corruption through heavy imposition of taxation. As an answer, He built his own disciples to mobilize the people in renewing their faith to God. While in the case of Cita in the movie *Sigwa*, she is part of the New People's Army where she goes around various communities and they organize the masses to transform their political consciousness and prepare them for their roles in capturing the state power. These characters are parallel on the basis that they have both recognized the necessity of mobilizing people aside from themselves and encouraging them to undergo a critical pedagogy where their consciousness is hammered down on the anvil of politics of change.

However, how do we proceed from the critique of Terry Eagleton in his essay entitled "Jesus Christ: Bolshevik or Messiah?" wherein Eagleton asks,

> *Was Jesus, then, a revolutionary? Not in any sense that Lenin or Trotsky would have recognized. But is this because he was less of a revolutionary than they were, or more so? Less, certainly, in that he did not advocate the overthrow of the power structure that he confronted. But this was, among other reasons, because he expected it to be soon swept away by a form of existence more perfected in its justice, peace, comradeship and exuberance of spirit than even Lenin and Trotsky could have imagined. Perhaps the answer, then, is not that Jesus was more or less a revolutionary, but that he was both more and less.*

What Eagleton shows in his essay is that Jesus Christ is criticized using the same categories and theoretical frames in evaluating and rationalizing the validity and relevance of Lenin or Trotsky as revolutionaries or anti-imperialists. As a consequence, Christ in the end becomes a "both more and less" of everything which is arguably as problematic. Christ would definitely be weighed lesser as compared to Lenin or Trotsky in matters of their struggles and theory on changing the social order but to compare the two figures as equally the same arbiters of history would definitely be grounds for becoming a culprit of making history anachronistic. Christ definitely would miss the logic of a proletarian revolution that is articulated in the traditions of Marx, Engels and Lenin but it is also impossible for him to even imagine the possibilities of a proletarian dictatorship as his political consciousness is limited by the same historical and material reality where the entire Roman Civilization is bound by the agrarian production.

As Marx had argued, "the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life" and this argument extrapolates that economics is supported by the various elements under the superstructure such as classes, institutions and the struggle among the people (760). It is then where Marx proclaims that "we make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions" (761). Subsequently, Christ as a figure who was crucified must be understood that his participation within the resistance against the colonial politics that is in operation through massive conquest of territories and corruption as seen in the large building projects, heavy taxations and grand banquets while people were suffering from starvation and repression as seen in the policies by the king, is also the same way to assume power. The crucifixion of Christ that is understood as his suffering to bring salvation for humanity clearly enunciates that salvation of the human race will only happen through a violent and bloody process. Thus, to place Christ on the same range with Marx or Lenin would absolutely efface the historical material reality because Christ's existence finds its relevance upon our truthful recognition of the life-world He operates. What then beholds for Cita in this matter?

Parallel to Christ, Cita's struggle for salvation has totally shifted into a larger measure which is now the class struggle. This simply means that the character Cita encapsulates the very shift of the mode of life where the material reality has pushed the same people to conceive a new mode of struggle and this means continuing the legacy of the Maoist tradition of waging a national democratic revolution. Cita's assumption within the power discourse becomes concrete through her volition to resist against the order by the virtue of joining the protracted people's war and persisting to dispense her politics within the rapid exchange of profit and oppression despite coming from an experience of torture, betrayal, destroyed relationships, rejection, suffering and pain. She has treated her past as history where one can unearth lessons that will fuel her agitation and intense passion to wage a war against a decaying system.

Cita advances and assumes power not simply by carrying a rifle for protection but by the same strategy of Christ where she builds organizations that mark a sense of discipleship of the masses and teach them how to free their class. The notion of power then comes from the Maoist line "the power comes in the barrel of the gun" where it enunciates the position of the carrier within the emerging people's war that is subservient to the cause of a revolutionary movement. Cita and Christ are both figures who have taken their powers in their hands, a Christian power, for they have given themselves in the cause where most of the people have secularized our society into disbelief of an order where an empire and class are in obsolescence. She embodies the fidelity to the Christian faith. More than a sheer plaintive cry of the name of the God, Cita appears as the material social practice of the very tradition, principles and legacy of Christianity. That by proclaiming Christianity, it is by submitting thy self into a struggle and questions bigger than oneself and by living in a world where one carries the cross of history.

Sigwa ends with a scene where Cita is once again reunited with Oliver but not with compassion, or any liberal gestures but with courage to elucidate further one's politics. Oliver is surprised to see a squad wearing a camouflage that he believes to be the reactionary soldiers but he is even more surprised to see Cita walking towards him with the guerilla fighters. Cita walks with bravery and she is greeted by Oliver who utters her name. She responds to him with nothing but silence which is the loudest sound anyone could hear.

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The Protestant Guilt:

On Subjectivity and the Market from an Ecumenical Perspective

Marta Helena Gustavsson

Marta is a student of Theology at the University of Gothenburg and also a former board member for the Swedish SCM, KRISS. This winter she finished her bachelor thesis in Systematical Theology exploring the theological and existential background to and challenges in global capitalism. Marta is, in general, very interested in politics, feminism and the strive for justice, but she is equally passionate about good food, music, dancing and beautiful things.

Subjectivity

This is the keyword to the growth of global capitalism, starting with reformation and increasingly growing with the development towards enlightenment and modernism and perhaps escalating in the post-modern world. The economy has grown into something which is even more difficult to control, a power which is also increasingly referred to as a transcendent divinity. "We can do nothing about it" people say when crisis is striking the world, "it is the finances".

How did it get this way? According to Mark C. Taylor, in his book *After God* (2007), the wish for self-power when all other authorities have vanished is met by the two new-found areas of enlightenment; democracy and market. The subject for this is the extension of the divided subject in the teachings of Martin Luther; the Christian human being is both justified and sinner simultaneously. This is a deeply personalist view in which the human who moves closer to the mystery of the Self-God relationship also will reveal more of his or her own self-contradiction and complexity.

So we shop to make an impact, to feel powerful and identify ourselves (our Selves). Vincent Miller, in his book *Consuming Religion* (2009), explains how even religion became a commodity to be bought and sold, explaining the use of consumption as twofold: First of all, we are seduced by the possibilities of the goods, by the pleasure they give us and the horizon of possible further satisfaction they promise. But we are also using them to misdirect other feelings, like anxiety, in order to feel better. In the act of consumption, we try to gain certain values – and when the purpose fails, we turn to new acts of consumption.

That is to say, we do not experience a submission to the market. On the contrary, we use our participation in it to feel powerful. But in this move we also increase the biggest source of powerlessness; the global economy and the world-wide injustice it has created. The possibility of power in the area of democracy is, so to say, weakened because of the wish for power manifested in market participation.

The reason for the contemporary globalist situation can, as mentioned, be explained as a development starting with the reformation, and its development has followed and depended on the teachings of the church and tradition of Protestantism. In the reformatory attempts, the "I" of the Credo shifted from the collective self of the Church, an "I" that actually meant "we", and was individualized to an "I" of the individual self, confessing own personal faith and trust. When the subjective relationship between God and private-Self was stressed, the road towards enlightenment and modernism was inevitable and the conditions set for an increasingly important and globalized market.

We do not experience a submission to the market. We use our participation in it to feel powerful.

I am not saying this subjectivity is not affecting you if you belong to a Catholic, Orthodox or Oriental church. The meaning of globalization is not only that the commodities and money are transferred all over the world, but with them also the capitalistic logics and values. This article does not propose to be a call for my fellow Protestants only, but is addressing a common problem that we have as humans, regardless of tradition. I am, though, not unaffected by the idea of a "Protestant guilt" - something which I will return to later.

But let me first, as a born and raised Protestant, let you see the other side of this terrifying subjectivity, this important reason for what I myself consider a highly problematic global order. Let me point out to you the beauty of the subjective teachings of my beloved Church.

The church I grew up in was not an evangelical tradition underlining the personal experience of once-and-for-all salvation. Still, the relationship to God was often talked about as individually experienced. God was often, in the songs of worship, referred to as "mine" and grace was, at least partly, communicated as your own sanctification in front of God's face. For me, the personal encounter, the devout relationship and the stress on personal trust is not a bad thing. It is the pulse of my tradition, and at the heart of my faith.

What else would this subjectivity mean in positive terms? I think it is a valuing of the personal experiences of the divine, which can mean an allowance for non-conformist theological thinking and personal theological views. I think we can see

I believe true repentance on this topic has to understand the complex intervening of the market and Protestantism and has to be done somewhat outside Protestantism.

today, that the Protestant tradition of individual faith has also been a good space for rethinking many of the new challenges of modern and post-modern times, such as interreligious dialogue and gender struggle. Being a church originally built on "heresy", formed after vivid theological debate and finally exclusion from the mainline, has also been fruitful when the need has come to rethink and regret. This has not least been true about the Protestant view on Jewish people after the Holocaust.

But when it comes to global capitalism and its challenges, I don't think it's enough to rethink or regret. I believe true repentance on this topic has to understand the complex intervening of the market and Protestantism and has to be done somewhat outside Protestantism. The Protestant guilt is not necessarily a guilt of today's Protestant churches but should be an essential part of Protestant self-criticism.

I do not suggest erasing all personal encounters with God (which I think would be to underestimate those features in the older traditions) from the Protestant churches. Neither do I intend to convert or to encourage others to do so. But from the angle of my tradition and with the teachings of history, I think we should be ready to learn from the Catholic, Orthodox and Oriental ways of thinking collectively in terms of wholeness and salvation. The Protestant guilt may be a fact but the Protestant challenge – to go beyond Protestantism and order ourselves of subjectivity into belonging and a communal-self, thus regaining something of what was lost in reformation, may actually be a repentance, a plight and a solution for us.

