

BREAK THE  
CHAINS OF  
OPPRESSION  
AND THE YOKES  
OF INJUSTICE  
AND LET THE  
OPPRESSED  
GO FREE

EUROPE  
COVENANTING  
FOR JUSTICE

WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES –  
THE COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES IN EUROPE

*f*



BREAK THE CHAINS OF OPRESSION  
AND THE YOKE OF INJUSTICE  
AND LET THE OPRESSED GO FREE

# Europe Covenanting for Justice

Edited by  
Martina Wasserloos-Strunk

In cooperation with  
Martin Engels

On behalf of  
The World Alliance of Reformed Churches –  
The Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe

© 2010

foedus-verlag

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Umschlaggestaltung und Lay-out-Entwurf: Gisela Blumentritt, Grafik-Design DTP  
Konzept

Satz: Breklumer Print-Service

Printed in Germany/USA

ISBN 3-938180-19-6

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen  
Nationalbibliographie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über  
<http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

# CONTENTS

Preface	
There is No Unjust Communion in Christ . . . . .	7
<i>Bishop Gusztáv Bölskei</i>	
Justice on the Horizon . . . . .	10
<i>Martina Wasserloos-Strunk</i>	
Chapter 1	
Preaching on Justice: The Question of the Homiletic Implementation of the Accra Confession . . . . .	13
<i>Peter Bukowski</i>	
Chapter 2	
Commitment after Accra: In Europe . . . . .	23
<i>Jan Gerd Heetderks</i>	
Chapter 3	
Europe's Discussion about Justice: Problems – Perspectives – Visions . .	29
<i>Douwe Visser</i>	
Chapter 4	
Democracy – A Matter of Choice!? . . . . .	37
<i>Martina Wasserloos-Strunk</i>	
Chapter 5	
Europe's Road to Justice – The Project: „Europe Covenanting for Justice“	51
<i>Martin Engels</i>	
Chapter 6	
Theology of Hope in Times of Globalization . . . . .	57
<i>Sjaak van't Kruis</i>	
Chapter 7	
Empire - Provocation with a Perspective . . . . .	69
<i>Martina Wasserloos-Strunk</i>	
Chapter 8	
Climate Justice and Tax Justice: Key for Global Ethics . . . . .	81
<i>Christoph Stückelberger</i>	
Chapter 9	
The Liturgy of Holy Communion and Issues of Justice . . . . .	97
<i>Lindsay Schluter</i>	

## CONTENTS

Chapter 10	
Europe Covenanting for Justice – The Projects . . . . .	111
<i>Martin Engels</i>	
Chapter 11	
The Joint Globalisation-Project – Dialogue on Basic Issues Africa and the Re- formed Church in Germany . . . . .	113
<i>Ahlerich Ostendorp</i>	
Dreaming a Different World Together (Draft) . . . . .	118
<i>Joint Declaration of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the Evangelical Reformed Church, Germany</i>	
The Further Development of the Concept of Empire – a Help to Reading . . . . .	122
<i>Peter Bukowski</i>	
Chapter 12	
In the Middle of Europe: Fighting the Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children in the Czech-German Border Region . . . . .	127
<i>A Project of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)</i>	
Chapter 13	
Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change . . . . .	147
<i>A Report of a Joint Working Group on Climate Change and Theology Convened by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church</i>	
Chapter 14	
„Searching For What is Best For The City“ . . . . .	171
<i>Interview with Maria Bonafede Moderator of the Waldensian Church Italy</i>	
Chapter 15	
Learning Justice - The World is Getting Smaller – Think Large! . . . . .	175
<i>Accra and the Millennium Goals with Children and Youth</i>	
Chapter 16	
Globalance - Christian Perspectives on Globalisation with a Human Face . . . . .	187
<i>Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches</i>	
Chapter 17	
„Don't Leave Us Hanging!“ – Against Child Poverty . . . . .	193
<i>Campaign by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia</i>	
<i>Alfred Buss</i>	

## There is No Unjust Communion in Christ

Bishop Gusztáv Bölskei, Budapest, Hungary  
President WARC-Europe

Christian faith creates an open space for responsible action in the perspective of hope in God's coming kingdom. This is a basic insight which Christian communities have had to learn throughout their histories in different places around the globe.

And this is our faith based responsibility which we failed to fulfil so many times in the past. When hope fades, God's people loose direction. This is the case in those situations when we transform the good news into human action – but also in times when we fail to hear that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Rom 8:22).

Paul reminds us that “for in hope we were saved.” (Rom 8:24) Based in this hope is the freedom of Christians who are called to share in Christ's mission and as partakers in His anointing, thus “as kings fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life” (Heidelberg Catechism 32)

We are called to become a community regarding and shaping the “penultimate in the light of the ultimate” (Bonhoeffer). We are called to discern our common path in the apparent alternative of radical rejection of the world and accepting its compromise rejecting the ultimate. We shouldn't confuse but we mustn't separate the two. In Christian awareness we have to discern together our hope-based responsibility, with a free and good conscience, based on our liberation in Christ. In Him we have communion, therefore we are called to build a just communion.

In Accra we recognized again that “we are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself.” In our covenanting process we are about to take a step forward together. “In our continuing journey as people of faith in a God of life toward the June 2010 Uniting General Council, under the theme Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace (Ephesians 4:3), we are reminded that the reign of God calls us into hope for justice, peace, wellness,



harmony and unity (Titus 3:13-14). Covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth is a testimony to just communion with God and God's creation." (Message of the Johannesburg consultation)

The reign of God calls us into hope for justice in different contexts. But in a global world these different circumstances, I would say, the different regimes can have a common agenda: they want us to believe that they are exclusive and pretend to be without alternative. In Accra we rejected this claim of the "current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life". As Christians we know, that no paradigm, regime or power created by men can raise such claim, "which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule" (Accra 19) In regard to the reign of God we know, that "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31) - including the neo-liberal regime. We are thus free to raise our voice and set clear signs in action.

In all this we have to consider that our lives are limited, determined by necessities which we cannot by-pass. We cannot stop the world passing away. But the necessity isn't an excuse for structural evils imposed by self-set limits of men. In 2004 we asked for reactions to the text adopted in Accra and published them in a special volume of our church monthly. I remember the one written by a protestant professor of economics, minister in the first free elected government in Hungary after the political changes. He wrote that the global market economy and the modern technology together were dangerous because they multiply the effects of those human sins, wickedness and mistakes which always existed. "If there is an empire, it is after all to find in the hearts of the citizens of the developed and rich countries. Thousands of toll-keepers of consumerism can only prosper, because there are millions of those dependent on consumption".

In this sense we recognized the neo-liberal capitalism as such a structural evil and we dedicated ourselves to fight against it. But we also confessed our sins, being part of the culture of consumption.

Let us remind the basic aspects of the being of the Church: *koinonia*, *martyria* and *diakonia*. It means, Christian witness creates and is based in communion with the Triune God and with each other, and is inseparably bound together with the responsibility for God's creation. Therefore action for justice within the church and beyond (should be) is a natural part of the community created and led by Christ. It belongs to our every day life, especially as Reformed people.

Let us remember: there should be no unjust communion Christ!

We owe thanks to those who contributed to and edited this book, which contains – pars pro toto – examples of thoughts and actions, of common witness in confessing and worshipping and covenanting in action of future European member churches of World Communion of the Reformed Churches. Thank to God, this is only a selection of the abundant every day life of the Churches enriched with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The book is designed to be a helpful tool in our discernment process in Grand Rapids, in giving an account of ideas and endeavours of the WARC member churches in Europe, which “want to be part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches after June 2010 and they want as such to be part of a Communion of Churches that sees the obedience to the call to justice as a deep part of its faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” (Douwe Visser)

I close this preface with a prayer, known as the serenity prayer, in the hope that this European contribution to the covenanting process will help us in making those differences and wise decisions in Grand Rapids. For doing so, we definitely need the wisdom granted by God which enables us to respond together to God’s salvation in a clear and accountable way, confessing and acting together as communion.

*God, grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
The courage to change the things that I can;  
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

**Gusztáv Bölcskei** (1952) is Bishop of the Reformed Church District Tiszántúl and Head of the General Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary. He worked as a Pastor and Professor for Social Ethics in Reformed Theological Academy of Debrecen. He is currently the President of WARC-Europe.

## Justice on the Horizon

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk

In the context of the reformed churches in Europe the theme of justice is not new. However, the question of the conditions of a world that is “drawing together”, and of the structures provoking an urgent cry for justice and sharing in the globalised world, were never so emphatically posed and so forcibly placed on the agenda of the reformed churches as at the General Assembly of the World Reformed Alliance in 2004 in Accra under the theme

“That all may have life in its fullness!” (John 10:10).

The discussions in Accra were dominated by the profound conviction and the firm belief that God has given us a world in which “there is enough for all”.

“Life in fullness”: what does that mean? Is it “enough to live on”? Is it an “abundance” of material goods? Is it an “even more”, a “more than enough”? Is life in fullness a pious hope for the beyond, or does there already here and now spring from this promise the challenge to distribute justly the many goods entrusted to us, to uncover structures of injustice and to name them? And does not the promise of “a life in fullness” involve at the same time the commission to create conditions diametrically opposed to the actually existing system of economic injustice?

Fullness for all? What could that mean in a globalised world? That all the children in Lesotho can go to school? That everyone in Mumbai has more than a handful of rice a day? That there would be a right to have a second child in China? That all full-time employees in Germany would earn enough to finance their living costs? That children in the rich countries of Europe would not become destitute? Is “fullness for all” really “just” a material category and not rather from the very start a spiritual issue and a matter of our confession of faith in the God of the poor?

What do we need, what can we, what must we do, how can we testify to the gracious pledge from the Gospel of John which promises us fullness for all?

John Calvin put plainly before our eyes what parameters for justice, what a vision of fullness for all should be the foundation for our confession:

“When there is no fellow-feeling for the poor,” he wrote, “who are tortured, bait-

ed, stripped bare, when there is no mercy, then everything else that we do finds only disgust with God; he rejects everything in which human sympathy is lacking for those who are in need and who are not helped in their need.”<sup>1</sup>

Goods and property, so we have learnt in the Calvin Year, are not bad *of themselves*. But they are a great challenge, for as Calvin says: property means that something belongs to God. So our possessions are only entrusted to us and bring great responsibility with them.

“Only those make a proper use of these gifts of grace,” says the Reformer, “who freely and generously share them with others.”<sup>2</sup>

The book lying before you is a collection of theoretical reflections on the various aspects of the process of “Covenanting for Justice” since the Accra General Assembly, and on the situation of the reformed churches in Europe and the responsibility falling to them, as well as a – necessarily selective – presentation of various projects of the European sister churches.

The authors reflect on the conflicts and confusions which can arise through a globalisation oriented solely towards the multiplication of capital, and develop approaches to solutions which have in view a world in which there is “enough for all”. With this they mirror at the same time the actual lines of discussion in the various European churches.

The great number of activities is impressive in the global context – and also shows that the negative consequences of globalisation are coming to be felt by people in Europe on a scale unsuspected only a few years ago.

Homeless children, impoverished mothers and fathers, women transported and forced to prostitution – these too are realities in a wealthy Europe

It is becoming clear that the reformed churches have on their agenda the question of how the structures of the globalised world can be more justly shaped and the confession of faith in the God who promises us fullness for all be made visible in concrete structures of action – even if the Declaration of Accra did not develop the same radiant power for all.

“That all have life in its fullness...” – the motto of the 24<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of

1 Institute III, 19, 20.

2 Institute III, 7, 5.

## PREFACE

the World Reformed Alliance in Accra is the promise which when applied to our thought and action in the globalised world faces us with great challenges.

Action in the churches to enable participation, responsible dealing with the goods entrusted to us in the service of others, engagement in the political sphere - these are all foundational for the action of the European reformed churches to this end.

## Preaching on Justice: The Question of the Homiletic Implementation of the Accra Confession

Peter Bukowski, Wuppertal, Germany

Confessing and preaching are interrelated: that which is recognized and confessed as the truth of faith in a specific situation, insists on being passed on to other people; conversely, the church's witness has to orient itself to its confession. One could go even further and say that confession and sermon are interwoven, since each confession contains an element of preaching and each sermon represents an act of confession.

Nevertheless, it must be said that despite their interrelationship, confession and preaching are clearly distinct speaking acts. This is clearly demonstrated by the simple fact alone, that although there are a limited number of confessions within the church, there are an almost unlimited number of different sermons. And nothing else can be expected, since a confession – if it is true to its name – is the outcome of a spiritual process of clarification, a concentration of essential and binding faith truths, which, despite all its clarity of content, is formulated in a generalized and fundamental way, so that it can find as broad an agreement as possible.

The sermon is addressed to a specific congregation at a specific time in a specific place. Normally, it does not seek to take stock of a spiritual process, but to give impulses; it does not seek to appeal to as many Christian people as possible but to this actual congregation. That is why it strives not to bring together as much as possible into generalized tenets, but to throw light on one aspect of the gospel in such a detailed and concrete way that it is able to reach those hearing it firsthand in a way that is relevant to their lives.

In fulfilling its task of witnessing, the church must heed this distinction between confessing and preaching. If not, there is a real danger that a confession which is bound too much to time and place, which is too concrete, i.e., “sermonizing,” will exclude people, or that a sermon which is too transcendent of time and place, which is too principled or theoretical, i.e., too “confessional,” will simply not reach them at all.

This distinction must be especially observed when, as in Accra, a gathering of Christian people sent by churches from throughout the world agree on a new con-

fession. Precisely because a confession seeks to reach and take on board as many people as possible, it is not enough to merely make it as widely known as possible, to refer to it loudly and clearly at every opportunity or to recite it, while perhaps pointing out how important it really is. A confession is, after all, not the objective, but one stage along the path of the witness of the Christian congregation or church. It is undoubtedly an important stage, since here, in listening to Holy Scripture and in perceiving the challenges of our time, the orientation is established.

However, any possible orientation reveals its relevance only when it is followed by the congregation, i.e., when it continues its path of witness and service in the specified direction.<sup>1</sup> This was something clearly recognized by the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra. That is why it not only instituted the “Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth,” the core of which is the “Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction” (“Accra Confession,” hereafter abbreviated to AC), but also established a “Plan of Action,” which gives recommendations on what, on the basis of the Confession, should be done in the future.

The Plan of Action begins with the recommendation to congregations to participate in the protests of the people through “praying, preaching, teaching and specific acts of solidarity.” The fact that the Plan of Action begins with ministry corresponds to our understanding of the church as *creatura verbi divini*. That is why preaching is already explicitly mentioned in the declaration: “The General Council calls upon member churches, on the basis of this covenanting relationship, to undertake the difficult and prophetic task of interpreting this confession to their local congregations” (AC 39).<sup>2</sup>

My understanding of this is that the churches are to orient their local preaching to the newly adopted confession and, in this respect, to preach prophetically. The aim of prophetic preaching is to call to repentance and to a return to the path of justice (Mk 1:15), and to give guidance on how to follow this path. What needs to be observed in doing this is discussed in detail below.

## Preaching on God’s justice as free grace

Preaching on justice means speaking about God in the indicative. Faced with the demand which God’s commandment places on us, our task is to deliver “the

1 We will see later that this can unfortunately be completely different: even with the correct directions at hand, one can remain on the false path; see below.

2 The wording is unfortunate and contains an element of unintentional humour: it does not say much for the clarity of a text, when prophecy is required for its interpretation. A text written today must speak for itself and is not much use if it does not; it would also be like a joke which no one laughs at, forcing the teller to attempt to explain why he had to laugh when he heard it – which does not really help matters. I hope that my understanding of paragraph 39 catches the real meaning of the text.

message of the free grace of God to all people” (Barmen VI). Because, in the Bible, justice is first and foremost a summarized rephrasing of God’s own good works. The Psalms declare: “How wonderful are the things the Lord does ...his righteousness endures forever” (Ps 111:2f.). Hence, “the heavens proclaim his righteousness” (Ps 97:6) “and from one generation to the next ... shall sing aloud of [his] righteousness” (Ps 145:7).

God’s justice (i.e., righteousness) – that is, his active caring for his creation – is his attentive accompaniment of his people; that is, his saving deeds and his good guidance. Justice – that is, his constant listening to the cries of the suffering – is his strong arm that liberates the captives; and in all this is God’s passionate love for his people, which can rage terribly about their wickedness and stupidity, but which can do nothing else except be “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps 103:8). Where the *justitia* is blind, indeed inevitably must be blind to avoid being dazzled by the specific case at hand, it is said of the God of Israel: he watches, he listens and he yields – he applies the freedom of his love by doing justice to each of his creatures in a way that is conducive to his or her life in his or her particular situation. Justice: that is the way of our God through the time and space of his creation, the way on which he keeps his covenant and faithfulness to Israel unto eternity, and through Israel to the whole world, and never abandons the work of his hands. And hence: in the path of righteousness there is life (Prov 12:28a).

Also in the AC, this *prae* of God’s justice takes precedence before all human endeavour. That is why the statements of faith always start with confessions of belief in God before going on to the rejections of economic injustice and ecological destruction.

In this context, I believe it is important to explicitly praise the confessional character of the Accra Declaration. For, in a very specific way, it corresponds to the fact that for us Christians standing up for justice is not a matter of political belief, but the response to God’s own words and deeds, through which we live and to which we, in faith, bear witness.

In order to make this clear, the sermon will, however, have to make the praise for God’s justice resound more clearly and comprehensively than the Accra Confession did or was able to do. I draw attention again to what was said at the beginning regarding the distinction between confession and sermon. Whereas the Accra Confession recalls God’s action in rather dry theological sentences, the sermon, guided by Bible stories, tells of the salvation work of God in such a way that it becomes clear: what happened at that time is also true today; the (hi)story of God with his people also embraces my world and my (hi)story. God is able to change my world and my life, and he will do so!

Hence, the sermon should avoid speaking “gesetzlich” (which means mixing gospel and the law) about the gospel (Manfred Josuttis). This always happens when the impression is given that human deeds could/should take the place of



God's action, as in: "Easter occurs when *we* rise up against death..." This kind of sermon does not offer much comfort, for it leaves those hearing it on their own, when they would in actual fact be in urgent need of God's healing action.

When, in this context, I look back on the General Council, I am left with a twofold impression: the spiritual life, with all the acts of worship, Bible groups and prayers bore credible witness to the primacy of God's action. In some of the theological lectures and documents, the situation was somewhat different; here, the indicative theological statements were sometimes no more than a kind of "compulsory exercise," to be passed over quickly in moving on to what was really important, i.e., ethics.

That is why I incidentally believe it is also a shame that, on closer inspection, only just over half of the statements of faith in the AC beginning with "I believe" actually talk, in a narrower sense, about God's saving action (AC 17, 18, 20, 24, 30), whereas the others are concerned, yet again, with our deeds, in that they lay down what we are being "called" to do (AC 22, 26, 28, 32). One is tempted to issue the warning: *Pelagius ante portas!* For, if a confession is going to include ethics, then it must at least be able to point out more clearly than in the AC, how God, who calls us, also enables us to obey his call (see also p.11).

This is by no means only a matter of dogmatic *correctness* (even if our texts would indeed benefit from theological accuracy!), but of an extremely deep pastoral question: what makes people persevere on the false path and what helps to motivate them to repent? We find the answer in Jesus' own preaching.

Jesus repeatedly warns about the life destroying power of Mammon (cf. Mt 6:24). But, at the same time, he knows that admonitions are a poor means of motivating people to change their ways. That is why the Sermon on the Mount proceeds therapeutically. It diagnoses *anxiety* as the fertile ground, in which Mammonism primarily prospers. The reason for our greed, namely, lies in the fact that we are all walking unconsciously into the trap of the model of scarcity. We are driven by the crazy yet simultaneously real fear that there will not be enough for all. "What will we eat, what will we drink?" – these anxious questions are seen by Jesus as the symptom of our ever-present fear of not being able to get enough. As long as I define myself in terms of this model of scarcity, I will, of course, never get enough, entirely regardless of my actual income level, for who knows what might come up? Thus, I have to cling on to and hoard more than I need – like the children of Israel in the desert, who could not be content with the daily manna.

Healing can only grow out of words of comfort: "Your heavenly father knows what you need" (cf. verse 32). Hence, away with the model of scarcity; away, too, from ethical appeals towards a new trust in God: discover how many gifts you have received from God! Jesus tries to win this trust with his references to the wonders of creation: look at the birds in the sky, how considerately God feeds them; marvel at the lilies in the field, how beautifully clothed they are – by how much more will your father in heaven care for you. And the more you be-

come aware of how abundantly you have been blessed, the more you will discover that you do not live from a position of scarcity, but from a position of abundance. In his preaching, Jesus picks up on the pastoral guidance contained in the Psalms, which also act as encouragement to trust in God through recalling the goodness of God: “Bless the Lord, o my soul, and do not forget all his benefits” (Ps 103).

One particularly striking example of such healing pastoral care is found in the Jewish passover liturgy. One of the songs sung during the celebration lists, one by one, all the good things that God has given to his people, and after the naming of each individual deed, the refrain is: “It would have been enough.” Thus: If God had only led us out of Egypt – it would have been enough. And so it continues: if he had only defeated the Egyptians – it would have been enough. And if he had only parted the sea, it would have been enough. And led us through the sea, enough. And provided for us in the desert, enough – and so on. Each individual deed in the history of salvation is individually praised as a gift from God, with the words “it would have been enough” – in Hebrew “*dajjenu*” – being constantly repeated: it would have been enough, it would have been enough, it would have been enough, enough, enough.

After Accra, our basic task in preaching, and simultaneously our unmistakable Christian contribution is to keep making new attempts to tell about the justice of God and to offer it to our listeners as free grace so that despite all their fears and hardship they will become aware of their wealth; despite all their weaknesses they will become aware of their God-given power (cf. 2 Cor 6:3ff.; 12:9) and so become willing and able to stand up to injustice.

## Exposing the others’ injustice and our injustice

In the light of the justice of God, the “*works of darkness*” (Eph 5:11ff.) become evident. That is why preaching about justice also means exposing injustice and calling it by name. From the perspective of the AC, the main focus is on the economic and ecological injustice, which, in paragraphs 5 to 14, is described as the consequence of the neoliberal globalization, and which in the confession section, in the light of the statements of faith, is decisively rejected.

The sermon will have to take up the criticism and the clear rejection of an economic system that operates in a way that is anti-human and anti-nature. But it is also true here that it must be concretized and extended in its own particular context.

Above all, it must be simplified into its elementary structures, so that it can be understood and accepted. For, ultimately, the aim of this part of the sermon is to keep the congregation away from the false path or to find them guilty of their sin (i.e., their following the wrong path). A few comments on this:

1. Martin Luther translates Lamentations 3:39: “Why are the people complain-

ing in life, each complaining against his own sin”. One could dispute whether this translation is exegetically tenable,<sup>3</sup> but there is no doubt that it is in line with the Bible as a whole and it corresponds with the intention of the passage, for the following verse stresses: “let us examine our ways and turn back to the Lord”. Complain about one’s own sin; examine one’s own ways: preachers must heed this admonition absolutely. For, if only the sin of the other is brought to light and charged, this only serves as selfjustification for the congregation – this kind of sermon is not helpful; on the contrary, it numbs and leads to harm.

In saying this, I by no means want to rule out that in the sense of partisanship and advocacy for those who have no voice, the guilt of others must also be brought to justice; only, the one must not be done at the expense of the other.

It seems to me that in this respect the AC (like the majority of texts and statements from the General Council in Accra) is very gracious towards Europe and America in that it gives us plenty of material and assistance to help us with the task of examining our own sinful ways. That is appropriate in so far as the neoliberal economic system, after all, starts with us.

Nevertheless, the churches and congregations of the South also now face the task of examining their own sin, without diminishing the “criticism of Empire.” The exceptional Africa Forum during the General Council impressively proved that this is indeed being done. For this very reason, it is striking that the assistance offered by the Accra texts in this respect remains particularly colourless, generalized or indirect (cf. for example AC 34 or the corresponding passages from the Action Plan).

As well as addressing corruption could it not also have more decisively addressed the non-Western collaboration with the unjust economic system? As well as the frequent mention of the HIV problem, would it not have been possible to have made more explicit mention of the “homemade” guilt – one only has to think of the scandalous way in which President Mbeki has spoken for years about this issue! And is the impression not given at times of monocausality, whereas in reality several factors are involved (cf. AC 5-13; despite 11)? The “Empire” is undoubtedly a very important but certainly not the sole reason that terrible wars are being waged in Africa, or that a country like Zimbabwe is being progressively ruined.

In saying this, my intention is by no means to divert attention away from our “Western” guilt, or to balance out one guilt against another. But when it is a case of preaching about justice in our own local congregations and churches, the admonition for each of us to examine our own ways, to (also) consider our own sin, cannot be ignored, for if we do we cheat those commended to us of the opportunity to change their ways.

3 The Revised English Bible translates this differently; however, the Hebrew text of this verse is extremely difficult to decipher.

I draw attention again to Isaiah 58, the motto of the 1997 General Council in Debrecen. In historical terms, we know that the economic injustice which the prophet is attacking, was brought about by an external factor: the tax reform pushed through by the Persian King Darius I (after 521) permitted taxes to be paid only in coins. This forced the small farming businesses that were not geared up for surplus production (i.e., had nothing to sell) to go bust. They ended up in the debt trap and were ultimately swallowed up by large landowners. It is this inner-Israeli “furtherance” of an externally-imposed injustice that the prophet makes the focal point of his sermon, precisely because his concern is the healing of *his* people.

2. This is especially relevant for the part of the sermon concerned with exposing sin: what is said here must be accurate. This appears to be self-evident, but it is not. Again and again, in sermons on ethics, it can be shown that statements are only half or three quarters true, that the research has been sloppy or that what is said is too general.

This is particularly bad in our context, because factual errors make it all too easy for the congregation to also fend off criticism that is in fact justified. Particular consideration must be given to one trap (in taking up AC 11): only in exceptional and borderline cases can human co-existence be assessed by the tools of binary logic. Anti-semitism, for example, or apartheid are cases where our “either-or” is required. More often, however, it is a matter of bringing the conflicting values into balance, instead of deciding in favour of the one and against the other; and hence in the economy, for example, it is a matter of finding the balance between the poles of public welfare and self-interest and not a matter of contradictory principles.

One other example relates to the use of “we” in statements on the issue of justice. According to the particular context, I am perpetrator, victim, co-participant, co-sufferer, co-originator, co-injured party, etc. But I am not always everything at any one time, and that is why, from case to case, it is important to question precisely, to talk precisely. An indiscriminating “we” seduces me and those listening to me to seek refuge on the agreeable side. Talking precisely also requires courage to confess along with Peter at the given moment: I am a sinful man (Luke 5:8), or to say with Nathan: You are the man (2 Sam 12:7).

3. Finally: in the part of the sermon exposing sin, the task again and again will be to draw attention to the misery of the particularly disadvantaged and to raise awareness for their suffering. This cannot be done through statistics alone, no matter how terrible they are. They are invaluable as information for the congregation, but statistics on many thousands of victims cannot be felt. I am more likely to be moved by what has happened to an individual. In such an example the unimaginable is made vivid and the demands on me cannot be rebuffed.

## Accompanying the congregation along the path of justice

The sermon on justice is not restricted to clearly identifying and exposing injustice; instead its aim is much more to accompany the congregation along the path of justice or to encourage it to stay on this path.

One forethought: justice must be *done*; the path of justice must be *followed*. Isaiah 58 does not demand that we “recognize” or “name” or “confess,” but that we “*break*” the chains of injustice. Justice aims at the praxis of liberation. This does not make the church’s words, statements and confessions on the issue of justice superfluous; however, one latent risk must be pointed out here, which simultaneously accompanies our declaration as if it were its shadow. On the one hand, declarations – especially when they are passed by so-called high-ranking or distinguished committees – promote the illusion of being influential: as if by (only) saying the right thing, justice will be established (cf. Karl Marx’s 11th thesis on Feuerbach!).

In my opinion, this overestimation of what is said is often responsible for the bitter struggle over individual words. To put it bluntly: we should put more of our energies into the cooking instead of into a continual re-editing of the recipe! And, on the other hand: in making declarations on justice one is at risk of blanking out one’s own complicity in guilt: in speaking, one has, after all, taken up a position on the “right” side. I am always astonished at how we committed Christians, in particular, are entirely able to block out our own structures of miserliness and greed!<sup>4</sup>

That is why the sermon, too, must not be content with just articulating the proper insights (no matter how important that, in itself, is!<sup>5</sup>), but must point out ways the congregation can follow, i.e., offer them help to take action. Two things must be observed here.

1. Instructions on ethics only make sense if they can be fulfilled. Take, for example, the sentence: “We must all ensure that the gulf between the rich and poor does not keep growing.” Can this be fulfilled? In theory, yes. But in practical terms, many people will simply not know how. How can this directive be put into practice by a family that has barely enough to get by, never mind someone on social security benefits? And how can it be put into practice by the many people

4 The psychotherapist Alfred Adler once said: “a bad conscience is actually the good intentions which one does not have.” By this, he meant that a bad conscience exactly fulfils the level of self-punishment that enables us to continue our undesirable behaviour. A bad conscience helps the smoker to go on smoking. A modification of this would allow us to exaggeratedly say: declarations on justice represent the ways one does not follow.

5 This task is especially demanding when one attempts to formulate not only the negation, but also the position itself. The Plan of Action accompanying the AC attempts to identify direction and course; but much still remains to be done here.

who believe that “those at the top” will do what they feel like doing anyway? I believe that everyone, in fact, has the potential to do something. But only when the preacher is prepared to go beyond a general appeal, “earths” it and comes up with some concrete ideas as to *how* the congregation can follow up this directive concretely: through asking such questions as: “What do you pray for?”, “For whom do you vote?” and “Is the maxim ‘learn to share’ part of the way in which you bring up your children?”

One more comment on this: we should avoid playing off the different ways of taking action against one another (as many of us, including myself, have done in the past): active struggle against contemplation, political action against local initiatives, missionary work against social commitment. Instead, in learning from the New Testament teaching on talents and gifts we should encourage each member of our congregations to discover their own gifts and potential and to use these on the path of justice.<sup>6</sup>

2. Anyone admonishing his or her congregation should reflect on the likely consequences. I have never forgotten the following incident: as a young minister, I spoke with great conviction and in fiery words in calling on my congregation to boycott products from the apartheid regime.

This included silver Kruggerands being offered at the time in our banks. A woman who helped out at the weekly children’s services, called me up to ask: “After applying for 50 jobs, I now have the chance of a job with the Deutsche Bank; should I take it? If I do, I will have to sell those coins you spoke about in the church on Sunday.” This scene set me thinking and made me ashamed of myself. Our purpose should not be to rob our directives of all their essential clarity and radicalism.

But as preachers, we should be aware of what we are expecting of our congregations. It does not cost a theologian much (at least not in my context) to commit him/herself to economic and ecological justice. On the contrary, in return for simply showing sufficient commitment, he or she might even be awarded a church commission and get the chance to meet lots of interesting people throughout the world. For the members of our congregations, however, a similar commitment may be a matter of life and death. We must be aware of this, and an appreciation of their difficulties must also be perceptible in our preaching.

I have left the most important aspect to the end: even where the sermon is focusing on the obedient action of the people, it must not cease to speak about God. For, according to biblical and Reformed understanding, it is not only our justification that is the work of God alone, but our sanctification too (cf. 1 Cor 1:30; 1 Pet 1:2). Of course, this sanctification does not occur without us: God has

<sup>6</sup> In this respect, the “Plan of Action” is very helpful, as it demonstrates the whole variety of what can be done.

chosen us, after all, as his partners in covenant; he wants our co-operation and, in this, our free and self-responsible action. But yet, it is *God* who effects this will and work in us (Phil 2:13<sup>7</sup>).

The sermon on repentance, of changing one's ways, does not take its power from the volume of its ethical appeal, but from the encouragement that God believes us to be capable of much (Mt 28:20), from the discovery of our God-given potential (Romans 12), from the recognition of the power of the Spirit with which God has equipped us in our battle against the powers of evil (Mk 16:17f.; Eph 6:10-17).

Whether the preacher is counting on the power of the Spirit will be demonstrated not least in whether he or she is capable of discovering its traces in the life of the congregation. The letters of the apostle Paul are full of the grateful recognition, appreciation and articulation of all the good that is being done in the congregation.

Reformed preachers, specifically, should learn a lesson from him. For, in this respect, I found many of the lectures and documents from the General Council to be quite simply substandard. An outsider could have gained the impression that we were talking about congregations and churches which, without exception, were stuck on the path of injustice, and thus had to be called on to take the very first step in a new direction.

We have a way of practicing criticism which has nothing to do with modesty or humility, but shows contempt for the many encouraging acts of justice also to be found within our churches.

A sermon on justice which is unable to recognize fruits of the Spirit is desolate. Part of the skill of preaching is the art of praising. Let us do so in following Paul's example: We always give thanks to God for all of you ... constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:2f.).

***Peter Bukowoski** (1950) studied Theology and Music in Berlin, Bonn and Cologne. He is the Director of the Reformed Seminary in Wuppertal and teaches homiletics and pastoral care. Since 1990 he is Moderator of the Reformed Alliance Germany and currently Member of the Executive Committee of WARC.*

7 So Barmen II too: our service to God's creatures arises out of his act of liberation

# ENGAGEMENT

## 2

### Commitment after Accra: In Europe

Jan Gerd Heetderks, Oosterhout, The Netherlands

#### Declaration of Accra (WARC 2004)

- 5. We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Romans 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.*
- 6. The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.*
- 7. We live in a scandalous world that denies God's call to life for all. The annual income of the richest 1% is equal to that of the poorest 57%, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition.*

This is the beginning of the “Declaration of Accra”<sup>1</sup> and sets out the area in which the Churches are acting. We find another expression of these ideas in the glad confession “The earth is the Lord’s!” God should reign and not Capitalism, not an unbridled materialistic way of behaving and not an uncontrolled accumulation of wealth and unrestricted growth.

Although a good many formulations in the Declaration of Accra and several analyses of the current situation have led to criticism in some European churches, the subject-matter has been widely taken up and European churches have again put the question of justice and poverty on the ecclesiastical agenda as a matter of urgency.

Many Reformed churches within Europe have in the last years conducted an animated discussion on the consequences of globalization – particularly on the consequences of “Capitalism without bounds”:

1 <http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/TheAccraConfession.pdf>



What conditions are necessary for trade to be fair and just? What qualifications are needed in the money-market, what significance should money be permitted to have? Which ethical criteria are necessary for an economy which serves the people? What are the consequences of the assertion that trade controls everything, what kind of ethics is concealed behind this self-regulated market?

What are the tasks facing the Church in this context and how can it meet them? The WARC in Europe together with the Reformed Alliance in Germany has produced a survey of the main emphases and projects in which the Reformed churches in Europe – following the Declaration of Accra – are involved against unfair structures of globalization.

Alongside the “traditional” projects against poverty or the projects of political co-operation in development, more and more ventures to help the poor are emerging in Europe. Currently the topic of “Child Poverty” is moving increasingly to the fore.

A further central focus of European commitment can be seen in projects relating to the protection of the climate and the preservation of a balanced agriculture.

Here it is above all the large European Reformed Churches – Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands – which are doing sound work and have developed outstanding exemplary projects. This may depend on resources of money and personnel, but certainly also on the fact that these large institutions constantly seek the partnership of non-governmental organizations and work in co-operation with them.

The discussions in the European Churches had various main focuses:

## Analysis

What are the real driving-forces in our economic system? Where does money become Mammon? Where is God's sovereignty totally undermined and other agencies (money, the obsession with capital, economic or military interests) are the real driving-forces of global development? The General Secretary of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Dr. A.J. Plaisier, writes on the current crisis:

*“There are two elements which at present are to the fore:*

- 1. Our economic system has become a system which can be described in Shakespeare's words: Money breeds money. The medium of exchange has taken over control. That can go well for a long time ... until the system nevertheless breaks down.*
- 2. Our economic order is directed exclusively to the increase of our own wealth. The unrestrained growth of material wealth lets others pay the bill. Which others? Who are the debtors? One day they will stand on our doorstep: Human nature*

*which has become spiritually poor; the indigent who were unable to participate; the third World, becoming impoverished; the natural springs which have dried up; the earth, which cannot endure this gluttony*<sup>2</sup>

## Dialogue with Politics and Commerce.

The Church does not live for itself. The Church lives in dialogue with people. For this reason the churches regularly seek dialogue with those responsible in politics and commerce on the questions thrown up in Accra. Here it is a matter of discussions on the economic system as such, also – and above all – with emphatic reference to the responsibility of politics and commerce for the poor in the South, but also in their own land. In the economic crisis various churches have sought contact with their governments to point out emphatically that savings should not be made in the area of developmental aid or affect the poor in their own land.

Thus, for example, the conference of European churches at the beginning of May 2009 drew attention in an open letter to the Presidents of the European Union under the title, “The economic crisis is a call for change”,<sup>3</sup> to the consequences of undirected globalization, and in the course of this demanded ethical conditions for the political action of the EU.

## Examination of its own Finances

How does the church itself use its money? How does it spend its money? Critical analyses have taken place on this topic, and decisions – some radical – have been made (e.g. the pension fund of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands recently invested 10 million Euros in the Ecumenical Developmental Co-operative, Oikokredit).

## Development work by the Church

The churches’ development work has gone on undiminished. In the process it is conspicuous that co-operation with commercial businesses has also been more intensively sought. In such co-operation the churches function as bridges: They warn businessmen and women to conduct their businesses in a socially vigilant way and to accept responsibility. “Corporate Social Responsibility”, the taking on of responsibility for social development by companies, is one of the particularly forward-looking projects of this co-operation.

2 [www.pkn.nl](http://www.pkn.nl)

3 <http://www.ccc-kek.org/pdf/Openletter5May2009.pdf>

## Poverty in Europe

When one speaks of poverty in Europe one must add: this is nothing like the existential poverty under which the people in the developing countries suffer. Basically no one in Germany, Poland or Portugal has to go hungry or do without clothing or somewhere to live. No one is turned away from hospital when he or she needs medical treatment. And no one has to pay for schooling. The social net may in the meantime have developed holes, but it exists – just. Yet: It is indisputable that economization, e.g. in educational establishments, intensifies the problem of poverty. In the meantime it has been scientifically proved that children from poorer homes have less chance of achieving qualified school-leaving certificates. We have said for a long time – poverty is hereditary. Charitable organizations, trade unions and academics have for years been warning of the increasing poverty in Europe. Naturally “European poverty” – in comparison with the poverty in the countries of the South – is different, is not life-threatening. Yet it excludes people, deprives them of a voice and puts them at a disadvantage.

### A Quotation about Poverty in Germany:

*“27% of the people in Western Pomerania live beneath the poverty threshold. Western Pomerania is the poorest region in Germany. Anyone who has less than 60% of the average income counts as poor. The poverty threshold in Germany in 2007 for a person living alone was 764 Euros per month, for a couple without children 1,376 Euros, for a couple with two children 1,835 Euros. Those particularly threatened by poverty are the unemployed and single parents and their children.”<sup>4</sup>*

In most European countries almost all areas of daily life are regulated by the market – by money. People find themselves in poverty when their income cannot supply the subsistence minimum. But how high must this income be? In Germany the Social Welfare Allowance counts as the “official” borderline to poverty. Other calculations start from the national average income: Anyone who does not have at least more than half of this average income counts as poor.<sup>5</sup>

Children are particularly affected by poverty. A study made by the European Union postulates that one in five children in Europe is poor.<sup>6</sup> Half of these children come from single-parent families or families with numerous children. A person who has little money at her or his disposal tends to be undernourished,

4 <http://www1.ndr.de/nachrichten/armutsatlas100.html>

5 [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_inclusion/docs/child\\_poverty\\_leaflet\\_de.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/child_poverty_leaflet_de.pdf)

6 [http://1.bpb.de/themen/HJSR7B,O,O,EUSozialbericht\\_beklagt\\_Kinderarmut.html](http://1.bpb.de/themen/HJSR7B,O,O,EUSozialbericht_beklagt_Kinderarmut.html)

worries more, is more easily affected by psychological illnesses such as depression, and has fewer possibilities of changing his or her situation. When one looks at the development of poverty in Europe under the conditions of globalization – and especially too with the consequences of the financial crisis – the prognoses are devastating. The commitment of churches and social welfare institutions will be called upon in future even more than before.

## What are the Churches doing?

The Churches are intensely and extensively involved – which two examples here may illustrate.

### *The Children's Table Project (Kindertafel)*

Even in Germany many children suffer from hunger. And by far not every child receives a warm meal each day. The Evangelical Church of Westphalia (PCW) is continuing its campaign against child poverty, “Don't let us down”, with the *Kindertafel* programme. The campaign of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia aims to make people in the church and in society in general aware of their share of responsibility and to thematize the background and consequences of child poverty. To the political goals and demands of the Westphalian Church's campaign belong – in addition to a hot meal each day for every child – children's participation in the life of the community irrespective of the financial situation in their homes. To this belong among other things free places in nursery-schools and open whole-day schools, free schoolbooks, access to computers and the internet, participation in school excursions and access to public cultural and leisure activities. Here, however, it is not simply a matter of material things but of love, security and acceptance. For: “Poverty does not begin with underprovision of material goods but when people are not given recognition, when they cannot enter with their abilities into the life shared by all.”

### *Helpen onder protest – Help under Protest*

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands has requested the diaconal services in the local parishes to register cases of poverty and also to register what kind of help and lobbying is being carried out by the congregations. The results of the investigation<sup>7</sup> are regularly presented to the responsible minister in order to refute the myth that everyone can live well on Social Security and at the same time to indicate how many stitches in the network of provision the state-run institutions let drop in their accompaniment of the poor. Material is also produced for the diaconal organizations of the local parishes – how and by what means they

<sup>7</sup> The investigation of 2008 can be found under: <http://www.kerkinactie.nl/site/uploadedDocs/PovertyintheNetherlandschurchesinvestigation2008.pdf>

for their part can give concrete help to the poor and, on the other hand, how they can forcefully and effectively represent the interests of the poor to the responsible civic authorities.

The Churches in the European area of the WARC have assumed responsibility in various projects. In so doing they have taken into account the fact that in Europe too, many people have been affected by the changes brought about by globalization. What many people even today cannot imagine: In the traditional “Welfare States” of Europe there is dire poverty. The European Churches are committing themselves under conditions which are increasingly more difficult – declining financial resources and a growing secularization of society increasingly hamper their engagement.

Following the Declaration of Accra the European churches have reconsidered and extended their engagement in manifold ways. Inter alia they have done this as a reaction to the Accra Declaration which emphatically demands that all economy and all capital should serve humanity. For: “*The earth is the Lord’s!*”

***Jan Gerd Heetderks*** (1957) *is a minister of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. From 2003 to 2007 he was the President of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. He is currently the spokesman of this church and Vice-President of WARC-Europe.*

# DISCUSSION

## 3

### Europe's Discussion about Justice Problems – Perspectives – Visions

Douwe Visser, Geneva, Switzerland

#### Introduction

My wife and I were kept waiting at Schiphol Airport for our son to arrive from Accra. He had been there for three weeks as a steward at WARC's General Council in August 2004. We saw that the KLM flight had landed so we could expect our son to come at any moment. It took a long time since he had decided to drink a coffee with a few of his fellow-stewards who had an ongoing flight from Amsterdam. In the mean time the delegation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) had arrived. Knowing them I had a short conversation with them. They were clearly unhappy with many aspects of the past General Council. Not in the least with how the acceptance of the Accra Confession had gone. It was a short conversation but it showed a condensed level of bitterness and concern.

In the months thereafter the evaluation of the Accra meeting and its outcome was done, at least in the Netherlands, in a more balanced and in a 'less first reaction, emotional' way. Critique on the Accra Confession and the way it was accepted by the General Council was streamlined in an attitude of taking up the challenge and working with it in the Dutch context.

The Netherlands is just one country in Europe and the PKN is just one of the 215 member churches of the WARC, but the reception of the Accra Confession there is a good starting point for a more general reflection on Europe's participation in the covenanting for justice work of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. What have been the problems? What have been perspectives and what are the visions?

#### Problems

In May 2009 I had a consultation on Communion and Justice in Sao Paulo for WARC's Latin American member churches. There were around 30 participants. In general they were staunch supporters of the Accra Confession and the covenanting for justice work. They were also clearly inspired by liberation theology models and they wanted the outcome of the consultation to show that as a

basis. However it was also honestly said, that the liberation theology model had not been so helpful in a country like Cuba. That reminded me of reactions you can hear in Europe concerning the Eastern European context.

Although nowhere in Europe Communism has the same position now as during the years of the Iron Curtain and the Cold War, the division between Eastern and Western Europe is still highly noticeable. It can be noticed also in the evaluation of the Accra Confession. The general feeling among Eastern European WARC member churches is critical, to say the least. One can hear sometimes that the language being used in the Accra Confession and also in the overall covenanting for justice work reminds one of the Marxist ideological language so favoured by the former communist regimes. Some also feel that there is no room for a critical approach as there was neither in communist countries. Above all many feel that the world wide economic models they now are part of, have improved their level of welfare far more than during the communist era. Of course not all are critical in this way and opinion has changed quite a bit during the recent credit crisis. But in general the word 'capitalism' has no longer the same pejorative connotation as often as in the global WARC context.

The Western European situation is different. First of all a good number of theologians and economists within WARC member churches have been involved and have supported the so-called *processus confessionis* leading to the acceptance of the Accra Confession. Many European member churches were greatly interested in matters of global justice and sought to have this also worked out from a theological perspective. However in the run up to the Accra General Council and in the process after, there was a dominant feeling of not being heard and being misunderstood. The following factors played a role in this critical evaluation:

- Europeans felt that in Accra the blame for injustice was put too easily on the shoulders of the global North. There was little criticism of actors of injustice within the South and if it was mentioned, it was also directly linked again to the dominance of global North actors.
- There was the feeling that the floor in Accra was very much dominated by a very outspoken part of the WARC member churches without them listening to other voices or even preventing dissident voices to be heard.
- The word 'empire' as defining the source of evil and injustice was not seen as helpful, especially when it was seen as uncritically linked to concrete regimes like the USA.
- Within Europe it was felt that parts of the world with the loudest support for the Accra Confession were not doing much with it while within Europe more was being done notwithstanding the critical evaluation of Accra 2004.
- An often-heard opinion is that there is a theological deficit within WARC's covenanting for justice process.
- Europeans felt that their critical questions were not taken seriously or that they

were being seen – because of this – of not standing behind the commitment to justice.

The above-mentioned factors played a role in the relation between the WARC and its European member churches. However in the reception of the Accra confession and the involvement in the covenanting for justice work there are other problematic factors directly linked to the European context:

- Europe is for many of its countries part of the global North from the perspective of economic wealth. As such Europe is directly profiting from the global economic situation that causes economic injustice for many of the poor countries.
- Looking at the global ecological situation, Europe as a whole has a very large so-called ecological footprint and is as such most probably the cause of pollution and climate change.
- European countries have played a dominant role in colonising countries in the global South and still play a role in neo-colonial situations.
- Also European churches and especially many of its members are directly profiting from the lack of balance of global economic wealth.
- European theology has often played a role and still plays a role in justifying situations of economic and ecological injustice.
- European churches have often played, not the least by using their financial powers, a dominant role in the ecumenical movement hindering equal global involvement.

These factors do cause uneasiness in the European context when, like with the covenanting for justice work and the Accra confession, only a self-critical process can be the right answer. If the global South really gets a voice, and that was the case in Accra 2004, then there is no easy message to digest in e.g. the European family of churches. No wonder many feel tempted to put the blame only on procedural mistakes and one-sided critique.

### Perspectives

The long list of problems could lead to the conclusion that the position of the European member churches within the WARC is of a critical nature and that due to this plus the European economic context the involvement of the European Churches in the covenanting for justice work is merely problematic. This however would be a totally wrong conclusion. Looking at the years since Accra 2004 many things have happened that give a positive perspective.

First of all there has been an open ear from the side of WARC's governing body and its secretariat in Geneva to look with a critical eye at the decision making process in Accra 2004. There has been careful listening to critical voices also from the European member churches. For this it has been helpful that there has been explicit critique.



In general the European member churches have not let themselves be dominated by frustration but have seen the importance of the commitment to justice. Many also within the churches, ministers in congregations and others were only inspired by what happened in Accra and church leaders in general were wise enough to look at what is in fact only important: Gods justice for the world! The covenanting for justice work played a great role in new bilateral relations, e.g. between German and South-African WARC member churches.

Discussions about the language used in the covenanting for justice work have lead to more understanding and more acceptance of some of the definitions being used, e.g. the word 'empire'.

A lot of work has been done to make it clear that being committed to justice is something of the heart of (Reformed) theology. It is the call to God which justifies us and sanctifies us to do justice in the world. The Calvin anniversary year 2009 yet again made clear how deeply rooted this commitment is in the Reformed tradition and as such – it is believed – in the Word of God itself.

The credit crisis, due to its often catastrophic impact, made it clear that the global economy has many sinful aspects that can only be condemned.

In 2009 the WARC organised eight regional consultations on Communion and Justice, the first one in Europe. Nowhere, most certainly also not in Europe, was there any movement of putting the commitment to justice in the background. With all regional variety the passion for this commitment is dominant everywhere. In Europe it also gave room to seeking clearer understanding. The same is valid for the global consultation on the Accra confession and the covenanting for justice work organised in Johannesburg September 2009: the discussion was open, honest and helpful for strengthening commitment.

The merger between the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the WARC that will lead to the formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in June 2010 makes it very clear as to what the mission of the organisation is: "Called to be a Communion of Churches, committed to justice"! In no way can it be feared that European member churches will be an obstacle to obey that call, on the contrary!

## Visions

Europe is one of the most secularised parts of today's world. In all countries mainline churches are declining. In most societies church attendance has gone down very much over the past decades. The position in society is often marginal. Still in many ways the Church has a financial position that reminds us much of the past when the Church had a more prominent position in society. In Germany and many parts of Switzerland Churches are financed through state tax benefits (Kirchensteuer). In Scandinavian countries, except for Sweden, the Lutheran Church is still a State Church. In a country like the Netherlands

Church and State are fully separated but Christian education is still 100% financially state supported. Many Churches and especially mission organisations have accumulated a lot of wealth over the past centuries. Although all European Churches have problems to meet ends financially, compared with the rest of the world – with the exemption of maybe the USA – the financial position of Western-European churches is still very strong. However the future for many European churches looks bleak. In the Netherlands e.g. the number of those visiting a Church service at least once per month has gone down 50% since 1971. If this continues at the same level then sometime in the forties of this century the last churchgoer will switch off lights. In conjunction with this decline of church attendance the relevance of the Church and its theology has very much gone down as well. This is valid also for WARC member churches. In this aspect we have to be aware however that a great deal of young people who have left the Church, still favour highly Christian values and are often very active in justice movements such as Green Peace, Kairos etc...

In Eastern Europe the situation is different. There the position of the Church has become stronger. However this is valid mainly for the Orthodox Church. The Reformed WARC member churches are – except for Hungary – small churches that cannot have a prominent position in their societies. Their financial means are also very limited.

What can, against this background, be the vision for a commitment to justice in the European member churches of the WARC and after June 2010 the WCRC? A few ideas listed below can help to develop a vision.

- It is not helpful when the discussion about justice in Europe is being dominated by a sense of guilt. Of course there is no doubt justification for 'feeling guilty': involvement in the two World Wars, (neo-) colonialism, paternalistic mission relations etc... There is no reason at all to deny the negative aspects of the past and where they are still valid in the present to do away with them. But in conjunction with this it is necessary to be first of all inspired by positive aspects of the past and present. Mission work in the past has contributed a great deal to the development of the Church and Society in global South countries. Many of those active in mission fields were also in the forefront of pleading for independence of European colonies. The ecumenical justice movement can be grateful for many contributions of European church leaders, theologians, economists etc... A document like the Accra Confession has played a great role in WARC European member churches. Most WARC member churches in Europe have also played a great role in matters of gender justice. In brief: Europe can be and should be inspired by a great deal that has happened and is still happening within its Churches concerning their commitment to justice. In the discussion about justice it is good to be aware of this great contribution.
- In discussions about justice it is for Churches of utmost importance to be

aware of the fact that here the heart of faith is at stake. In Reformed tradition sanctification is a very important aspect. One could almost say more than justification. Reformed traditionally does not focus on 'how' God has justified us but 'whereto' he has justified us. Therefore the focus on sanctification and the concrete aspect of that is our call to do justice in the world. This theological basis is fundamental. It has to be believed otherwise churches are committed to justice within – for them at least – a vacuum. Secularisation in Europe has indeed often meant a loss of sense of transcendence. It is a caricature but still it can be said that in some church circles, also in Europe, it looks as if the 'J' of 'Jesus' has been replaced by the 'J' of 'Justice'. If so then in the end a church will have nothing to say anymore. The call to justice within churches should always be heard in conjunction with Scripture and Confession. Only in this way will we experience this call as a holy matter.

- In line with the previous argument it is necessary to use in the analysis of situations of justice and injustice definitions that have their origin in Scripture and Confession. An example is the word 'sin'. There should be no hesitation to use this word in matters of injustice. It is prophetic language that should not be used in a too frequent and as such inflating way but for the evil situations that are catastrophic and have human causes there should indeed be no hesitation to speak of sin. Only then we can also talk about grace and forgiveness. It is also helpful to be inspired by the Christian eschatological visions e.g. of the Kingdom of God. Not as an alibi that our work here on earth is in the end useless but to make us aware that we are part of Gods work and that therefore we should not be desperate if things here and now will not be perfect.
- For European Churches it is important to be actors in the call to justice but also to be listeners. Not only in the sense of listening to the Word of God but also in the sense of listening to Churches and their representatives in other parts of the world. It is not first of all the call of Europeans to analyse the situation of justice and injustice in e.g. Africa. Even when comments could be justified that the blame is put on the shoulders of e.g. Europe too easily it is still important to wait and to hear how voices from other parts of the world will contribute to a balanced analysis of the global situation. Having said this we should be aware of the fact that the division in global South and North can be misleading. There is a global South in the North and a global North in the South. Not all in Europe are profiteers and not all in the global South are victims. The word 'empire' used as a definition in matters of injustice has a global connotation. But it is helpful in the European discussion about justice to have some patience and to hear what others have to say about their situation.
- The commitment to justice should also have its place and find its inspiration in the spiritual life of the Church. Liturgy with all its components of sacraments, preaching, praying and singing is the place where life and justice are being celebrated. Where also suffering and injustice is being brought before God.

The Reformed tradition with the openness for the Old Testament and its theology, with the Psalms being part of the singing tradition, with the great contribution to church music has a lot to give inspiration in obeying the call to justice. It is important that European Churches play a role in the ongoing development of Reformed worship. There is a tendency to 'evangelicalise' Reformed worship, not the least in Europe. This may happen out of a feeling that the evangelical movement will bring success also in declining European Reformed Churches. It is however very doubtful whether this success – if there is one – will not only be a temporary matter. There is enough in the Reformed worship tradition to be inspired by and it gives certainly a good voice to the awareness of injustice and the hope for a better world to come.

## Conclusion

This short overview is meant to analyse part of the background of the discussion about justice in especially WARC member churches in Europe and to give some ideas for the ongoing development of a vision. WARC member churches in Europe want to be part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches after June 2010 and they want as such to be part of a Communion of Churches that sees the obedience to the call to justice as a deep part of its faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This with the awareness that the word of God has as its ultimate goal, that all may have life in fullness.

***Douwe Visser** (1953) is a minister of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. He worked in Zambia, for the Reformed Church of Zambia and in the Netherlands. He was president of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2005-2008. Since June 2008 he works in Geneva for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as Executive Secretary for Theology. His PhD thesis was on the concept of sin in Bonhoeffer's theology.*



### Democracy – A Matter of Choice!?!<sup>1</sup>

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, Rheydt, Germany

Church and Democracy – it took a long time until both got along well. Especially the history of German Protestantism shows the difficulties of the church and democratic structures and systems. The state was regarded as God's gift but what about democracy? Within the last century the church has entered different unholy alliances apart from any kind of democratic ethos. She was motivated by goals which had nothing in common with the welfare of people. In this explicitness perhaps for the first time the Barmen Declaration pointed out the church's role as a sentinel and public voice. It pointed out clearly the responsibility that the church has for the state. The fifth thesis of the Barmen Declaration<sup>2</sup> states clearly that the state has its appointment according to God's assignment to provide justice and peace "according to the measure of human judgment and human ability".

The church as a sentinel? What does this mean in the context of democracy? With reference to the countries of the northern hemisphere, democracy is, in spite of all critics, the form of government which is accepted and practiced most by its citizens. A transformation or abolishment of the democratic system in Europe is truly unthinkable.

1 Paper delivered at the consultation of the URCSA/ERK Joint Globalisation Project in Emden, Germany, 27 September – 2 October 2009.

2 "Fear God. Honour the emperor. (1 Pet 2:17) Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the state has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. [It fulfils this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things. We reject the false doctrine, as though the state, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the state, thus itself becoming an organ of the state."

However democracy is still at risk even here. It is not put to risk by powerfully eloquent demagogues or disintegrating philosophies but in a much subtle way. Political institutions are undergoing a global structural change which overruns national borders and disrupts systems in their foundations. Self-evident structures of democratic communities such as participation and subsidiarity do not organize by them selves and are not to be presupposed anymore.

In this context the churches have an important task which should not be underestimated. Churches are the 'movers and shakers' for democratic awareness and the sovereignty of the people. Coming from the church's tradition of Barmen 5 they are a critical authority concerning those structures, which do other than function in order for the welfare of the people. Churches will only then fulfill their office as a sentinel, if they act along the basics of the three ecumenical steps of *seeing, judging, acting* concerning democracy!

## Democracy in times of globalization – what needs to be done?

"Democracy is a box, 90 centimetres high and 35 centimetres wide. On top, democracy has a lid with a slot. Every few years – in Germany always on a Sunday – a great number of people flock to these boxes." The boxes are called "urns", thus exactly the same name as the receptacles in a cemetery in which the ashes of the dead are preserved. This is really a curious use of this term, since democracy is not burnt and buried on election-days; on the contrary, every few years it is born, renewed again and again. Election-days are the birthdays of democracy and the election-campaign that precedes it is, as it were, a time of good wishes. Democracy, however, is far more than an election (...) Democracy does not take place every few years but every day: It is the most successful, best and most peaceful system of operation for a country that exists. It is a system in which everyone who is a citizen of a country can have her/his say."<sup>3</sup>

The above is a description of democracy given by Heribert Prantl. Do you detect a note of irony in his comparison of ballot boxes with urns? It might hardly be the case. However the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as many other members of the media in Germany and even the German Protestant church, has appealed to all German citizens to exercise their right to vote. These appeals were all very necessary if one looks at the results of recent opinion polls. According to one study, conducted by the association of banks, things are not well with regard to the German population's interest in politics.

Between 2003 and 2009 an "interest in politics" has demonstrably declined in Germany. From 2003 to 2006 there was still a clear difference in respondents who were "very interested" and those who were "not interested" in politics. Re-

<sup>3</sup> Heribert Prantl: Wahlen in Deutschland, *Süddeutsche Zeitung für Kinder*, 19 September 2009.

cently, however, the numbers have moved closer together, with a higher number of respondents being “moderately interested” and clear increase in “not interested” respondents.<sup>4</sup>

Is this the much-feared loss of trust in, the erosion of, democracy? Or is it that it is simply asking too much of people that they should judge and assess politics and act politically? On the other hand, at the local municipal elections several weeks ago the turnout did after all reach 43% – almost high as in the elections in Afghanistan; but then, in Germany one did not have to reckon with reprisals by political opponents.

## Democracy without content

The election-campaign of the last weeks has shown very well and in the truest sense of the word exactly what the problem is. In it one finds election posters with statements like “Germany can do better!”, “Vote for the chancellor!”, or “Riches for all!” and, by the same party two lamp-posts further “Tax the rich!” Political parties have also used the possibilities offered by the internet in their campaigns as never before – with catch phrases such as: “Vote: Which MPs. would you miss? Would I miss any MP?”

The system of the election-campaign system was not a substantial confrontation with democracy, Europe, the financial crisis, politics, participation, the appropriateness of particular decisions, the shaping capacity of the one or the others – the terminology appealed in the end. “For Germany – lend a hand!”, read one slogan. Very well, then – lend a hand to what or whom, then? And how?

The election-campaign has shown what the basic problem is in politics under conditions of globalisation, namely that it has become indeterminable. Who can judge whether the health policy of the last parliamentary term has been successful? There *has been* a health policy, but what are the parameters of valuation with which we judge whether it corresponded to a red, black or green party-programme – or whether it was perhaps helpful or detrimental?

Earlier, when political action ensued within nation-state borders and, first and foremost, took place as a clear antithesis to that of the Eastern Bloc, everything had been clear. This had to do with borders – geographical, ideological as well as political borders. Democracy was ideologically unrestricted and geographically “enclosed”. It was clear who the actors were and the programmes too were clear – with the East or against it; rearm or not; recognise the German Democratic Republic or not; comprehensive Schools, yes or no. In short, political success could be measured.

We have heard and will hear that democracy presupposes, but also the presence

<sup>4</sup> The results of the opinion poll, “Politisches Interesse in der Bundesrepublik” can be viewed online at <http://www.statista.com>.



of the *homo politicus* – the person who makes democracy and its values his/her own and “writes them on the flag.”

## Democracy and what is gnawing at its roots

### *Transnationality*

In the meantime it is almost obsolete to point out that the democratic structures and nation state regulations exist in a frame of action that has long been successfully transcended by global economic interconnections. Internationally the influence and power of enterprises, international and transnational institutions and organisations operating independent of governments are increasing. For a long time we have reflected on and discussed the primacy of politics, however, in the meantime businesses have become transnational and little by little have made political action more difficult or even impossible.<sup>5</sup>

From our brothers and sisters in the South we hear that the question regarding the parameters of the world in which we live has long been settled – at least for them. It is the world market that determines trade. Global society is a global *market* society with well-known consequences: the formation of transnational monopolies lead to a global planned economy under the private capitalist sovereignty of transnational companies which are in part larger than entire national economies and whose needs, for example for energy resources, lead to an increasing militarisation.<sup>6</sup> *This is precisely what the Accra Declaration calls “Empire”.*<sup>7</sup>

However, people in industrialised nations also experience the failure or the helplessness of politics and the subjection to powerful economic players who have little interest in democracy – and that is why so many appear to feel that in the end it does not make any difference for whom or whether one votes. In this way, starting from an initial situation that is already difficult to cope with, democratic discipline and republican virtues are all too quickly broken undermined. In the context of globalisation the old model of democracy no longer appears to function properly.

### *Communication*

Everything is changing, not only political systems. Society is changing from an industrial one to a society of communication and knowledge. We are currently witnessing an immense increase in, acceleration, intensification and globalisation of communication. In Calcutta there are people working at a call centre who have learned the language and dialect of their customers from southern

5 Colin Crouch, *Postdemokratie*, Frankfurt 2003, 9ff.

6 Jürgen Habermas, *Die postnationale Konstellation*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998, 91.

7 [http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news\\_id=1174&navi=46](http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=1174&navi=46).

Spain to be able to inform them of the state of their accounts in a bank in Malaga. These people live in the time-zone of southern Spain, go shopping when people shop in southern Spain and go to bed when the lights go out in Malaga. Global communication is flexible, exists across boundaries or knows no boundaries. It creates parallel worlds. What does not fit is made to fit.

In such a global context political action that has bearing on the future is becoming more and more problematic. Because in our age of accelerated communication we communicate, as it were, without pausing for breath, without visualising, without first deciding and only *then* translating decisions into action. We are losing the element of insight into the present and of learning from the past. Before we can review the past we are already overtaken by the future. The future is less and less shaped by traditions and past experiences. The here and now, at most, directs our defences against anticipated dangers.

Under these conditions democratic structures produce, in a manner of speaking, tectonic vibrations – they bump against the limits of their effectiveness and show themselves as economically and structurally vulnerable systems. Furthermore, the differences in the tempo of development of global society and global financial society under the conditions of the global intensification of communication, loss of tradition and acceleration, lead to the result that the foundations of democratic action erodes the foundations of democratic action? – not only globally, but already also within still existing nation-states. Under the premise of democratic trading, globalisation results in a withdrawal from the conditions upon which democracy was conceived and practised, namely transparency, restraint and a process orientation.

It is becoming clear that here two fundamental problematic constellations of a democratic system come into conflict, namely the fact that, in order for politics to work in future, processes and methods are needed that require time and space for political discussion. And, secondly, that the acceleration of communication and action on a global scale stands in opposition to this.

## *Media*

With regard to general questions of communication in a globalised society, the role of the media must be scrutinised more closely. Freedom of reporting and the freedom of the media in general are certainly an important consequence of modern democracies. However, we increasingly see that freedom from the influence of the state does not automatically mean freedom from all influences – quite apart from the fact that there is no *a priori* exclusion of influence by the state. For a long time now, the media has been led and financed by major communication trusts all of which promote their own interests and positions through the media channels at their disposal. Large advertising campaigns of customers leads to the trimming of programmes to suit the needs of these paying customers. If news broadcasts and political programmes do not draw the necessary number of

viewers, the programme is “cut to shape” in order for it to bring in advertising revenue. Yet, the staging of politics in the media has originally been beneficial for democratic systems since its visualisation reduced the access threshold and made it easier to take notice of politics. In this way the interest of large numbers of people in certain political issues could be aroused and they could be informed about these issues. Admittedly precisely the consistent shifting of political “enlightenment” to talk shows and television duels is much more likely at times to heighten the profile of personalities than content – to say nothing of the difficulty of checking the content! In this process a “participatory democracy”, in which the sovereign power, namely the citizens, create their own picture of an issue through participation and engagement, disappears in favour of a “spectator democracy”. As a result political parties and programmes, engaging in civil society and political discourse lose much of their significance. Rounds of talks, as it were, take over the task of the “mature citizen” to inform him/herself politically and take political responsibility. With its capability for staging politics and for influencing people the media undeniably became a major power in democratic systems. The media now even have the concrete, conscious and deliberate ability to bring about political decisions. The interconnectedness between the “politics of the media” and neoliberal ideology subordinating every political and social structure to criteria of the market economy can, at least implicitly, be demonstrated.

## Loss of trust

In the meantime, the crisis in which democracy finds itself is obvious. Citizens of nation-states suddenly find themselves responsible for the “whole of the great state” and they know and experience all too clearly that nation-state democracy in the truest sense of the word has reached its limits – at least as long as there are no adequate structures replacing it on a global level.

What occurs is insidious erosion from within, a growing distance between citizens and the state, politics and political parties; a loss of trust; a loss of solidarity. Much rather runs up against felt disapproval, the model of “Europe”, as an example, or the European Parliament are rather seen – at least by the German people – as a hindrance, frequently as threatening, and often as completely needless – as, for example, when one discusses the often-quoted curve of the cucumber! A common European identity? Forget it – at least in Germany. Positive aspects of a European democracy are scarcely noticed – attempts to communicate and highlight them leave a hopeless impression.

Yet, despite all criticism the model of “Europe” is a success story. Sixty years of peace is in itself reason enough to welcome the coalescing of Europe. The reduction of regulations, standardisation and simplification make living in Europe easier for us – and yet apparently this is seldom experienced as such. When

countries open their borders for one another, the consequences of this opening has to be consistently regulated. This can translate into gains in freedom, but it also necessarily includes the restriction of freedoms.

On the intellectual level at least, “Europe” has not yet found its way into the hearts of many Germans. It may be that they, with their more distant and perhaps unemotional relationship to political institutions, have a blind spot in this respect. At least in Germany the people traditionally find it difficult really to be enthusiastic about any particular political system. There naturally are historic reasons for this and it finds its expression in pragmatic “constitutional patriotism” stamped by republicanism and it tends to be more intellectual.<sup>8</sup> It aims not at an ethnic concept of community, but rather at identification with the normative bases of the community – constitution, fundamental values and institutions.