There is also a challenge that global capitalism gives us as a universal, ecumenical Church. I believe that the closeness of the Protestant teachings to the values of globalization must be embraced by our sister churches. Even if they might have caused the problem, rather than a withdrawal from the actual world, will help us find the solution. Together, we need to find a tradition-crossing way to communicate an alternative to the individualized and subjective selfhood and the needs to delude oneself into consumption in order to escape anxiety and face the demands of self-fulfilment and self-power. That is not to create uncritical, non-reflecting fundamentalists but to offer interdependent and ecumenical belonging as the fulfilment and the possibility of democratic, responsible servant-hood as the gain of power.

For us the real freedom is to love God and our fellows. God is the only giver of freedom and His presence is what makes us free.

St Silouan the Athonite

Church and State through History

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Dr. Peter Lodberg

The relationship between state and church can be organized in various ways determined by history, politics, and theology. State and church often include the same people, but they represent different organizational forms, with different aims and styles of work. Church and state represent neither abuse of power nor the Reign of Heaven but pragmatic ways of controlling power to the benefit of people, nation, state, and church. The degree of controlling power varies, but there are basically two ways of relation between state and church: the free church, with the church financially and administratively independent of the state, and state church, with the church financed and regulated by the state. Between these two poles a number of different systems organizing the two entities have developed.

State-church relationships are regulated through systems of civil and ecclesiastical law. The diversity of these systems mirrors the diversity of national cultures and identities. In Europe, differences between these systems mirrors the diversity of historical influence: the early church, the Middle Ages, the reformation, the Wars of Religion of the 16th and 17th centuries, the 18th century, Enlightenment, and the development of liberal democratic states after World War II. States like Portugal and Spain were almost untouched by these events before 1945, while political and theological events during the Reformation resulted in dramatic developments in northern Europe, where state church systems were established. These systems, moreover, varied in different countries. In Germany and the Netherlands, for example, the state church system allowed different denominations of approximately equal strength to coexist. In the 17th and 18th centuries, most European states were marked by some form of absolutist state control of the church. Separation of state and church became an issue in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries as a consequence of ideologies like Marxism, socialism, secular liberalism, all under the Enlightenment.

The separation of state and church was established in France in 1905 after many years of discussion. The 1905 law is based on the religious neutrality of the state. Under the doctrine of *laïcité,* the state must ensure that everyone has the possibility of attending worship and of being instructed in the beliefs proper to his or her chosen religion. This equality among the different religions implies that there is no state religion; the legislation of 1905 was designed to make religion a private matter and, as such, subject only to individual control. The religious denominations in France, in principle, do not have any direct or officially approved relations with the political system, although religious representatives are regularly consulted in ethical debates of national importance.

A new dimension of the state-church relationship was added by the signing of the Treaty on European Union (EU) in February 1992. The treaty extended the scope of European unification through to social and cultural components. Its scope now extends to areas that directly concern the churches such as education, culture, labour, and tax laws. The EU respects the ways the

member states have decided to organize relationships with churches and denominations, and today three basic types of relation between civil and ecclesiastical law exist within the EU. The first is characterized by the existence of a state church or predominant religion (Greece, Malta, England, and the Nordic countries). The second type is based on the idea of strict separation of church and state (France, Ireland, and the Netherlands). The third type features the basic separation of state and church while simultaneously recognizing a multitude of common tasks (Austria, the Baltic States, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain). The tendency in most countries is towards disestablishment and the acknowledgment of the right of self-determination for religious communities.

Churches in Asia, Africa, Latin America established by Christian missions from Europe or North America in recent times are free churches. As minority churches, some of them have experienced persecution and harassment by hostile governments, especially when the churches have advocated justice, democracy, and the rule of law. In 1992, for example, the Protestant Christian Batak Church in North Sumatra was attacked by Indonesia´s internal security agency, which appointed its own choice for ephorus (archbishop). Church members were arbitrarily detained, houses were searched without warrants, and press coverage was banned. The incident illustrates the ongoing tension that exists in the relationship between state and church in many parts of the world.

Suggested Reading:

A. Cunningham, ed., *The Early Church and the State* (Philadelphia, 1982).

E. Dussel, ed., *The Church in Latin America: 1492-1992* (London, 1992).

P. Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

J.N.K. Mugambi, ed., *Democracy and Development in Africa: The Role of the Churches.* (Nairobi, 1997).

B. Ryman, ed., *Nordic Folk Churches: A Contemporary Church History* (Grand Rapids, 2005).

J. Witte, *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002).

Rather Turkish than Papist?:
Dutch Debates on Religious Diversity

Margriet Westers

Margriet Westers has a bachelor's degree in theology and studies Arabic language and culture at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She is especially interested in Christian – Muslim dialogue and liberation theology. She participated in a study trip to India on interfaith dialogue in January 2010. From September 2010 to March 2011 she lives in Jerusalem volunteering for Sabeel, an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

On June 9, 2010 elections for the parliament were held in my country, the Netherlands. Since the former government, usually formed by a coalition of two or three parties, fell on the issue of the presence of Dutch army forces in Afghanistan, there have been a lot of debates and discussions about the new government. The Dutch seemed to be extremely divided between left-wing and right-wing political parties and a growing minority in the Netherlands decided to vote for the PVV, the Party for Freedom led by Geert Wilders, a major political opponent of a multireligious and multicultural society, whose key issues in politics are immigration, freedom of speech and Islam. The PVV got 24 out of 150 seats in the parliament – which means that about 1,5 million out of 17 million Dutch people voted for this political party. In this article, I want to describe the movement of the PVV and share my opinion on the role of the Church in these current debates on religion and society in the Netherlands.

First, it might be helpful to give a few facts about the presence of Islam in the Netherlands: about 1 million people in the Netherlands are Muslim. Most of them live in the four major cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Often, they are concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods with poor housing, chronic unemployment and high levels of crime. There are two well-known Dutch Muslim politicians, Ahmed Aboutaleb (the mayor of Rotterdam) and Nebahat Albayrak (the former State Secretary for Justice).

History

Going back through history, it amazes me how things can change over centuries. "Rather Turkish than Papist" was a slogan used by the Dutch mercenary naval forces ("Sea Beggars") in their fight against Catholic Spain during the Dutch Revolt at the end of the 16th century. The slogan was the product of debates on tolerance in the Netherlands. In these debates, the (Turkish) Ottoman Empire was referred to as an example of an empire in which diversity of religion had proved successful. These discussions in the Netherlands started as the Calvinists were persecuted by the Catholic Spanish King Philip II. The Calvinist Dutch people preferred Turkish Islamic rule over Spanish Catholic rule and the Protestant William of Orange even appealed to the Ottoman sultan for help in the war against Philip II.

In present-day Netherlands, Christianity is decreasing and Muslims have become a growing religious minority. The idea of Islamic rule as opposed to Christian (be it Catholic or Protestant) is something feared by a significant number of people in the Netherlands. The death of Theo van Gogh, a Dutch film director assassinated by Mohammed Bouyeri in 2004 because of his critical film on Islam, *Submission* (produced together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali), even sharpened the debates on Islam and Dutch culture. Nowadays, this debate is dominated by Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom.

The Party for Freedom and Geert Wilders

As mentioned, the PVV is currently the major political opponent of a multireligious and multicultural society. With a strong focus on nationalism and the "Judeo-Christian history" of the Netherlands, Geert Wilders and the PVV condemn the growth of Islam and the waves of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s that influenced the religious and cultural identity of the Netherlands. In two interviews, Wilders stated that "Islam is the greatest danger threatening us". In the past, he has spoken of a "tsunami of Islamisation in the Netherlands" and said, "Before you know it, there will be more mosques than churches!"[1] These statements show how Wilders and his party think of Islam: a dangerous ideology threatening Western society based on Judeo-Christian values.

Wilders often relates Islam to Moroccan and Turkish culture (where the majority of Dutch immigrants are from) and strongly opposes immigration from non-western countries to the Netherlands. In 2008, he wrote and commissioned a short film called *Fitna* about Quranic-inspired motivations for terrorism. In this film, Wilders states that Islam is basically a radical, terrorist ideology and that the Quran provides religious legitimatization for terrorist activities. The film caused great controversy in the Netherlands and abroad. On 12 February 2009, Wilders was denied entrance to the United Kingdom when he was invited by one of the members of the House of the Lords to show *Fitna*. In October 2009, the British tribunal overturned the ban, so that Wilders could enter the UK to show his film.

1 "Wilders bang voor 'tsunami van islamisering'" *de Volkskrant,* 6 October 2006.

I wondered for a long time why Christians vote PVV since ideas on cultural exclusivism and demonising of the (religious) other is, in my opinion, something Christians should strongly oppose.

The Church's Role in Political Debates on Religious Freedom

Learning from Christians in Countries with a Muslim Majority

In the last elections, the number of Christians that decided to vote PVV has increased. An article, that I recently read in a Christian magazine, said that this has partly to do with Wilders' support of Israel. Moreover, these Christians recognized their fear of Islam in Wilders' hostility toward Islamic culture and beliefs. Having read this, I realized how much Dutch churches can learn from their fellow Christians in, for example, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia – places where Christians and Muslims have lived together for a far longer time.

The majority of Christians who voted PVV belong to reformed or evangelical (reformed) churches that strongly focus on salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. I used to think that this explained why these Christians tend to vote for the Party for Freedom: since their theology is based on exclusive views in which one is either saved or not, their attitude toward people with different beliefs - be it secularism, New Age or Islam - is one of conversion instead of conversation. But I was wrong on this point.