The political scientist Klaus Beyme describes the effects of constitutional patriotism as follows:

“The coolness of constitutional patriotism conceals deficiencies in experience. Efforts must be made to achieve a balance between cognitive and affective elements of identification. But how can this take place in regard to the [European] Union? Can the EU generate affective identification? ... There is an increasing fear that constitutional patriotism contains dangers even at the European level. The ‘standardization of life decreed from without’ increasingly gives rise to nationalistic counter-reactions in many European countries.”<sup>9</sup>

But there is certainly far more over and above this. To be able to develop a European identity it is necessary to reach decisions independent of and free from various national interests. However long and difficult as it might be, only when political organs beyond that of the state develop their own political distinctiveness and leave their national identities behind can the democratic form of their election be accompanied by a democratic identity that allows them to be understood as *European* democratic organs. And, only when the necessity to develop these identities is effectively and constructively communicated to the different European nation-states can there be a “democratic European principle”. With a European democracy founded on consensus but also, finally, anchored in the national consciousness of European countries the ground can be pulled from under the feet of rejection and impairment of democracy the plug can be pulled on the rejection of and the view of an European democracy as being an impairment to democracy. We certainly find ourselves here at a transitional stage which is currently highly vulnerable and can eventually turn into a threat to democracy in Europe.

8 On this see “Staatsbürgerschaft und nationale Identität”, *id.* Jürgen Habermas: Faktizität und Geltung, Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaates, Frankfurt, 1992.

9 In Herfried Münkler, Marcus Llöanque & Clemens K. Stepina (eds.), *Der demokratische Nationalstaat in den Zeiten der Globalisierung*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2002, 108.

Finally it would naturally be an oversimplification as well as slightly dishonest not to point out here that Europe, in many places, is on the verge of developing into an “empire”. Even if this is not the theme in this paper, I have to say with caution that regarding Europe and its development questions of power interests and the struggle for scarce resources also exist.

## Loss of sovereignty and transparency

The hegemony of the people as the realisation of the democratic principle is no longer the premise of nation-state sovereignty and thereby ultimately its protection against external heteronomy. In these times of radical global change, where the regulations of the nation-state are no longer a priori effective and the structures of super-ordinate institutions are still not completely developed, citizens feel that they have lost their power to organise their participation and and all too often capitulate to the situation with giving as the reason that “one cannot change anything anyway”.

The lack of transparency in heterogeneous systems leads to uncertainty and the loss of the ability to make and justify credible political decisions. To return to the German election campaign, it is a perfect reflection of this. It was simply full of common pearls of wisdom behind which one was meant sound political insights. Voters became witnesses to the confirmation that politics is a complicated business and that one should all the more trustingly leave this business in the hands of specialists. However, the question remains: are these political players really specialists, and is the surrender of the citizens’ political responsibility to others appropriate foundations for a democratic system?

The loss of transparency and the lack of sovereignty, as described by Ulrich Beck<sup>10</sup>, ultimately lead to alienation. Individuals in the post-democratic societies are confronted with the disintegration of a community that has previously been consolidated by a more or less unified collective consciousness and in which there used to be security of orientation and expectation. Because of the impenetrable differentiation between control within and beyond the nation-state, individuals feel as if they are facing a hyper-reality (of whatever sort). They are increasingly subjected to experiences of alienation. It is no accident that awareness of what philosopher Peter Sloterdijk in a powerful picture describes as “being pitched out of the foam of security” is being viewed as *the* cultural conflict of the twenty-first century. Like cells of foam, the “cells” of social life (family, profession, politics, households, places of work, associations) exist alongside each other without being attached really, but also without being really separable. The dialectic between desired sole responsibility and individualisation, on the one

10 Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1986, 12f.

hand, and the problem of loss of relationship, on the other, is evident in European societies.<sup>11</sup> The metaphor of society as “foam” points to political and social demands for integration which are far from being adequately discerned, described and addressed.

Yet it is precisely now and precisely here that the discipline of the *homo politicus* is decisive in order to establish democracy and its emancipatory creative power beyond questioning in the new structures as well. With this in mind it may be helpful to take note of philosopher Otfried Höffe’s three criteria for a democracy that has a future:

Politics witnesses that it has a future when it perceives in time the important tasks of its community and plays a leading role in all three phases: first in the public debate, then in the search for effective solutions and finally in taking a decision. It has no future if it does not discern, suppresses or neglects important tasks.<sup>12</sup>

### High time to ask what democracy in fact really is

Specialist literature on the theme of democracy fills whole libraries. I do however want to make highlight some basic structures of democracy.

Democracy is a projection surface. A democratic system finds its first and conclusive premise in the reciprocal recognition of the other’s freedom. Thereby freedom forms the basis of democracy while it is, at the same time, a prerequisite for democracy to create freedom. For many people in democratic systems democracy itself is the surface onto which a manifold wishes – many of which in fact have little to do with democracy itself – is projected and which cannot be resolved “democratically”.

The democratic constitutional form of a country does not automatically guarantee well-being and security. This is because, on the one hand, the “will of the people” found in freedom may itself cause insecurity, while, on the other hand, it is also possible that authoritarian systems too might possibly ensure well-being and security. The following serves as an example of this: After September 11 the need for security in the West increased under the threat of terrorism. There is much dispute on what kind of measures are necessary to protect people from terrorist attacks. On the one hand, security should be ensured by the state; on the other, encroachment on citizens’ private lives is viewed as unacceptable. Both views are justifiable and this points to a central problem of democracy: Not all conflicts of interest can be the subject of majority decisions. In a case such as this it is systematically false to put freedom and security on one and the same level. Here it is security which ensures freedom. And – even if this may sound heretical – it may be necessary to restrict freedoms in order to ensure freedom. On this

11 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären III, Schäume*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2004, 27ff.

12 Otfried Höffe, *Ist die Demokratie zukunftsfähig?* Munich, C.H. Beck 2009, 212.

point modern democracies are open to attack. More security at the price of freedom breeds discontent and the fear of ultimately falling into the hands of a control-state. However, it is precisely this that guarantees the continued existence of freedom in democracy.

## Democracy and reason

The foundation for democratic decisions is not necessarily the reason or good sense of a nation – whatever that may be – but its *will*. This does not automatically mean, on the one hand, that the democratic will of the people is unreasonable – on the contrary, Kant already made the freedom of the will a prerequisite of reason and was convinced that humankind has the ability to make reasonable decisions in spite of other desires: “Reason is not an antithesis but a sign of freedom.”<sup>13</sup>

We cannot deny that in political theory there have been those who have maintained exactly the opposite. The constitutional lawyer Carl Schmitt, for example, argued vehemently against democracy on the grounds that precisely the formation of majorities always encourages fragmentation of that which is reasonable.<sup>14</sup> Democracy lives by participation and creates the foundations of the same. It does this, for example, by creating the conditions for the social and political emancipation of whole sections of the population. But all is not accomplished by the creation of preconditions: democracy does not simply create conditions; it lives by the translation of these conditions into action. This being the case, democracy is, as it were, a self-perpetuating model of emancipation if it is in the position of allowing rationality to arise within its processes. The inclusion of varied interests, the depiction of facts and the necessity to justify and explain in order to obtain majorities – these are mechanisms that create an open and correctible process of knowledge – i.e. rationality.

## Democracy and its subject

Against this background it becomes clear that a not insignificant part of the difficulties which faced by democracy in the global context arises from the fact that from the beginning the debate on what constitutes the subject of political action is not an unambiguous one. Even if there is an almost universal – and in large parts legally undergirded – agreement – on the kind of demands facing a state that defines itself as “democratic”, there still remains disagreement on who the active subject of democracy should be. Is it the people integrated into a nation, or is it the individual affected?

There is also no clarity on what the goal of political action within a democratic

13 Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), first section.

14 Carl Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, München/Leipzig, Dunker und Humblot, 1928, 128.

system should be: is it the self-determination of the people and the conscious structuring of the political community, or is it, ultimately, the effective control of those in government?

## Is it all over now for democracy?

*Too complicated? Too obscure? Too ponderous? Too boring?*

In all discourses on political systems and processes it is evident that among different models of government the democratic system is still appreciated, not uncritically but it still meets with the greatest amount of approval. Whether classic democracy as we live it and wish to preserve in Europe and North America can be the appropriate export model for all other countries and societies is, however, not absolutely clear. At any rate, self-aware European democracies should be cautious with promises of salvation and suggestions of complete democratic prototypes as the solution for complex problems in cultures whose political structures they have recognised only in (very small) part, to say nothing of really understanding them.

*High time for preservation of democracy*

Global structures – if they exist – are chaotic and conflict-ridden. Over against the interconnectedness and scale of global society stands the lack, the absence of a close chain of transnational global institutions. The current lack of transparency also leads to problems of legitimisation. Politicians do not help by keeping quiet about the fact that the modernisation of the world urgently requires the modernisation of society too.<sup>15</sup>

Politicians furthermore make a mistake in countering the spectre of globalisation simply with comforting words such as “We can do it!” Apart from the fact that this immediately reveals a virtually paternalistic attitude to the decision-makers their countries, namely their citizens, it is also simply not true. To obtain a balance between rights and regulations, between directing by the government and economic expectation – so that each complements the other and does so for the good of the global community – more is needed than to “whistle in the dark”.

At the level of international organisations it must be made clear in what way exactly the powerful positions of mighty nations and the lobbyists of international capital stand *a priori* in the way of democratisation – and must this be changed. The path to democratisation can by no means pass the international institutions by and bases on which this can be prevented must be clarified without delay. It makes little sense to radically question international organisations. They are in most cases already attempts to achieve something in cooperation with others.

15 Christoph Möller, *Demokratie: Zumutungen und Versprechen*, Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach Verlag, 2008, 122ff.



Naturally, in many cases this cooperation is fragmentary and those in power in these organisations greatly influence the politics of the organisations. But the fact that it has, for example, finally proved possible to put the issue of a (further developed) Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) on the agenda of the IMF – a great success for the emancipatory forces in civil societies that have been pursuing this and spreading information about it for years.<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes, experience teaches, international organisations do move after all! For, the more international organisations impinge on the freedoms of individuals, the sooner questions on their legitimacy arises. International organisations may, for example, see themselves as the champions of peace, freedom and welfare. With an high intention for good governance but in the absence of democratic procedures like those in the traditional nation state they are worse controlled when they exercise power than democratic states under the rule of law. The UN Security Council published a list of suspected terrorists who are prohibited from using any of their assets. However the UN does not provide any control through courts.

The constitutionalisation of the Law of Nations is most certainly the goal to strive for and it is absolutely necessary. The individual should be defined as being the subject of the Law of Nations, structures of legitimation should be created – for example, at the level of the UN – and the development of a common concept of public welfare is absolutely necessary. These latter three are the basic preconditions if we are to give a “constitutional character”<sup>17</sup> to the Law of Nations. However, constitutionalisation is not yet democratization. When individual personal rights are codified under the Law of Nations, and the actions of governments are increasingly bound to rules which hold good even when it goes against the will of a government, this means that democratic politics will be made possible for the first time.

Hence, we are not standing here at the beginning; strictly speaking we are a step ahead of it.

16 According to IMF director Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the IMF will look into the issue of a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). In a speech in London on 23 November 2009 he said:

*“... we have been asked by the G-20 to look into financial sector taxes. This is an interesting issue. Can the tax system help reduce excessive risk-taking in the financial sector? Can it be used to further the legitimate goals of fairness and equity in this area? There are a number of ways to think about this, and we will look at it from various angles and consider all proposals. Let me say that the financial sector should contribute to the cost of the rescue and to limiting recourse to public financing in the event of a future crisis. I suggest this for practical reasons because, in my view, there would not be political support in parliaments for a rescue on the scale we have seen during this crisis.”* (Online: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2009/112309.htm>. Accessed on Sept. 2009.)

17 Christoph Möller, *Der vermisste Leviathan*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2008, p. 109.

What does this mean for the churches? How can we understand the churches role as a sentinel within the context of Barmen 5?

It appears to be of the utmost importance that new life needs to be breathed into the foundations of political action within democratic systems and to communicate these foundations against the individualisation and the fragmentation of societies. Angry frustration with politics will only rather lead to the deterioration of freedom?

Finally, the wish to solve the problem merely at the level of structures likewise appears to me to be insufficient. We also need a higher valuation of political action, training in republican virtues, the challenge to enter into discussion and, if need be, into dispute. *If* we take the necessary precautions, and take its bases as our basis, I do not believe that globalisation needs to be a threat to democracy.

Within this context churches have a high credibility and various ways of creating and influencing society. However credibility within the very own structures of church is the condition for the appointment. Compared to nation state systems which now start to consider cooperation across their national borders due to economic pressure, the churches have always been transnational and organized in cross boarder networks. From the beginning they have organized multilateral relationships, gathered experience and took over responsibility for larger contexts.

The church has the appointment to watch over the democratic systems under pressure and observe if the basic elements of democratic power structure are still functioning within the circumstances of the global context.

Without participation, freedom, separation of powers, transparency and democratic self-confidence the global world will whether be a life sustaining place in the sense of Barmen 5 nor a home for people.

***Martina Wasserloos-Strunk**, (1963) is a political scientist specialising in political theory. She is a member of the Moderamen of the Reformed Alliance Germany. As a member of ATTAC Germany she is responsible for communication between the Reformed Alliance and civil movements working towards a just economy. On behalf of the European Area of WARC she published the book "Europes Covenanting for Justice".*



# COVENANTING

## 5

### Europe's Road to Justice – The Project: „Europe Covenanting for Justice“

Martin Engels, Wuppertal-Ronsdorf, Germany

Since the very beginning Christianity and economical structures have been intertwined in a seemingly inseparable way. Beginning with Paul who followed trading routes of the Roman Empire later being followed by missionaries accompanying merchants who traveled by wagons and ships across continents and oceans the gospel was spread globally. Finally even the roots of the ecumenical movement a hundred years ago are unthinkable without the economic internationalization in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A decade after the new millennium has begun, the ambivalence of this relationship between Christianity and economy has become clearer than ever before. For parts of the world the internationalization of the economy has lead to an unforeseen growth of prosperity and wealth whereas for others the mechanisms of this economy have lead to a massive threat of life. Amidst this development we find our churches on the one side as well as on the other side of this massive change, sharing their faith in the triune god, the creator, redeemer and sustainer of life. The cries raised by the sisters and brothers of the churches heavily suffering under injustice deriving straightly from the mechanisms of the economy have been heard in Europe. The undeniable devastating results for life have sparked vivid discussions and broad action throughout the majority of the European member churches of WARC.

In the aftermath of the General Council in Accra the Reformed Alliance in Germany in cooperation with the steering committee of WARC-Europe began to collect reactions and projects connected and related with the Accra-Concession and the ongoing “Covenanting for Justice”-process. The focus of this joint project was to bring the common struggle for justice within the diversity of the European churches to light. The work on the project started amidst the utmost severe global economic and financial crises underlining the issues of social and ecological justice voiced in Accra in 2004. Within the context of a sudden transformation of society, orientation seemed to be lost and the voices of the church were not only heard but also listened to. The need for orientation in the light of the Gospel at this time of crisis was seen more clearly inside the churches and

was being asked for by people and institutions with a distant relationship to the church. In fact, the cries of those suffering due to social and ecological injustice found more resonance as the crisis showed that the issues addressed to was not only a phenomenon of a distant reality but reality here and now for many people sitting in the pew. A *kairos* making apparent that the issue of ‘Justice in economy and on earth’ does not only concern other people but influences our whole common life.

In the procedure of the project all European member-churches were asked to send in reports as well as projects affiliated with and inspired by the ‘covenanting for justice movement’. The responses that have been sent in show the manifold ways in which the issue “covenanting for justice” has been addressed within the last years.

However, the contacts as well as the resonance are also a mirror of the diversity of the European member-churches and their different contexts in which the question of justice in economy and on earth have been and are being addressed to.

On the one hand we see majority-churches in countries like Switzerland, The Netherlands as well as in parts of Great Britain and Germany engaging in this topic on all levels of church life. The Accra-Confession and its impact were discussed by congregations and synods and action was taken on local and national level co-operating with other (N)GOs involved in the topic. Even the attempt to grasp these manifold projects and documents would go way beyond the scope of publication but would be an indication of the sincere engagement.

On the other hand, the smaller churches especially in the South of Europe may not play such an influencing role in their society as their sister churches in the northern part, but the responses show a wholeheartedly engagement for the economic and social issues of the time. One major pressing issue for the countries along the Mediterranean Sea are the unprecedented ‘waves’ of illegal immigrants seeking asylum and a chance for a better life on the European continent. The societies are confronted with numbers of refugees crossing the ocean under utmost life-threatening conditions from Africa as well as from the Middle East. The ministry “Helping Hands” of the Greek Evangelical Church is one example for the commitment of minority-churches to provide basic help for immigrants and trafficking victims. The interview with Maria Bonafede from the Union of the Methodist and Waldensian churches in Italy reports the vivid struggle for the rights of men, women and children seeking asylum in Italy by explicitly opposing the latest legislation passed by the Italian Government. Compared with the churches in the North-West of Europe only significantly few responses were sent in by churches located in the Eastern part of Europe living in the context of post-communist countries. Surely most churches with a reformed tradition in the Eastern parts of Europe are in the situation of minority churches struggling with pressing problems different from those of their larger sister-churches in the

Western neighbor countries. Due to their situation as a minority church and their size they simply do not have the same capacities to engage in the discussion sparked in Accra to the same extent others might do. Besides this reason located on a mere organizational level two further reasons shall be named which voice concerns that should not be overheard in the ecumenical discussions. Post-communist countries in Europe have benefited largely from the Eastern European expansion of the European Union accompanied by the economic system. This surely might be a reason for the skepticism of a fundamental critic raised by concept of 'empire'.<sup>1</sup> Closely connected to this reason is a second reason located in the heart of the Accra-Confession often rather regarded as a 'declaration'. It is the "ideological color" and political „overtone" of the semantics used in the text. The responses of the churches here voice a concern deriving from their experience of recent history. Having suffered greatly under the actual existing communism there is a high sensitivity concerning any kind of political contextualization of the Gospel and especially any kind of „communist" reading of it. In spite of these general and theological concerns that have been voiced concerning the "Accra-Declaration" and their perception, the general issue of justice in economy and on earth is widely shared and there have been various implementations of the covenanting process. Therefore we find astonishing work and projects being done there, dealing with the particular problems globalization has imposed on the people in this part of Europe. Due to the current economic downturn the "young" European economies in the East are severely suffering from the implications of global economy and their by comparison smaller influence on society and politics.

A last perspective should not be lost out of sight since it also reflects the plurality and especially the inequality of regions and countries on this continent: a few sister-churches in the south east were merely available by contemporary communication such as email and fax.

After this first step of a more or less structural analysis it is possible to state a clear tendency within this common effort of the covenanting for justice process. The churches in countries with the largest economies in Europe have embraced the issue profoundly. In other words: especially in the context of societies, which under a simplified perspective could be described as the actors among the globalizing world, many different projects were launched on national, regional and

1 Especially in the European context the concept of 'empire' has been broadly discussed and the standpoints have been highly controversial. However the Globalization-Project (cf. Chapter 12) and profound analysis (cf. Wasserloos-Strunk, Chapter 8) have lead to a fruitful progress in the understanding by keeping all sides of the discussion from falling back into old paradigms. Cf. also the Message of the Global Dialogue Meeting in Johannesburg 2009.

local levels. Awareness was built up among church-members. Starting with religious education of children<sup>2</sup> leading to adult-education<sup>3</sup> and workshops, the question of justice in economy and on earth was raised in various contexts of European societies. The issue was also dealt with on the level of church-leaders and synods as well as discussed in theological debates. The effort of the churches is in most cases not limited to church-bodies but co-operation with NGOs or the government-bodies was explored. The engagement of churches in this field was echoed by other organizations leading to experiences that projects once launched on a congregational level had a far reaching impact.

Unfortunately this discussion that has gone on in churches within the last years has not yet been reflected in a similar way within academic theology pursued at most universities. Indeed even a deficit of research was stated for the theological reflection on the field of internationalization and globalization.<sup>4</sup>

In many conversations and discussions dealing with the project “Europe Covenanting for Justice” there has been a powerful perception that the issues raised by the Accra-confession are only directed towards the “*other*” churches - namely the churches of the Southern hemisphere. It was the feeling of being finger-pointed at which lead to a refusal of parts of the Accra-Confession, even though otherwise they greatly shared common values and efforts behind the semantics. The sociologist Niklas Luhmann<sup>5</sup> focused his research on communication processes and might clarify difficulties experienced within the discussion the Accra-confession. In a very lucid way he identifies any kind of moral discourse as form of privation of respect concerning the dialogue-partner. It elevates one partner on a morally higher standpoint. He identifies this structure as a major hindrance for a successful communication. Refraining from this paradigm provides the chance for controversial discussions in an open space struggling for a solution in the pressing issues of the times. This will not lead to arbitrariness but to a higher accountability. It give’s the chance of voicing the common struggle for justice in one’s own specific context. It provides the chance to widen the horizon beyond one’s own church tower and locate it within the context of the large communion.

This is precisely the point the joint project “Europe Covenanting for Justice” was

2 Cf. the project “Learning Justice - the world is getting smaller – think large!” of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands in Chapter 15.

3 Cf. the ecumenical report “Hope in God’s Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change” of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church in Chapter 13.

4 Cf. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Zu diesem Heft, in Verkündigung und Forschung, Vol. 54 (1/2009), 2-5, 3.

5 Cf. Niklas Luhmann, Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft, Frankfurt a.M. 1998, Suhrkamp, 244.

focused on. On the one side it should reflect the scholarly insight into the main topics discussed within the European Churches and Theology. While critical voices<sup>6</sup> rightly point out the danger of persisting on this level only, this approach prevents the discussion from simplifications and incommunicable standpoints outside the horizon of the reformed protestant Christianity. As this can only be one side of the coin the second scope of our project was therefore laid on concrete projects in the light of the Accra-Confession, aiming to facilitate a compendium of various European voices and delivering insight into the European situation of the struggle for Justice and providing material for the ongoing process within the new communion of the reformed churches in the world.

In the end of this joint project "Europe Covenanting for Justice" there is a astonishing amount of manifold engagement concerning the issue of 'justice in the economy and on earth'. The struggle for justice was an issue in churches in congregations and churches even if the Accra-Confession played no major role. The responses showed outstanding engagement of smaller churches, putting all power and creativity into ideas fighting injustice. The larger churches brought this question into all fields and levels of society and engaged in uncountable projects. There is a shared hope that these various European voices will join in the choir of the communion of sisters and brothers in Christ seeking for justice and life in the light of the coming God. It is the experience made during the project that the common ground of our communion is laid by the Gospel and is antecedent to all discussions and debates yet to come: *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* (Eph 4:5)

**Martin Engels** (1980) is assistant pastor of a reformed parish in Wuppertal-Ronsdorf. He studied theology in Wuppertal, Heidelberg, Kyoto and Bochum. He is a member of the Reformed Alliance Germany and worked as executive secretary on the publication-project "Europe Covenanting for Justice".

6 René Krüger, The Biblical and Theological Significance of the Accra Confession, A Perspective from the South, in: Reformed World 55 (2005) 3, 226-233, 227.





# HOPE

## 6

### Theology of hope in times of Globalization

Sjaak van't Kruis, Utrecht, The Netherlands

#### Introduction

It is not easy to come with a definition of globalization. From a historical perspective globalization can be described as 'the process of increasing integration in world civilization'.<sup>1</sup> From a sociological point of view however, the focus is mostly on the economic aspects of globalization. In that perspective globalization is described as 'the international integration of markets in goods, services and capital'.<sup>2</sup> In the theological discussions on the field of globalization, there is a tendency to focus all attention on the economic aspects of globalization. Without doubt the economic aspects are a strong factor in the globalizing world. We can however argue whether economical globalization is the main challenge for church and theology. If we understand globalization as a development that will lead to the shaping of the world into a village, the question can be posed if globalization as such can be seen as a movement of hope. The enormous development of means of communication and as a result the spread of information at the one hand and the ongoing improvement of transportation at the other hand, have led to growing global networks and inter-connectedness. It has opened possibilities for sharing and communication that are unprecedented.

#### Globalization as a phenomena of hope?

To answer the challenging question whether globalization as such can be seen as a development of hope, we have to take a closer look into the phenomena of globalization itself. In that case we have to focus on the ecumenical aspects of globalization rather than at the economical aspects.

The uniting aspects of globalization can not be understood without the history of the church and the missionary movement. This missionary movement has always

1 B. Kogut, and M. Gittelman, 'Globalization', in: R. Tung, (ed). *The IEBM Handbook of International Business*, London, 1999, 200-214.

2 G. Garrett, 'The Causes of Globalisation', *Comparative Political Studies*, 33, (6-7), 2000, 941-991.

been at the core of the Christian church. From that perspective the church can be seen as one of the driving forces behind globalization. In this respect we are reminded to the original meaning of the word *oikumene* as the whole inhabited world. Christian faith is a strong driving force in the crossing of geographical, cultural and ethnical boundaries (although in the history of Christianity this has not always been visible). Further: Christian faith is lived in a community. From the very beginning this community is a worldwide unity. The church is the (one) Body of Christ. This comprehensive view at the unity of mankind belongs to the core of Christian faith. We should acknowledge however, that the historical picture of these aspects of Christianity is ambiguous. Too often the core of Christianity became blurred because the church could not resist the temptation of power. In that case the result was division and not unity. The movement from the church to the 'ends of the earth' has often been a movement in close cooperation with (colonial) powers, on their search for new possibilities for trade. The history of the church is full of this tension between ecumenical and economic interests. This conclusion is however not sufficient to answer the question whether the ecumenical dimension of globalization as such can be seen as a movement of hope. To answer that question we should dig a little bit deeper into the soil of the history of the church and its missionary movement.

### 'Civilization' as the heartbeat of Christianity

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Pietism and several movements of awakening have led to an enormous growth of missionary activities towards 'the ends of the earth'. This growth was fuelled by new organizations that came into being in the UK (London Missionary Society – 1795), in the USA (the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions -1810), followed by all kinds of organizations at the European continent (Rheinische Mission -1828), Nederlandsch Zendinggenootschap 1797 – Dutch Missionary Society, etc.) At the core of these societies and their activities, there was the strong conviction that the personal salvation in Jesus Christ as a hopeful perspective for mankind, should be proclaimed throughout the world. An even stronger movement was initiated as a result of the so called spirituality of the 'millenium' (the soon event of Christ's second coming), that was initiated in the USA and that had a deep influence on the Christian student movement. It was in this context that the slogan 'Evangelization in this generation' was born. The personal faith in Jesus Christ was connected with a strong awareness of calling and commitment. In an essay on these important developments L.A. Hoedemaker speaks of a 'spirituality of conquest'.<sup>3</sup>

3 L.A. Hoedemaker, 'De oecumenische beweging in het verlengde van de zendingsbeweging' in: Bert Hoedemaker, Anton Houtepen, Theo Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces, inleidende in de oecumene*, Utrecht, 1995, 59-68.

At the bottom of these enormous enterprises there was often the strong conviction that mission and civilisation were two sides of the same coin. In that case mission was an ally of the project of Enlightenment: the modernisation of the world.<sup>4</sup>

## The Kingdom of God

The alliance of the missionary movement and civilization became more and more problematic at the end of the colonial period and after the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Civilisation had become a difficult concept, because of the deep crisis in Western Europe, a crisis that had affected humanity and civilisation in such a profound and horrible way.

Concepts of 'civilization' were no longer of use in describing the aim of the calling of the church. The renewal of Reformed theology that took place in Europe led to a new approach. Karl Barth's theology challenged the projects of modern mankind in replacing them by the revelation of Jesus Christ as the decisive breaking point in history. This Christological view at history and eschatology (!) was the inspiration for the so called 'theology of the Kingdom of God'. This theology was profoundly elaborated by Oscar Cullmann in his book 'Christ and Time' (*Christus und die Zeit: die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung*, Zürich, 1946). No longer was civilization seen as the goal of mission, but the proclamation of the Reign of God. This theology became so important in the field of mission, because it offered a new and practical translation for proclaiming the Gospel. Mission was no longer a spiritual matter but it could easily be connected with all kinds of practical work in the field of agriculture, health, etc. The theology of the Kingdom of God has among others led to the missiological concept of the comprehensive approach. Preaching of the Gospel and activities in the field of development were seen as inseparably connected. These projects of development could be seen as 'signs of the coming Kingdom', signs of the new era that had started with the coming, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His Kingdom becomes visible in concrete action. The reign of Christ is not an isolated event, it has universal dimensions.

## Oikumene and universality

This paradigm became the leading vision also within the ecumenical movement. Shortly after World War II the shift was made within the ecumenical movement from unity of the churches as the aim of the ecumenical work, towards the unity of the world.<sup>5</sup>

4 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, New York, 1991, 344.

5 In fact there is a long tradition within the history of the church in which the universal character of the Gospel is connected with a universal view on actual historical developments. Already the 3rd Ecumenical Council in Ephesus (431) stated that the reign of

The universal approach towards history is strongly fostered at the 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala in 1968. "Uppsala set the unity and catholicity of the church squarely within the sphere of God's activity in history. Stating that 'the church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind', the assembly admitted that secular 'instruments of conciliation and unification... often seem more effective than the church itself'. Therefore, "churches need a new openness to the world in its aspirations, its achievements, its restlessness and its despair. All church structures from local to world level, must be examined to see whether they enable the church and its members to be in mission. More dialogue with the world and more effective proclamation to the good news are equally needed. For the first time the idea of 'a genuinely universal council', able to speak for all Christians, was articulated".<sup>6</sup> The view at *oikumene* from the perspective of the unity of mankind however leads to tensions in the field of Christology. What is the relation between the universality of salvation and the particularity of Christ? The universal aspect of Christology had been widely elaborated in Barthian theology in which was stressed that the Lordship of Jesus Christ has decisive impact not only on the church, but on the world. The world however is not aware of this reality. The church is conscious of a reality that applies also for the world. This view is in danger to lead to an uncritical view at ecclesiology. It is also not clear how the universality of salvation is related to the particularity of Jesus Christ. It seems that the Christological language that is used, becomes more and more empty. In other words: Christology is in danger of becoming merely an ideology to maintain a universal view at history.<sup>7</sup> At the same time however the concept of *oikumene* also becomes blurred. Konrad Raiser even speaks of 'transnationale Ökumene' (transnational oikumene) which means the economical, military and political system.<sup>8</sup> Finally the universal Christological approach is linked with a vision in which the project of Western modernisation and secularization are regarded as universal civilization. After all the renewal of church and theology after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War did not lead to 'liberation' of mission from the goal of civilisation. On the contrary, the Western paradigm of progress, which is at the core of Enlightenment and this universal Christological vision become almost inseparably intertwined.<sup>9</sup>

Christ becomes a reality in actual history: the church and the Roman emperor are the visible signs of this Reign. Later on the so called *Imperium Romanum* was regarded as the Universal Reign of Christ. After the Roman Empire ceased, the church was seen as the Universal Reign of Christ: One God, one Christ, one pope, one church (Jürgen Moltmann, *Das Kommen Gottes, Christliche Eschatologie*, Gütersloh, 1995, 184, 203).

6 In: *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edition, 2002. WCC Publications, Geneva (<http://archives.wcc-coe.org/query/Detail.aspx?ID=40916>).

7 Konrad Raiser, *Ökumene im Übergang*, München, 81.

8 *Ibidem*, 138.

The question has to be raised whether this close relationship between Christian faith and the project of Western modernity does not lead to the loss of the meaning of Christian faith itself. Or, to put it more bluntly: does this relationship not shape Christian faith into merely an ideology?

## Opposing voices

The approach towards history from an universal Christological perspective led to criticism from theologians in the Global South. One of the results of this criticism was the foundation of EATWOT in Dar-es Salaam, Tanzania, in 1976. Christians from the Global South had become aware that the 'universal' theology they had inherited from the West was not pertinent to their context of poverty and marginalization; traditional theology had to be reformulated become meaningful to peoples struggling for a more just and egalitarian world.<sup>10</sup>

At the one hand the objective of the appeal that came from theologians from the Global South was the context of (economic) injustice. At the other hand, the focus was a hermeneutical one. Western concepts of 'universality' tend to look upon other values and cultures as realities which have to be reshaped. This becomes even more apparent in approaches that look upon secularization as an inherent result of the global spread of the Gospel (and of modernization). In his book *The Secular City*, published in 1965, that came with the subtitle "Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective", Harvey Cox argues that secularization is itself a result of biblical faith and that secularization sets the agenda which gives meaning to the church's mission. According to Cox the biblical commandment 'no other gods' led historically to the 'disenchantment' of nature and the relativization of politics and values. Therefore the church must learn to 'speak in a secular fashion of God,' as the liberating power operative in nature and history that is discerned through the model of the Exodus.

Ultimately this point of view does not only lead to the loss of the identity of Christian faith, it also proclaims a kind of universalism that is rather narrow-minded: it only takes into account the Western context which further is seen as absolute and universal.

9 'Die quasi naturhaft gedachte, christologische Gesamtqualifikation der westlichen Fortschrittsgeschichte führt damit (...) zu der Tendenz, dass das Credo des Glaubens und das Credo des westlichen Fortschritts eigentümlich miteinander Verschmelzen oder jedenfalls bisweilen ununterscheidbar aneinanderzurücken scheinen.' Dietrich Werner in his research on the missionary approach within the World Council of Churches, *Mission für das Leben - Mission im Kontext, Ökumenische Perspektiven missionarischer Präsenz in der Diskussion des ÖRK 1961-1991*, Rothenburg, 1993, 99, 83-120, 149.

10 [http://www.eatwot.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=26](http://www.eatwot.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=26)

This universal vision on the progress towards one global secular city brings the Asian theologian Aloysius Pieris to the conclusion that these types of universal theological approaches are an example of using theology for the sake of Western colonialism.<sup>11</sup>

Theologians from the Global South oppose to the universal Western vision by drawing attention to God's revelation or incarnation in each culture. According to the Gambian theologian Lamin Sanneh, God's activity in history is His permanent incarnation in each culture. This means that in each culture there are reflections of God's revelation.<sup>12</sup>

This point of view does not only lead to a higher valuation of non-Western cultures, it also fosters cultural plurality. It no longer assumes that unity of the world has to be seen from the perspective of uniformity (the uniformity as fruit of modernization), but it gives space for numerous contextual approaches towards the Gospel.

If the Bangkok meeting of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (1973) was correct in stating that 'culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ', then it should be clear that theologies designed and developed in Europe can claim no superiority over theologies emerging in other parts of the world.

Theologians from the Global South make us aware of the immanent character of suppression in Western Enlightenment with its ideal of unity. This even more so because it is clear that this unity is not a unity that is already present. To reach this unity, struggle is needed and even conquest. It is remarkable that the 'Clash of Civilizations' as described in Samuel P. Huntington's famous 1992 lecture at the American Enterprise Institute (which he developed in 1996 in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*) focuses on a *future* that in fact has already been present for decades. This reality however is not a reality of clashes of civilizations only, it appears also (and maybe even primarily) to be a clash of interests and (economic) power.

## Unity and uniformity

If we take into account cultural and contextual plurality as fruits of the interaction between God's revelation and concrete human history, our vision towards unity has to be enhanced. The unity or the catholicity of the church is not oneness in the sense of uniformity, but unity in diversity. *Koinonia* is the keyword to understand this unity. *Koinonia* is not merely fellowship, but it has the strong notion of communion. Communion should be understood from its rootedness

11 'Ein klassisches Beispiel sich der Theologie zu bedienen, um der westlichen Kolonialismus durchzusetzen' (Werner, *Mission für das Leben*, 152).

12 Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message, The missionary impact on culture*, Maryknoll, 1989.

in the *communio* with Christ. In this perspective Christ is the ‘ultimate Other’. The ‘otherness’ of the Other and of the others is a presupposition in the Biblical thinking of communion. *Koinonia* does not mean that the ‘otherness’ of the ‘Other’ is lifted or neutralized at a certain point. It is on the contrary maintained! Even when to *koinonia* is referred as the (growing) unity with Christ, this is the case. *Koinonia* is the communion of dissimilar and unequal parties. It is exactly this important notion that will help us to answer the question posed in the first part of this article concerning globalization as a movement of hope.

### The ambiguity of globalization

Although globalization also contains hopeful aspects, globalization itself divides as much as it unites. The unity that is shaped by globalization is not a unity in diversity, but there is a strong tendency towards homogeneity. One of the strongest driving forces behind globalization is liberal capitalism and its constant drive for profit. This ongoing search for higher profits and more wealth ultimately leads to the loss of human lives. The unity it provides is the unity of the shareholders. The enormous wealth of the West has led to dramatic consequences in the field of the environment. It has also resulted in unprecedented movements of migration. This migration has again led to the protection of boundaries and to huge amounts of displaced persons. Human trafficking and the illegal trade in human organs are only a few of the consequences of this development. The point is that globalization is an anonymous phenomena. It is a phenomena that can not be controlled. This reality challenges the nation state in a profound way. Nobody seems to be in control. In fact nobody *is* in control. In his analysis of globalization<sup>13</sup>, Zygmunt Bauman comes to the conclusion that our postmodern societies are full of fear because people are aware of the fact that ‘nobody is in control’. This constant fear leads to xenophobia and racism. As globalization in itself is not a movement of hope, the churches are challenged to reflect upon the meaning of hope in times of globalization.

### The apocalyptic vision

Before we will take a closer look to a theology of hope, a few remarks should be made on the concept of ‘empire’, used in the discussions of WARC on economic globalization. According to official documents of WARC, there is one omnipotent power behind globalization (in its economic aspects). This power is not only universal, it is also transcendent as it applies its power not only in present, but also in the past. The ‘empirelanguage’ used within WARC is apocalyptic lan-

13 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear*, Cambridge, 2006



guage: 'In the name of peace and security, the global empire is exercising 'omnipotent' power through its military weapons systems of mass destruction and its intensive, totalistic warfare. Already, wars such as the Crusades, the conquest of the Americas, and the colonial wars against the racial and ethnic peoples in Asia and Africa have caused massive victimization of peoples. This historical process of systematic, massive conquest and destruction of people and the earth has extended into modern times. World Wars I and II, the US atomic bombing of the Korean and Japanese peoples, the US Cold Wars against the Korean and Vietnamese people, and the Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars against those people and their communities have evolved into total wars of omnicide. Current developments by the empire in global militarization threaten the total destruction of earth as a living abode. The nature of war has been radically transformed into limitless war in time and space under the geo-politics of global empire. But the omnipotent power of empire can never obtain 'total security'. Its absolute power through modern military technocracy – omnicidal weapons systems and the claim of omnipotent power – constitutes a tyranny over all living beings'.<sup>14</sup>

The paradigm of 'empire' is not very helpful in developing a theology of hope in times of globalization. First of all because the paradigm is too simplistic in its approach towards reality. In this perspective it does not account for opposite interests among the players on the global market. It does not discern between the interests of the state and that of bankers, of that of shareholders and entrepreneurs. It does not take into account the growing influence of emerging new economies (India, China). It seems to be blind towards the 'neo-colonial' behavior of e.g. China in Africa. And more important, it does not provide a critical attitude towards nepotism, corruption and ethnic conflicts in other contexts outside the USA. Unless 'empire' is to blame for all evil in this world. That presupposition however is not taking into account the role of the individual and his responsibility. Finally: it is too simplistic a conclusion to look upon evil as something that has only one origin and centre: the United States of America.

## Theology of hope in the context of globalization

The apocalyptic and transcendent shape of 'empire' does not leave much space for (a theology of) hope. We either have to withdraw from this world and disengage from daily life, or we have to engage in creating a universal revolution. As 'empire' is omnipresent, the battle against this apocalyptic beast has to be universal as well. It does not only include the battle against the driving forces of liberal capitalism, it also has to fight Western Christianity as its ally: "Western Christi-

14 [http://warc.jalb.de/warc.jsp/side.jsp?news\\_id=809&part\\_id=0&navi=6](http://warc.jalb.de/warc.jsp/side.jsp?news_id=809&part_id=0&navi=6)

anity has been closely related to empire since the Roman days and has thus spread throughout the world. It is now being used to provide ideological legitimization for today's empire. Globalized Christendom and the 'crusades' it embarks upon today are symbiotically intertwined with global capital and the power of the global empire. In its triumphalistic pursuits, it discounts if not condemns all other religious faiths and cultures. The indigenous religions of many communities are destroyed and Islam is vilified.

The convergence of Christian religion with Western modernity has destroyed the religious and cultural life of peoples and their communities throughout the world. The powers and principalities of the global market and empire are being baptized by these theological distortions of 'Christianity', which promote religious conflicts and bigotry globally.

The Christian religion of empire treats others as 'gentiles' to be conquered, as the 'evil empire' to be destroyed or as the 'axis of evil' to be eradicated from the earth. The empire claims that the 'goodness' of the empire must overcome these 'evils'. Its false messianic spirit is imbued with the demonic.

These false claims destroy the integrity of faith(s), and radically erode the identity of Christian faith in Jesus Christ. As the spirit of empire penetrates souls, the power of global empire possesses the bodies of all living beings. Lord of its domain, it builds temples for the global market to serve Mammon".<sup>15</sup>

These bold statements show in a clear way the problem with universal paradigms. Universal paradigms do not leave sufficient space for the ambiguity of reality. They do not take into account the existence of different contexts and they do not sufficiently take into account the role of the individual and the plural complexity of concrete reality. In this respect the concept of 'Empire' is (again) a Western modern and thus universal view on history. It sticks to the existence of one universal all embracing totalitarian 'grand narrative'. Finally it does not take into account the postmodern criticism of modernity.

## History as the field of promise

The critical statements on the role of (Western) Christianity as quoted in the text above, is not without reason however. Jürgen Moltmann states, that there is a strong relation between 'metaphysical monotheism' and 'political monotheism'.<sup>16</sup> With 'metaphysical monotheism' Moltmann refers to a type of monotheism in which God is seen as a supreme Being without any affection. In Greek concepts theology is in duty of the state. The gods are served to assure peace and

15 *Idem.*

16 J. Moltmann, *Trinität und Reich Gottes*, München, 1980, 209-217; cf. J. Moltmann, *Politische Theologie-Politische Ethik*, München, 1984, 42-48.

prosperity. Early Christianity was regarded as a threat for the established order by the state. This is why the Apologists defended Christianity as a religion which was supportive to the state. In their framework they defended monotheism in which God was seen as One, as immovable and immutable. Monotheism with its attributes of endlessness, immutability and immovability is reflected in the oneness of the state: one God, one emperor, one state.

Moltmann's theology of hope is in strong opposition with this type of monotheistic thinking. Moltmann stresses the eschatological character of God's revelation in Christ in this sense, that God is not seen as an immovable Being. God is 'on the move'. We will experience His presence if we are willing to move with Him in the direction of the future. In Moltmann's theology the future is really the future, it will reveal a new reality, which is not present yet. The resurrection of Christ is a historical event in this sense, that it creates history: it brings forward a new reality.<sup>17</sup> This new reality is a mirror of the new reality of the resurrection itself, being '*creatio ex nihilo*'.<sup>18</sup> History is 'salvation history' ('Heilsgeschichte'). As such history is full of promise. History is a futural-eschatological category. History can change. The existing social order is criticized by the hope on a new future. The mission of the church takes place under the eschatological horizon of God's coming Kingdom.<sup>19</sup> In the perspective of Moltmann's theology of hope this also means that people can change history. It is only when people become part of God's mission (the transformation of the world) that they come to their destiny. Hope is more than just an emotion, it is the dynamo of change. The church is a community of people who transcend the existing order and who are on their way to a new future. That is why Moltmann calls the church 'the congregation of Exodus'. The mission of the church is change.

There is of course much more to say about Moltmann's theology of hope.<sup>20</sup> This very short description however already leads to the question of the particularity of the death and the resurrection of Christ in relation to the reality of the 'Exodus character' of the church. Does the transformation of the world depend on the church? The history of the church is not very promising in this perspective. The question arises how we validate the present shape of the world. This world as it is today is a world in which Christianity is present. Does this mean that until now the church has failed and that the church will act in a better way in the future? Another important question is that of the role of the victims in our

17 J. Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, München, 1964, 163, 164.

18 Ibidem, 76.

19 Ibidem, 308.

20 The same is true for the transcendent aspects of eschatology, e.g. in his more recent study *Das Kommen Gottes, Christliche Eschatologie*. In this eschatological study Moltmann underlines the cosmic and transcendent aspects of eschatology. Not only humanity and mankind will be recreated, this also applies for nature and history.

world: the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized people. How do they become agents of change? Do we sufficiently understand the dehumanizing aspects of poverty, of oppression, of injustice?<sup>21</sup>

## Liberation and hope

The starting point for a theology of hope lies in the meaning of the cross and the resurrection of Christ. In the person of Christ, the age to come, which alone will endure for all eternity, has arrived. It arrived in his person and was redemptively present in his work on the cross. The cross of Christ is the judgment of the end of time now exhausted within time. For the people of God the 'end time' judgment has already happened. 'Empire' has already been conquered. The cross of Christ is the ultimate judgement on the powers in this world. This radical message means that we are liberated from all powers. We do not depend on them. We are free. Christian hope means learning to live in freedom. We are also freed of the burden to realize salvation in this world or to even change the world. The church does not change the world. The church proclaims that this world and its powers have been judged by the death and the resurrection of Christ. "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2: 15). This creed is the most radical criticism of 'Empire-like' powers. Are these just words? The church lives from this reality and in doing so she gives shape to this new era. That is why the proclamation of the realm of Christ will inevitably lead to 'signs' in which the new reality of the Reign of God becomes apparent. Moltmann calls these signs 'anticipations': they are sacraments of God's real presence in reality.<sup>22</sup> These sacraments are provisional: they remind us of the eschatological reality, but they are not that reality itself. They also have a character of ambiguity. The road towards the future is not linear and progressive. This has also to do with the character of the eschatological reality itself. God's reign is not the reality present at the end of the road of human history. The eschaton is not the result of human enterprise and or the efforts of the church as the resurrection of Christ is not the foundation for the progress of history. It is on the contrary the ultimate crisis of history. The cross and the resurrection of Christ point to the eschaton as the transcendent reality of God, breaking in in our history. We should also notice that the signs or the sacraments of the Reign of God bear the shape of the cross. Not only because they are controversial and critical, but also because the charac-

21 An impressive view on this reality can be found in T.A. Mofokeng, *The crucified among the crossbearers, Towards a Black Christology*, Kampen, 1983

22 J. Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, 314.

ter they bear is not a triumphant one. They bear the signs of struggle, of tears and sometimes even blood.

The resurrection of Christ can not be regarded without the perspective of the cross. That is why the Reign of God is primarily visible among the outcasts and the marginalized, among the victims of history. But the signs of God's Reign will always be provisional. Even if we would succeed to save the present victims of our history, we are not able to save the victims of the past. Is there hope for them who we can not save? Or do we leave them as garbage at the refuse dump of history? A theology of hope should be able to answer these burning questions. It can only do so if it does not look upon eschatology as a final reality only. It also has to elaborate on the transcendent character of eschatology. The new reality of God fuels our hope even when hope is beyond our horizon and our possibilities.

*J.M. van 't Kruis (1952) studied theology in Utrecht and Groningen (doctorate 1998). He was Pastor in the Netherlands Reformed Church (1977-1983), Teacher at the Theological Seminary of the Christian Church of Central Sulawesi – Indonesia (1985-1990) and Officer for the Relationship with Migrant Churches in the Netherlands (1990-2004). Currently he is Officer to the General Secretary of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.*

# EMPIRE

## 7

### Empire - Provocation with a Perspective

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, Rheydt, Germany

Empire is a topic that has constantly fueled, inspired and sometimes unfortunately stifled discussion since Accra. What “empire” is, whether it exists and what it does to us – how we are ultimately part of it – has been discussed in many settings, from different standpoints, and with great enthusiasm, sometimes even bordering on aggression.

The fact that global power structures have been termed “empire” has often been understood as an accusation leveled at the European churches of being part of the imperial machinery themselves. This was interpreted as a sweeping judgment on European commitment to justice and finally the South was directly accused of disregarding victims of unjust neoliberal global structures in Europe, indeed, of seeing them as being, as it were, in “complicity” with empire.

The heated debate around this concept is worthy of attention. Arguably there is more behind it: people get worked up about the issue of global power structures but that topic triggers emotions about other conflicts as well.

Notwithstanding all of this, the Accra Confession explains what is meant by “empire” very clearly, carefully and with a great sense of political realism:

*We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of the powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. In using the term “empire” we mean the coming together of economic, cultural political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests (AC 11).*

As in many other passages, too, the Accra Confession is not always easy to classify as a linguistic text type. This particular section does not use the language of confession, nor does it sound like a statement. It is more a reflection on the subject of “empire”, its manifestation and our own involvement—with all the precautions necessary to avoid being too categorical.

The General Council in Accra wrestled over this section of the Confession and probably that is why it is semantically so hard to categorize. That, however, is a boon for any discussion of the matter.

“Appropriate and insightful,” were the terms used by Peter Bukowski, Moderator of the Reformed Alliance in Germany,<sup>1</sup> to describe the talk about empire. Appropriate and insightful because talking about empire brings into focus the power constellations that are shaping up politically and shows us what coalitions of economic and military interests have established themselves. Empire-talk compels us to analyze the situation.

That being so, it is hard to follow the repeated claims from the North that the wording of the Confession contains accusations and conflicts to be read “between the lines.”

## Empire – an old term for new-style dominance

What the Accra Confession says about the structure of “empire” has long been consensus in other disciplines. Political science, for example, has been working intensively on the subject of empire at the same time. The topic is downright fashionable as an object of analysis in both conservative and left-wing circles.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have presented a lucid analysis of the post-modern empire, but other academics have also described the new type of power structures of the globalized world. What an empire is, how it functions—or also how it does not function, what internal logic it follows, whether it is even needed in the global context and under what preconditions—the question of the foundations of imperial sovereign structures in the age of globalization, the differences over against the classical “empire” of the old days, the new alliances, combatants, technical insignia of dominance and communication orbs have been sufficiently described and applied to the easily identifiable empires of the global age.

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt give this description:

*In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentralized and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges.*<sup>2</sup>

By contrast with many church responses, Negri and Hardt do not describe the new-style empires as totalitarian and thereby inevitable and absolute.<sup>3</sup> The au-

1 [http://www.kirchentag2007.de/presse/dokumente/dateien/BIB\\_9\\_1266](http://www.kirchentag2007.de/presse/dokumente/dateien/BIB_9_1266): “As a theological definition, talk of empire (as Jesus used the word Mammon) is appropriate and insightful, precisely because it makes us more aware of the fact that political and/or economic forces and constellations confront us almost like persons.”

2 Hardt, Michael/Negri, Antonio, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000, xii.

3 Hardt, Michael/Negri, Antonio: *Multitude, War und Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin USA, 2004.

thors also supply an ambitious vision of a democratic global society—one which is certainly not uncontroversial but shows that “another world is possible”<sup>4</sup>.

Political scientist Herfried Münkler comes up with a rather smug analysis: “*Being empire is not all fun.*”<sup>5</sup>

Empires are not, “figures from sentimental literature and cinematic reminiscences”. Empires exist and, according to Münkler, they are undergoing a “transformation of imperial order”.

Münkler says that, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new forms of imperial systemization appeared which are no longer confined to territorial presence and militarization. Elements like economic integration, control of technological innovations and business law take on a central role; they already played a part at the time of the Roman Empire but they have a new significance today.

Other questions are standard elements of imperial policy – the resource question, economic policy, legal codes.

By contrast, the empires of today do not always have an easy time at another point; they have to contend with the media of the entire world public – at least when they do not go so far as to switch off the Internet, as China has done. This creates public awareness, which sets clear limits on imperial tendencies, e.g. when it costs too many victims to be empire or the price is too high. Or when many people note that many other people are likewise victims.

The most important insights include the fact that - with the decline of colonial imperialism and under the conditions of globalization - present-day empires differ completely from those of the past. New empires distinguish themselves through a heterogeneous power policy. In more recent times, that has meant not necessarily pursuing a classical policy of aggressive conquest: troops march in, land is conquered. Whether a power is an empire is not shown by the conquered square kilometers, but by how the power succeeds in using its power, how power is secured and with whom. Nor is an empire “America”, “the EU”, country X, but, as the Accra Confession aptly describes, a “coming together”. The power of empire is shown not just through the visible presence of imperial storm troops,

4 Ibid. 9: „Stark vereinfacht könnte man sagen, dass die Globalisierung zwei Gesichter aufweist. Auf der einen Seite umspannt das Empire mit seinen Netzwerken von Hierarchien und Spaltungen den Globus; (...) Andererseits bedeutet Globalisierung aber auch, dass neue Verbindungen des Zusammenwirkens und der Zusammenarbeit entstehen, die sich über Länder und Kontinente hinweg erstrecken und auf zahllosen Interaktionen fußen. Dieses zweite Gesicht der Globalisierung bedeutet nicht die weltweite Angleichung einer und eines jeden; es bietet uns vielmehr die Möglichkeit, unsere Besonderheit zu wahren und das Gemeinsame zu entdecken, das es uns erlaubt, miteinander zu kommunizieren und gemeinsam zu handeln.“

5 Münkler, Herfried: Imperien, Die Logik der Weltherrschaft – vom Alten Rom bis zu den Vereinigten Staaten, Hamburg 2008, 184ff.



but through movement of capital that flows at the imperial behest, through communication shaped and defined by imperial control of communications and the *divide et impera* of alliances with the empire and its satellites.

### An empire is a “coming together” of power.

What constitutes power? While part of the power of the Roman Empire could be recognized from the map, modern empires can no longer be described in national borders. Modern empires make themselves visible through the movement of capital, goods and services, control of communication systems and the brain drain. The borders of modern empires are lost – to quote political scientist Herfried Münkler – “in the expanse of space”.<sup>6</sup> However, they only survive when they succeed in crossing the threshold to the Augustan age. As a constituent of every imperial construct, Münkler has discerned its ability to allow the periphery to participate in the welfare of the imperial center. In the case of the USA, the empire under discussion, this means in quite practical terms that the constant military securing of its own interests in the long run provokes “increasing resistance, higher costs and heightened unrest on the home front”.<sup>7</sup> For that reason alone, no empire can survive for long by power accumulation and military engagement. In the light of the above, it is apparent that we can certainly speak today of power “coming together”, of power centers that fulfill these criteria. They pursue a powerful policy of expansion that is nowadays no longer expressed in the conquest of distant countries but uses modern instruments – a post-imperial imperialism. Who could deny that China is an empire?<sup>8</sup>

Hence the reserve shown by European churches in the empire discussion can hardly be explained on the grounds that empire had not been adequately described or defined.

The Accra Confession reflects precisely the tenor of the above. Empire is a *coming together of economic, cultural political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests* (AC 11).

It is all the more surprising to see the effect that section 11 has had on post-Accra discussions.

6 Münkler, Herfried, Neues vom Imperium, Das alte Rom und der 11. September. Reflexionen über politische Ordnungen im Anschluss an Montesquieu, 2007, in: Die Welt, 12 February 2005.

7 Fisch, Jörg on Herfried Münkler, Die Wiederkunft des Imperiums, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 20 July 2005.

8 Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III gives an interesting insight into Chinese influence in Africa in his introduction (What the Chinese show us) to the chapter on “complicated Africa” in the German edition of the Atlas of Globalization, Le monde diplomatique, December, 2009.

## Aspects of a difficult relationship in a church family

While the churches in Europe declared the use of the term unhelpful, for the churches of the South it has been a key term for dealing with their own history and the structures of globalization. The issue of empire is attracting great attention in the way it has been perceived and worked on since Accra. Against the background of their experiences of colonialism and oppression, the churches of the South designate the exploitative structures of unbridled globalization and understand the role of the church in the context of empire as that of a worldwide movement that has to raise a prophetic voice and speak out against the life-destroying consequences of neoliberal globalization.

Empire, in this perception, is the reincarnation of the New Testament Babylon—the *imperium romanum* that destroys life and seeks to destroy God's creation, in un-Christian fashion. Empire is said to be the metaphoric vision of the adversary, the life-destroying power that denies God. The discussion about empire calls for apocalyptic language in order to really plumb the depths of the threat. The presence of empire, according to voices from the South, poses vital questions to faith and confession. *A priori* and through its structure it is life-destroying and acts against God's creation.

It has become clear in the discussions that many people's lives in the South are so desperate and miserable that only strong images can attempt to describe them. And the language of church declarations and final documents expresses precisely this desire to send powerful messages.

For the churches in Europe it was difficult, if not impossible, to accept this definition. The originally so realistic and balanced definition in the Accra Confession, and the description of one or several empires as really existing models of political order and thereby their demystification, suddenly became unacceptably loaded for the North, especially given the enthusiasm with which the South received the document.

This was expressed in rejection, denial, vocal disapproval and, in some places, even polemics. One reaction to the Accra Confession and the use of the concept of empire was presented under the heading: "What the World Alliance of Reformed Churches could have also decided":<sup>9</sup>

*All these states (South Korea, Australia, China, India) liberalized their economic system to introduce market economy mechanisms, some unwillingly and under military pressure from the USA. From these and similar developments there arose what WARC disparages as "empire." Unquestionably most people can think themselves lucky to live in this empire.*<sup>10</sup>

9 Lucke, Bernd: Was der Reformierte Weltbund auch hätte beschließen können. Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Hamburg, 2004 (manuscript for discussion at the Synod in 2005).

10 Ibid.

It is clear that such cynicism does not contribute to an objective debate. Furthermore, suddenly it was no longer so interesting to discuss the issue of where empire develops its fatal power. Rather the North-South discussion operated in the field of emotional meta-messages in church family relationships that were not always without friction:

The use of the term “empire” became a shibboleth for: acceptance or rejection. Bend the knee or die a martyr’s death! Are you for or against empire! And likewise: are you for the victims and those deprived of their rights, or against them? Are you for the brothers and sisters in the South or against them? Anyone who wants to discuss empire is good, and anyone who rejects the term may be suspected of being its agent. Anyone who does not confess is a combatant. In the ecumenical debate the empires that actually dominate our world were thus merged into *the empire*, whose totality can only be resisted in confessional formulations – which at the same time are declared the standard for solidarity with brothers and sisters.

Here one thing is clear: people in Europe - where blatant injustices are becoming visible, where people suffer and are threatened - of course also need to confess belief in God’s promise of grace and solidarity with those who are vulnerable. However, the description of empire and its different avatars as a global power factor became so theologically loaded that it, first, aroused the appearance of a life-threatening omnipotence at all levels, which it seems hopeless to try to oppose. Then, second, the North became the target of a continuing charge of complicity which, while rarely expressed explicitly, was often implicit. And that although the sober description in section 11 of the Accra Confession had been possibly capable of finding a consensus!

The churches in the North have all too often avoided the question of their involvement in global exploitative structures by claiming that they are highly committed to justice and have placed that topic high on the agenda of their assemblies... And yet all the specific questions remain: that of our energy consumption, when this can only be covered by anthracite from South African or Colombian mines – with working conditions that are intolerable and dangerous; that of our attitude to food, when the remains of our chicken consumption are shipped to Ghana and not only cause illness there but also destroy local industries. And those are just two examples among many.

Going beyond these practical questions, the discussion about the existence and form of whatever kind of empire is in fact only a proxy debate that has provoked extreme discomfort in church discussions, since it also shows the difficulties people have in letting themselves be drawn into friendly debate and taking account of the other’s context, sometimes against the background of a dreadful history. Thus dialogue became difficult in the smokescreen of the implicit.

Much in this discussion has provoked amazement, even annoyance. For example,

governments in southern countries express their emancipated freedom in rejecting development programs from the North on the grounds that the link to respect for human rights or health and safety regulation is pure paternalism; they then turn around and accept a no-strings-attached program from China, allowing their own people to work without the benefit of health and safety regulations. They must therefore be prepared to face questions about their moral integrity and a discussion about who is actually empire and what instruments it uses.

On the other hand, the constant reference to abuses – corruption, lack of transparency and disloyalty toward their own citizens, as is often heard in discussions in the North about the South, cannot deny – let alone eliminate – the fact that many people in countries of the South live in situations of oppression and threat to their livelihoods. Nor is the very justified question about the responsibility of affluent countries of the North answered or in any way settled. When brothers and sisters “on the one side” disparage good intentions with knee-jerk anti-colonialist reactions, those “on the other side” withdraw from critical reflection by making sweeping accusations of corruption.

Apart from these arenas of conflict management among brothers and sisters it may be helpful to note that the approach to analyzing structures of globalization of people in the North is completely different to that in the South. Argentine theologian René Krüger describes it as follows:

*In the North, a method of evaluation is frequently used which sets the positive and negative aspects and elements of neoliberal globalization side by side, and then tries to advise how to check the negative effects and combat the disadvantages, in line with the logic “keep the good and correct the bad.” (...) In contrast, attention in the South of the globe is repeatedly drawn to the extensive negative effects of the globalized world economic system.*

*The subjection of all humanity and nature to the logic of barefaced acquisition of ever more capital is denounced as inhumane, sinful and contemptuous of life.*<sup>11</sup>

Krüger calls the approach of the North “an abstract quest for truth” and thus an “academic debate”, far removed from real life and of no use. The “South’s hermeneutic approach”, by contrast, stems from “the concrete urgency of survival and the search for justice, for which the starting point lies in analysis of the living conditions of human beings who have been harmed by neoliberal globalization.”<sup>12</sup>

Both approaches have their weaknesses. Whoever cool-headedly analyzes the ranking of globalization’s advantages and disadvantages misses some essential points, is not touched inwardly by the suffering of those who are affected, and does not need to open up to their lament or to his/her own responsibili-

11 Krüger, René: The biblical and theological significance of the Accra Confession: a perspective from the south, In: Reformed World, 226, Volume 55 (3) Sept. 2005.

12 Ibid., 227.

ty.<sup>13</sup> And those who confine their analysis to describing injustice and inhumanity do not get at the actual structures, do not unravel the internal system of these events – and do not need to discover their own share in these situations or self-critically ask questions about their own responsibility.

These different approaches have frequently sparked off disagreement and conflict at ecumenical assemblies – e.g. when people from the South report on their real-life, often difficult situations and people from the North at the same time supply more or less abstract analyses and instructions for action without taking a moment to sympathize before getting down to their policy agendas. With respect to the very helpful discussion on global power structures, this thinking in opposites – “us” and “them” – has generated friction and resistance that has at least slowed down a more in-depth discussion about the imperial structures of globalization. That was due to the different forms of response, but also to the imprecise semantics of some of the statements from the South.

One example of how carelessly complex political structures can be stirred into an ideological mishmash by the concept of empire is the Faith Stance of the participants at the Manila Consultation (2005) describing the political situation in North Korea:

*North Korea's economy, already weakened by the ravages of neoliberal globalization, has been pushed to the brink by the US trade embargo and economic sanctions. (...). Refusing to hold bilateral talks or to normalize relations with North Korea, the US has demonized the country, calling it part of the “axis of evil” in hopes of forcing a regime change. This has only provoked North Korea to go nuclear, in turn heightening tensions and fuelling the arms race in North East Asia.*<sup>14</sup>

What kind of serious reply is possible to that? Whoever turns offenders into victims in this way misuses the real victims and does not allow the reader to undertake a sympathetic and careful consideration of their situation. This instrumentalizes the victims and is thus a double victimization. Anyone who simplifies North Korea's criminal policy toward its own people, calling it reaction to provocation, uses a stereotype that is unthinking and harmful. In terms of political science, the Manila Paper contains a highly questionable analysis of real structures that barely conceals its inflammatory intention under the guise of the theological category of “empire”.

13 Cameroonian political scientist Munasu Duala-M'bedy describes in his book *Xenologie – Die Wissenschaft vom Fremden und die Verdrängung der Humanität in der Anthropologie* (Freiburg/Munich 1977) the involvement of former colonial powers in the contexts of perceiving “the strange as their own” and their flight from empathy into rationalization – leading to profound problems of incomprehension that have impacted even on the ethnographic accounts of academic anthropology.

14 An Ecumenical Faith Stance Against Global Empire For A Liberated Earth Community. [http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news\\_id=1166&navi=45](http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=1166&navi=45).

Talk of empire, as this example shows, is in terms of speech-act theory not just a matter of naming the subject matter. It is speaking and acting. Speech is loaded with collateral themes, capitalism critique, imperialism theory, apocalyptic exegesis and the depths of a common history – talking empire is a highly political act.

## Lordless powers: bridging the divide

In our debates since the General Council in Accra we have been struggling to find a basis on which to agree on the definition of “empire”.

Together, and learning from one another, we have gone down roads that have opened our eyes to our respective identities and traditions. We have learned from one another that the empire issue is not just a question of *Realpolitik* [or practical politics], but reflects the whole breadth of relations in the Reformed family. That includes old wounds caused by imperialism and colonialism and likewise blindness toward the other side’s commitment and genuine desire to make reparation. Empire – or at least the history of its reception since 2004 – has made it clear to us that we were all too inclined to think in terms of “us” and “them”. This cuts both ways and is somehow arbitrary – regardless of the direction in which we look. Sometimes we had the impression that we would never find a path leading to a consensus. The stumbling blocks on our different routes are simply too big – old unsettled accounts, colonial and anticolonial identities, cultural diversities and, not least, language, which has never been able to exactly define all the experiences involved.

And yet: our conversations and discussions, the struggling and searching for a bridge toward one another, the goodwill that ultimately exists on both sides and the insight that we need each other, have enabled the finding of a common basis for discussion about empire.

In the conversations of the Reformed Church and the United Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA), but also and primarily at the Global Dialogue launched in 2009 in South Africa, a definition drawn from Karl Barth won the day. It has meanwhile met with broad consensus and opened the way to common action:<sup>15</sup>

*We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today. This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind. An all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves, and even sacrifices humanity. It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed—the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, pro-*

15 On the concept of “lordless powers” in 2006: Plasger, Georg, *Das Imperium - ein theologisch brauchbarer Begriff?*, [www.reformiert-info.de/side.php?news\\_id=264&part\\_id=0&part3\\_id=56&navi=3](http://www.reformiert-info.de/side.php?news_id=264&part_id=0&part3_id=56&navi=3).

*claimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is the colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.*

Karl Barth describes how human beings use their skills to initiate developments but cannot keep them under control. What Barth calls “lordless powers” are unbridled, potentially harmful human actions. They are powers we authorize in all the limitations of our understanding, action and desires.<sup>16</sup>

Clear structural analyses and the clear-sighted description of the circumstances of our globalized world help us to understand, but they equally produce perplexity and helplessness. Talk of “lordless powers” – this mythological talk adds another, broader perception to our scientific, rational perspective. It is about powers we cannot express in language and that impel us to speak of the “demonic” without in the least being rid or acquitted of the ultimate responsibility. It is mythological talk that describes something for which we lack the words. With it we can express our impotence, our entanglement and our helplessness despite all our good intentions. Mythological language expresses the inexpressible in images. It is a second level of understanding enabling other approaches to the real situations of our world. It is thus not appropriate to pit “rational” against mythological language – that is the great benefit of this new approach. When we speak of “being held in God’s hand”, the question of how many fingers hold us is then irrelevant. Such talk means finding different approaches to human reality that are completely independent of each other and unlock independent experience and knowledge.

In the ongoing debate about the “lordless powers” it will be exciting to give closer consideration to parallels between Karl Barth’s definition with, for example, Karl Marx’s fetish theory – and place the description of capitalism as an “idol” more exactly in this context. Presumably this will produce precise descriptions of harmful power relations and dependency structures in the context of globalization.

With all the rejoicing about this common position, the new definition cannot spare us individual responsibility – it cannot be cause for leaning back in new-found freedom. The “lordless powers” must not be misused as a “deus-ex-machina” reflex or rhetorical trick that immediately relieves us of discussion about the unjust structures of globalization and our share in it. Barth himself consistently demythologized the “lordless powers” and placed them in the context of the real world. Nor do “lordless powers” mean that the evil in the world is merely the result of fatal entanglement, or that the distortions of globalization – exploitation, oppression, unrestrained reaching for power – simply flow freely, as it were like a bye-product of free will.