In my bachelor thesis for theology, I compared two Christian theologians coming from countries with a Muslim majority on their views of Christian – Muslim relations: Chawkat Moucarry from Syria and Michael Nazir-Ali from Pakistan. I found that Moucarry, though his theology of religions and his ideas about Islam tended toward exclusivism, did not show any intolerance toward his Muslim neighbours (nor did Nazir-Ali, whose ideas were more inclusive). So, part of my conclusion was to say that exclusivism does not necessarily lead to an intolerant attitude toward people who have different beliefs. Therefore, I would like to advise the Church of the Netherlands to learn from Christians, Churches and theologians from countries like Syria and Pakistan, where Christians and Muslims have lived together for a far longer time and where interreligious dialogue is a daily experience.

The Gospel: "There is no fear in love"

My second, but even more important piece of advice to the Christian Churches in my country is about the Gospel itself. I wondered for a long time why Christians vote PVV since ideas on cultural exclusivism and demonising of the (religious) other is, in my opinion, something Christians should strongly oppose. An answer came when I read a quote from a friend of mine, who wrote:

> *Since when are Christians afraid?*
> *Since when do Christians fear people of other religions?*
> *Since when do Christians fear loss of freedom?*
> *Since when do Christians fear their enemies?*
> *Since when do Christians fear death?*
> *Only when they no longer fear… God.*

Of course I will not state that Christians voting for the PVV do not fear God. But I think that this quote asks us a crucial question as Christians: whom do we fear? Why do people, Christians and other people, vote for a party who condemn the religious other, condemns a minority group in our country?

This quote encouraged me when I realized that no politician, no security system, no army can protect us from any person.

We trust politicians and security systems instead of God. We create imagined communities of nations and religions that exclude each other.

God in the Bible warns people again and again that they should not trust in false gods, but trust in God alone. The first commandment that God gives to the Israelites in Exodus 20 is, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." And the second starts, "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them…"

Again and again the people of Israel in the Old Testament failed to do this as we fail to do this now. We trust politicians and security systems instead of God. We create imagined communities of nations and religions that exclude the other. We have made idols of our communities. We have forgotten the true meaning of liberty: to trust in God, in God alone, in the God that identified with the oppressed and marginalized Hebrews in Egypt. Today, this same God calls on us to trust in God's power of liberation. The Biblical history shows how any effort to trust in earthly powers failed – all these idols are, in the end, idols – creations of people who have forgotten to worship their Creator.

Although, I am disappointed because of the growing fear of Islam, I also think there is a wonderful challenge for the Church in the Netherlands today. The elections have shown that it is very obvious that people live in fear. The Church can proclaim the Gospel: the message of hope and liberation, the gospel of the one true God, the message of good news that excludes fear of the other. The Church can challenge the Dutch people: in whom do we trust? Do we trust in politicians, do we trust in security systems, do we trust in culture or nationalism? Without attacking persons or political parties, the Church's message is political, since both politics and the gospel are based on the question: in whom do we trust? In staying faithful to the Gospel, the Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche) in Nazi Germany opposed the Nazi regime. In staying faithful to the Gospel, the poor in Latin-America formed a liberation theology. In staying faithful to the gospel, I believe the Church in the Netherlands can share the gospel and in doing that, criticize culture and politics by asking: in whom do we trust?

For a time I was not sure whether Christians in the Netherlands would be able to give one clear response to the growing movement of the PVV, since Christians did not seem to speak with one voice: some voted PVV, others did not. But the message of hope and the Christian witness of hope and trust in God alone, is something confessed by all Christians – whether their views are exclusive or inclusive when it comes to salvation, whether they believe that other people should convert to Christianity or not – all Christians share a belief and trust in the one God, the one Creator and Liberator, who demands that we do not trust in earthly powers. Fearing God, we lose fear of other religions, of loss of freedom, enemies and even death. It is by fearing this God that we are able to love one another and to love people that are so different from ourselves. The gospel of hope creates community and communication instead of polarization and hatred. It is precisely the gospel of hope against all hope, of love where the world tends to hate, of bridges where the world creates separation – it is precisely this gospel that speaks of another kingdom, not ruled by earthly powers but by justice and love.

Suggested reading:

H. Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: from double standards to mutual understanding*, 1995.

P.F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 2002.

C. Moucarry, *The Prophet and the Messiah: an Arab Christian's perspective on Islam and Christianity*, 2001.

M. Nazir-Ali, *Islam. A Christian Perspective*, 1983.

E.W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, 2003.

Peaceful Life in a Land of War: Religion and the Balkan Conflicts

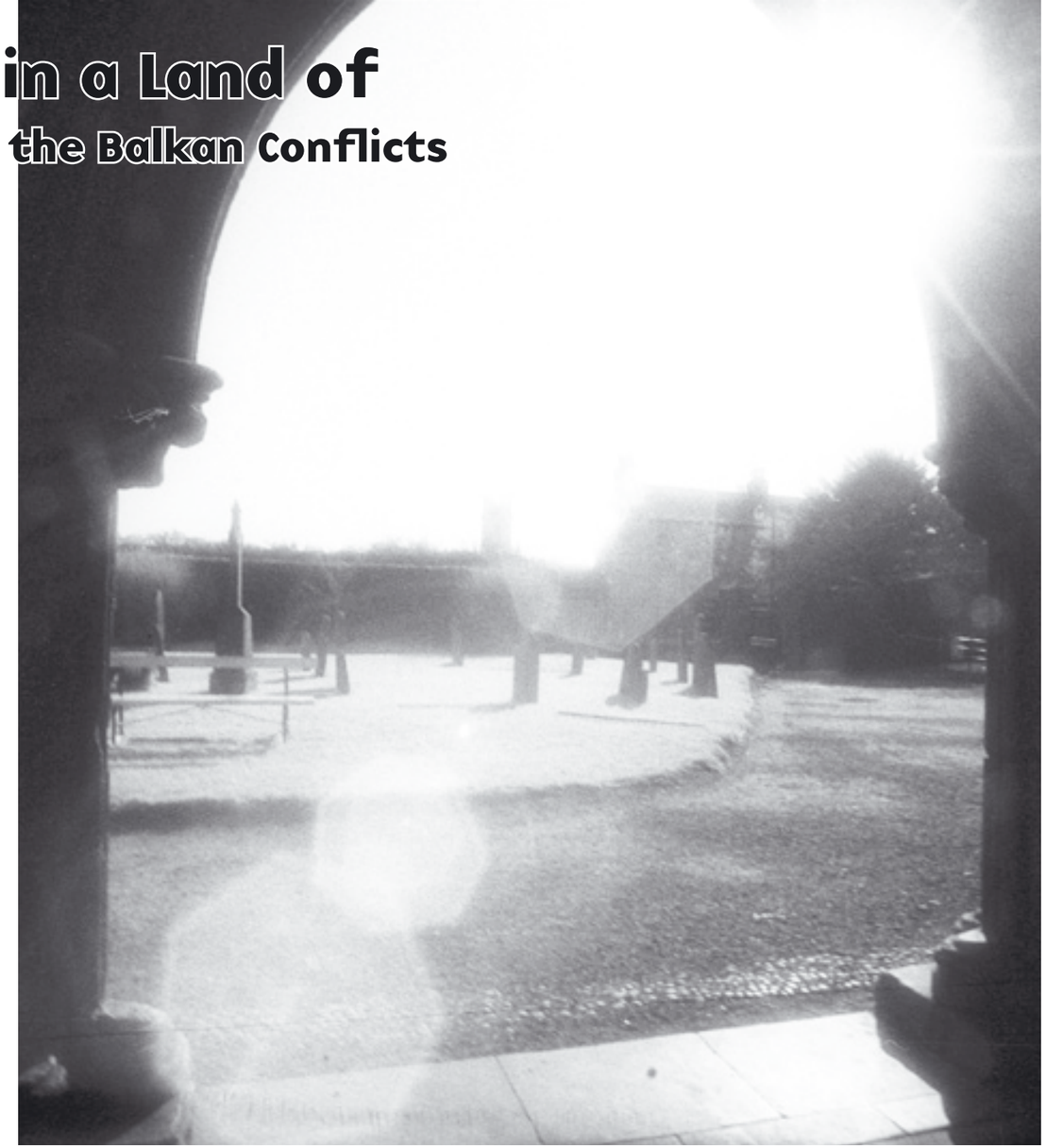
Janko Stefanov was born on 19 June 1987 in Dryanovo town, Central Bulgaria. He was raised in a Muslim community and is now an Orthodox Christian. Currently, he is a student of Orthodox Theology at the University of St Cyril & St Methodius in Bulgaria's medieval capital Veliko Tarnovo.

Janko Stefanov

Living in peace with each other

When I was a child, I spent most of my days at my grandmother's house in a small mountain village located in Central Bulgaria, where both Christians and Muslims were living peacefully in an atmosphere of great respect, sharing their happiness and pain each day. When the Christians celebrated Easter, they used to give red-painted eggs and sweetbread to the Muslims. The Muslims, from their side, used to treat Christians with different candies and pancakes for Ramadan. My grandmother was a Muslim and she couldn't even spend a day without having a cup of tea and a nice chat with the old woman next door to us, who was an Orthodox Christian. They used to help each other in whatever kind of work they did.

Later on, I started to go to school in the nearby town, where I was born and where my parents now live. When I started to study history, the new things that I learned deeply shocked me. I understood that Bulgaria was 500 years under Ottoman (Turkish) occupation and that thousands of people were slain because they didn't want to change their faith. My head was straining to find an answer – I just couldn't make out how the people in my grandmother's village could stand each other. A scary picture was revealed in front of me – the land that I'm living on is literally soaked with the blood of thousands of men and women. In the 20th century alone, the Balkan area had suffered three major internal wars, two world wars, of which the first one was actually caused in the area, and numerous other conflicts. In 1999, when the war in neighbouring Serbia broke out, I started to question myself; what was the actual cause of all that hatred and death devastating the land just few hundred kilometres west from where I live? Great sorrow had overtaken me after I read the list of the more than eighty holy sites (monasteries, churches and chapels) in Kosovo and Metochia that were destroyed during the war for Kosovo's independence. Why did that happen? Was it because of religion? Then, how can Muslims and Christians in my village live in perfect harmony and friendship? Later on, I found the answer that I longed for so much.