Nuances in the discourse on empire – theological, metaphorical talk, on the one

16 Barth, Karl, *The Christian Life. Church Dogmatics IV/4*. Posthumous lecture fragment.

hand, and *realpolitik* talk about global power structures, on the other – have thus opened up new opportunities in handling a difficult topos. In the internal Reformed dialogue this expanded terminology led to the crucial breakthrough. On the one hand, it seriously addresses the helplessness of many people in the North and also the shame of ultimately being on the side of the winners in the “imperial” structures, without really being able to impact on the political reality of the division into winners and losers. On the other hand, discovering the existence of “lordless powers” challenges us to engage in even more critical reflection and spiritually work through the consequences.

Cuban theologian Ofelia Ortega clearly describes the ambivalence of this perception but with the profound certainty that here the last word has not yet been spoken:

*The Empire functions today, as never before, through colonization of subjectivity. It is a complex construction of a colonized subjectivity. This is more than imperial ideology - we are facing an imperial subjectivity—which ends up in suicidal annihilation of the human being, of human freedom, of human judgment, and from a dreadful ecological perspective, of human and natural life on the Earth. (...) Paul, the militant of anti-imperial eschatology, announces that imperial reality is ending. There will be an “after the Empire”, an after every empire, also of this one, because the empire is just the face of this world, never its truth. Above and against the final word of the empire, the cross, there comes God’s truth, Resurrection. It is a beyond, beyond the power of the empire, beyond the ideology of the empire, beyond imperialized subjectivity.*<sup>17</sup>

Our own limitation and our compulsion to find a final form of words prompts us to pray in all humility and ask for God’s guidance and transforming power. Perhaps it is now, for the first time, possible to speak with clearly defined terms: to separate the necessary theological talk about empire and the consequences for our faith from their absolute, eschatological overtones and to work out how, with the aid of political science, we can gain clarity about our options and opportunities for achieving more just global structures. This way, talk of empire will cease to be abstract and become extremely real.

**Martina Wasserloos-Strunk**, (1963) is a political scientist specialising in political theory. She is a member of the Moderamen of the Reformed Alliance Germany. As a member of ATTAC Germany she is responsible for communication between the Reformed Alliance and civil movements working towards a just economy. On behalf of the European Area of WARC she published the book “Europes Covenanting for Justice”.

17 Ortega, Ofelia: Communion and Justice, Contribution to the Global Dialogue, September 2009, Johannesburg.





# ETHICS

## 8

### Climate Justice and Tax Justice: Key for Global Ethics

Christoph Stückelberger, Geneva/Switzerland

Justice, based on equality, is a key value in all value systems around the world including: all world religions, non-religious philosophical systems, and world views. But there are obviously manifold interpretations of the content and meaning of justice/equity, its priority related to other values and its implementation. The blood revenge in many tribal traditions around the world is not the same justice as the “new justice” of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with its message to “love your enemy.” Even respecting this diversity, in international human rights declarations and conventions as well as international law, the global human community has already reached an impressive level of common understanding of justice. The following contribution begins with a brief description of the *relationship between global and contextual ethics*. Chapters two and three then develop principles of global *climate justice* and apply them to the current political debate on climate politics. In a similar way, chapters four and five, principles of *tax justice* are then applied to the current hot topic of tax evasion and tax justice for developing and emerging countries. The author’s background is protestant, reformed theology and ethics; nevertheless, this article does not develop the specific theological and reformed justifications of the various principles and dimensions of justice, and he refers to his other publications for such foundations.<sup>1</sup>

#### Global and Contextual Ethics

Today’s globalized, interdependent world needs common values for interaction and joint action. At the same time, it needs the respect for diversity as a gift, beauty and richness of this humanity. But what is the relation between the

1 E.g. Stückelberger, Christoph/ Mathwig Frank, *Grundwerte. Eine theologisch-ethische Orientierung*, Zurich, Theologischer Verlag, 2007, 74-100; Stückelberger, Christoph: *Global Trade Ethics*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002.

two? Globethics.net proposes the following understanding for dialogues on values<sup>2</sup>:

**“Global ethics** is an inclusive approach towards common binding values, guiding principles, personal attitudes and common action across cultures, religions, political and economic systems and ideologies. Global ethics is grounded in the ethical recognition of inalienable human dignity, of freedom of decision, of personal and social responsibility and of justice. Global ethics acknowledges the interdependence of all human and non-human beings and extends the basic moral attitudes of care and compassion to our world. Global ethics identifies trans-boundary problems and contributes to their solution.

Global ethics fosters public awareness of those fundamental values and principles. They are the foundation on which the universal consensus on human rights is built. Human rights are the most tangible and legally binding expression of this ethical vision. Global ethics fosters trust among human beings and strengthens caring and action for global environmental protection.

**Contextual ethics** takes seriously the identity of persons and institutions in their local, cultural, religious, economic and political contexts. Global ethics needs to be local and contextual in order to have an impact on individual action and societal structures. On the other hand, contextual ethics becomes isolationist if it remains local and is not linked to global ethics.

Contextual ethics appreciates and respects diversity in its different forms as social, political, cultural, religious, and bio-diversity. There is an enormous richness in diversity. It may decrease vulnerability and be a source of sustainability.

Contextual ethics contributes to global ethics. Together they can lead to unity in diversity. All cultures and religions can contribute to global values. For example, the contribution of African values to global values includes that all of reality is a continuum, from the spiritual to the human to fauna, flora, and the inanimate world. Therefore, injuring nature is unethical. This implies responsibilities towards non-human living beings and the inanimate universe as well as the continuum between generations that have gone before and that come after us.

**Global and contextual ethics** are two poles which challenge each other and inseparably belong together.

Global and contextual ethics have to consider power structures. Global ethics can be abused for domination over other cultures, religions and values. Contextual ethics can be abused to defend traditional privileges or power. On global as well as on local level, ‘power over others’ tends to be oppressive, ‘power with and for others’ tends to be empowering and nurturing. Power as ‘power from’ (e.g.

2 The following chapter, mainly written by the author, is quoted from *Globethics.net Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions*, published by Globethics.net, Geneva 2009. [www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net).

power from God, from the people through election) can be abused to justify oppressive power. It can also be used responsibly as an empowering power, serving the needs of the needy and thus responding to the origin of power.”

## Global and contextual Climate Justice

Climate change is probably the most urgent challenge for humanity since it affects every single part of the world, but in very different ways and since it influences all other efforts such as poverty reduction, education, gender equality, environmental sustainability, economic, financial and political stability, spiritual hope, peace etc. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches at its 24<sup>th</sup> General Council in Accra 2004 in its Report of the Public Issues Committee adopted the following recommendation to its member churches: “As our commitment on confessing our faith in the face of economic injustice and ecological destruction, ... WARC recommends ...: 2.4 Call on governments to fulfil international and national environmental obligations such as the Kyoto protocol against global warming and the Cartagena protocol for biosafety; to set new global warming targets to reduce greenhouse gases by 60 per cent by 2050; and to promote new international agreements on conservation of water, soil and forest.”<sup>3</sup>

Before and during the climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009, “Climate Justice” became the key term for the value-oriented efforts and the goal where to go. But what does it mean?<sup>4</sup>

**Climate Justice means just and fair instruments, decisions, actions, burden sharing and accountability for the prevention, mitigation and adaptation related to climate change.**

1. *Capability-related justice* means that every person and institution has the duty to contribute solving problems on the basis of their capability. This means related to climate justice: Everybody can and should contribute according to his/her physical, economical, political, intellectual and spiritual capabilities. An economically strong person, institution, company or state has to contribute more than an economically weak person, institution, company or state to solve the climate challenges.

3 Accra 2004. Proceedings of the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva 2005, 201.

4 For the following chapter see also Stückelberger, Christoph, Who Dies First? Who is Sacrificed First? Ethical Aspects of Climate Justice, in God, Creation and Climate change. Spiritual and Ethical Perspectives, ed. By Karen L. Bloomquist on behalf of The Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, LWF/Lutheran University Press, 2009, 47-63.

2. *Performance-related justice* means that every person and institution involved in human activities (such as the production, trade, sale or disposal of a product or service) must be given their due (e.g. salary) on the basis of their performance. This means related to climate justice: An activity which reduces greenhouse gas emissions is a good performance and should be rewarded respectively.
3. *Needs-related justice* means that basic human needs and rights (i.e. the subsistence minimum, a life in dignity and the right to food and water) should be taken into consideration for every person and institution. This means related to climate justice: Every person has the right to survive and be supported to manage adaptation to climate change independent from his/her capability and performance.
4. *Distributive justice* ensures that access to resources, goods and services is distributed fairly, taking into account the balance of capability, performance and needs. This means related to climate justice: Financial or other resources to decrease negative effects of climate warming on human life should be distributed first according to needs, but also taking into account performance and capabilities so that the overall disparity between people becomes smaller and not larger.
5. *Justice as equal treatment* means that all human beings have the same human rights and the right to equal treatment independent of capabilities, performance, needs, origin and characteristics (such as gender, colour, race, religion). This means related to climate justice: Climate related measures for prevention, mitigation and adaptation have to respect equal treatment of all people affected.
6. *Intergenerational justice* means a sustainable use and fair distribution of resources, as well as a reduction in and a fair distribution of ecological burdens between generations living today and future generations. This means related to climate justice: Decisions have to respect the needs for a life in dignity of future generations which have the same right of equal treatment as generations living today.
7. *Participatory justice* means the fair, appropriate participation in decision-making of all those affected by a problem and by decisions. This means related to climate justice: Decisions on climate related policies should be taken by democratic participation of the population and its representatives on the different levels, from local to global.
8. *Procedural justice* means calculable, constitutional (publicly and privately) regulated, transparent, corruption-free and thus fair procedures in all interactions. This means related to climate justice: The decisions related to climate warming and its implementations (such as access to financial resources, climate related taxes or incentives, media information) have to follow the mentioned criteria of procedural justice.

9. *Functional justice* means a fair and optimal relation between needs of persons and structural necessities of institutions, processes and resources. It is a question of functional justice, where, when and to whom to allocate how much and which kind of resources. This means related to climate justice: Functional and organisational aspects of allocation and distribution of limited resources is key for a fair solution of climate challenges.
10. *Punitive Justice* means the punishment of actions which violate justice. The goal is retaliation, determent or overcoming of existing injustice. This means related to climate justice: Where climate justice is violated – and this violation is ethically as severe as other injustices – , measures of punitive justice have to be taken into account as for other injustices.
11. *Transitional justice* means a provisional justice in transformation societies where ordinary, regular institutions and procedures may be absent or in reconstruction (e.g. in post war situations or after a revolutionary change of the system in a society). This means related to climate justice: in exceptional situations such as after emergencies, accelerated procedures for decisions and aid and exceptional instruments such as amnesty (which is not impunity) may be required and ethically justified.
12. *Restorative Justice* means a common solution of the perpetrator/s and the victim/s in order to restore justice from occurred injustice by compensation, reparation and/or reconciliation. This means related to climate justice: Climate injustice takes place daily because those who suffer most from the negative effects of climate change are not those who cause it. Decisive and courageous measures of the polluters, especially the industrialised countries, would be measures of restorative justice.
13. *Transformative Justice* means a process of transformation and renewal of reality towards justice, especially to overcome situations of injustice. It is a creative and ongoing process which goes beyond punitive or restorative justice. This means related to climate justice: Climate justice is not a single decision or act, but rather an ongoing process which leads to a fundamental transformation of societies in their relations, use of natural resources, distribution of goods and services and sustainable policies. Climate justice is not the result of one or the other isolated action but a holistic process of transformation.
14. *On Time Justice* means that justice is bound to the right time of decision and action (in German: zeitgerechte Entscheide, Zeit-Gerechtigkeit, in Greek: kairos, the right moment). If a measure is taken too late and the patient or victim dies, injustice happened and it is difficult to restore justice. This means related to climate justice: to prevent and mitigate further climate victims, measures have to be taken on time. The fast climate warming needs steps on time, now. The time factor is one of the most important to implement climate justice.

Some of these fourteen aspects of climate justice are in tension to others and it is

difficult to implement all of them at the same time. The goal of the list is to be aware that climate justice is not an empty or arbitrary new slogan, but a fundamental value with concrete and challenging content.

## Ethical Guidelines for Climate Justice

How can these aspects of climate justice help to find ethical guidelines for the crucial question in politics, economy, civil society and religious institutions: *How to invest and distribute limited resources for the threefold duty of prevention, mitigation and adaptation related to climate change in order to minimize the number of victims?*

First of all, guidelines can only indicate a general direction. For concrete decisions, the respective situation has to be analyzed and the guidelines have to be interpreted and adapted according to the concrete situation. In many situations, conflicts between values exist and need a prioritization, which can ethically be solved by preferential rules (if case A, then priority X, if case B, then priority Y). The following guidelines should help to prioritize and to solve conflicts between different values. Such conflicts are the criteria for benefit sharing, for burden sharing, for power sharing or for space sharing.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Volume of resources.* Before looking for preferential rules for the operation of limited resources for climate justice, the first effort must be to increase the overall amount of resources available. Resources available to solve a problem reflect the priority given to the problem and the ethical values behind this prioritization. Since climate change affects the whole humankind including future generations and non human beings, high priority has to be given to this challenge. The volume of resources is composed of financial resources from governments, private donations, profitable business activities, but also non financial resources such as human, organizational, intellectual and religious resources. In order to substantially increase financial resources, a global climate fund as proposed by the Swiss Government and others, is one important instrument. The taxation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduces the emission and generates funds for mitigation and adaptation.
2. *Prevention* aims at avoiding climate victims by early actions. Prevention respects the goal to minimize the number of victims and supports inter-generational justice, i.e. to avoid future victims. It has – like mitigation – ethically speaking a higher priority than adaptation because it avoids instead of curing victims or minimizing its number. The measures are more efficient because the costs are lower than for adaptation.

<sup>5</sup> See Stueckelberger, Christoph (1997), *Umwelt und Entwicklung. Eine sozioethische Orientierung*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 30-33 (case study on the UNCED climate convention). Chinese Edition, Beijing, October 2008.

3. *Mitigation* aims at reducing already existing negative effects and at slowing down the development of such effects and the number of victims of climate change. There is no doubt that mitigation becomes more and more important since climate change already happens.
4. *Adaptation* aims at accepting new climate conditions and adapt the own living place (including eventual need to emigrate or accept immigration), lifestyle, production, technologies, spiritual roots, nonviolent ways of conflict management etc.). Justice related to capability, performance and needs will be re-interpreted: Capability will more and more have to include the capability to adapt to the new challenges. The capability to adapt will be rated as a better performance. The needs will include as now basic human needs, but will in addition include the need to adaptability. *Instruments* for prevention, mitigation and adaption are often *interlinked*. To plant trees or to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by reducing fossil energy consumption, are preventive measures and help at the same time for mitigation and adaption. The danger is, that the international community invests more and more in curative measures such as emergency aid and has less and less resources for preventive measures such as long-term development cooperation and technological innovation in the service of climate prevention.
5. *The Polluters-Pay-Principle* means that the polluter has to pay the costs of the damage caused by his behavior/action. The principle is broadly accepted in environmental ethics and it is put into practice in many countries in specific areas such as waste management, but in climate responsibilities it is not yet implemented, for the obvious reason that the polluters who emit CO<sub>2</sub> and other climate relevant emissions, fear heavy financial burdens. The (climate related) taxes on fossil energy have to be multiplied if the principle is taken seriously.
6. *The Capability-to-Contribute-Principle* means that responsibility is not only related to the causer of pollution but also to the economic and structural capability to contribute to a solution. This capability includes not only financial payments, but also the contribution by scientific research, structural and political support, spiritual orientation and encouragement etc. Responsibility is not only related to direct causes of once action, but also once capability to solve a problem. A medical doctor in an airplane is obliged and responsible to help a patient independent of his/her relationship to him/her.

The *Responsibility and Capability Index RCI*<sup>6</sup> is a very helpful measuring

6 It is developed as part of the Greenhouse Development Rights GDR, mainly developed in Great Britain by Development Agencies such as Christian Aid, supported by others like Bread for all/Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund in Switzerland. See [www.ecoequity.org/GDRs](http://www.ecoequity.org/GDRs).



instrument, which corresponds to the Polluters-Pay-Principle as well as the Capability-to-Contribute-Principle. The RCI combines the cumulated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of a country and its purchasing power parity and the distribution of wealth. The industrialized countries therefore have the biggest share to pay, but developing and transition countries with purchasing power and wealthy elite are called to contribute accordingly. This country index shows a way of climate burden sharing. It is an ethically serious effort to make climate justice measurable and politically operational.

7. *The combination of positive and negative sanctions.* Justice in general as well as climate justice can be strengthened by positive sanctions (such as incentives, repayments, awards, facilitated access to services etc.) and negative sanctions (taxes and other burdens, punitive measures, court). Positive sanctions are ethically preferable, because they encourage the right behavior. But negative sanctions to establish punitive justice are often also necessary, especially to change the behavior of “black sheep” who do not react on positive sanctions. Both mechanisms presuppose that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are seen as a severe, unethical misbehavior.
8. *Efficiency and Transparency* are key factors of good stewardship using limited resources. The efficient use of resources (energy, capital, organizational structures, intellectual creativity etc.) allows reducing costs, helping more people and saving more lives. It is an expression of responsibility and sustainability for future generations. Transparency supports the efficient use of limited resources by reducing corruption, abuse and wrong investments. Transparency and efficiency are important aspects of procedural justice.
9. *Market related instruments.* The international free market mechanism contributes substantially to general economic growth and to global interaction and peace. Programs like “Financing for Climate - Innovative Solutions and New Markets”<sup>7</sup> tries to win the private sector to take climate change as business opportunity. Without private investments, climate-related funding will never be enough. But market related instruments alone could not and cannot solve three major problems and made them even more severe: poverty eradication, fair distribution and climate stabilization. Climate change today can be seen as the biggest market failure in human history.<sup>8</sup> Can the market then be a chance to solve it? From an ethical point of view, the answer can be found in the criteria for climate justice: if and where ever

<sup>7</sup> Title of a Conference of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Government, the International Finance Corporation IFC and Swiss Re, 11-12 September 2008 in Zurich.

<sup>8</sup> This is the view of the Stern Report: *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, HM Treasury, UK 2006. [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent\\_reviews](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews).

the market mechanism strengthens the different above mentioned forms of climate justice, it has to be supported. If and where ever it weakens or violates the different forms of climate justice, the free market has to be replaced/accompanied by binding corrective instruments such as social and environmental laws regulating the markets. Many encouraging examples show that companies gain profit and reputation from activities to reduce climate relevant emissions<sup>9</sup>. In this ethical perspective, the trading of CO<sub>2</sub> certificates is one specific form of positive and negative sanctions, based on the market mechanism. As long as it really contributes to worldwide CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and climate justice, it is ethically positive. But if it is abused to circumvent legal restrictions in a country, to avoid reorientation of activities towards climate justice and only to get moral “purification” and indulgence, it has ethically to be refused.

10. *Care for the weakest*. “Solidarity with the victims of climate change” was the programmatic title of an important statement of the World Council of Churches in 2002.<sup>10</sup> To care for the most vulnerable groups of people in cases of emergency corresponds to the human ethos in many cultures and especially in the Judeo-Christian value system. “The option for the poor” as formulated in the liberation theology is an expression of it. To care for the victims and the weakest among them offers a guideline for decision making also related to climate justice. But in concrete, it opens at the same time a lot of questions: Who are the victims? Who are the weakest among them? The children, women on Fidji Island who lose their agricultural land or the elderly people in a suburb of Paris dying from heat? And does justice as equal treatment not require that all people in danger get the same treatment? And since there are much more people who need support for mitigation and adaptation than actual resources are available, what are the additional selection criteria? Political preferences and calculations which is in fact often the case? Economic conditionality? Or where there is the greatest chance that empowerment of weak groups of people lead to efficient solutions and use of scarce means?

The first step is to honestly recognize that support is often not given to the weakest even if one accepts it as ethical criteria. A second step is to look for preferential rules in case that some of the above mentioned aspects of justice compete with each other. In may sound provocative: To give priority to the weakest may meet the needs-related justice, but is not in each case the most ethical decision because it does not recognize other aspects of jus-

9 Swiss Re (2008a): *Pioneering Climate Solutions*, Zurich. Swiss Re (2008b), Corporate Responsibility Report. Committed to sustainable value creation, Zurich.

10 *Solidarity with the Victims of Climate Change, Reflections on the World Council of Churches' Response to Climate Change*, January and November 2002, Geneva, 25f.

tice. In some cases it may save more lives if priority is given to people with an efficient, well performing way to use the limited resources and therefore can then support others to survive. Therefore, *an ethical preferential rule* may say: In general, priority is given to the weakest. In case where somebody or a group of people who do not belong to the weakest, but to those who better perform and are better capable using limited resources to save more people, priority may be given to them. The justification of this preferential rule is the number of lives to be finally saved.

11. *Institutionalized solidarity*: Solidarity needs voluntary care and charity activities. Solidarity has at the same time to be implemented by binding institutionalized instruments. New forms of climate related insurances are forms of institutionalized solidarity. Drought or flood insurances for small farmers in poor countries similar to and combined with microcredit are an example for it.<sup>11</sup>
12. *Urgent legislation*: The speed of climate change shows that binding measures for prevention, mitigation and adaptation have to be taken much faster than in the last twenty years. The reasons for the too slow process in the past have been the lack of political will, but also slow democratic decision making processes. In Switzerland, the parliament seeks since more than ten years a compromise for a CO<sub>2</sub>-legislation. On-Time-Justice is crucial in order to reduce the number of victims. Urgency legislation by governments on CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction measures may be necessary and ethically justified even if it can limit the participatory justice. In emergency situations, the rights to food, water and survival have priority over the right to participation in decision making (and participating in avoiding timely decisions).

## Global and Contextual Tax Justice

Tax income is crucial for every state in order to fulfill its own tasks, as well as the tasks for climate prevention, mitigation and adaptation. Increase in tax income is one of the core goals of the international community<sup>12</sup> for finding new sources to finance development, in addition to development related trade and development aid. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches at its 24<sup>th</sup> General Council in Accra 2004 in its Report of the Public Issues Committee adopt-

11 See the recommendations of the Round Table on „Are the Right Risks Insured?“ at the Global Humanitarian Forum Geneva, 24 June 2008, [www.ghf-ge.org](http://www.ghf-ge.org).

12 As defined at the UN Conference on Financing Development in Monterrey/Mexico in March 2002. See also Boadway, Robin, National Taxation, Fiscal Federalism and Global Taxation, in Atkinson, A.B. (ed.), *New Sources of Development Finance*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, 210-237.

ed the following recommendation to its member churches: “As our commitment on confessing our faith in the face of economic injustice and ecological destruction, ... WARC recommends ...: 2.2 Support governments to achieve fair and sufficient taxes in order to guarantee basic needs and a life of dignity for the population, to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals and to fulfil the obligation of providing social welfare. ... 2.6 Enforce present and create new laws against all forms of criminal economic activity such as ... tax evasion, money laundering and illegal employment, which deny the rights of the poor.”<sup>13</sup>

Tax justice is the key value of tax ethics. As outlined below, the following principles can be seen as global principles of tax justice while respecting that their implementation still allows contextual and diversified tax systems and even to some extent a tax competition between states or regions. Tax ethics is and has to be implemented in various tax principles as they are known, or should be further developed in tax laws:

1. The *Principle of Generalness*: every taxable citizen is obliged to pay taxes as an expression of equal treatment and *justice as equality*.
2. The *Principle of Capability*: Tax payers should be charged on the basis of their economic capability and performance. This is an expression of *capability-related justice* and performance-related justice. Wealthy persons should contribute more to common public tasks than poor persons, not only in absolute, but also in relative terms.
3. The *Principle of Regularity*: the state cannot take taxes in an arbitrary way, but has to tax based on predictability which is part of *procedural justice*.
4. The *Principle of Redistribution*: Progression in taxing income or revenue leads to a relative higher taxation of wealthy than of poor people. This is ethically justified because the needy, such as people without food or education, need support. Needs-related justice means distributive justice, also called social justice, which respects differences in performance while balancing the needs of those who cannot perform in the same way such as elderly, poor, handicapped and sick.
5. The *Principle of Coherence*: The different forms of taxes and policies have to be coherent and non-contradictory. It would be incoherent to reduce, e.g. income taxes for poor people, and at the same time charge them with additional consumer taxes. Coherence is an ethical requirement for credibility and trust as well as for a holistic implementation of a set of values. Nevertheless, full coherence is never possible because politics is always a battle field of balancing conflicts of interests, compromises and contradictions.

13 Accra 2004. Proceedings of the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva 2005, 199-201.

6. The *Principle of Transparency*: The tax rules including tax exemption must be transparent and implemented in a transparent way to everybody. Secret agreements, e.g. with wealthy individuals or companies, violate this principle. Transparency is part of fair procedures and therefore of procedural justice.
7. The *Principle of Practicability*: A tax must be structured in a way that the tax payers and the state administration can handle its implementation in an efficient and transparent way without too many costly administrative burdens. Practicability is a requirement for functional justice as the way to use limited financial and organizational resources in the most efficient way.
8. The *Principle of Democracy*: Participation means that tax payers indirectly (as electorate electing the parliament as in most countries), or directly (directly voting on the tax system as in Switzerland) participate in fixing the level and kind of taxes to be paid. Without it, the tax payers identify themselves much less with the tax and tend more to tax evasion. This is an expression of participatory justice.
9. The *Principle of Intergenerational Justice*: The level of taxes should in principle be sufficient in order to cover the expenses of the state. Huge debt burdens, as they are accumulated in many countries, violate the intergenerational justice because future generations have to pay the bill for overconsumption and expenses of present generations. Intergenerational justice leads to greater sustainability.
10. The *Principle of Fair Tax Competition and Harmonization*: Tax competition within and between countries is part of market competition. Free markets need some tax competition for an efficient allocation of resources. However, tax competition often becomes very destructive because it lowers tax income to an extent that public entities cannot finance their duties. Tax competition is unfair if it is not based on performance in terms of better conditions and delivery of services, but on protectionism or in-transparent laws such as tax havens, variations of offshore banking or banking secrecyes. Unfair tax competition encourages tax evasion and tax fraud. Tax harmonization and transparency on tax income is therefore needed to a certain extent. The balance of tax competition and tax harmonization is a requirement for tax justice.
11. The *Principle of Fair Punishment*: As in every sector of life, violations of ethical principles, laws and rules happen. Therefore, criminal law is an integral part of the instruments needed to increase justice, as in the case of *punitive justice*. In many societies, tax evasion is almost seen as a legal game and as a gentlemen's behaviour. But tax evasion deprives public institutions of their means. Protest against unfair tax systems needs - at least in democratic societies – active resistance within democratic means. Tax

evasion as a form of passive resistance is, in this context, unethical. Punitive tax justice needs equal treatment of tax payers, which in turn needs court systems which are not corrupt. Corruption is cancer which undermines punitive tax justice.

12. The *Principle of Restoration*: Tax amnesty is a means for states to recover part of the tax evasion. It contradicts the principle of fair punishment but is often legitimized by the governments' need for additional income and can be seen as an attempt for (at least partial) *restorative justice*. The goal then justifies the means. In the conflict of interests between punitive tax justice and distributive tax justice, tax amnesty is not in any case to be ethically condemned, but to a greater extent depends on the conditions, forms and frequency of tax amnesty.
13. The *Principle of Transformation*: The perception of tax justice evolves as all value systems do. It can then happen that an activity such as tax evasion or black money transfer is more or less accepted and then, by international developments such as in the OECD countries, is seen as a heavily illegal crime. Thus, a grey zone of insecurity about what is just or unjust is opened. In such situations, for reasons of procedural justice, it is often necessary to define and allow a transition period for *transitional justice* which can lead to *transformative justice* with a new level of international tax justice.

## Tax Justice also with Developing and Emerging Countries

The above principles first of all have to be applied *within* sovereign states which have the power and authority for tax collection. But they also have to be applied *between* sovereign states. In a globalized world, the states are not isolated but interdependent in manifold ways. Therefore, tax justice is an intergovernmental, regional and global topic. It is a hot issue because tax evasion is still growing within the liberalized financial markets. The efforts to decrease tax evasion are, since the 2007/2008 global financial crisis, strongly increased because states urgently need more tax income to cover their financial engagement to overcome the crisis.

Every state has the right to tax its taxable population in order to provide services to this population and the global community. This is the first principle of tax justice. It includes the ethical obligation of states to support each other in tax collection by not protecting tax evasion.<sup>14</sup> The principle is based on the universally accepted ethical Golden Rule of reciprocity, whereby we should do and give

14 The following is based on the article Stückelberger, Christoph, Weissgeld-Strategie kann unseren Finanzplatz stärken. Die Schweiz sollte über Europa hinausblicken, Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag, 21 February 2010, Hintergrund.

to others what we ourselves expect from them. This applies to individuals as well as to states and inter-state relations or to companies.

This principle of tax justice applies not only with respect to countries such as the USA or Germany that can exert pressure on Switzerland, but globally, including also developing, transition and emerging countries. In its favour are not only ethical considerations but also political and economic benefits for countries like Switzerland which rather fear economic losses with a white money strategy.

*Ethical necessity: poverty reduction.* Economically weak states rely on tax revenues even more than economically powerful countries. International efforts to find new ways to finance development have stressed this repeatedly. In addition to increased trade and aid, developing countries need just and fair taxation if they are to reduce poverty and reach the Millennium Development Goals. The annual revenue loss to developing countries because of tax flight and tax evasion is estimated to amount to 150-250 billion Swiss francs a year, which significantly exceeds the total official development assistance ODA of all the industrialized countries (100 billion per year)! Special cases such as dictatorships aside, we may recognize many developing countries governed by the rule of law where the principle of tax justice is applicable. These also need their tax systems strengthened. Switzerland should conclude more double-taxation agreements with developing countries.

*Political advantage: Cooperation with the EU.* In the actual situation, Switzerland in Europe seems to have its back to the wall. But precisely a pro-active initiative directed beyond Europe could offer Switzerland the possibility of new coalitions. The European Commission intends to start a dialogue with developing countries to strengthen their tax systems and combat tax evasion. The “International Tax Compact” (ITC) – a new initiative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – is beginning to coordinate partners in development from industrialized and developing countries. They also take up the concerns of the International “Tax Justice Network” (TJN) of the private development agencies. The Swiss Foreign Ministry, through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA), should play a part in such initiatives. In this way, Switzerland will be not an opponent but a team player with the EU!

*Economic advantage:* Any shortfall in Switzerland caused by less untaxed wealth from developing countries would be offset in the medium term by credible and sustainable trade relations with important Asian countries, for example, and by removing the threat to the reputation of Swiss companies and corporations. The firm position of Switzerland in the fight against money-laundering has earned her respect and economic benefits. The same can happen with a new white money strategy in the relationship with all countries.

*Global white money strategy:* This will still allow for tax competition based on locational advantages between and within states, while at the same time respecting

the legitimate claims for tax revenues of other states. It creates a level playing field, based on “competition on the merits”, not based on protecting tax evasion. It includes improving the rules of transfer pricing (in which country internationally active companies pay taxes for which part of their profit) towards tax equity. Switzerland’s financial centre may emerge stronger from a global white money policy, thanks to its locational advantages of political stability, its virtues of high professionalism and efficiency, and an innovative service that combines asset management with the philanthropic concerns of investors, oriented to the common good.

*Promotion of voluntary charitable giving:* Some tax evaders are generous philanthropists. They lack confidence in the spending policies of the country in which they are liable for tax. But many are quite willing to contribute to the common good, for example through foundations abroad. It is certainly not a question of justifying tax evasion ethically, but of giving a positive signal by admitting generously tax deductions for charitable donations and the creation of foundations. Such tax deductibility for philanthropic activities should be more recognized across borders. This will promote significant voluntary contributions for the common good

**Christoph Stückelberger** (1951) is Director and Founder of the international ethics network *Globethics.net* ([www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net)) based in Geneva/Switzerland. He is Professor of Ethics with a focus on Economic Ethics and Development Ethics at the University of Basel and a regular guest lecturer in Asia and Africa. He was for many years the General Secretary of the Swiss development organization *Bread for All* and author of many books on ethics, published and translated in various languages.





# LITURGY

## 9

### The Liturgy of Holy Communion and Issues of Justice

Lindsay Schluter, Larkhall, Scotland

*'The God of Scripture is not a God of disorder, but surely God's ways are not our ways, nor are God's thoughts our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). Our Sunday services can become efforts to orchestrate intimacy without contact, to seek encounter without risk. The danger of losing control in our worship is an apparent danger to us but irrelevant to God.'*<sup>1</sup>

*'Prayer is to enter into the lion's den. It brings us before the Holy One where it is uncertain whether we will come back alive or sane, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'*<sup>2</sup>

At the heart of prayer, at the heart of worship everything that matters in our lives is at stake. Every aspect of self-centred living becomes endangered as we come to worship the God who gives of Self into that very self-centredness of ours, and we are asked to share in God's self-giving to others. Worship, when understood in this way is indeed a dangerous act and one where we may want to reconsider whether we truly want to be part of it. We may never be the same at the end of an act of worship, we may have encountered the danger of meeting God face to face and may as a result discover that we are the ones on whom a suffering world waits as signs of God<sup>3</sup>.

To engage in worship is a dangerous thing, it is a profoundly counter-cultural act and only too often it exposes our spiritual complacency towards a world of suffering and injustice.

And so, while we prepare the prayers, purchase the wine, set the central heating or draw up the rota for those who are to count the offering, while we do all this and more in preparation for worship we have to hold to the wider vision and its dangerous implications in what it means to be a worshipping people of God.

1 Labberton, 47.

2 Attributed to an American Preacher. If the correct source could be supplied by any reader the author would be most grateful.

3 Romans 8:19.

Within all these efforts in preparing worship there also lies another danger: God's Holy Spirit will move where she will, but in contrast our desire is only too often for control and thereby we are capable of stifling and hindering God's Spirit. Maybe even that is one of the conscious or unconscious desires we have as leaders of worship.

And yet another danger lies hidden only too often from our eyes when we engage in preparing, leading and participating in worship.

From the opening chapters of the bible onwards the human willingness to believe lies about God and then even attempt to pass off those lies to God is apparent. Again and again the people of Israel try to tell God that they are on his side and are doing what God has commanded. And again and again the prophets make it clear: it is a lie. The presumption that we can hide behind our own assumptions starts in the garden of Eden and has lost none of its attractions in the year 2010. Then to add fuel to the fire by blaming others – 'The woman whom you gave to be with me....' – will not work. We may succeed in deceiving ourselves, we will not do so with God.

We are called to worship in Spirit and in truth, yet as Labberton puts it: only one community exist where there is no lying: the triune communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord', and do not do what I tell you?"<sup>5</sup> The discrepancy between our acts of worship and our acts of Christian living can be stark. 'We confess "Jesus is Lord" ...but only submit to the part of Christ's authority that fits our grand personal designs, doesn't cause pain,.....doesn't draw us across ethnic or racial division, doesn't add the pressure of too much guilt, doesn't mean forgiving as we have been forgiven, doesn't ask for more than a check (sic) to show compassion. We "sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" ... expressing our desire to know Jesus, but the Jesus we want to know is the sanitized (sic) Jesus that looks a lot like us when we think we are at our best. Despite God's Word to the contrary, we think we can say we love God and yet hate our neighbour, neglect the widow, forget the orphan, fail to visit the prisoner, ignore the oppressed.'<sup>6</sup>

This much for setting some of the overall context of this paper whose main intention is to address matters of the liturgy of Holy Communion in relation to the issue of Justice.

I had been asked by my own denomination, the Church of Scotland, to attend in March 2009 a preparatory conference in Zurich for the Uniting Council in Grand Rapids in 2010. The main qualification I could identify for having been

<sup>4</sup> Labberton, 70.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 6:46.

<sup>6</sup> Labberton, 71.

chosen was that one of the conference languages was German, a language with which I am familiar. The subject matter of the conference - the historical developments within both the REC and WARC, especially in relation to the Accra declaration - had up till that point been distant information which occasionally had landed on the desk in my study together with other mailing regarding the wide variety of subject matters with which a parish minister in the Church of Scotland has to contend with when not dealing with flaring tempers on the Congregational Board over malfunctioning central heating systems or savouring the peculiar delights of attending the town council's meetings to unravel the mysteries of parking, legal and illegal, outside the church's premises.

Having arrived at the conference as a bit of an innocent abroad regarding not only the intricacies of the Swiss public transport system which was to convey me to the conference centre, but also on the subject matter itself, despite having immersed myself in any papers I could lay my hands on, I then discovered myself to be in the peculiar situation of being asked within half an hour of arrival whether I would consider conducting a communion service. Tomorrow.

This particular communion service is the reason of my having been included in the list of contributors to this publication. An analysis of this particular liturgy cannot be offered in retrospect as the notes of the liturgy are no longer extant. While some of the overall considerations which determined the crafting of this particular liturgy can still be recalled, this article shall reflect on wider issues of the liturgy of Holy Communion in general rather than the particular liturgy on which the editor's request had been based.

I write as a parish minister and as a theologically reflective practitioner. I also write from a particular cultural context and a particular theological background which may require of some readers an act of translation, modification or even contradiction for their particular cultural, ecclesiastical and theological contexts. This much as background information which may or may not prove useful: the author is an ordained minister of the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland serving in one of that country's socially and economically more deprived areas. The author also, if asked to define herself theologically would claim to be Calvinist in her general disposition, though hopefully not uncritically so, having enjoyed a Lutheran childhood and also an immersion into Roman-Catholicism during her student years.

Covenant. Justice. Communion. Liturgy. Each of these subject matters deserves attention in its own right, yet the request had been made, based on the experience of that one Communion service led by the author together with an Irish colleague at the above mentioned conference, that she reflect on matters of liturgy and communion, liturgy and justice, Holy Communion and justice.

Having consulted the local university library, and - resulting from the meagre success I had in the world of academia on these matters - then consulting with colleagues in the ministry, it transpires that the latter two pairs in particular are not, or are not considered to be, natural theological companions.

Instead of attempting to remedy that gap with an academic theological paper, I propose instead to offer reflections which weave from that particular Communion service at the conference to general observations gleaned from many years in parish ministry to biblical theological reflections and also pastoral considerations on the above mentioned subject matters.

The liturgy which had been prepared for the above mentioned conference had laboured under the disadvantage of having been requested at short notice and with only a bible as resource material to hand. With the assistance of an Irish colleague a liturgy was crafted which drew on elements recalled from the Church of Scotland's Book of Common order and which also made use of material which has entered the life of the Church of Scotland through the Iona Community. In its intention it was biblically grounded throughout and it had to take particular care of being accessible to those for whom English was neither a first, nor even a second, but third or even fourth language.

At the time of its preparation issues of liturgical practice were reflected on – what form was the sharing of the bread and wine going to take? Matters of the theology of Holy Communion were touched on - could it be assumed that all present were grounded in a Calvinist theology of the real presence of Christ? At this stage in the conference we hardly had got to know each others names, never mind our respective theological backgrounds. Were there any Zwinglians among us? Any closet Lutherans?

And then there was the subject matter of justice: consciously it was not dealt with, unconsciously though it was a constant companion in the preparation of the liturgy for matters of justice and potential injustice required to be addressed.

The conference had been called on the subject matter of 'Communion and Justice' and delegates had travelled from all over Europe to attend. But as one of the first observations on the conference programme it was noted by one delegate that no space had been allowed for the celebration of a service of Holy Communion. And so at very short notice room was created for such a service. That such a service had not been scheduled might have indeed been an innocent oversight. But in itself it presented an injustice, maybe even a very Reformed injustice.

We may claim as the *notae ecclesiae* the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. But in Reformed practice there is a history of a much

stronger weighting towards the preaching of the Word than the celebration sacrament of Holy Communion. When having to choose between the two, our natural inclination leans not towards the sacrament. Dare one suggest that built into our overall framework of Reformed thinking and spirituality is an inclination to do the place of the sacrament of Holy Communion injustice by treating it as a secondary rather than a co-equal *nota ecclesiae*?

Injustice also reared its head in other forms, if ever so fleetingly. The only ordained woman present at the conference was sought out to prepare and lead this service - the reasoning being apparently that it would strengthen the role of ordained women throughout the Reformed family. At least in passing the question cannot be avoided as to why it is that a Reformed ordained woman is still such a rarity that she is to be chosen not on the basis of her own merit, but as a symbolic representative of her sex.

Injustice there was not only because of the gender imbalance but also to the role of the celebrant. Not having a prescribed liturgy, the Reformed tradition places high expectations upon its celebrants in terms of preparation for the liturgy and rightly so. The Reformed congregation expects its celebrants to do justice to the liturgy of Holy Communion, for in doing justice to the liturgy hopefully justice also will be done to those who enter it in worship and also to the One to whom the worship is addressed. A liturgy prepared at short notice with no resources at hand, can fulfil those expectations yet possibly labours under greater pressures. A celebrant may on occasion have to labour under such pressures because circumstances conspire against the celebrant, the congregation, the church, yet justice to the celebrant, justice to the liturgy, justice to the assembled congregation, justice to God, will attempt ordinarily to ensure that adequate space is given to the process of preparation.

Already in the preparation itself issues of justice will require to be addressed. A congregation with a high number of recovering alcoholics will reflect on how to address their needs when it comes to sharing not only the bread, but the wine. The question will have to be addressed what kind of bread to use and where it is to be sourced. Is it to be the unhealthy cheap loaf whose mass production has exploited workers in appalling work conditions but which is the bread of the poor and therefore might be an expression of that solidarity with the poor, though it participates in the exploitation of that very same group? Or is it to be home baked, gluten-free and wholemeal – but an utterly alien food item to the majority of the congregation? And what contribution to the injustices represented in the issues and effects of climate change are we making when having to import wine over great distances simply because we may not be living in a wine growing country?

In the liturgy of Holy Communion the drama of salvation is re-called and played out with the assembled congregation as active participants in that drama, not as passive recipients of an act done to them. If the theological issue of Christ's real presence in the sacrament is to hold true then it is real for those assembled in that act. Each individual gesture, each individual word, reading, prayer and hymn is then part of that playing out of the drama of salvation.

In that drama of salvation we gather as did the first disciples in the company of those who are not just. The only just person present in this act is Christ. Fraudsters, adulterers, child abusers, liars, betrayers, social climbers, greedy bankers, heartless elders and careless ministers - sinners great and small are gathered around that table knowing themselves not to be just but trusting themselves to be justified in Christ.

This gathering of the unjust around the table is sign and symbol for a new reality in Christ which will find its fulfilment and completion one day which is not yet.

But the sign and symbol and the participation in the drama of salvation requires that those who have assembled round the table then seek to express that future reality already today and begin to enact the ethical consequences for living of that drama of salvation not only within the context of the liturgy, but also out-with it. It means that those who know themselves to be unjust but justified in Christ seek to live out the justice of God which they themselves have experienced; and that they do so not only in privatised, individualised ways but as the community of the church and also in relation to the community of the world.

In the church in Corinth it was those who ate and drank without sharing with the poorer members of the very same church who were not expressing that future reality in the here and now.<sup>7</sup> Filling their stomachs without the poorer members of the church being offered the same opportunity, considering apparently the bread and wine of the liturgy a symbol sufficient unto itself without ethical consequences for just living the congregation in Corinth needed to be reminded by Paul of the inclusiveness and the ethical consequences the sacrament of Holy Communion carries within itself.

7 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The rich, who had ample time together before their poorer fellow Christians arrived from serving their masters, went ahead eating what is understood to be an agape feast. It appears that this agape meal, celebrated before the sacrament "proper", was not considered important. It seems that, the sacrament "proper" was understood to be the act in which Christ's sacrificial death was remembered and that the agape meal simply was perceived to be a convivial meal. Paul's criticism of the rich was that their behaviour outside the sacrament proper scandalized the full meaning of it. Using metaphorical language Paul's understanding of the horizontal relationship between the poor and the rich mattered as much as the vertical relationship between Christ and the Corinthian church members.

It may be argued that few congregations today would indulge in the self-same matter and yet in the church world-wide there continue to be those who fill their stomachs and those who are unable to; there continue to be those who do not consider this to be a matter of injustice which requires to be addressed directly out of the liturgy of Holy Communion and who do not perceive that the sharing of the symbols and the active presence of Christ in that self-same sharing require that the drama of salvation be played out outside the confines of the liturgy also - that the actors of that drama 'take the play into the world.'

Other issues of injustice within the context of Holy Communion may be easier to identify, they may appear to be significantly smaller in relevance but the failure to address them may have wide ranging repercussions regarding the integrity of the life and faith of the worshipping community.

What does it say about the just living of those who are justified through Christ when one person almost always is the first to be served, especially when that person is likely to be the senior elder or influential treasurer rather than the man whose struggle to overcome drug dependency has not yet been successful?<sup>8</sup> Liturgical practice will seek to address such a situation by ensuring that an intentional rotation as to who will be served first might be introduced; equally the danger of a singling out of individuals could be addressed by congregations through adopting a practice of literally eating and drinking together by waiting until every single person has been served.

Also, what does it say of the just living of those justified through Christ when a certain age has to be attained before inclusion of all baptised people can be considered? What does it say when, as can occur in the Scottish context the baptised children and young people of the worshipping community are removed from the premises before the sacrament of Holy Communion is shared?

What does it say about the just living of those justified through Christ when gender determines who may serve bread and wine or colour determines who may read the words of institution. What does it say about the just living of those justified through Christ when the language of the liturgy is incomprehensible, excluding, negligent or all of these at the same time? What does it say about the just living of those justified through Christ when we share the peace in the sanctuary but cannot begin to be civil to each other outside it?

What does it say when we receive the riches of heaven free of charge and then make others pay for the goods we purchase for our daily food?

8 Different ways of serving and sharing will take place in different congregations; the main argument here is that attention requires to be paid in each circumstance for potential ways in which unhelpful messages regarding justice and/or injustice in the act of serving and sharing may manifest themselves in the particular liturgical action.



We therefore have to be acutely aware that all our liturgical interaction carries meaning which will be measured against our interaction as believers outside the liturgy also.

The smallest of gestures will tell not only others, but ourselves about the measure of integrity we seek to live.

What does it say when the surplus bread of the communion celebration is simply consigned to the bin? What does it say when the celebrant does not raise the chalice high enough for all to see? Are these liturgical minutiae? Insignificant? Or filled with meaning of the intended or unintended kind?

The liturgy of Communion tells us who we are, whose we are and how we are to live. The liturgy of Communion and the issue of justice are linked inextricably for the very simple reason that we confess Jesus as Lord. But it is God's justice that we are confronted with and it has initially more to say about us, than we have to say about others.

At the heart of God's justice lies the recognition and confession of our injustice: our injustice, not that of others. 'The woman you gave me....' – pointing the finger at others will not do.

It is therefore significant to note that in relation to Holy Communion and the issue of justice, it is first and foremost God's justice we are concerned with and then our injustice. Our subsequent concern for justice is an outflowing of that primary recognition that justice is not ours, but it is God's and is given to us as a gift and a gracious mercy which is not to be appropriated for our private salvation but to be shared for that of the whole of creation.

At the centre of the liturgy we therefore confess Jesus as Lord and God as the author of justice, divine justice. And we confess ourselves as not just, but trusting ourselves to be justified through Christ.

In the liturgical history of the church this has been supremely expressed in the *agnus dei* in preparation for the receiving and sharing of Holy Communion.

The interaction of the short phrases between celebrant and congregation expresses that interrelationship between God's merciful justice and our injustice and it is at this point that consideration shall be given to a liturgical development which has taken place in the Reformed tradition within Scotland, but may have found similar expressions in other branches of the Reformed family of churches. Originally intended as a liturgical interaction between the celebrant and the congregation, such responses as indicated in the *agnus dei* were by gradual process appropriated for the use of the celebrant alone – possibly out of a misguided fear of being perceived to be too Roman-catholic or Episcopalian – and thereby rendering the role of the congregation as that of passive recipient rather than active participant in the liturgy and drama of salvation of not only Holy Communion,

but here particularly so.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore the language in which some of these phrases are rendered proves in some contexts to be inaccessible or incomprehensible to individual members of congregations. Phrases, even if profoundly biblically based – such as ‘lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world’ – prove to be in some instances the modern equivalent to the medieval Latin of the liturgy which the original reformers had critiqued. Injustice was and continues to be committed in the removal of congregational participation and the avoidance of congregational comprehension.

A further, possibly peculiarly Scottish, injustice in relation to the liturgy of Communion is the distinction between so-called formal and informal communion services. The former referring to the often still quarterly or bi-annual Communion services or even Communion seasons, the latter to short communion services celebrated after the main act of morning worship, often attended by only a small group of members who will stay behind for this celebration. The separation of Holy Communion on these latter occasions into an ‘additional extra’ again does not recognise the sacrament of Holy Communion as co-equal to the preaching of the Word and thereby suggests an imbalance in the importance given to each with an unjust weighting against the celebration of Holy Communion. It is a practice which arose out of the need to introduce a more frequent celebration of this sacrament into the life of the church, but has in too many situations not led to a full integration into the ongoing worshipping life of the whole congregation but has instead led to a rather unhealthy practice of separation of the sacrament from the main act of worship.

Similarly the practice in many congregations to sing only particular ‘Communion hymns’ and read particular ‘Communion readings’ only, leading to the preaching on particular ‘Communion themes’ only, leads in the Scottish context in many situations to a rather skewed understanding of worship among those who attend worship on Communion Sundays only.<sup>10</sup>

It may be that other branches of the Reformed family of churches do not have to labour under such historical developments which have contributed to a lack of understanding among members and clergy alike of the interconnectedness of all

9 An insight into the long process of re-introducing such liturgical interaction can be observed in the transition from the 1979 edition of the Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland to its 1994 successor. While the 1979 edition only hints at the possibility of such liturgical interaction between celebrant and congregation, the 1994 edition makes this explicit. As the Book of Common Order is not prescriptive and previous editions still are in use, it may take a few more generations before liturgical interaction of this kind becomes common practice in this branch of the Reformed church.

10 This may be a particular issue in the Scottish context, where it is especially the attendance on Communion Sunday which ensures retention of individual’s names on the membership roll of the congregation.

aspects of the liturgy of which Holy Communion is one integral component which interacts and informs the ongoing worship of the Church and its members. Perpetuating rather than seeking to address these issues, means that injustice is done not only to the liturgy and the place of Holy Communion itself, but also to the worshipping congregation who is deprived of the riches and benefits of that sacrament. This may be particularly of relevance for those for whom the often very cerebral approach in the Reformed tradition is not easy to access or follow and who find it much easier to respond and engage with symbol and symbolic action. This may apply especially, but not exclusively so, to young children or adults with learning difficulties, but may also offer profound and life transforming opportunities and challenges for all members who find themselves faced with having to present the cup to the person they most despise or having to offer the peace to a spouse with whom they are experiencing major conflict. To deprive a congregation of such regular opportunities may be one of the injustices particular to the Scottish Presbyterian tradition.

In perpetuating rather than seeking to address such and similar issues which may have grown up in other Reformed churches also, injustice is done to the liturgy and the place of Holy Communion itself and to the worshipping congregation who is deprived of the riches and benefits of that sacrament. But injustice is also done to God who through this sacrament offers the possibility that we to learn to practice justice with one another. For in Holy Communion one of the most simple and at the same time potentially most profound expressions of God's justice can be found in the simple fact that each and everyone receives the same: a piece of bread and a drink of wine. No more and no less. And with it each and everyone receives the same also: the sinner, the unjust, is assured of God's justice which finds its expression in the mercy of assigning justification to the unjust. No more and no less.

Whatever therefore our passion for justice may be, whatever success or failure we may experience in seeking justice, there is need to remember that whatever just pursuit we are engaged in, we are doing so as the unjust who have been justified through Christ.

Justice remains God's business and will come into its fullness through God and in the time God sets.

'I will drink with you next in the coming kingdom of God'<sup>11</sup> is the reminder at the heart of the liturgy of Holy Communion where we are invited to have a prophetic stake in God's justice and to participate in that which eventually is God's alone to bring about. That eschatological dimension does not absolve us from seeking to engage God's justice, fraught and difficult as that pursuit may

11 Luke 22:18

turn out to be. For if we already practice that eschatological reality in the way we celebrate and enact the liturgy of Holy Communion we cannot escape the demand towards the integrity of faith and life and seek to pursue that reality outside the liturgy in a world that waits for signs of God on earth and seeks them to be revealed in us, the children of God.<sup>12</sup>

*‘Prayer is to enter into the lion’s den. It brings us before the Holy One where it is uncertain whether we will come back alive or sane, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’<sup>13</sup>*

It is not only prayer that leads us into the lion’s den. All our worship does so, including the liturgy of Holy Communion and it is indeed uncertain whether we will come back alive or sane, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. This may be the reason why many refuse to engage in that fearful task of worship in all its facets, including Holy Communion. Or it may be why we do strive carefully to orchestrate worship in such a way that we have intimacy without contact where we seek personal satisfaction and the fulfilment of our expectation without the risk of being touched and transformed in the presence of God and find ourselves called upon in ways we would ordinarily avoid for fear of facing the truth about our very being. It may be why we seek an encounter with God in measured ways and on our terms because the danger of losing control is too great a danger for us to contemplate – who knows what realities about God, the world and ourselves may lie waiting to be discovered; realities that may require metanoia, a complete and radical re-orienting of our lives.

The Communion liturgy which was prepared and conducted for that conference in March 2009 was in many ways prepared for a context that differed from a parish setting. It laboured under the peculiarities and difficulties of its context as do in other ways the celebrations within any parish setting.

The conditions under which this particular liturgy had been prepared had been slightly more fraught. For those with a sensitivity to the English language and the traditions of the Scottish and Irish churches a slight Celtic Christian overtone might have been apparent, though certainly one song from Latin America had been also included. Attention to detail in language, freshness of expression and clarity of symbolic word and action were one of its hallmarks as were its grounding in biblical tradition though not in Biblicism.

The invitation made clear that all were welcome, our general condition as human beings before God was set out and God’s gracious and generous offer to us was made transparent also. The prayers and songs were crafted and chosen with

<sup>12</sup> Romans 8:19

<sup>13</sup> Attributed to an American Preacher. If the correct source could be supplied by any reader the author would be most grateful.

the particular needs of the multilingual company in mind, the Lord's Prayer was spoken in a multitude of languages and the sharing of bread and wine was accompanied by words in each participant's own tongue. The 'Holy Holy Holy' was sung by all rather than spoken by one. The words of institution were shared by a male and female ordained minister and the peace was shared among all.<sup>14</sup> But this alone does not give explanation as to why it touched the hearts and minds of those present. The beauty and poetry of words, the meticulous attention to preparation and the grounding in biblical principles alone are not sufficient for creating such a touching place.

Out of a situation of potential chaos, out of a requirement for order so that Reformed Christians from all over Europe conversing in more than one language would be able to participate, a liturgy for Holy Communion had been crafted with attention to detail, concern for inclusion, clarity of language and for the expression of biblical understanding of justice and justification of the unjust. *'The God of Scripture is not a God of disorder, but surely God's ways are not our ways, nor are God's thoughts our thoughts....'*<sup>15</sup>

Order had been created in that liturgy but into that order ultimately broke the One on whom all our worship depends. That is the One whose wild and exuberant Spirit is not in our control, whom too often we fear and seek to control against what we perceive to be too quickly as chaos and disorder. It had not been in the celebrant's power to control or channel that Spirit, not even through the most exquisitely crafted liturgy of Holy Communion. Quite the opposite could have taken place also: that the Spirit would not deign to transform, move or engage - just as the assembled congregation also could have refused to be open not only to the words of the liturgy but the prompting of the Spirit.

*'Our Sunday services can become efforts to orchestrate intimacy without contact, to seek encounter without risk. The danger of losing control in our worship is an apparent danger to us but irrelevant to God.'*<sup>16</sup>

It appears that on this particular occasion intimacy sought through the crafting of the liturgy did lead to open contact with God. And the encounter hoped and prayed for through the shaping of the liturgy had taken place.

14 While the original notes of this liturgy are no longer extant, similar invitations, prayers, hymns and liturgical actions can be consulted in the publications of the Iona Community as listed in the bibliography and also in the Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland.

15 Labberton, 47.

16 Ibidem, 47.

For the shaping of the liturgy the author can take credit. For the contact, the encounter, the intimate communion with God she cannot. The author of that is always and ever God's Holy Spirit alone who moves where and how she will.

## Bibliography:

Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh 1994

The Book of Common Order, Edinburgh 1979

Iona Abbey Worship Book, (editor: Iona Community), Glasgow 2001

A Wee Worship Book, (editor: Wildgoose Resource Group), Glasgow 1999

Dawn, Marva, Reaching out without Dumbing Down, Grand Rapids 1995

Gaddy, C.W., The Gift of Worship, Nashville 1992

Labberton, M., The Dangerous Act of Worship, Downers Grove (Illinois) 2007

***Lindsay Schluter*** (1964) is a Parish Minister of Trinity Parish Church of Scotland in Larkhall (Scotland), since 1995. She studied Divinity at Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities. Prior to entering the ministry she worked in the Whisky Industry in northeast Scotland. Currently she is the vice-convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Church of Scotland and completing a PhD on an Early Medieval Church History topic at Glasgow University.



# PROJECTS 10

## Europe Covenanting for Justice — The Projects

Martin Engels

The projects introduced in the following chapters exemplify Europe's continuing process and struggle for justice in economy and on earth. Chosen from a manifold variety of responses the following chapters can only be understood as a snap-shot.

The first project focuses on the pressing problem of the sexual exploitation of Women and Children along the German and Czech boarder region. The Cooperation of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren engaged a massive problem in the heart of Europe largely ignored by politics and society.

The second report introduces a project of the Reformed Church in Germany with the Uniting Reformed Churches in South Africa. On the level of church leaders there have been intense consultations in South Africa as well as in Germany going to the very middle of the Accra-Confession. Sorting out the problems and commonly looking for ways of a solution.

An ecumenical project of the United Reformed Church of England follows this report. Focusing on the issue of climate change in the horizon of the scripture and common Christian belief this is an extract made from a study guide which has been handed out to church members.

The issue of illegal immigration and the struggle for a humane handling of immigrants is voiced in the Interview with Maria Bonafede, the Moderator of the Waldensian und Methodist Church of Italy. She reports strikingly on their efforts along the Southern borders of the European Union.

How can we teach our children? A project from the Netherlands precisely focuses on this question and gives recommendations and examples on how to educate the future generations concerning the problems of injustice in economy and on earth.



## PROJECTS

The scope of the children is also kept in the next project. In Europe's largest economy and welfare state the question of child-poverty has become pressing. The campaign "Lasst uns nicht hängen" (don't let us down) of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia points its finger on a very urgent problem within the German society as the number of poor children and families are on the rise.

Summing up a Swiss contribution seeks for a Christian perspective on globalization with a human face.

# DIALOG

## 11

### The Joint Globalisation Project— Dialog on Basic Issues

#### Africa and the Reformed Church in Germany.

Ahlerich Ostendorp, Leer, Germany

#### Incentive for the joint project on Globalisation.



The “Declaration of Accra” caused turmoil! The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) rejected unequivocally not Globalisation *qua se* but an economic globalisation dictated by neo-liberal ideology.

Many Churches and Christians in the countries of the South are thankful for this theological declaration by the WARC in 2004. For those who with justification regard themselves as victims of neo-liberalism this “Confession” expresses what they as Churches and Christians who emulate Jesus in their political and economic context believe: God is a God of righteousness and liberation; he shows solidarity with the exploited and oppressed.

Some churches and Christians in the countries of the north are confused by the “Declaration of Accra”, some are also annoyed, and many are unsettled. They sense that their way of being a Church of Jesus Christ within the area of “empire” is being put in question.

In this tense and electrifying situation the Reformed Church in Germany (RCG) and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) decided to conduct a joint project which in the meantime has become known as “The Globalisation Project”. In this project, planned to last three years, political and econom-

ic analyses which already existed were discussed and new analyses have been worked out, in both cases with the aim of achieving a common, theologically justified statement on neo-liberal globalisation. Here the “Declaration of Accra” was not questioned but was taken as a starting-point.

Shortly before the end of this project – I am writing this report on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010 – one can assume that the joint venture was successful. A great help here was the very good partnership which has linked the two Churches since the time of the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. Faith in Christ and the trust which evolved between the two Churches was the basis on which we could travel this very interesting and successful but yet tense way together.

## The Organization of the Joint Work.

Globalisation committees were formed in both Churches. Together they determined the various aspects of globalisation which should be dealt with. Members of both committees then worked out analyses and positions on the topics agreed upon or asked external experts for assistance on individual subjects. The discussion of various theological questions raised by the “Declaration of Accra” took up a great deal of space, e.g. *status confessionis*, ‘Empire and God’s option for the poor’. Among other topics dealt with I mention as examples: the history of inequality; the politics of globalisation; international financial markets and development; world trade and development; the worldwide crisis in foodstuffs; gender and globalisation; militarization and globalisation; democracy and globalisation; ecological justice. All these topics and others are to be found in the final joint document of the two Churches.

In these roughly three years the two Globalisation Committees of the URCSA and the RCG have met for three intensive symposia on these topics.

## The Essential Features of the Joint Position on Economic Globalisation.

We are in agreement “that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians” (Accra, Thesis 16) and that the question of ecological justice is inseparably connected to this.

Particularly also in the confrontation with the ideology of neo-liberalism it is clear how relevant the Theological Declaration of Barmen from 1934 still is. There Thesis II reads: “We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords – areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.”

In the spirit of the Declaration of Accra – or as many prefer to say: In the spirit of the “Confession of Accra” – we are firmly convinced that God’s option for the poor is binding on the Churches so that they too are placed by their Lord on the

side of the poor and those deprived of their rights in order to be committed together to a better justice. And because we believe that the earth was made by God and was entrusted to humanity we are united in striving for the conservation of creation on the basis of an ecological justice.

It seems to me noteworthy that we decided at a crucial point to begin with the question of Human Rights. Commencing with the theological foundation outlined we understand human dignity as a inalienable gift of God to every person, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, skin colour, ability, religious affiliation or political conviction. And from this God-given human dignity is then derived the validity of human rights for every person. To human rights belong the General Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Agreement on civil and political rights of 1966 and the International Agreement on economic, social and cultural rights of the same year. The decision to begin with Human Rights is important because it can surmount conscious or unintentional paternalism in the relationships between rich and poor. The approach shows that the poor are not the recipients of the compassionate contributions of the wealthy for which the poor should be thankful; the poor have a right to political and economic justice and a right to a decent life in which e.g. the right to sufficient healthy nourishment, adequate accommodation, education and political participation becomes a reality.

On this basis the ethical consequences of significant aspects of economic globalisation are then developed. The concrete demands on politics and finance can be sketched in outline as follows:

- The achievement and protection of the human rights of the poorest is the criterion on which we judge politics and finance.
- Conservation with a just and sustained development must take precedence over the interests of profit.
- The primacy of politics over the globally-trading financial and economic concerns must be recovered.
- Human dignity and justice demand the democratic participation of all in the processes of decision which affect them.
- The financial and trade-markets do not need liberalization and deregulation but legal rules which promote a humane and ecologically just development.

As might be expected the debate on “Empire” proved extremely difficult. For the representatives of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa there could be no joint document without reference to what was called “Empire” in the “Confession of Accra”. Some representatives of the Reformed Church in Germany would have preferred to relinquish the concept of “Empire” completely. It became very clear to me: In the conflict over the concept of “Empire” different experiences of globalisation clash. If I understood it correctly one can say: People in the countries of the South experience themselves first and foremost as the victims of neo-liberal economic globalisation. They experience exploitation and

suppression as a power-alliance (“Empire”) between globally-active businesses and the countries of the rich north for the purpose of securing their own power and prosperity over against the poor. People in the countries of the North have, at least until the current worldwide financial crisis, had different experiences. Many are profiting from economic globalisation; many, however – and particularly the poor in these rich countries – are also victims of neo-liberal politics. An additional fact is that the churches in Germany are integrated socially, politically and financially in the political and economic system of the Western world. This does not exclude political criticism of the system, but it makes many church representatives from Germany cautious and even suspicious of fundamental criticism. In all justified criticism of this interconnection between the German churches and the economic and political system we should not forget that this interconnection puts the churches in the position to support many serviceable projects for the good of the poor in their own country and in the ecumenical context. Nevertheless the German churches must constantly ask themselves whether they still have the necessary critical distance to the system of capitalism. Finally, I suspect the dispute about the concept of “Empire” is a matter of a basic ecclesiological question: It is a question of the relationship of church and state, of the relationship of church and economic power, of how one can and must be church in capitalism as it actually exists. In other words: Every time that the topic “Empire” is put on the agenda by the churches of the south many church representatives from Germany have the impression that their existence as church is in principle being called into question. I am convinced that we must discuss ecclesiology afresh in the ecumenical movement under the stand point of “Empire”.

In the Joint Project on Globalisation of the URCSA and the RCD we have decided not to make the topic central but also not to ignore it. In controversial debates we succeeded in reaching a definition of “Empire” which was acceptable to all. The Moderator of the Reformed Alliance in Germany, Peter Bukowski, wrote as an outside observer: “In the end it should be...noted that the discussion on the concept of ‘Empire’ has made a decisive step forward thanks to the successful and consequently ground-breaking theological co-operation of the RCG and the URCSA. Empire is now understood as a theological category, as what Karl Barth described as a ‘lordless power’. So regarded, ‘Empire’ describes a dangerous and threatening mechanism of reciprocally reinforcing powers and tendencies which in the end leads to an idolization of power and money: Consequently ‘Empire’ becomes a critical challenge to all rather than a supposedly em-

1 Peter Bukowski die-reformierten.upd@te 09.3, 14.

pirical concept designating a country or economic area.”<sup>1</sup> Whether this definition on the basis of the concept of “lordless powers” really helps us further remains to be seen. In my opinion we must, alongside the ecclesiological debate, discuss once again whether with this definition we do not run the risk of being understood apocalyptically and consequently falsely. If we understand the concept of “Empire” in the framework of biblical apocalyptic thinking, the false impression could arise that neo-liberal globalisation is the embodiment of evil, virtually an invincible demon to which we are impotently handed over. The result would be resignation and not, as intended, encouragement to political involvement against the neo-liberal model of globalisation. A theological definition of “Empire” should also be politically relevant and helpful outside the Church.

## Balance and Outlook

The Joint Project of the URCSA and the RCG on Globalisation was a unique project. It was an encouraging and hopefully also a forward-looking project. We talked with one another and not about one another. We argued with one another in a brotherly, sisterly and friendly way. The uniting power of the Gospel supported us through all distinctions and differences.

We hope that our co-operation finds emulators across cultural and social borders.

We hope that with our results we have done the worldwide Reformed Church family a good service which will bring us further together.

***Ablerich Ostendorp** (1951) is pastor of the Evangelical-Reformed Church in Germany. He has worked as a parish minister in a rural region in the north-west of Germany and currently teaches at a high school. From February 2007 to January 2010 he worked for the Globalisation-Project of the URCSA and the ERK. Since 2009 he is the chairman of the German Region of the United Evangelical Mission.*

## Dreaming a Different World Together (Draft)

*Joint Declaration of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the Evangelical Reformed Church, Germany*

*Together, from North and South, discerning the signs of our times, we hear the cries of your people and see the wounds of your creation.*

We are shocked by stories of injustice worldwide and disturbed by accounts of ecological destruction. We are moved by experiences of oppression, violence and being violated; experiences of exclusion and marginalization, often of minorities; experiences of human trafficking and modern-day slavery; experiences of vulnerability and neglect, lack of education, employment, protection, health, dignity, more often than not the experiences of women and children. We listen to warnings of climate change, prophesies of local disasters, dangers to air and sea; we hear accounts of coral reefs that are lost and deserts that grow, of the atmosphere that is polluted and snow that disappears. We are told of threats to the future of our children and our children's children. We receive reports about lack of clean water and abuse of natural resources. We see the devastation of militarism and violence and war. We read studies about unfair trade and out-of-control finance and deepening poverty that disturb us. We learn about statistics describing our time and our realities and they shame us.