A scary picture was revealed in front of me – the land that I'm living on is literally soaked with the blood of thousands of men and women

A Brief Introduction to the Balkan Area

The Balkans (or Balkan Peninsula) is a geographical, political and cultural region of south-eastern Europe. The region takes its name from the Balkan Mountains, which run through the centre of Bulgaria and into eastern Serbia. The region covers an area of 550,000 km^2 with a population of about 55 million people. The name Balkan comes from a Turkish word meaning "wooded mountains". The ancient Greeks named the Balkan Peninsula the "Peninsula of Haemus" (Χερσονησος του Αιμου). The countries commonly included in the Balkan region are Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo (independent since February 17, 2008, not recognized by some countries), Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Other

countries sometimes included are Romania and Turkey. The Balkan area is the major crossroad between the Near East and Europe, cradle of the Greek and the Thracian civilizations, land ruled by three vast empires (Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman), each one with its own influence upon it. It will not be too far-fetched to say that the Balkans is a melting pot of ethnicities and religions, a great mixture of different ethnic groups with their own languages and traditions coexisting and cooperating for centuries.

Religion, Ethnos, Conflict

The dominating religious denomination on the Peninsula is Orthodox Christianity, followed by Islam (both Sunni and Shia), Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Unitarianism, Armenian Orthodoxy and Judaism. The Balkans can remember conflicts between all of the fore-mentioned. Roman Catholic crusades (13th c.), Muslim invasions (14th–15th c.), Protestant repressions (Transylvania, 17th c.), a whole genocide against the Armenians (Turkey, 1915-1917), etc. During the Balkan wars (1912-1913), whose victims were more than 140 000, from both sides of the frontline the soldiers were encouraged by Orthodox priests. The peace in some regions is still very fragile, which can be clearly seen from the recent events in Kosovo.

The French geographer Yves Lacoste emphasizes that the Balkan Peninsula is a record-holder for the number of the nations, whose pretensions are more or less in contradiction. Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Serbs, Croats, Hungarians, Romanians – these are eight nations living on an area smaller than France. Each one of them has the feeling that it had become a victim of the historical injuries, and that it didn't profit enough territory and receive its due respect. The effect from the combination of political leaders using those feelings, and from appropriate historical circumstances, can easily lead to the spark of conflict in "Europe's ammunition dump", as a friend of my father used to call the Balkans. Sadly but true, the term "Balkanization", deriving from the name of the Peninsula, refers exactly to the process of fragmentation of a region into smaller regions that are often hostile or non-cooperative with each other.

The main questions remain through the echoes of the countless wars – is the religious diversity a reason for the separation and the conflicts on the Balkans? Is there an adequate theological answer for all that suffering, a part of which we had witnessed not long ago? Is there a way to keep and strengthen this fragile peace? Very often, especially some atheists, point to the ethnic and religious differences as one of the main causes for the clashes in the area. When the communists took over the area in the mid 1940s, one of their main tasks was to convince the people how bad religion was and how much trouble it caused. Of course, for a religious person those accusations are totally implausible.

As a first year student in the University, we had a lecturer, an old professor from our capital city Sofia. One day, a colleague of mine tried to raise the topic about WWII. Suddenly, the old professor got deeply upset and tears made his eyes wet. He said to us "Young people, remember well that even the most fragile peace is better than the most equitable war". Later on, we found out that some of his friends from his school years were killed during the bombings on Sofia in 1944, which took more than 1200 victims and injured the same amount of people. As most of the cases anywhere in the world, the conflicts on the Balkans are initially on a political basis. Eventual religious clashes perform nothing more than a turn to an emergent military conflict. This brings enormous responsibility to the politicians, who need to be very careful with keeping up the unstable peace in the area. Political parties with an "ultra" label on them, especially when they involve religion in their politics, don't work for anything other than creating tension and hatred between the people.

The goal is to understand the others and to love them as they are – this, I firmly believe, is what the people from my grandmother's village managed to achieve over the years of coexistence.

...it is better to be treated with injustice ourselves than to do injustice to others.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39)

No matter how God is worshiped and praised, no matter what kind of sacred scriptures are respected and ridden, none of the religions confessed on the Balkans is preaching oppression or hatred against the others. If there is something that is turning one group of religious people against another, that is called human delusion. For instance, it is not accidental the one of the most speculated terms in Islam is the "Jihad" – the so called "holy war" – a terrifying interpretation of the Quranic text, created by human thirst for political power. The Islamic Mujahideen ("struggler" or "freedom fighter") and Militia Christi ("Soldiers of Christ") are two sides of a same coin. Instead of a zeal for living a virtuous life, the meaning of the term has often been falsely substituted. The religious wars are a result of a fatal human misunderstanding, intentionally used as an instrument of domination and oppression. It is very important to realize that neither Christianity nor Islam were meant to become bearers of prejudice and oppression. Our great duty is to prevent this happening and to stop the use of religion in political conflicts. To do good deeds and to not do evil is a constantly repeating call in all religions. As an example:

For Allah loves those who do good
(Quran 2:195, 3:134, 3:148, 5:14, 5:96),

For Allah loveth no transgressors (Quran 2:190),

Allah loveth not mischief (Quran 2:205).

In the core of every religion, there is a message about equality, love and peace – we are all equal in the face of the Creator. We must also clearly understand that God is not to blame for our mistakes and failures. In his

homily "That God is Not the Cause of Evils", the great Orthodox thinker St Basil the Great (†379) writes:

> *Truly foolish, therefore, and lacking all understanding and mind is he who says there is no God. Alongside him, no less in this madness is he who says that God is the cause of evils. I consider their sins to be of equal gravity because each one similarly denies the good.*

As we know very well, "God is love" (I John 4:16) and "He does not wants the death of the sinner, but his converting and salvation" (Orthodox evening prayer to Lord Jesus Christ). We, humans, are the sinners causing injustice, lying, using unwisely the power granted to us from the Lord and twisting religion to serve our needs and desires. "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil, which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19).

As Bishop Alexander (Mileant) mentions in his work *The Ten Commandments – Moral Foundation of Society*, "as long as evil abides in people, wars and crimes are inevitable evils". One will attack, another will respond – a circle that has no end – and indeed, it is hard to remain in a stance of peace when your own family and land are under a death threat. Then where should we search for a solution to prevent the past mistakes? "The only true solution is that the people should overcome the evil in themselves and reform their hearts", writes Bishop Alexander, because otherwise it is clear that the violence will never stop.

To start with, deeper education in our own religious traditions would be really helpful to teach us how to "love thy neighbour as ourselves" (Leviticus 19:18). Nevertheless, it is also very desirable to motivate a proper understanding of the other denominations and religions, and to create a peaceful framework for religious dialogue, friendship and respect between the younger generations, suited to the historical specifics not only for the Balkan area. "Only a peace between equals can last, only a peace the very principle of which is equality and common participation in a common benefit" (Woodrow Wilson). The goal is to understand the others and to love them as they are – this, I firmly believe, is what the people from my grandmother's village managed to achieve over the years of coexistence. However, I also do not doubt that they also had hard times getting along together. Let us not forget, though, that God ordered us to pray for our offenders and to do good to them, even if sometimes we know that they are not right to offend us. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, states that "it is better to be treated with injustice ourselves than to do injustice to others". Only in such a state of unconditional love, "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10).

Suggested reading:

I. Bartholomew, Ed. John Chryssavgis, *War and Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2003).

G. Haar and J. Busuttil, *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, violence, and visions for peace* (Boston, MA, 2001).

I. Merdjanova, *Religion & Politics on the Balkans* (Silistra, 2004).

“I am making all things new”

“For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters…use your freedom to serve one another in love.”
Galatians 5:13

Rosie Venner

This liturgy may be used to acknowledge and confess the power held by many of us; whether that is because we live in the West or global North, because we are part of a majority or because we enjoy freedom, peace and opportunities denied to others. It gives space to reflect on the unsettling challenges of the gospels to our privileged way of life, while reminding us of Jesus’ call to participate fully in the work of the kingdom, and to be transformed.

The words in bold are to be said or sung by everyone. Leave plenty of space between the prayers, readings and meditations and don’t be afraid of silence. The Taizé chants can be found at www.taize.fr.

A Liturgy of Readings and Reflections on Power and Transformation

Opening Prayer:

Come all who are weary
of wealth, of poverty, of power, of struggle, of division

Come all who are heavy-laden
with too much, with too little, with anxiety, with fear, with anger

Come all who have hope
for liberation, for peace, for freedom, for the kingdom

Hear these words
"See, I am making all things new".

Taizé chant: See I am here, says the Lord, see I make all things new

A reading from Luke 1: 46-55:
Voice 1: And Mary said

Voice 2: 'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Voice 1: Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

Voice 2: His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

Voice 1: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

Voice 2: He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever'.

Meditation:
A revolutionary prayer
the rich are sent away empty
the poor are lifted up
this is her God

A God who looks with favour on the lowest
who brings down the high and mighty
who takes the rulers from their thrones
and prepares a feast for the hungry
this is her God

A holy, powerful God
fragile within her womb.

Silence

Prayer:
Forgive us Lord when we cling to privilege and the trappings of Empire
When we hoard our possessions and enjoy riches at the expense of others
When we take for granted our position in society and in the world
When we do not share power and decision making with others

Unsettle us from seats of power and the confines of luxury
Challenge us with scripture and the stories of others
Liberate us from the grasp of consumerism and complacency
Transform us in the pattern of your kingdom
that breaks into this world, to resist, to restore, to rebalance, to renew.

All say: **For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen**

A reading from Luke 6: 20-21:
Then he looked up at his disciples and said:
'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
'Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.
'Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

Taizé chant: Beati voi poveri
(How blessed the poor in heart)

(Singers or musicians could carry on quietly with this chant while the meditation is read over the top. If you do this you may want to continue with the chant several times after the meditation as well, before entering into silence)

Meditation:
When you say blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God
do your eyes rest on me in the crowd and see how weighed down I am with possessions?

When you say blessed are you who are hungry, for you will be filled
do you place your hand in mine and know the feasts I have eaten?

When you say blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh
do you anoint my head with oil and sense that I have laughed long and hard?

Then bless me again Lord, take my riches, my fullness, my laughter
all that I have in excess
and let it rise up in the poor, the hungry and those who weep.

That together we may delight in good things
share bread and wine together
open our hearts in joy and sorrow
knowing that together we seek your kingdom
as one body.

Silence

Song: Come now O God of peace (O-so-so)

All say:
May grace and peace be ours in abundance, in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
May we be thankful for simple things, for friendship, for health, for daily bread, for good news.
May we rise above the corruption of power and become participants in the divine nature.
May we go from this place to pursue goodness, wisdom, holiness and love.
God the Creator, call us to the work of the kingdom
God the Redeemer, keep us from stumbling
God the Sustainer, transform and inspire us.

Amen

Commitment to Community Building:

A Primary task for the Federation in Europe

This piece was written for the August 1990 edition of the WSCF Journal of the World Student Christian Federation entitled ***Europhoria***. It contained student submissions that looked at the changing face of Europe, and WSCF's experience and visions during this time-period.

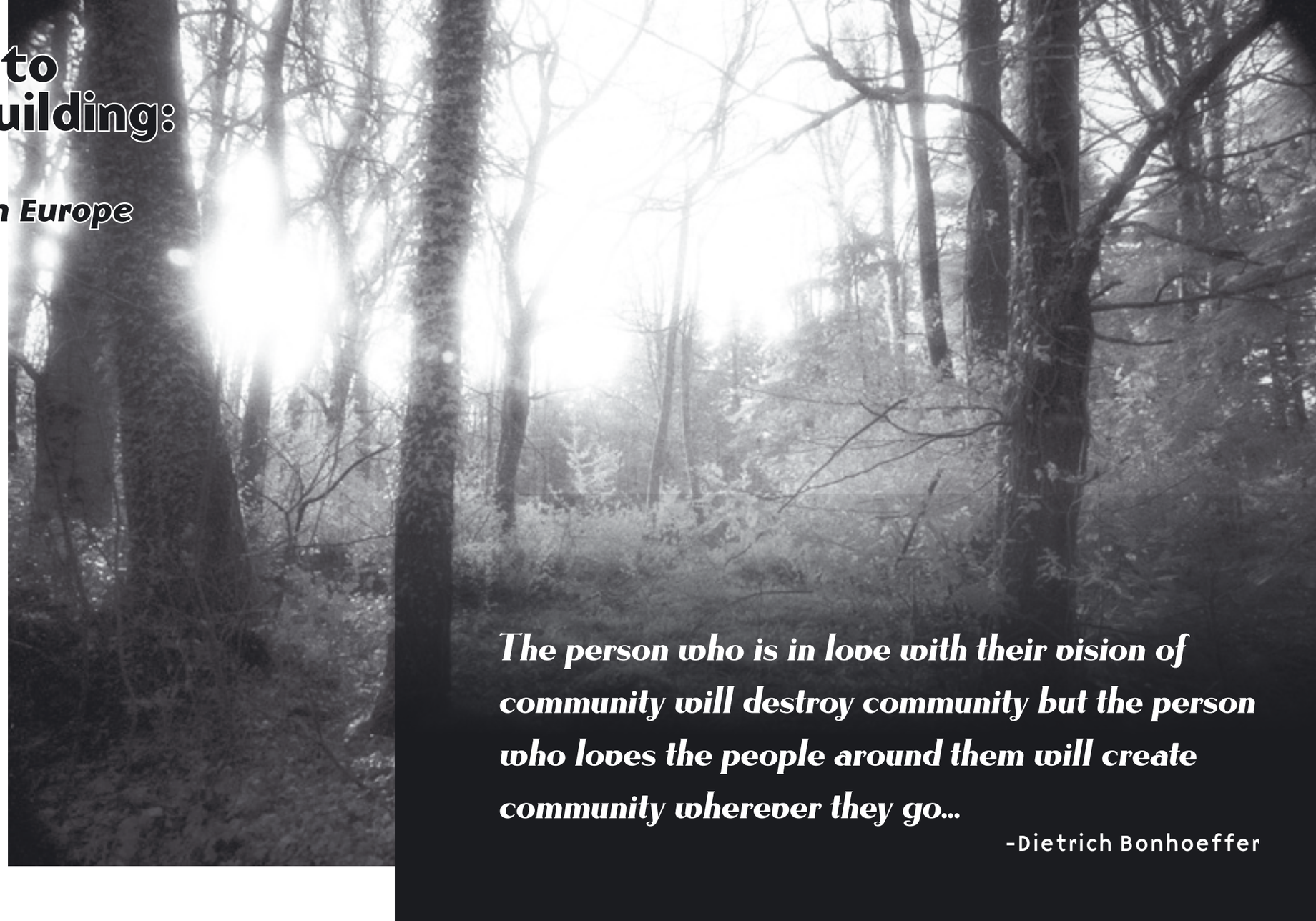
Jean-François Delteil – Former Regional Secretary for WSCF-E

The present issue of the *WSCF Journal* focuses on Europe: the concerns are many, as are reflected in the articles that follow. Who are we to face up to such considerable needs and questions?

The face of Europe is rapidly changing because of the dramatic developments in Eastern/Central Europe and in the European community. There are certainly reasons to rejoice in the fall of dictatorial regimes and in ongoing reconciliation of nations which have been fighting or threatening each other for such a long time. If an era of peace is ahead, it should certainly release a lot of tensions, energies and resources.

But we know, as well, that there are certainly no reasons to be euphoric. There will be, as there are already, many bitter disillusions: the GDR, as well as other Eastern European countries, is discovering that there is a price to pay for joining the "club" of wealthy nations, starting with a drastic increase in prices and unemployment. The existence of the poor in our midst, the so called Fourth World, constantly contradicts the triumphalism inherent in capitalist societies.

We know from the economic crash in socialist countries – and this is confirmed historically by such analysts as F. Braudel – that we cannot



The person who is in love with their vision of community will destroy community but the person who loves the people around them will create community wherever they go...

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

afford to ignore the “market”. But will the market be the one and only driving force in the formation of a reconciled Europe? While the implementation of the single European market is already well on its way (capital will be circulating freely by July 1990), where are the corresponding social and cultural charters? Furthermore, as Jean-Martin Oudraego points out in his article on Individualism, “What are the fundamental goods which are not marketable, are neither to be bought, not to be sold: citizenship? basic needs? health? education? attribution of positions of responsibility and authority? This question is not one of the economics but is political”.

There are other questions. How are we going to respond to the increasing fragmentation of societies and social groups, including families, into individual consumers? How long are we going to chase the myth of everlasting growth? How long will we keep on building our wealth at the cost of the exploitation of other parts of the world? When shall we start implementing an ecologically sustainable development?

The number of students in higher education has increased very rapidly in the last twenty-five years (in France students make up approximately 2% of the population) and in some countries the goal is to double the number of students in the next ten to twenty years. From a very small elite of the middle and upper classes, students have already become a significant component of our respective societies, particularly in regard to the responsibilities they will have. Although on several occasions there has been some talk of the apathy of students, more recently there have been student uprisings, such as in Berlin (1988-1989), in Czechoslovakia towards the end of last year, and more recently in Britain on the issue of the Poll Tax.

Students are put in a position of permanent pressure, and this could well lead to more uprisings in the near future: limited time to complete their studies (two to four years), heavy competition, limited access in certain disciplines, constant constraints, the increasing cost of studying, privatization of universities, increasing links with corporations and the business world, less student scholarships, the necessity to have summer or permanent jobs while studying, poor conditions for studying, and above all, at the end, no guarantee of being able to enter the job market, unless you are ready to fight, or are among the best.

You’d better run my friend. Don’t stop. Don’t look around. Don’t waste your precious time.

Given this context, the primary task of the Federation and of the Student Christian Movements in Europe is to be committed to community building. But what kind of communities are we talking about?

Allow me to try some answers, in the form of a prayer, modeled on the one of Saint Francis of Assisi:

Oh Lord,
Lord of the SCMs and the Federation,
Lord of the students and the universities,
Lord of the Jews and the nations,
Lord of Europe and the whole inhabited earth,

Where there is individualism, loneliness and isolation, let us build communities, love and friendship.
Where there is competition, winners and losers, let us learn solidarity, mutual support and respect for all.
Where values are based on success, money and power, let us cherish humility, simplicity and shared responsibilities.
Where we are pressurised to buy, to sell, to accumulate, let us give and receive, being thankful for what we have, and not concerned with wanting more.
Where there are barriers of race, sex, and class, let us smash them down with hospitality, partnership, and a clear commitment to the equality of all human beings.
Where there is nationalism, sectarianism, and denominationalism, let us respond with visits, exchanges and action in order to strengthen our understanding of others, and to stand for the values of belonging to a worldwide ecumenical fellowship.
Where there is specialization, corporationism and clericalism, let us develop lay communities where students and others of all disciplines and backgrounds can be challenged and enriched by each other.
Where there is injustice, oppression and exploitation, let us claim the rights of justice, freedom, and a sustainable life for all now and in the future.
Where there is a lack of values, sense of belonging, orientation, let us be witnesses to the light of the Gospel, to the memory of the people of God, and to the hope of the coming Kingdom.
Lord of the past, of the present and of the future,
Hear our prayer, Amen.