Behind much of these, we observe in our world a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power into a spirit of domination that seems to lord it over all and everything. We experience this presence in a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; in a spirit that lacks compassionate justice and shows contemptuous disregard for the household of life and the gifts of creation. We recognize this spirit of our time in an all-encompassing way of life that serves, protects and defends the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while willing to sacrifice humanity and creation. We even hear proclaimed today a gospel of consumerism, supported by powerful propaganda and believed and followed by many, religiously spreading and justifying this spirit of our time. We sense the seductive power of idolatry, the danger of losing our soul.

Therefore we lament – with the cries of your afflicted people and the wounds of your suffering creation.

*Together, from North and South, we are comforted by the gospel, by the common faith we share and the common tradition in which we stand, by your Word and Spirit.*

We are comforted by the knowledge that our world belongs to God; by the assurances that we do not belong to ourselves; by the promises that Jesus Christ is Lord – and we proclaim these convictions as central to our faith and tradition.

We remember the voices of our mothers and fathers, denying that there could be areas of our life in which we do not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him. We recall their witness when faced with the realities and the spirit of their times, with the lordless powers and ideologies of their day, with the challenges and temptations of their moments in history.

We confess with them that God has revealed Godself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace on earth; that in a world full of injustice and enmity, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that God calls the church to follow God in this; that God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that God frees the prisoners and restores sight to the blind; that God supports the downtrodden, protects the strangers, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for God, pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that God wishes to teach the people of God to do what is good and to seek the right.

With them we are convinced that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church, belonging to God, should stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Together, we are inspired by these convictions in our broken world today; together, we resist the ideology that there is no alternative and together, we reject the spirit of idolatry with its disdain for the household of life and the gifts of creation.

*Together, from North and South, we heed the call of your Word and Spirit, the claim of this gospel on us, today.*

We declare that Jesus Christ is God's assurance of forgiveness and God's mighty claim upon our whole life; that through Him, we receive joyful deliverance from the godless powers of this world for free and grateful service to God's creatures in our common world, today.



We remember together the instruction of your law, teaching us to seek justice, compassion and truth; the voices of your prophets, warning us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God; the visions of your worship and praise, inspiring us to long for the day when justice and peace embrace; the many accounts of salvation, exodus, liberation from bondage, filled with promises of your saving presence – we remember this even today.

We continue to believe that since we are not our own our whole life should be spent in the cultivation of righteousness, also in our common world, today.

We feel inspired by those voices who taught us that true piety and love of righteousness belong together; that worship and justice cannot be separated; that God is truly known where humanity flourishes; that we recognize as if in a mirror both your image and our own flesh in the poor, the despised and the furthest strangers in the world. We believe that all this remains true in our deeply divided and unjust world, today.

We recall those teachers who professed your creation to be the theatre of your glory, moving us to contemplation and wonder, to gratitude and respect, to stewardship, vocation and responsibility – also in our threatened world, today.

We remain mindful that together we live in communion – as members of Christ and partakers of his gifts, and thus members of one another, bound to employ our gifts readily and cheerfully for the well-being of the other.

We still acknowledge that being baptized in your name and into your body, we are called to your ministry of priest, king and prophet – as priests to receive and proclaim your justification and to share in your service, your care, your compassion and your intercession for the world; as kings to share in your struggle against the powers, your sanctification of the world and your victory over all forms of sin and destruction; as prophets to publicly proclaim your truth, your truth of reconciliation and justice, your truth that sets people free.

Together, we are moved by these memories and this claim on our life.

*From South and North, together in communion, we dream a different world.*

Being claimed by you, we long together for your reign of justice and peace, for your presence and your salvation – for freedom from these disturbing realities, these harsh inequalities, this cultural domination, this abysmal disparity, this injustice, this destruction; we dream of your promises of shalom. We cry and plead; we sigh and pray together for our broken and threatened world.

Praying, we commit ourselves together to care for your creatures and your creation; to work with all who seek for alternative ways – those with insight and knowledge, those with special gifts and opportunities, those in positions of leadership and responsibility; not to seek for simple answers; not to close our ears to the stories of those who are afflicted; not to close our minds to the knowledge of those in science and research; not to close our eyes for the realities all around us, both near and far; not to close our fists in selfish greed; not to close our hearts when we encounter the suffering and the wounds; not to close our hands in abdication of what is in our power to do in order to make a difference – treasuring energy, protecting biodiversity, resisting desertification, saving water, preventing pollution, respecting your work, marvelling in your creation, celebrating the wonderful web of life, your rich and abundant household of belonging.

Committing ourselves, we covenant to believe, to love, to hope together; to find new ways of being obedient, new ways of creating communities of life and witness in our shared world; to talk and learn together; to search and seek solutions together; to raise our own awareness; to see with new eyes; to turn and to change; to mitigate causes and adapt to new life-styles; to live in solidarity with victims; to speak for those without voice; to remember those easily forgotten. To heed the call to prophetic action, to struggle and strive, to face and expose, to challenge and critique, to analyze and plan, to reframe and refuse. To cultivate and nurture a spirituality of resistance and a lifestyle of discipleship – as witnesses to your compassionate justice, dreaming a different world.

## The Further Development of the Concept of Empire – a Help to Reading

Peter Bukowski, Wuppertal, Germany

The Johannesburg Declaration, “Global Dialogue on the Confession of Accra” (September 2009), takes up positively the further development of the concept of Empire which was realised in cooperation between URCSA and ERK. And indeed, these two churches – the one from South Africa, the other from Northern Europe – have succeeded in their joint inter-continental globalisation project in reaching an understanding of *Empire* which is well-suited to leave old polarisations behind, to find broad acceptance and, most importantly, to carry the matter forward. A commentary on the decisive passage should make this clear.

First the complete quotation:

*“We speak of **empire**, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today. This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind. An all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves, and even sacrifices humanity. It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is the colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.”*

At a first glance it is not entirely easy to discern the cognitive advance made in this new definition, for as is (unfortunately) common with commission texts, it is a monster of a definition which is not exactly easy to read. I shall therefore quote it again, dividing the text into segments which should then be ‘contemplated’ individually.

- (1) *“We speak of **empire**, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today.*
- (2) *This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind.*
- (3) *An all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves, and even sacrifices humanity.*

- (4) *It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is the colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.*”

## (1) The Empire – a Socio-Political Reality

The first sentence emphasises that the concept of *Empire* characterises a socio-political reality. This is described as *a concentration of economic, cultural, political and military power*. It is obvious that such a concentration exists. That it is described by means of *one complex* concept should make it clear that the cause of the injustice currently being suffered cannot be reduced to one factor, but can only be properly understood as the product of just such an interaction of many factors. That also means: the totality of the power here manifested is more than the sum of its parts and we would miss its complex reality if we thought that to analyse (or change) it, it would be enough to select only one of its components. The financial crisis with its catastrophic effects has confirmed for us yet again how meaningful such a total view of interconnexions is: To call only for stronger state intervention underestimates the finance markets’ own special dynamics, just as in reverse a one-sided ascription of blame to the markets overlooks the complicity of politics; and both of these could and can lead to catastrophic consequences because they are embedded in a general anti-culture of greed, etc.

This first part of the definition is in substance not new; it takes up what was said about *Empire* in § 11 of the Declaration of Accra. Here already, admittedly, a decisive marker is set. In Accra, *Empire* is introduced as an active subject: the world (dis-)order, it is said there, is defended by (an) *Empire*; and: the imperial system stands under the control of powerful nations. This led in subsequent reactions to the question whether the Empire could be identified without remainder with a particular region – such as Europe and North America: does that not lead to an all too simple distinction between victims and perpetrators? Beyond that: can these regions be reduced to such a characterisation? What about the counterforces which, thank God, are also to be found there? This is still to say nothing of the fact that every individual political or economic system has its own ambivalent character. Here the issue is not so much whether such critical queries are fair to the intention of the Accra Declaration or not. They were at any rate provoked by the formulations chosen there and led to persistent dissent.

By comparison the new definition is not in any way less clear or less profiled, but it helps to avoid a reductionist misunderstanding of Empire. By characterising the mechanism as such, it compels everyone to ask *whether* and *how far* the place in which they live is infected by the Empire. And how individuals themselves

come to stand: do they belong more on the side of the victims or of the perpetrators, or are they sometimes the one, sometimes the other? And I think Christians from the South too will feel themselves addressed by the definition of Empire: certainly first of all as members of a region which is suffering under the concentration of power described here and rightly sees itself as its victim. But then perhaps also as those who must recognise that the unholy amalgamation of power is *also* a problem *within* their own context. It is no accident that the third segment will speak about *an all-encompassing global reality protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people*.

This kind of extension and deepening of the understanding of *Empire* becomes clearer if we now turn to the second segment of the definition. Here we meet the core of the newly won insight.

## (2) The Empire as “Lordless Domination” – the Theology of the Concept of Empire

This is the most important advance of the new definition, that it gives *Empire* a *theological base*, and does so by reference to Karl Barth’s doctrine of the “lordless powers”. Now, what is this theological description about?

The concept of Empire has repeatedly been accused of being ideological and confused, of making nothing really clear, of being incapable of connecting with a scientific analytical approach. And all this above all because it gets itself tied up in a mythological figure of speech.

Now it was precisely Karl Barth in the last chapter of his *Church Dogmatics* (CD IV, 4, Fragment, § 78) who entered an earnest plea for this biblical “mythological” figure of speech by working out its *gain for theological insight*. East of Eden, that is, in a life turned away from God, humans find that their planning, willing and acting turns against them. Their highest human capacities: organising themselves into a complex community, setting in motion processes of economic exchange, but also the developing of law, culture, science and technology – all this runs out of control, corrupted by human sin, just in the poem of the sorcerer’s apprentice. In the end humans no longer have a firm grasp of what they planned and set to work; it develops a dynamics of its own which turns against them and, although made by them, tears itself free of their control. Barth characterises precisely these forces as “lordless powers” and calls them “Empire”, “Mammon”, “Ideology”. He writes: The New Testament “sees and understands humankind not only as pushers but as pushed - not only as drivers but as driven ... Without questioning their responsibility and guilt it sees behind and above them those unassailable but highly effective potencies, factors and agents, these imaginary, yet precisely in their imaginary character astonishingly active “gods” and “lords”. It is just these thoughts that the new definition picks up by understanding *Empire* as *lordless domination, created by humankind*. Only such theological “deep

drilling” can resist all over-simplification (and also connect with basic insights of system theory). For only this anchoring makes it clear that on the one hand no-one can talk himself out of it: It remains a fact that the concentration of power is man-made. At the same time it becomes clear that (and why) the perpetrators are also at the same time slaves of their actions, “shoved” and “driven” as Barth put it (Karl Marx could already say that the “proprietors”, as he called them, must be “liberated”!). We shall not therefore be trapped by all too simple and one-sided ascriptions of blame or political recipes. Above all, however, it becomes clear that the struggle against the *Empire* is in the first instance a *spiritual* challenge: Only so far as we find our way back to the true Lord, to the Creator of heaven and earth, to the Father of Jesus Christ, shall be in a position to unmask the false lords for what they are and to oppose them. To speak with Matt 6:24-32: Seeking the kingdom of God brings liberation from Mammon.

### (3) Political Contours of the Empire

In the third segment, which connects back to the first, the theological view is at once again “earthed”. The turning to false gods which has its roots in a false spiritual orientation does not remain a purely ideal phenomenon but turns into bitter and painful reality: the “lordless domination” of *Empire* – like the power of “Mammon” – manifests itself as an *all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, which while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves, and even sacrifices humanity.*

These lines speak for themselves: they urgently describe how fatal the outworking of the “lordless powers” is: they threaten and damage humanity and creation. And they surmount all spatial and temporal limits: they are at work *world-wide* and not only the present, the future too threatens to crumble under their attack. This reconnecting of theology with empirical realities makes clear that theology and analysis may well be distinguished but never separated. They belong together like contemplation and combat (Roger Schütz).

### (4) Spiritual Contours of the Empire

In the last segment the connexion just emphasised is viewed yet again from the other side. For it would short-circuit the matter if after the theological characterization of the lordless powers we only looked at their actual political deformities, as was done in (3). Certainly these must be brought to awareness and they are doubtless named first because they lie directly in view and cry for redemption. Yet they are, however, only the visible external aspect of an *internal disturbance* and it is its urgent reference to *that* that is the great service of the new definition of Empire. For here – without losing sight of the social connexions! – it is the in-

dividuals who come into view: in each of us there nestle *selfishness and greed, idolisation of money, possession and property*. Therefore no separation of spiritual and political! Political action must be accompanied by spiritual introspection. Thus by the question where I myself in my selfishness and greed fall captive to the “lordless domination”. And everyone must pose himself or herself this question. Doubtless there are those who are primarily “perpetrators” and others primarily “victims”. The burden of guilt is also very unevenly distributed. But the “lordless domination” unleashed by sin stops short of no-one. Not even short of the “victims” – otherwise there would not ever and again be found such as let themselves be corrupted by the forces of the *Empire* and are ready to become its accomplices. The future will depend not least upon whether we succeed in seeing *both* of these without playing the one off against the other.

Finally the general social, cultural and political “weather situation” is once more looked at spiritually. Here the new definition of *Empire* unfolds its potential for a *religious critique*. What appears as a concentration of power (cf. paragraph 1) is at bottom a false religion: *In this system consumption is proclaimed as a gospel*, which uses thought, values and visions for the logic of mercilessness and contempt for life.

We have only then seen through the “lordless powers” when we have grasped their *character as religious power*. They stage themselves among us like gods and demand their tribute. Their very speech betrays them: war victims, economic victims, victims of tirades of hate, traffic victims. The more we see through these and take refuge in prayer to the living God, the more shall we be enabled to free ourselves from the grasp of these powers. We shall learn no longer to use our understanding and our science to optimise idolatry, but to seek ways out of slavery and take steps into freedom.

Balance: As the result of intensive further work on the Accra Declaration the new definition of *Empire* offers helpful orientation on the further path of the Reformed community. It remains to hope that those gathered in Grand Rapids will adopt this definition.

**Peter Bukowoski** (1950) studied Theology and Music in Berlin, Bonn and Cologne. He is the Director of the Reformed Seminary in Wuppertal and teaches homiletics and pastoral care. Since 1990 he is Moderator of the Reformed Alliance Germany and currently Member of the Executive Committee of WARC.

# EXPLOITATION 12

## In the Middle of Europe: Fighting the Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children in the Czech-German Border Region

A Project of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)



In the face of the misery that women and children are daily enduring in the Czech-German border region, joint action is urgently necessary. The suffering of the people affected cries for quick and emphatic action. Such action manifests the love of God for his creatures. That love reaches especially to those who are wounded in body and soul. It is therefore imperative in view of the violence towards women, girls and boys and their sexual exploitation in the border region to further and strengthen the engagement of the churches in this area.

The exploited women and children in the border regions stand daily in the struggle for survival. They have scarcely any hopes that their dreams of a better life could be realised. They need help

now – and they need help characterised by being sustained. Our churches are challenged, together with the governments and social initiatives, to do everything to make this help possible – and better today than tomorrow!

The fellowship of our churches is realised in the horizon of the justice of the Kingdom of God. We live in the Ecumene of our common vision of a more just world. Such hopes also inspire the world-wide fellowship of Christians. In this sense the Special Commission regards the work it has behind it as a contribution to justice. It calls the churches to come in at this particular place with help, in-



formation and counsel for a culture of mutuality and co-humanity as well as for loving relations between women and men having equal rights in our societies.

Between 700,000 and 2,000,000 people are traded each year throughout the world. The profits from human traffic across the world are estimated at about € 12 billion annually. A large part of this commerce in human trading serves the purpose of sexual exploitation of women and children in the sex industry.<sup>1</sup> The great rise in prostitution and human traffic in the Czech Republic took place directly following the fall of the Iron Curtain and was marked by the special migration circumstances of that period at the beginning of the 1990s. Above all, women from Eastern Europe became sought-after wares on the markets of the western countries, among them many Czechs. In the Czech Republic about 30,000 people are active in the sex industry. Of these admittedly some 70% are foreigners. With the eastern expansion of the European Union the Czech Republic also became a main destination for women who were traded here from countries beyond the eastern frontier of the European Union. The Czech police have observed since this period a remarkable rise in the number of young women from Eastern European countries as well as from Asia who are forced to the Czech Republic into prostitution and often are traded on further from there through the whole of Europe. And it is men from western countries, above all from Germany and Austria, who use this market as so-called sex tourists or as customers in their homeland. Children and young women from socially disadvantaged families and groups on the edge of Czech society slip under the social pressure of their miserable living conditions into the undertow of the sex market dominating the Czech region bordering on Germany and Austria. In particular, trade in commercial sex in clubs, bars and brothels appears to not a few women from these weak social strata as the ultimate escape from impoverished living conditions that offer no perspective. In the border regions this business offers work and apparently lucrative conditions. This is met half-way by a shift in public attitudes to sexual morality and prostitution. In these areas erotic clubs and the huge market in sex services have become everyday normality.

1 "It is not easy to express statistically the exact scope of this problem, and therefore the estimates of the number of victims vary significantly. Various international studies indicate that 700,000 – 2,000,000 persons are traded annually around the world, while 300,000 – 500,000 persons are traded annually within Europe. It is estimated that the global annual proceeds from human trafficking are € 8,500 – 12,000 billion." Ministry of the Interior, National Strategy of the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2005-2007, Prague 2005, 7 (<http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/dokument/2005/strate-gie.pdf> last access 12.5.2009; cf. also <http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/dokument/2006/komerzni06.pdf> last access 12.5.2009) with reference among others to International Organisation for Migration, the US Department of State, the Europol, loc.cit., 7, n. 2.

Human trade for prostitution is plied both by organised criminal groups and by individual operators. The traders come from the lands of the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, Albania or Bulgaria, Slovakia, China, Vietnam or other countries, and of course from the Czech Republic. All of these operate in the entire Czech Republic, with clearly recognisable concentration in the areas bordering Germany or Austria. A further focus lies in Prague.

Alongside these there is a rising number of traders of Czech nationality, mainly coming from population groups threatened by social marginalisation. They chiefly trade in women from their family circle or from their group of closer friends or acquaintances. As an example there may be mentioned some Roma clans in the regions of Chomutov or Western Bohemia which organise and control the trade of families in their own women. The victims of this trade, which is closely monitored by the clans, are in part also women who themselves are not Roma.

The human traffickers use very various methods to recruit women. Informal contacting via friends or relations of the victims is popular. But the more formal method of reaching women through advertisements or apparently serious agencies which pretend to mediate work, marriage or travel also enables the traders to gain the women's trust and then to exploit them in their situation of weakness. The unfamiliar environment, ignorance of the language, loss of money or documents as well as fear of police and officialdom creates in the women a feeling of complete helplessness. Many are also promised highly paid jobs as models, barmaids, dancers, animators or hostesses, which then turn out to involve sexual services under slave-like conditions in clubs and brothels near the border. The women are artificially kept in the belief that they have high (fictive) debts: mediation and transport expenses, discharging of debts between the traders, living costs, clothing or rent (although very often only a single room as the "workplace" serves both to receive customers and as a home for the woman with her children).

For many men from Germany and Austria, but in the mean time from many other European countries as well, the excitement of sexual adventure lies just across the Czech border. They are lured by the extensive offers, by the exotic and the anonymity. Women with an apparently uncomplicated attitude to their customers are to be had here cheaply. These men fail to see that both the price and the "service quality" are enforced by the economic plight of the women and the situation of the country. They neither know nor suspect that scarcely any of these women are prostitutes of their own free will.

Prostitution in the border region extends both to street prostitution along the main long-distance highways connecting the Czech Republic to its neighbours as well as to innumerable saunas, brothels, massage salons or apartments in small towns near the border. In the mean time there are communities which consist almost exclusively of a collection of such establishments. Thanks to this milieu

there is emerging here a specific infrastructure from which municipalities in a region otherwise structurally extremely weak make a profit. This often makes authorities and citizens alike unwilling to view the situation critically or to solve the problem.

## Aspects of the Demand

What sort of men dive so willingly into the prostitution scene across the border and what makes this world so hugely fascinating for them? From the few studies made of the customers of prostitutes in Germany<sup>2</sup> we know that men from all classes of the population pay for sex. This also holds good for the customers in the Czech-German border region and in particular for their shared affinity to the milieu here: The region counts as the erotic supermarket with corresponding price advantages and “bargains”. The “palette of offers” is multifarious and even includes child-abuse, which is now being followed by the police in Germany with increasing intensity. “Sex without taboos” is probably also easier to find in this relatively uncontrolled and opaque scene, characterised as it is by psychological pressure and physical violence towards the women, than in the professional brothel milieu in Germany. Yet most customers are blind to this causal connexion. They are convinced that the Eastern Europeans live out a female role which allegedly meets the man half-way and so seems to be quite different from what they believe they can expect from the emancipated women of Germany.

## Men are Responsible

We know from reports of the women affected that above all older men from Germany and Austria belong to the problem-groups of customers. They are often aggressive, try to beat down the price or not to pay at all, do not show proper respect, frequently demand intercourse without condoms or violent sexual practices. It is a point of disagreement even between the staff of the local counselling services whether the men as customers of prostitution in the border re-

2 Dieter Kleiber/Doris Velten, Prostitutionskunden. Eine Untersuchung über soziale und psychologische Charakteristika von Besuchern weiblicher Prostituierter in Zeiten von AIDS, 1994; Dieter Kleiber/Martin Wilke, AIDS, Sex und Tourismus. Ergebnisse einer Befragung deutscher Urlauber und Sextouristen, 1995; Hydra, Freier. Das heimliche Treiben der Männer, Hamburg 2000; Tamara Domentat, Lass dich verwöhnen. Prostitution in Deutschland, Berlin 2004; the qualitative study of customers of foreign prostitutes by Christiane Howe has not appeared until now; first results in: Christiane Howe, Zwielfichtiges. Bilderwelten-Innenwelten, Dokumentation der Fachtagung über Prostitutionskunden von context e.V., November 2003.

gion are open to being told about the diverse difficulties the women have<sup>3</sup>. Certainly this must be denied in the case of the group of those who exploit the special situation of this region precisely for their own special needs. Others could perhaps still be reached through directed information campaigns.

Every customer of the sex business must realise that his desire for commercial sex creates the very market which unscrupulously employs human trade. Yet the customers could demonstrate responsibility by opposing the violence in the milieu and avoiding scenes which raise the suspicion of human trafficking. That may be difficult in the area of the border region, yet no-one should remain ignorant of the fact that it is precisely his visit to this scene that creates an environment in which exploitation, violence and degradation flourish. The social evaluation of prostitution and its use is difficult and is also variously accented in the churchly/diaconal context. Yet a general consensus about the limits of any tolerance relates to the areas in which compulsion, physical and psychological violence or conditions of slavery condition the business. This applies especially to prostitution in connexion with human trade or indeed child prostitution. There can be no ethical compromise with structures of bodily and mental violence, abduction and exploitation. The fundamental constitutional and Christian principles of human social life draw a radical limit here. Here every customer must be made responsible: By contrast with many women he has a choice. It is a question of awareness and sensitivity.

## Aspects of the Supply

Where do the women and girls come from who post themselves on the notorious roads in the German-Czech border region? What drives them into the brothels and clubs standing there in rows? For what reasons and with what degree of freedom or under what compulsion do they sell their bodies or offer sexual services? It seems important to make a distinction at this point: Even if the scale of prostitution motivated by poverty and existential need may be immense – especially at the boundary between East and West – it is still important not to present women simply as “objects”, as “female wares”. For it is primarily a matter of migration to find work (even if combined with the described outgrowths of smuggling, trading and violence) across the prosperity barrier from East to West as from South to North. Migration across boundaries in search of work is an integral element of a globalised economy. In particular the inhabitants of many East and Central European countries belong to those who make their way to the

3 IOM, Report on the Project “Pilot Research among Customers of Commercial Sex Services in two Border Regions of the Czech Republic”, 2005, p. 31f. (cf. [http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/rs\\_atlantic/data/files/iom-clients.pdf](http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/archiv2008/rs_atlantic/data/files/iom-clients.pdf) last access 12.5.2009).

wealthier lands in North and West Europe or come to their borders. Entrepreneurs and middle-men hope for large profits through recruiting cheap workers. Here women make up the largest and at the same time the most vulnerable group among the work migrants. Their chances of legal employment are slimmer and they are driven to poorer paid work in largely insecure sectors of the work market. This often involves risky occupations under conditions equivalent to slavery. In the final result women often end up as victims of human trafficking. However, it is often not recognised that women have understandable reasons for letting themselves be involved in this trade, e.g. they are dependent on the hard-earned money. The Special Commission therefore regards it as important that women in prostitution are not simply described as victims; their decisions must rather be met with understanding. The key problem of working migration by women from Eastern Europe is the difficult situation in their homelands together with the legal regulations applying to foreigners and the market demand in their countries of destination. This general estimate, however, changes nothing in the established need for help for a large number of women and children who are involved in prostitution or victims of sexual misuse.

### Where do the Women in the Border Region Come from?

The Czech Republic can be counted as a land of origin, destination and transit. However, both adult women as well as under-age girls (between 15 and 17) in prostitution come overwhelmingly from the countries of the Ukraine, Moldavia, Lithuania, White Russia, Bulgaria and Slovakia. A particularly endangered group are members of the Roma. Alongside sexual exploitation the trade in women serves such further goals as forced marriage or the exploitation of women as slaves working in the domestic economy. The women's situation remains hopeless. The criminal structures of the human trade let them earn little or even no money and their dream of supporting their family back home remains unfulfilled. Their residence as foreigners is often illegal and they are constantly threatened with expulsion.

### Causes in the Countries of Origin

1. Unemployment in the lands of origin is generally very high, especially among women. They often find no work-place or none corresponding to their qualifications, and even when they do have a job the wages are often too low for them to be able to live on them. This stands in contradiction to the rising responsibility of women for the economic survival of their families. For many women the wish to support their families is one of the central motives for taking up work in a foreign country. They see in that the answer to their family's financial problems.

2. In many countries of Central or Eastern Europe too, the inadequate, non-existent or disappearing social system increasingly throws off responsibility on to the shoulders of women.
3. There also exists in many countries a tradition of emigration in search of work. It is nothing unusual here to look for or to have a job in another country.
4. Educational qualifications, above all good qualifications, are increasingly expensive. Many young women believe that in Germany they can earn the money for their own education which they want to begin in their own country.
5. Alcoholism and violence in the families are often a reason for girls to flee from home. Against this background they become an easy prey for middle-men and operators such as smugglers and human traffickers.
6. At the same time there lives in the heads of many, especially young women, a picture that can be described as the "Pretty Woman Syndrome": the dream of wealth and happiness. Women are presented and perceived above all as erotic objects. Then why not make a virtue out of necessity? Sex work can then seem an attractive path to rising in the social scale.
7. Along with all these factors there is also still the myth of Western Europe, allegedly promising freedom, prosperity and modernity.

At all events a distinction is to be made between emigration in search of work, which women look for because of the situations of need just described, and trade in women, through which they are brought into a situation which they can no longer themselves control. The boundaries are, however, fluid since many middle-men lure women with promises and then force them into jobs in the sex industry. The desire of many women to move to the countries of Western Europe in order to build themselves a better life is an important reason for the problem of world-wide migration and female trading for the purposes of domestic service, marriage and prostitution. Significant almost everywhere is the rising responsibility of women for the economic survival of their families. So not a few of those who arrive in Western Europe and manage to earn some money send the greater part of their earnings back to the homeland.

## Sexual Misuse of Children

"Poverty and the lack of training and career perspectives make it easy for human traffickers to recruit women and children for prostitution."<sup>4</sup> In 2004 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Medical Faculty of the University of Prague carried out a second descriptive

<sup>4</sup> Cathrin Schauer, Jeder holt sich, was er will. In: *Mythos Europa; Osteuropa*, No. 56, 6/2006, 240.

study<sup>5</sup> of children's attitudes to prostitution among pupils of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes at elementary schools in Prague and Cheb. 42% of the children questioned in Cheb characterised prostitution as a possibility of earning for people without an education. In Prague by contrast it was 4,6 of the children<sup>6</sup>.

This result is alarming. In areas with a shortage of jobs and high unemployment, where the prospects for personal development are poor and prostitution generally widespread, the population can regard prostitution with tolerance or indeed benevolence. The boundaries between what is desirable, tolerable or unacceptable are visibly displaced. In socially weak families and areas where the demand for sexual services is relatively strong, children can respond to the pressure of their social surroundings (including the people closest to them) and consumers and so fall prey to pimps and human traffickers. Accordingly poor future prospects and unstable family relations play a dominant role in child prostitution and child trafficking. Although this connexion does not look much different in the case of children and young people compared with adult victims of human trafficking, a further boundary is crossed here: the vulnerability of children who have no choice is exploited in extremely degrading fashion. At this point the instruments of criminal law are challenged in a special way.

## The Roma

In connexion with human trafficking in border regions it is necessary to give particular attention to the so-called Roma question. Because of the fact that there are no statistics for the Czech Roma, statements about their numerical presence in the scenes of prostitution and child prostitution are speculative. The starting point for further reflection can therefore only be such experienced data as are based on local observations. Representatives of local social services report on entire living areas and whole communities where Roma clans live, for example in the regions of West Bohemia, Chomutov or by Teplice. There are areas here which are exclusively inhabited by socially marginalised population groups. A range of these Roma families live from the prostitution of their very young women, who in part can be under 18 years old, in some cases even much younger. In this opaque environment child prostitution is on offer. Admittedly this criminal market operates under cover, because it is also strongly bound up with blackmail of the customers of the under-age prostitutes. This problematic situation is the result of a completely failed attempt to reintegrate the Roma in the Czech Republic in the second half of the twentieth century. The Roma were uprooted from their traditional life-style without being offered alternative mod-

<sup>5</sup> Eva Vaníčková, *Dětská prostituce*, Prague 2005, <sup>2</sup>2007, Grada.

<sup>6</sup> 1585 children were questioned; they were asked 23 questions.

els or being able to develop new perspectives for their life. In the affected families there exists an extremely low level of education and high unemployment, combined with the most various symptoms of social disintegration. Life is marked by unemployment, alcoholism, petty crime, domestic violence and the forming of gangs. Lack of personal development and lack of will to change are the results of such circumstances. For these groups participation in the sex business is acceptable and is excused by reference to financial need. Attempts to meet these problem areas with offers of help are made more difficult by the cultural strangeness of the Roma life-style, into which it is hard for outsiders to enter.

## Balance

The analysis of the problematic “Sexual Exploitation of Women and Misuse of Children in the German-Czech Border Region” is inevitably marked by different perspectives, different frameworks of juridical and political conditions, but also by perceptions emotionally occupied by stereotypes: *In prostitution migration from East to West it is not only a matter of dignity, human rights or economy. Discussion of prostitution also has a tension-laden symbolic and political dimension. The place to which the West European societies assign prostitution is strikingly similar to the ranking which “Eastern Europe” occupies in West European thinking. In the perspective of the bourgeois societies “Eastern Europe” and prostitution stand for “the forbidden, the notorious, the excluded, the other, which attracts to itself longings, secret wishes, involuntary fantasies and fears. “Eastern Europe” stands for trade in drugs, weapons and women; for illegal business dealings in millions, money-laundering and corruption; for extreme poverty and extreme wealth; for money, sex and violence. It is an El Dorado for heavy boys and easy girls.*<sup>7</sup>

Such estimates make it clear that because of this, ascriptions, prejudices and mutual accusations are constantly in the air. This renders the thematic a hard one for European cooperation - and so also for German-Czech - and makes it more difficult in the actual work to reach possibilities for solutions across the borders. So all initiatives are to be gratefully recognised which challenge the churches in particular to cross-border cooperation and show them possibilities for joint action.

## Christian Ethical Orientation

Sexuality counts in the Judaeo-Christian tradition as an essential and inseparable aspect of our humanity. It is a good gift given by God (Gen1:27;31) and mediates joy and happiness. Tenderness and sexuality in mutual respect and responsibility are forms of the language of love. This insight belongs to the biblical and

<sup>7</sup> *Osteuropa*; Vol. 6/2006, Editorial, 6.



Christian understanding of humanity in spite of every narrowing of the view in past and present. Sexuality between man and woman is often described in the language of the Bible as “knowing” the partner (Genesis 4:1 and frequently). This marks an exceptionally deep, exclusive and committed relation of love to which God has promised divine blessing.

## Sexuality as a Committed Relation between People

From this arises a decisive principle guiding behaviour for Christian people: Sexual intercourse is above all experienced as fulfilling human happiness when it is integrated in personal life and becomes the personal giving of oneself. Sexuality is therefore to be seen as the expression of a special relationship between persons which presupposes their loving responsibility for each other. It is not casual acquaintance or momentary attraction that constitutes the nature of christianly lived sexuality, but the binding readiness to be committed to the other and to give love in mutual respect. The freedom of one's own sexuality is bound up with responsibility towards the other. Freedom thus means committed devotion.

Commercialised sex, however, disregards among those involved the dignity of their respective individual humanity. This contradicts a Christian understanding of human behaviour resting on the Biblical traditions according to which each has to take on responsibility for the spiritual and bodily integrity of the other. The character of a commodity which prostitution imposes on sexuality does not conform to such a view of humanity. Christian understanding of a holistically lived sexuality excludes every form of violence, degradation and exploitation, and with them, trading in sexual services as well.<sup>8</sup>

Absolutely objectionable and unacceptable are those forms of the sex business that lead to the application of violence and misuse of women and children. Human traffic with the aim of sexual exploitation not only contradicts ethical prescriptions but is also a crime in the eyes of the law. Therefore human traffic and the compelling of women and children to sex must be combated using all the means of criminal law.