The Exception Becomes the Rule

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Matthew Gardner

The distinction between liberal democracy and totalitarian dictatorship is not as clear-cut as we like to think. This is the inevitable conclusion that arises from a foray into the work of Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1944-), whose multivolume *Homo Sacer* project explores the structure of sovereign power and its proximity to 'bare life' (valueless, unsacraficeable life, which exists only in order to be killed).

The historical symbols par excellence of bare life are the victims of the Nazi concentration camps. 'Holocaust' (a burnt sacrifice which is offered whole) is a misleading name because this was one of the most flagrant unsacrificial killings of modern times. The death penalty – modernity's version of ritual killing, a sacrifice in the sphere of law rather than religion – was not applied, there was no grand significance or meaning to the slaughter, rather the Jews were exterminated as 'lice' – bare life which is only identified by its capacity to be killed.

Agamben traces bare life back to the Ancient Roman figure of *homo sacer*, the exile who could be killed by anybody but was not allowed to be sacrificed, through to its various manifestations in the last century – not only the Jews, homosexuals and mentally ill in the Nazi camps, but also human guinea pigs in US prisons, refugees in detention camps, prisoners on death row, and (in the field of medicine) the overcomatose person or 'neomort' (a proposed idea of 'living corpses' that are kept for the purpose of future transplants). Slavoj Žižek gives a powerful example:

> *When a conservative member of the US Congress recently designated the Guantanamo prisoners as 'those who were missed by the bombs' and thus forfeited their right to live, he almost literally evoked Agamben's notion of homo sacer, a man reduced to bare life no longer covered by any legal or civil rights.*[1]

In every case, bare life is identified by its relationship to sovereign power. The 'state of exception', which involves suspension of the law, rule-by-decree, and a conflation of executive and legislative powers, has been used increasingly by all kinds of governments: as the 'dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics'[2], the state of exception has become the norm.

In these circumstances, Agamben argues, the original political act is revealed not to be the contract (as according to the enlightenment political philosophy of Hobbes and Rousseau), but the ban:

> *What has been banned is delivered over to its own separateness, and at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it – at once excluded and included, removed and at the same time captured.*[3]

1 Žižek, quoted on the cover of Agamben.: *State of Exception* (Chicago University Press, 2005).
2 *State of Exception* p.2
3 *Homo Sacer* p.174

The modern political paradigm is not the city of classical political thought, but the camp – the materialisation of the state of exception.

And likewise, the modern political paradigm is not the city of classical political thought, but the camp – the materialisation of the state of exception, where the normal order is 'temporarily' (but indefinitely) suspended, and whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the sovereign (military, police, etc.)

Liberal political thought would have us believe that where such spaces are so obviously visible (the camp at Guantanamo being the prime example) they are an aberration, against the rule of law which ought to be used to contain them. In truth, the state of exception is the life 'more secret and true' of our law, the abandoned *homo sacer* is the foundation on which our politics is built, and the camp is the essential juridical-political structure which our law and politics both rely on and inevitably create. The camp at Guantanamo may be closing, but the forces which made it possible have yet to be confronted.

References:

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford University Press, 1998).

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Being Church in a Nation in Crisis

Lawrence Mashungu holds an honours degree in Chemical Engineering and is currently studying towards his master's degree in Renewable Energy with the University of Zimbabwe. During his time at the university he was a student leader which culminated in him being arrested several times for standing for the rights of students. He sits on the board of the Zimbabwe Youth Council and is employed by Youth Agenda Trust. Lawrence was the National Chairperson of SCM Zimbabwe from 2007-2010 and Lawrence has a passion for youth development and empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable populations. He strongly believes in the promotion of meaningful participation of young people in national processes.

Lawrence Mashungu

The church and the state are two separate institutions with different roles. Since the two institutions deal with the life of a person, more often than not the state feels undermined by the church when the latter does its work, especially when the former is violating human rights. These problems normally come when the church preaches its gospel of peace, justice and fairness in a country where the authorities feel that such work works to their downfall. This is the situation in Zimbabwe where the ruling elite think that anyone who speaks against oppression, violence and injustice speaks against the government of Robert Mugabe. Anyone who is viewed in this way faces the full wrath of the Zimbabwe Security Agency; the Church has not been spared in this onslaught.

The state has the obligation to provide the necessary protection of citizens and not to oppress them. The church on the other hand deals with the spiritual welfare of the person and in most cases complements government efforts to develop the nation through building schools and hospitals, to give examples where the church has done a lot in Zimbabwe. But, one can then argue that the church should be concerned with the source of the grief of the person for it to fully address their needs. In that regard, church cannot be silent when the source of suffering is clearly visible. The prophecy of the Old Testament is full of such cases where the prophet would openly castigate those who oppress the poor and take advantage of the weak; Amos is such an example. Therefore, the church, one can conclude, is a transforming and empowering community; it is the continued presence of Christ on earth. It is from this understanding that the church cannot afford to be indifferent in the face of our socio-political challenges because doing so will be tantamount to neglecting the human welfare.

The monstrous tyranny of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front regime has targeted church leaders who have been victims of arrests, abductions, illegal detentions and torture for openly speaking about the protection and respect of the rights of the citizenry. Leaders of such organizations such as the Christian Alliance, Student Christian Movement of Zimbabwe, Ecumenical Support Services and many others have remained resolute and steadfast despite such monumental challenges they face from the intolerant and unrepentant government. Such acts of barbarism from the state have largely affected the operation of the church in Zimbabwe. It is sad to note that the interference of the state in the internal affairs of ecumenical institutions is a clear infringement on the right to freedom of worship and preaching the holy word to the people. This is so because the state is fully aware of the holy teachings of the Bible and that when the people hear such teachings they will be aware of the evils the state is committing against the people.

Church organisations have managed to hold a number of noble activities to see that Zimbabwe becomes a country where human dignity is upheld. In 2007, a prayer meeting under the theme 'Save Zimbabwe Campaign' resulted in the arrests, torture and killings of human rights activists who attended. It is only an irresponsible and autocratic government that can send heavily armed policemen with orders to shoot and kill innocent citizens who will be praying. Robert Mugabe claims to have grown up in a Christian family but his actions towards the church can only be equated to that of Judas Iscariot who sold out Jesus Christ for pieces of silver because to him what matters was political power: nothing more, nothing less.

Being church in a nation in crisis is something difficult to grapple with especially when the state feels threatened by the presence of the institutions that preach justice and peace. This might be caused by the fact that during the liberation struggle the church was on their side. Now the Church is on the wrong side the government is sure that the preaching of the church is against them.

Even in the current situation, there is hope that one day the nation will enjoy cordial relations between the church and the state. It is our belief that this is going to happen when Zimbabwe has a new God-fearing leadership that does not view the church as an institution that mobilizes the masses against them. We continue to draw our inspiration from the prophet Joel who encourages us with the words, "And I will restore what the locust had eaten" (Joel 2.25).

Religious Freedom as a Human Right

From 25 to 30 May 2009, participants from throughout Eastern Europe gathered for the WSCF-E Lingua Franca seminar, Religious Freedom as a Human Right, in Lviv, Ukraine. Lectures, bible studies, discussions, case studies, and training sessions throughout the week examined many questions: How can we work for the religious freedom of those we disagree with? In what hidden and public ways do authorities restrict religious freedom? What can we, as young people, do to work for the religious freedom of our neighbours in Europe and beyond? What methods can we use to effectively raise our voices through nonviolent activism?

We learned from stories of those present, whose religious freedoms had been restricted. All were challenged by the activism and bravery of those working directly for the religious freedom of others. I will never forget one of the participants sharing "My husband was arrested for attending an event like this once and spent ten days in jail when he got home". Two participants from the same country chimed in immediately, "We would do ten days for this". How brave these activists were, and what a challenge they presented to the rest of us.

On the final day of the seminar, the participants preformed a skit they created on the topic; street theatre being one example of a method to raise public awareness. In the beginning of the skit, a tree representing religious freedom stands firmly rooted. Then, when a Muslim women's veil is violently removed while praying, the tree becomes shaky. A young Christian crosses herself as she prays and is grabbed to prevent her from completing the prayer. The tree becomes shakier still. A Buddhist is then forced to stop meditating, and the tree is in danger of falling. All three people, whose rights were violated, unite around the tree. In a circle, together, their oppressor is no longer able to prevent them from practising their faiths, and the tree is firmly rooted once again.

This skit left all with an impression of hope. In response to this same hope and the discussions throughout the week, all joined together to create this statement on religious freedom. Together, standing in solidarity, we can work for the freedom of our neighbours and a better world.

Rachael Weber,
WSCF-E Lingua Franca Coordinator

Statement on Religious Freedom from WSCF Europe Lingua Franca

As a diverse community of European Christian youth, we gather with a variety of visions but share the following common convictions:

Supporting the definition of religious freedom, as defined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we believe that it is our responsibility to work for the religious freedom and equality of all humans to choose, practice, and share their faith. We stand in solidarity with those who are struggling for religious freedom and with all vulnerable groups.

Recognising that religious freedom is a human right, and as such is inalienable, we must respect the rights of those we do not agree with. We affirm the rights of minority religious groups – though we may be in the majority today, tomorrow we may be in the minority somewhere else or even at home. Our belief and hope is that the more we ensure the rights of others, the more our own rights will be ensured.

Faith should not be used as a political tool of manipulation. Although people of faith have the responsibility to be engaged in politics and society, we condemn political manipulation of churches by governments and political parties.

Religious freedom must be respected at all levels of society, in governments, courts, civil society, churches and schools. Hate speech fuels discrimination and violence, and it permeates politics, the church and the media and should be identified and condemned. We have a responsibility to educate and raise awareness about religious freedom – intolerance is often caused by lack of education and knowledge on these issues.

We have the responsibility to be aware of the situation of religious freedom in our homes, communities, nations, and world and we must not be silent when we become aware of violations.

We must continually work for religious freedom. Throughout our societies, in Europe and beyond, the freedom of many groups and individuals are violated. We want to raise specific attention to the situation in Belarus, where the instrument of law is used as a tool of oppression against churches, minority religious groups, and generally against all who are struggling for their human rights.

These rights and responsibilities apply to all and tolerance should be promoted in all levels of life. Diversity is our wealth. We are called to action, in government and non-governmental organisations, in our churches, universities, and societies. We challenge our churches, communities, and nations to join us in our commitment to work for religious freedom.

May the God of freedom and truth, Christ who was persecuted, and the liberating Holy Spirit inspire the growth of religious freedom and tolerance in our world.

WSCF Europe
Lingua Franca Seminar
"Religious Freedom as a Human Right"
Lviv, Ukraine
from 25- 30 May 2009

Forum 18 News Service:

A Journalist Monitoring Religious Freedom

Geraldine Fagan

Born in the United Kingdom, Geraldine Fagan studied Russian and German at Oxford University. She has monitored religious freedom in the former Soviet Union since 1999, currently as Moscow correspondent for Forum 18 News Service (www.forum18.org). She is an Orthodox Christian.

Forum 18 News Service is a Christian initiative defending the right of all people to religious freedom, irrespective of their beliefs. It reports on violations of religious freedom in former Soviet states. We focus on the former Soviet Union for two reasons. As the location of the communist experiment to destroy religion, similar problems affecting religious freedom exist in its successor states. It is also the area in which our journalists have particular expertise. As Moscow correspondent for Forum 18, my brief includes Russia and Belarus.

Forum 18 has been operating since 2003 and has three full-time journalists. Reports go out in English via email and the internet to anyone who wishes to receive them. Our news is followed by politicians and diplomats from Europe and North America, as well as representatives of international bodies such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Our readers also include members of churches and other faith communities, human rights groups, journalists, ordinary people, and academics studying religion and culture in the former Soviet Union. Websites in the region which specialize in religious affairs often translate our news into Russian and other local languages.

As a journalist, I prefer the term 'religious freedom', as it is short but still maintains the essential point, the right to believe. It is the term used most widely in the United States, whose congress set up a Commission on International Religious Freedom in 1998. 'Religious freedom' does include the rights of atheists and agnostics, but the European human rights community tends to prefer more neutral-sounding terminology, such as 'freedom of conscience', 'freedom of thought, conscience and religion' and 'freedom of religion or belief'. Freedom of conscience also includes the right to refuse military service on possibly non-religious grounds.

Legal Framework

Freedom of religion is established in international legal frameworks, which are the main mechanism for believers to secure and defend their rights. The document most commonly cited is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Forum 18 is named after Article 18 of this Declaration, which reads:

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

Nations which allow the manifestation of only one worldview in public life are reluctant to support this. The Soviet bloc states abstained from the vote for the Universal Declaration, as their governments promoted atheist propaganda but permitted religious activity only in private or within very narrow limits in the public sphere.

The Universal Declaration is a statement, not a law. However, Article 18 is supported in international law, most notably in Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, also adopted by the United Nations, came into force in the Soviet Union and its successor states in 1976. Its own Article 18 upholding religious freedom reads:

> *Article 18.*
> *i. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.*
>
> *ii. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.*

The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was adopted by member states of the Council of Europe in 1950. Violations of the Convention are reviewed by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, to which residents of any member state can lodge a complaint. The Convention came into force for Russia in 1998 but has no status in Belarus, which is not a member of the Council of Europe. Article 9.i. of the Convention reads:

> *Article 9.*
> *i. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.*

Monitoring Religious Freedom

So how does Forum 18 monitor religious freedom? How do we determine whether people are free to choose and practise their beliefs in the different states we study? As journalists, we ask representatives of different faiths whether they are able to do various things. Are they able to join together for worship without restriction by their government? Can they meet in private homes? Can they rent public property in the same way as their fellow citizens who join together for sports or music? Do government officials prevent them from using, buying or building their own property for religious activity? We also ask them whether they are able to organize their communities in accordance with their beliefs. Can they elect their own leaders, raise their children in a particular faith, and work with fellow-believers from abroad without state interference?

Furthermore, we inquire about their ability to share their beliefs in the public arena. Can they conduct mission? Can they operate Sunday schools, catechism classes or hold public lectures

about their faith? Can they hold religious processions? Can they operate charitable activities motivated by their beliefs? Can they import or produce and circulate material about their beliefs?

As well as directly contacting representatives of faith communities, we monitor local, usually Russian-language, media for reports on violations of religious freedom. We also always contact relevant government officials and ask them why violations are taking place. Often violations of religious freedom are due to a state adopting restrictive legislation on religion. This is not always the case, however. Individual state representatives, such as bureaucrats or the police, may stop citizens from practicing their beliefs simply because they are opposed to them. Whatever the method, repressive states are rarely as careless as to violate religious freedom bluntly and openly. They usually create a web of restrictive rules whose end result is to ghettoise faith communities. At this point we can now turn to some examples:

The Salvation Army

The well-known international evangelical organization with a special focus on charity, the Salvation Army began to operate in Russia in 1913, but its work was cut short by the Bolshevik Revolution four years later. It returned to Russia at the end of the communist period, obtaining legal status as a religious organization by registering under a 1990 law which affirmed religious freedom. Then, in 1997, Russia replaced this law with a more restrictive one, which demanded that all religious organizations re-register with the state. In Moscow, the authorities refused to re-register the Salvation Army for a number of bureaucratic reasons. The Salvation Army was unable to appeal this refusal before the re-registration deadline passed at the end of 2000. As it tried to do so, it was even accused by one Moscow court of being a paramilitary organization because it calls itself an army and its members wear uniforms.

Landlords began to cancel the Salvation Army's rental contracts, disrupting a meals-on-wheels service to the elderly and the organization's weekly worship services. In September 2001, a local court ruled that the Moscow branch of the Salvation Army should lose its legal status, as it had not re-registered. The Salvation Army's successful complaint to Russia's Constitutional Court managed to prevent this. In February 2002, the Constitutional Court ruled that a religious organization could have its legal status taken away only if shown not to exist or to be in violation of the Constitution. But the Moscow authorities still refused to re-register the Salvation Army, leaving its legal position uncertain. Responding to the Salvation Army's complaint, the European Court of Human Rights in October 2006 ruled that the Russian authorities had wrongly refused to re-register the Salvation Army. They paid compensation on time, but remedied the original violation by re-registering the organization only very recently, on 10 April 2009 – ten years since it filed its application.

I chose this example because it shows that, as long as a faith community in Russia has access to legal support and is very patient, it can obtain justice via the law, in the European Court if not at home, but this is rare. Raising awareness about and encouraging support for religious freedom across society however, is far more important in ensuring that a government respects it.

Belarus

In Belarus, the religious freedom situation is perhaps more serious. There is no possibility of appeal to the European Court, and the government seeks even tighter control over its citizens' beliefs. Unlike Russia, laws adopted in Belarus in 2002 clearly state that all religious activity which does not have state permission is illegal. This results in the most blatant violations of religious freedom.

On 16 March 2008, a small group of Pentecostals met for Sunday worship at a private home in Mosty, a town in north-west Belarus. But local state officials soon arrived at the house and drew up charges against the group's pastor, Valentin Borovik, for leading a service without registering his religious organization. Belarusian law says that group religious activity without state registration is illegal, including home groups. At Mosty District Court on 28 April 2008, Pastor Borovik was found guilty of an administrative offence and fined the equivalent of 40 Euros. He attempted to appeal the verdict, arguing that:

> *I and my fellow citizens are believers, Christians. In accordance with the Bible we meet regularly as believers for joint prayer and Bible study … we are only realizing our constitutional right to joint profession of religion.*

The case was sent for appeal on 9 June 2008, but Pastor Borovik was again accused of leading an illegal religious organization and the fine was raised to the equivalent of 95 Euros. As evidence of wrongdoing, the court reported that at home meetings the Pentecostals 'read the Gospel, discuss questions of religious faith, sing songs and conduct religious rites.' Pastor Borovik took his complaint as far as possible, but the Belarusian Supreme Court simply dismissed his argument that compulsory registration goes against European norms.

At Forum 18, we hear a variety of cases. The victims are usually Protestant, but we reported one case which involved a Bible fellowship belonging to the official Belarusian Orthodox Church. The KGB secret police raided one of the group's meetings at a private apartment in the Belarusian city of Gomel in March 2007. During their three-hour search of the apartment, the KGB downloaded data from a computer, confiscated notebooks and questioned and photographed those present. The owner of the apartment was later issued an official warning.

Another type of religious freedom violation typical in Belarus is when a religious community has a public worship building, but the state refuses to grant official permission to use it. The community must have this state permission under Belarusian law, and without it, those believers are in a very insecure position. Further problems arise because, as in Russia, the law forced all religious organizations to re-register.

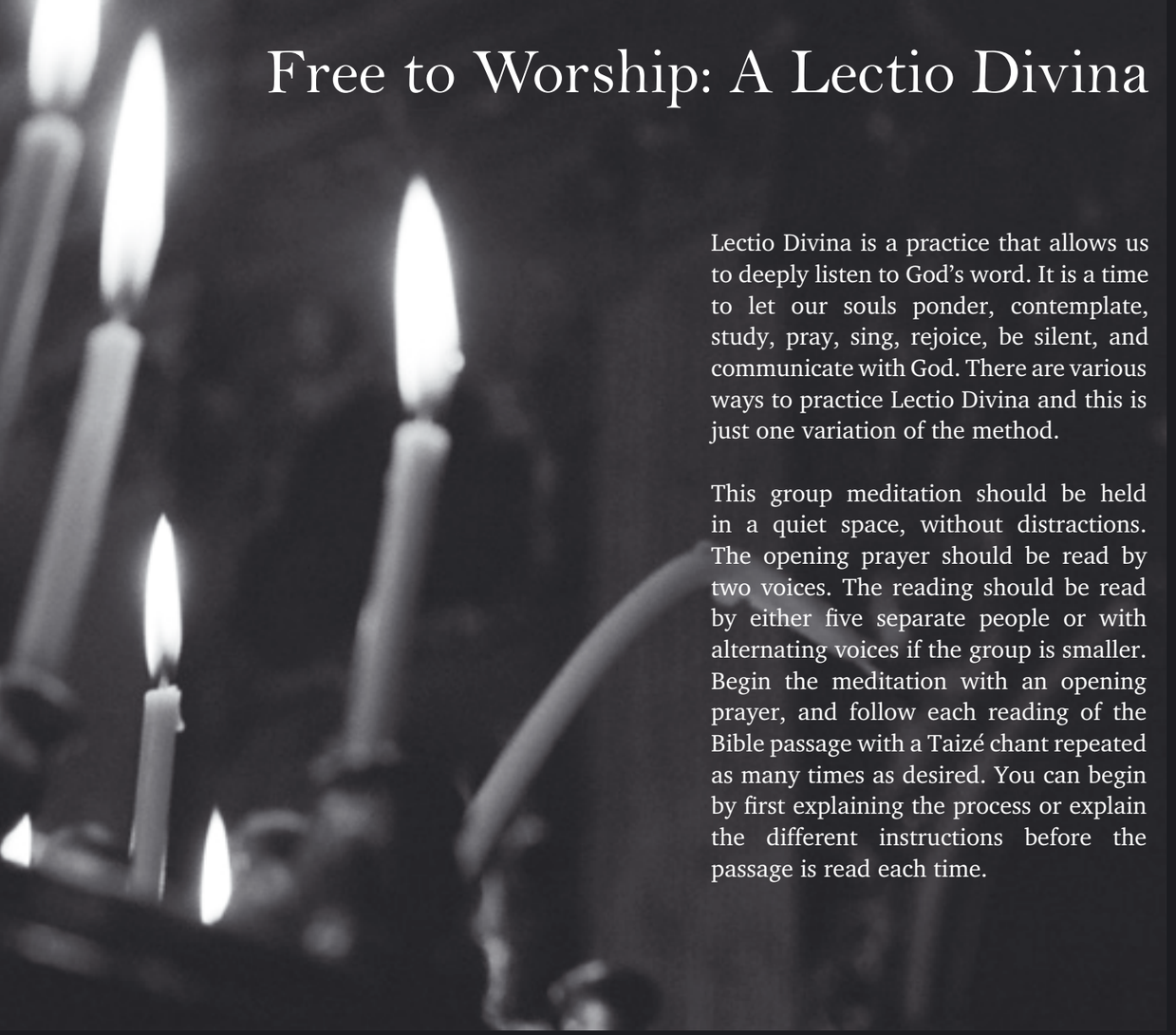
The local Hare Krishna community is unable to re-register its community in Minsk or to register a nationwide umbrella organization because the state refuses to approve its temple building in Minsk as a legal address. Responding to a complaint from two members of the Hare Krishna community, the United Nations Human Rights Committee concluded on 23 August 2005 that Belarus had therefore violated the religious freedom guarantees of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The state rejected this conclusion on the basis of Belarusian law – even though international law takes precedence – and has not remedied the situation. The Hare Krishnas are no longer being pressured for using their temple as in earlier years, but they dare not risk public activity. As their representative explained to me, 'On the one hand we exist, but on the other we have no rights.'

Separate from a valid visa, a foreign citizen must obtain permission from the authorities to work with a local religious community. The top religious affairs official in Belarus decides whether the work is necessary or not and can refuse permission without explanation. The foreign citizen can conduct religious activity only within approved houses of worship belonging to or premises continually rented by the umbrella organization's affiliate communities. The transfer of a foreign religious worker from one religious organization to another – such as between parishes – still requires state permission, even for a single worship service. In September 2006, a Polish Catholic priest was detained after he celebrated Mass in breach of this rule while passing through Minsk.

These restrictions are felt particularly by the Catholic Church. Catholic seminary education was severely restricted in the Soviet Union, so the Church in Belarus is heavily dependent upon foreign clergy – usually from Poland – to serve its parishes. Of the 430 or so Catholic priests in Belarus, about 160 are foreign citizens. Since the end of 2005, 22 Polish Catholic priests and nuns have been forced to leave Belarus. It seems that the government does not like particularly active or outspoken clergy. In one recent case, a Polish Catholic priest was forced to leave because he organized an ecumenical Christian music festival in the town of Borisov, even though it had state permission. An official from the local ideology department stopped the festival just minutes before it was about to begin.

These are some of the many situations I have written about. As well as interviewing people and keeping a close eye on local media reports, however there is another important aspect of our work monitoring religious freedom as journalists. People often do not tell us about violations of their religious freedom because they are afraid of the consequences. Raising awareness about and encouraging support for religious freedom across society is therefore the most crucial form of defence.

People often do not tell us about violations of their religious freedoms because they are afraid of the consequences.



Free to Worship: A Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a practice that allows us to deeply listen to God's word. It is a time to let our souls ponder, contemplate, study, pray, sing, rejoice, be silent, and communicate with God. There are various ways to practice Lectio Divina and this is just one variation of the method.

This group meditation should be held in a quiet space, without distractions. The opening prayer should be read by two voices. The reading should be read by either five separate people or with alternating voices if the group is smaller. Begin the meditation with an opening prayer, and follow each reading of the Bible passage with a Taizé chant repeated as many times as desired. You can begin by first explaining the process or explain the different instructions before the passage is read each time.

Opening Prayer

Voice 1: How good and how lovely it is,
Voice 2: To live together in unity.
Voice 1: If the Lord's disciples keep silent,
Voice 2: These stones would shout aloud.
Voice 1: Surely it is God, Who saves me,
Voice 2: I will trust in God and not be afraid.
Voice 1: For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defence,
Voice 2: And God will be my Saviour.
Voice 1: Make God's deeds known among the peoples;
Voice 2: See that they remember that God's Name is exalted.
Voice 1: Sing praises of the Lord, for God has done great things and is known in all the world.
Voice 2: Cry aloud, ring out your joy, for the Great One in the midst of you is the Holy One.

Lectio Divina

Silence: The first time the Bible passage is read, ask everyone to contemplate the words, listening to each individual word and phrase. After the reading all meditate quietly on the verse.

One Word: The second time the Bible passage is read, ask everyone to listen for one word that stands out to them. After the reading, ask that they share that word, the word they remember hearing or that they related to the most.

A Phrase: The third time the Bible passage is read, ask everyone to quietly listen for a phrase that speaks to them, that causes them to contemplate or challenges them to act. After the passage is read, ask that they share it with the group.

A Call to Act: The fourth time the Bible passage is read, ask everyone to briefly share what they feel this passage is calling them to do, what kind of action they feel God is calling for them, or how they think it relates to Religious Freedom.

Contemplation: The final time the Bible passage is read ask everyone to reflect again on what they have heard, what others have shared, and on God's word.

Reading – Mathew 18:18-20

18"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Song: Ubi Caritas (Taizé chant).
"Where there is charity and love, there God is."

* *One variation of this meditation is to experiment with different versions of the song or translations of the biblical passage. Sharing slightly different versions of these verses may bring up additional ideas and reflections.*

Submissions

As the ecumenical journal of the European Region of WSCF, *Mozaik* aims to provide a forum to explore and share your ideas, experiences and faith. It is a space to take up burning questions from theology, society, culture, education and other arenas; to explore Christian experience; to clear up misinformation; to provide a firm basis for dialogue and cooperation and to suggest innovative answers to the challenges we face.

We accept essays and articles about 1500-2000 words long, with endnotes, including some suggested readings when appropriate. For information about formatting please consult previous *Mozaiks*.

Mozaik is also a space to share news about your SCMs, to reflect on discipleship and culture and to express your creativity. So, we also value shorter articles, interviews, book and film reviews, reflections and reports from your SCM. Contributions of artwork, poetry, short stories and liturgy are also strongly encouraged.

Climate Justice Now!

The next *Mozaik* will follow the joint WSCF-E and EYCE study session this September 2010 in Strasbourg, France and will be published in the beginning of 2011.

It is clear that climate change is affecting the entire planet. How can simple, reasonable decisions made by an individual in Europe reduce the desertification in Africa? What can we do as a group and as a community of young Europeans?

The issue will focus on the following themes and areas:

- **Raising awareness on climate change, its roots and consequences and empowering young people to address these issues.**
- **Theological and ethical aspects of climate change and the concept of responsible dominion.**
- **Roles and responsibilities of young Europeans with regards to climate change.**

If you are interested in contributing to this or any issue of *Mozaik*, please inform the editors as soon as possible at wscfmozaik@gmail.com. They will also be able to help you with any questions you may have.