## Christian Responsibility in the Face of a Social Problem

Prostitution is not a form of expression of human sexuality that corresponds to the ethical principles of Christian behaviour. However, prostitution as a social reality will remain in being for the foreseeable future. This is to also be taken into account in the theological evaluation of the problem. So the biblical documents do indeed condemn the act of prostitution, but do not reject the persons

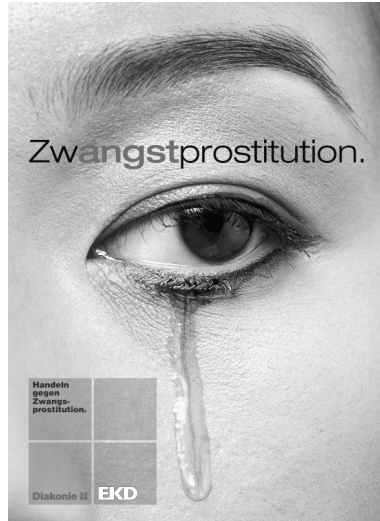
<sup>8</sup> For the special divine valuing of the human body in the Bible, with absolute equality for woman and man, see e.g. Gen 2:7, Gen 2:22 or Ps 139:13.

who are involved in it, instead emphasising their inalienable, God-given dignity. Prostitution does not correspond to the principle of Christian living which asks what the will of God is. The command to love our neighbour makes it self-evident that the weak and exploited are to be protected and those who misuse others are to be vigorously opposed. The prostituted are exposed to exploitation, largely without protection. Social condescension towards the exercise of prostitution contributes to their status as having no rights, as if the women were alone in this exercise without partners – clients or consumers of their so-called services. This negative valuation allows the customers and others involved in prostitution their own advantages

while further consolidating the status of the prostitutes as one without protection and without rights. Stigmatising the prostitutes means restricting their possibilities of building a decent life. This denies them the chance of finding community, protection and solidarity.<sup>9</sup>

According to the will of God the Creator women and men are of absolutely equal value and called in the same way to responsibility for each other. Effective prevention of human trafficking therefore requires that men too become aware of their responsibility. Men play different but decisive roles in the sex business: as users of prostitution their demand determines the supply and the market. As pimps or managers they organise and control the business. The profits flow to them. Here there exists an unspoken male alliance between criminally operating human traffickers, pimps and the others enjoying the benefits of prostitution.

The commercialisation of sexuality creates a global criminal branch of the economy with immense margins of profit. It is thus no accident that this business is often bound up with violence. Here the state has the task of guaranteeing the le-



<sup>9</sup> For the Bible's judgment on prostitution see e.g. Lev 19:29; 1.Cor 6:18; 1.Thess 4: 3. How highly nevertheless the worth of the person was valued is shown by the account of the whore Rahab (Joshua 2): Her prostitution has a heathen background at the beginning, but she shows compassion to the Israelites and saves them from their pursuers. She herself is then saved and becomes a member of Jesus' family tree (Joshua 2 und Matt 1: 5). She wins back her dignity and is given a honoured place in God's act of salvation. So too it is then Jesus who does not condemn, but in a special way promises the love of God and the way to a new life (Joh 8:11).

gal prosecution of criminality on the required scale. Beyond this, the state also has duties of public order, for example in the fields of health control and the supporting of therapeutic and social offers of assistance such as for example the churches and other social institutions make available.

The transitions between voluntary and forced prostitution are not sharply defined. So society's awareness for its common responsibility must be sharpened. Those who trivialise the problematic of the sex business and lend it the appearance of "normality" close their eyes in the end to the crimes which force women and children into sex. The scandal of the misuse and degradation of people, yes, even of children, as it shows itself in the crimes of human trafficking and sexual exploitation must be clearly named.

### Sexual Education and Mediation of Values

The Bible and Christian ethics aim above all for human dignity and the achievement of a loving relationship. That is why sex education is important which starts with human dignity and mediates sexuality as an integral element of a loving, holistic relationship in mutual respect and responsibility. It is a matter of a sexuality which lives out pleasure in one's own body and that of the other and includes at the same time responsibility for each other.

The aim must also include overcoming deceptive images of women and men which advance the commercialisation of sexuality and with it the spread of prostitution. That is why the corresponding sex education must necessarily include boys in particular. They in particular need the model of a male sexuality which is shaped by respect and a personal relationship rather than exclusively by performance, success and quick satisfaction. Living such a fulfilled and responsible sexuality presupposes a clear rejection of violence and offers a pledge for the protection of spiritual and physical integrity. It is urgently necessary to begin giving appropriate attention to this neglected theme of sexuality and strengthening the dignity of every human, whether child, woman or man, as well as protecting the right of every person to be psychologically and physically unharmed.

Our churches emphasise their responsibility for all the offers of help which are necessary for prevention and offer help for the needs of those affected. They are thankful for all initiatives in this area and offer their support.

### Opportunities for the Church to Act

One of the churches' chief tasks is to help in situations of pressure and need and to step in fearlessly where wrong is being committed. The churches have done and do this with the voluntary help of their members as well as their professional social and diaconal work.

The starting points of the churches on the Czech and German sides are different. In the German church and its diaconal organisations there is a highly developed network of full-time and voluntary staff and the church itself has significant moral authority, thanks to which it can call further political and social actors on to the stage. By contrast the voice of the church in the Czech Republic has little political and social resonance; the congregations in the German-Czech border region are numerically very weak; professional diaconal work is limited to a few centres. This different situation should not be allowed to discourage us. It rather shows that effective church action requires cooperation between the Czech and German sides. Common calls will have a significant weight; together we can work effectively on all the fronts of the problem; together we can obtain more means to finance professional help.

What is to be done in view of the predominance of organised criminality and the great number of women who pay so dearly for their attempt to free themselves from poverty and lack of perspectives? How can the irresponsibility of their clients and the indifference of large parts of society in both countries be countered?

How should one deal with such a complex problem? Where should one begin? The churches would overreach themselves if they tried to combat organised crime. It would be equally superfluous to strain themselves to replace already existing forms of social assistance<sup>10</sup>. One must distinguish where the church can use its specific potential, where at the moment the work of Christians is really necessary and where instead it is enough to support those who are already helping. What is the task?

## Lifting Taboos through the Churches

The first and most important step is that the churches and their organisations should open themselves for this frequently taboo subject and apply themselves to it. Ultimately human traffic always has to do with questions connected to sexuality, morals, partnership relations and gender topics. In the churches, however, these themes are seldom discussed openly. But there is no alternative to facing

10 Projects of the church and diaconal advisory centre “Jadwiga” in Hof; the advisory agency “Fluchtpunkt” for children and young people in Cheb/Eger, run since 2006 by the Evangelisches Jugendfürsorgewerk (EJF-Lazarus) and the Jana Project in Domažlice. Extensive help throughout the entire territory of the Czech Republic is offered by the Caritas project “Magdala” in the Archdiocese of Prague. Additionally the secular organizations Rozkoš and Rizika, La Strada – those returning voluntarily to their homelands, IOM ČR, Šance – work with boys in prostitution. Further the cross-border social work of KARO e.V. (Plauen) and the professional advisory agency for victims of human trafficking, KOBRAnet (Zittau and Leipzig).

these questions. An approach that respects the dignity of people in the prostitution milieu is the precondition for effective work for and with those affected.

Church and society as good as never address the topics of violence, misuse and numbing of feeling in the field of sexual behaviour. Yet just these themes are decisive for understanding the phenomenon of prostitution, for understanding the situation of the women – the victims of the sex business – and the men – the clients.

A precondition of work with and for those who are affected by this problematic is dealing in an accepting way with people in the environment of prostitution. That is why silence about prostitution, partnership relations and violence must be broken through among those who can help. It is necessary – above all for Christians – to abandon the stance of a distanced moral critique and understand the needs of the victims of the sex business.

## We Recommend

Opening and supporting in the church and its congregations a broad discussion of the themes of partnership relations, family and human sexuality. This can be served by materials already published for work in youth education as also for work with women and men.<sup>11</sup>

Engaging themselves as churches for a comprehensive gender and sex education in schools and in church work with children and young people. This is about the example of a responsibly lived sexuality marked by careful respect and personal relationship.

## Sensitizing the Public

It is vital to inform the public in church and society about this massive and excessive infringement of human rights represented by human trafficking. In this the backgrounds and connexions are to be made clear. At this point it is also necessary to depict the extent of the need – including the need for help and support – for which in both countries there is no adequate financial support.

In this connexion there are already successful examples of effective publicity

11 So e.g.: Männer und der Sex. Die Artisten im Bett, männerforum, *Zeitschrift der Männerarbeit der EKD*, No. 25, Oktober 2001; Hansfried Boll, Männer und Sexualität, in: Martin Rosowski/Andreas Ruffing, *Ermutigung zum Mannsein. Ein ökumenisches Praxishandbuch für Männerarbeit*, Kassel 2002; *Frauen-Leben, ein Positionspapier des Präsidiums der Ev. Frauenarbeit in Deutschland zu Lebensformen von Frauen*, Mai 2005; Prostitution, Tagungsdokumentation zum Studententag der EFD, May 2001. The most recent memorandum of the ECG on sexual ethics dates admittedly from the year 1971.

work. To these belong the pioneer initiative of Caritas in the Czech Republic as also the publicity efforts of the Diaconal Work of the ECG, which produces TV spots, placards, postcards and a flyer for the public. Church parishes can order these materials and see that they are circulated in the congregation.<sup>12</sup>

What this involves in the first place is informing and gaining support in people's minds for this work. A further goal of this publicity effort is to supplement professional social work by the voluntary social engagement of members of the congregations. Publicity work also aims to unlock additional financial resources in the form of donations for this chronically under-financed target – for the protection of victims of human trafficking.

## We Recommend

Organising an extended campaign to educate the public about the phenomenon of human traffic in the context of the commercial sex industry and to inform about its consequences for the development of children and society as a whole. On the Czech side seeking ecumenical support for a stronger voice for the church in the fight against human trafficking in order to awaken the interest of the media and politics.

## Help for the Victims of Human Traffic

Women and children suffering from sexual exploitation need protection, secure accommodation, a supply of basic necessities and competent accompaniment when it comes to a court trial of the human traffickers. They need professional advice in the development of a new perspective for their lives. Not least do they need support on their return to their homeland, for mostly they cannot stay in the so-called host country.

Voluntary workers are not enough here. Instead, specialised advisory services are needed which have correspondingly trained experts and are qualified to take over the necessary crisis management. This is already being done in many places<sup>13</sup> and at the same time further people are being sought for this work.

For the work in the border region it is of very great importance that the problems are recognised as joint (Czech-German) issues and handled cooperatively. That also holds for the financial guaranteeing of the work. Alongside donations and other financial support, that of churches and diaconal agencies in both countries is needed, above all when it is a matter of winning the understanding

12 Cf. [www.stoppt-zwangsprostitution.de](http://www.stoppt-zwangsprostitution.de); [www.diakonie-menschenhandel.de](http://www.diakonie-menschenhandel.de); [www.magdala.cz](http://www.magdala.cz).

13 Cf. footnote 4.

of governments for the regular financing of such services. Church decision-makers should therefore use their influence to work in their respective contexts towards support in the political realm.

A difficult moment for women who decide to leave the scene is the beginning of a new style of life in a new place where they usually do not know anyone. The church network of congregations can offer much here: support in these beginnings, transitional accommodation, community.

### We recommend

Support for the building up of joint Czech-German offers of help for the victims and for the work of advisory centres.

Declaring collections in Czech and German congregations at regular intervals for this necessary work – not only in the regions near the border. It would therefore be desirable to include this in the regular collection plan.

Supplying the congregations in the border region with essential information on the situation of the victims of human traffic and contacts with helper organisations.

Calling on all Czech congregations to accept and support the socially excluded and give them appropriate methodical help.

Offering help in congregations in the form of inexpensive accommodation in church buildings as well as support and community to persons who have left the milieu of the sex industry and followed through specialised reintegration programmes.

Experienced older women and men in the congregations can help the women in caring for their children. To some degree they can substitute for lost or never-existing family relationships.

### Prevention

The combating of human traffic can not only be a matter for criminal investigation, i.e. by police, judges and prosecutors. Rather here too it is necessary to work on prevention.

A restriction of the work of the church and diaconal organisations to “merely helping victims”, without taking account of the causes and working to change them, falls far short and contradicts the self-understanding of social work according to which it is always also about improving circumstances and conditions. The Special Commission recommends three angles of approach to the question of preventing human trade and the sexual exploitation of children and women:

1. *Prevention through Information.* It is of special importance to inform young girls and women in their home countries about possible dangers abroad. If they

travel to the countries of northern and western Europe as au pairs, students or employees they need to be informed and warned so as to be less likely to fall for the false promises of human traffickers. Good initial approaches are known here, particularly from the work of the Association for International Youth Work which has many kinds of contact in the central and eastern European countries through the mediation of au pair positions and supports various prevention projects there. This work is also supported by the programmes “Hope for Eastern Europe” or “Churches Help Churches” in the Diaconal Work of the ECG. For this too financial means are urgently needed as well as good-will support.

2. *Mediation of Perspectives.* More demanding and further reaching than mere information on dangers is the development of an individual and collective future perspective for young people in their home countries. Young women travel away because they have no chance of training and working in their homeland. Because of the desolate economic situation in many Eastern European countries the human traders will still find hosts of disappointed young women who will take any risk to escape from poverty. Here impressive examples and promising initiatives are known of work with young people at home with the aim of developing a future perspective in their own countries. The existing project work needs to be built up more systematically and financially supported in this aspect as well.

3. *Sensitizing of men.* As it is well known that it is the “clients” who create the market in all its forms, preventive work in the sense of information must be directed not only at the women and girls in their home countries but also at men as customers in the various countries. Around a million men – thus the familiar if controversial estimate – are believed to take advantage of the “services” of prostitutes every day in the German Federal Republic. How many of these women may be supplying these services – in the Czech Republic too as well as in Germany – under duress and unworthy conditions? This human traffic can only be effectively checked if men as potential customers of prostitution can successfully be appealed to and persuaded to change their behaviour. That men can be addressed is shown by experiences in Italy, where in the meantime significantly more victims of human traffic are identified through tips and reports from customers than through police investigation. In 2006 on the occasion of the FIFA World Championships, the Protestant Women’s Work in Germany, the Men’s Work of the EKD and the Diaconal Work of the EKD began in a country-wide publicity programme to speak to customers and to make the problem of forced prostitution known through effective publicity. In this connection it is important not to condemn men even in their role as clients for the purchase of sexual services, but to challenge them to stand up for humanity and freedom from violence in the sex business.



## We recommend

The organisation and support of preventive programmes in the countries of origin of the victims of human traffic, both in short term respects (work on information for girls) as also in long-term (development of perspectives for the future, educational projects etc.).

A comprehensive campaign with the aim of appealing to customers of the sex business, drawing their attention to the phenomenon of modern slavery and human trade (especially in women and children) – and so reducing the market demand.

## Advocacy and Networks

Adequate and appropriate help and support for children and women suffering sexual exploitation, as also effective combating of human traffic, demand a cross-border network of persons and institutions. This includes, alongside police and the law, the various institutions and offers of the assistance infrastructure, but also existing areas of work in the church and diaconal organisations which come into contact with the thematic. These include work with adults and young people, with convicts, in the field of Aids prevention, on human rights and much more. The church itself already disposes of a wide network which it can use in the sense of political lobbying. Its energy can be brought to bear on the social and political environment when it is a matter of putting through demands on the combating of human traffic and assistance.<sup>14</sup>

The Working Group on Prostitution and Human Rights in the Diaconal Work of the EKD is similarly a good example of interdisciplinary cooperation spanning different fields.

Good and proven initiatives for information and networking come from Caritas in Europe and Eurodiaconia together with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). The project "CAT" anchored there since 1999 attempts to improve the situation of affected women and girls through the cross-border cooperation of the counselling services. The Special Commission pleads to continue this work long-term and if possible to intensify it.

By contrast it has not yet been possible to institutionalise specific cooperation in the German-Czech cross-border region. The Special Commission sees here a good chance for the churches to work together on the corresponding problems as Europe grows closer together.

<sup>14</sup> An overview of the most important demands is given by the paper "Frauenhandel bekämpfen – Opfer schützen und unterstützen" by the Protestant Women's Work in Germany, October 2005.

### We recommend

In both churches to commission at least one person with the following tasks:  
Mediating and maintaining contact with the other side and facilitating domestic and cross-border cooperation in significant projects and activities connected with the problematic of forced prostitution in the German-Czech border region.  
Informing the church leaderships on the development of the situation and on the work of church, diaconal and secular agencies in this area.

Keeping a record of the fulfilling of commitments taken on by the churches in connection with further work with this document.

The Special Commission pleads for the continuing of this work long-term and, if possible, for its intensification.



# FUTURE 13

## Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change

A report of a joint working group on climate change and theology convened by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church

### I Approaching God in the context of climate change

The theological task is to reflect on modern scientific accounts of the threats presented by climate change in the context of affirming the triune God as creator and redeemer of the universe. The scientific analyses of climate change and the role of human carbon emissions are well-grounded. It is now intellectually and morally irresponsible to fail to acknowledge and address the urgent need for radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent intolerable damage to human populations and mass extinctions of many plant and animal species.

### II Encountering the Word of God

Reading the Bible in the context of climate change gives a vision of hope in God's faithfulness to creation, a call to practise love and justice to our human and other-than-human neighbours, and a warning of God's judgement of those who fail to do so. In this context, closing our ears to the voices of those most vulnerable to climate change would be nothing less than giving up our claim to be disciples of Christ.

### III Responding to God's Word

What is required of God's people in the industrialized world is repentance. The first step towards this change of heart and practice is confessing our complicity in the sinful structures that have caused the problem.

## IV The body of Christ in the World

A core component to Christian discipleship is now a commitment to lifestyles consistent with levels of carbon emissions the earth can sustain. The church must commit itself to the UK government target of reducing carbon emissions by a minimum of 80% by 2050 and to urgent action to meet appropriate interim goals, as well as assisting members of its congregations to make similar changes and engaging with government to enable national and international change.

## V Sending out

We call on our churches to confess their guilt in relation to the causes of climate change, to show signs of repentance and redeemed sacramental living and to be a prophetic voice in the life of our communities in the following ways:

1. Through prayer, preaching, bible study, teaching, and discussion to raise awareness of the need for confession and repentance among the churches and thereby enable acts of corporate confession in liturgical settings.
2. To act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life in line with the national goal of a minimum 80% reduction by 2050 and appropriate interim targets. This will require first a systematic audit of church carbon emissions at national and local levels and second a strategy to reduce these emissions to achieve this target.
3. To help members of congregations to make similar adjustments in the carbon emissions associated with their lifestyles by supporting them in a personal audit and strategies to reduce their emissions.
4. To campaign at a local and national level for policies that strengthen and take steps towards realizing the commitment to a minimum 80% reduction by 2050.

## I Approaching God in the context of climate change

### Reflection 1

Before you work through the report, jot down any initial questions or thoughts you have about climate change.

What have you heard in the news?

What have you discussed with your friends?

Do you believe all the information you are confronted with?

Keep the questions safe, and we will return to them

### *The Christian doctrine of creation*

The foundation of the Christian doctrine of creation, and therefore the starting point for theological reflection on the issue of climate change, is the great affirmation of Genesis 1.31: 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' In this statement we see both that the universe, our solar system and all life on earth are entirely dependent on God for their origin and continuing existence, and that all these things were declared good by their creator. The opening of John's gospel identifies this creative work with the Word of God, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, showing that the reconciliation of all things to God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus cannot be separated from God's act of creation (Col. 1.15–20; Eph. 1.9–10). Creative and redemptive work also belongs to the work of the Spirit, recognized by Christian theologians as sweeping over the face of the waters in the beginning (Gen. 1.2) and inspiring a groaning creation as it awaits redemption (Rom. 8). God, Creator and Redeemer, Father, Son and Spirit,<sup>1</sup> is the transcendent and immanent source, sustenance and salvation of all creation.<sup>2</sup>

### Reflection 2

Spend ten minutes looking carefully at something from the natural world: a leaf, a flower, a bud, a stone, a bowl of water. Look deeply, noticing tiny details. Look, smell, touch, listen, taste? Think about its place in the inter-connected web of Creation, and how God sees its goodness.

What thoughts or feelings does this stir in you?

Make a collage showing something of your thoughts and feeling about Creation, using your object as an integral part.

1 In this report we avoid using masculine pronouns for God, but for scriptural and ecumenical reasons retain, alongside other names, the traditional Trinitarian formula which includes masculine referents.

2 While the working group compiling this report has reflected on the teachings of other faiths as part of its work, it has not been possible to rehearse these within the scope of this report without the risk of failing to attend to the particularity of different faith traditions. Some references to relevant reading may be found in the attached list of study resources.

## *The scientific understanding of climate change*

In this theological context, we approach the current scientific understandings of recent and future changes in the earth's climate. In the second half of the twentieth century it was recognised that 'global atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>, methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) have increased markedly as a result of human activities since 1750 and now far exceed pre-industrial values determined from ice cores spanning many thousands of years'<sup>3</sup> – carbon dioxide levels being around 30% higher than pre-industrial values by the year 2000. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is tasked with drawing together observations and climate modelling studies, together with assessing potential impacts of future climate change resulting from human activity. After over 15 years of concerted research, the fourth report of the IPCC published in 2007 concluded that 'Warming of the climate system is unequivocal'<sup>4</sup> and that 'Most of the observed increase in global-averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic [human induced] GHG [greenhouse gas] concentrations.'<sup>5</sup> In predicting future climatic changes, the IPCC set out several scenarios, projecting temperature rises by the end of the 21st century ranging from just under 2°C (compared to the end of the 20th century) for a gradual reduction in GHG emissions after 2040, to 4°C for continuing increasing GHG emissions.<sup>6</sup>

Associated with these global temperature increases, the IPCC also judges climate change will cause:

- increased frequency of heat waves over most land areas (very likely);
- increased occurrence of heavy precipitation events over wet areas (very likely);
- increased tropical cyclone activity (likely);
- decreases in water availability and droughts in semi-arid areas (high confidence);
- the North Pole to be ice free in summer months by 2050, although recent trends in decreasing ice coverage have been faster than model predictions, suggesting that the rate of climate change, at least in some areas is faster than projected;<sup>7</sup>
- gradual sea level rise of seven metres over a timescale of 1000 years, although 'more rapid sea-level rise on century timescales cannot be excluded', affecting 'major changes in coast lines and inundation of ... river deltas and low lying islands'.<sup>8</sup>

3 IPCC, 'Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the IPCC Fourth Assessment', (2007), 5.

4 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 2.

5 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 5.

6 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 7–8, Figure SPM-5 and Table SPM-1.

7 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 13, Table SPM-3.

8 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 13.

All of these changes will have significant impacts upon all human populations and the wider ecosystem of the earth. The Stern Review notes that 'the poorest developing countries will be hit earliest and hardest by climate change, even though they have contributed little to causing the problem'.<sup>9</sup>

In Africa, for example, agricultural production is projected to be severely compromised as early as 2020, and food production in other areas will be compromised. Progress toward achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals is likely to be impeded and by the mid 21st century there are likely to be 200 million refugees as a result of climate change.<sup>10</sup> For global warming as low as 1.5°C, it is estimated that 30% of species face an increased risk of extinction, while for warming of 3.5°C, 40–70% of species may become extinct.<sup>11</sup>

While there was some legitimate debate during the early stages of the development of scientific models of climate change regarding their accuracy, there is now an overwhelming scientific consensus that the analysis provided in the IPCC report is robust and reliable.<sup>12</sup> Even in the most optimistic scenario identified in the report, where there is international action to bring rapid and significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, the associated rise in global temperatures of 2°C by the end of the 21st century will make many areas of human population uninhabitable and cause the extinction of many plant and animal species. It is important to note that while much progress has been made in understanding climate change, the scientific view continues to develop. Some new research released since publication of the IPCC report suggests climate change will occur even faster than the IPCC estimates.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of whether this is eventually accepted into the consensus scientific view, the conclusions of the current IPCC report are sufficiently robust to suggest that it is now morally irresponsible to fail to act on this analysis of our current situation.

9 Stern Review Report on The Economics of Climate Change (London: Cabinet Office – H. M. Treasury, 2005), [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview\\_index.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview_index.htm), xxvi.

10 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 11, Table SPM-2, 18; N. Myers, 'Environmental Refugees: An Emergent Security Issue', Paper presented at the 13th Economic Forum, Prague, 23–27 May 2005, [www.osce.org/documents/eea/2005/05/14488\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/eea/2005/05/14488_en.pdf).

11 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 13–14.

12 See the DEFRA position on climate change (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/ENVIRONMENT/climatechange/index.htm>); The United Nations Framework Commission on Climate Change (<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>); the United Nations Environment Programme Global Environment Outlook Report ([www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/](http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/)); The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (<http://www.occ.gov.uk/activities/stern.htm>); and the Royal Society guide to climate change controversies (<http://royalsociety.org/page.asp?id=6229>).

13 J. Hansen, et al., 'Target Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>: Where Should Humanity Aim?', *The Open Atmospheric Science Journal*, 2 (2008), 217–231, doi: 10.2174/1874282300802010217, [www.bentham.org/open/toascj/openaccess2.htm](http://www.bentham.org/open/toascj/openaccess2.htm).



**Reflection 3**

What are the threats humankind will face  
You could roughly draw out a map of the world and mark on it the threats you  
have identified.

What are your initial reactions?

What most alarms or surprises you?

How urgent do you see these threats?

If you made the collage, try to find some way of showing on it the threat of climate change.

## II Encountering the Word of God

### *Theological approach*

The remainder of our report tackles the question of how these theological and scientific accounts bear upon each other as we work out a theological response to climate change. The approach we have adopted is to:

- recognize the situation we find ourselves in, and the questions our faith provokes in this context;
- bring these questions into dialogue with the Bible and Christian theological traditions; and
- seek to discern the implications of this encounter for changed practice.

Our report also seeks to reflect our practice as Christians, and is structured to reflect many Christian liturgies. We seek to bring the situation of the church, as part of a world facing threats of climate change, into encounter with God's word in the Bible in order to inform and motivate a response by the church and the world.

### *Christian hope in the context of climate change*

We consider it crucial to begin our theological response to climate change by reflecting upon our situation in relation to the overarching biblical narrative: God creating the universe, God in Christ bringing reconciliation to a world gone astray (e.g. Gen. 3, 4, 6), and God's promised redemption of all things in Christ and through the Spirit.<sup>14</sup> This understanding of the place in which the church finds itself crucially shapes theological thinking about climate change. First, and most importantly, followers of Christ must hope in these days and not despair. If we affirm the goodness of God's creation, God's incarnation in Jesus Christ, and God's promise of redemption, we cannot despair of what will be, because we are called to have faith in God and hope in God's promises. God's creatures do not have the power ultimately to frustrate the purposes of the almighty God we wor-

<sup>14</sup> See paragraph 'The Christian doctrine of creation' above.

ship; God's sacrifice in Christ was a once-for-all effective action to defeat the sin of God's creatures and to refuse to allow it the final word. In these days between the resurrection of Christ and Christ's return, we are part of a creation groaning in labour pains for the new creation on its way (Rom. 8). These are testing times, but faithfulness means not weakening our grip on the hope that has been set before us (Heb. 6.18). We cannot, therefore, countenance a future in which God has abandoned the project of creation and redemption, in which climate change destroys all that God has established or in which human irresponsibility overwhelms God's ability to bring redemption to creation. The basis for Christian responses to climate change is hope in the realization of the reign of God over a renewed creation.

This affirmation of Christian hope in the face of climate change is subject to two kinds of misunderstanding. First, ever since disputes with Marcion and other Gnostics in the early church, some Christians have been tempted to view redemption as an escape from the created order rather than its renewal. This view of the end-times leads to a lack of concern for what happens on earth, for it considers material creation as unimportant in comparison with the higher spiritual reality to which some human beings are destined. This has obvious relevance to debates about climate change. Such a theological view would suggest that actions to mitigate global warming are unimportant. This Gnostic view of creation and redemption has been consistently rejected by Christian theologians from Justin Martyr in the second century onwards. It is inconsistent with the Christian understanding of the incarnation of God in Christ in which God affirms all God has made, the promise of the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15) and faith that God will make all things new (Rev. 21.1–8)<sup>15</sup> Christian hope means hope for what God is doing in this world, not that spiritual beings will escape the destruction of the material.

The second possible misunderstanding is that we need not act in relation to the threat of climate change because God will sort out the problem for us. In creation God has given creatures freedom, and human beings bear weighty responsibility. Their good and bad actions have real and serious consequences for others. Hope in God's future does not mean a naïve confidence that bad things will not happen. This is made clear by the biblical narrative of human disobedience of God, originating with Adam and Eve in Eden and Cain's murder of his brother (Gen. 3–4), and rehearsed in a catalogue of human atrocities throughout history and continuing to this day. Hope in God's future is, therefore, not an alternative to wise and moral actions in response to the situations that confront us (Rom. 6.1–2). Christian hope guarantees that such faithful actions will not fi-

<sup>15</sup> Tom Wright makes this point in a recent book (N. T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007)).

nally prove to be meaningless and ineffective but will find a place in God's purpose for the redeeming of the world. Hope is thus a reason for bold action in the world in accordance with God's will for creation, not an excuse for inaction.

#### Reflection 4

The two ways of misunderstanding Christian hope have tended to make Christians slow to respond to the threat of climate change.

- What is your reaction to them?
- Do you or your church see or do things any differently?

Look up the Bible references given above.

- What do they say to you about Christian hope?
- What do they say to you about the hope that God is calling you to?

If you made the collage, add a sign of hope to it.

#### *The human vocation to love and do justice*

The Bible provides no shortage of counsel for how humankind should live in accordance with God's will, bearing significantly on the question of climate change. Jesus summarizes the Jewish law in the commandments to love God and love the neighbour (Mk. 12.29–31). Our love of God is demonstrated in our response to the seventh day of creation, in a Sabbath commitment to worship and interruption of our daily work. This love, in response to the covenant God made with all living creatures after the flood (Gen. 9), cannot wholly be distinguished from the second call to love of neighbour: Luke's gospel follows this two-fold commandment with the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of neighbourly love (Lk. 10.25–37). This love is linked in Matthew's shocking identification of Christ with those in need in his image of God's judgement of those who fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited those in prison – and of those who did not (Mt. 25.31–46). In this account those in need are particularly identified with Christ. This priority is echoed in Jesus' 'Nazareth manifesto' where he declares he has been anointed by the Spirit to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Lk. 4.18–19). The beatitudes similarly announce God's blessing on the poor, the mourning, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, peacemakers and the persecuted. Luke follows this with a catalogue of the woes to fall on those who are rich, full, laughing, and well-regarded by others (Mt. 5.3–12; Lk. 6.20–26). There is no doubt that Christ's disciples should show particular concern for the poor and vulnerable.

The New Testament demand to love the neighbour, with particular attention to the poor, can be seen in continuity with the emphasis in Jewish law and Jewish prophetic writings. Jewish law made particular provision for those in need, as well as establishing economic structures such as the Jubilee to prevent differences

between rich and poor becoming too great (Lev. 25.8–17). The prophets protested against oppression of the poor by the rich: the book of Isaiah opens with a vision of cities desolated because of evil-doing. God calls Israel to cease doing evil, learn to do good, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan and plead for the widow (Isa. 1.16–17). Amos declares that because Israel has trampled on the poor and taken their grain they will lose their houses and vineyards (Amos 5.11) and Deuteronomy associates departing from God's law with agricultural catastrophe (Deut. 28.38–40).

The judgement Jeremiah prophesies has an ecological dimension in which the mountains quake, the birds flee and the fruitful land becomes a desert (Jer. 4.24–6). God speaks these warnings through the prophets to call God's people back to the acts of love and justice required by their relationship with God: this is a call for changed living to transform Israel's future, rather than the fatalistic living out of a future fixed by God. The words of the prophets remind us that concern for the poor and vulnerable is not only a matter of love and charity, but of what is due to them under God's law: it is a matter of justice.

#### *Hearing the neighbour as a test of discipleship*

In the context of this biblical demand for love and justice, encountering those whose communities are imperilled by climate change is especially striking. In September 2007 the Pacific Conference of Churches issued a statement from their General Assembly concerning climate change. They understand themselves to be guardians of the Pacific Ocean or Moana, and 'deplore the actions of industrialized countries that pollute and desecrate our Moana'. They declare 'the urgency of the threat of human induced effects of climate change to the lives, livelihoods, societies, cultures and ecosystems of the Pacific Islands' and call on 'our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world to act in solidarity with us to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change. We issue this call especially to churches in the highly industrialized nations whose societies are historically responsible for the majority of polluting emissions. We further urge these countries to take responsibility for the ecological damage that they have caused by paying for the costs of adaptation to the anticipated impacts.'<sup>16</sup> The echoes of the anger of the prophets ring loud through this statement. The Pacific Islanders face grave threats to their way of life as a result of the burning of fossil fuels by industrialized nations: we cannot fail to recognize this as the trampling of the poor by the rich criticized by Amos. The demands of justice and love for these neighbours are even stronger than the claim of the man cared for by the Good Samaritan: here are nations left wounded by our negligence in the past,

16 Pacific Conference of Churches, 'Statement From the Pcc 9th General Assembly on Climate Change', (2007).

whose injuries we continue to worsen through our irresponsibility in the present. Closing our ears to this call would be nothing less than giving up our claim to be Christ's disciples.

Being able to hear the voice of these communities already threatened by climate change is a blessing to us in shaping a theological response, especially as many who are not able to make themselves heard are also threatened. Among these are communities in sub-Saharan Africa for whom changes in climate have already brought increasingly frequent famines and droughts, as well as those in India, the Americas and Europe who have suffered heat waves and storms intensified by global warming.<sup>17</sup>

There is also a much larger group of human beings threatened by climate change who have no chance of making themselves heard: those not yet born. As well as alerting ourselves to the demand of love and justice to our present neighbours, we need to understand what it means to treat as neighbours those in following generations. The covenant God made after the flood was with all the creatures in every generation descended from those saved in the ark (Gen. 9): we must not make the mistake of thinking that those alive today have any superiority under the covenant over those to follow us. For some, thinking of children and grandchildren helps to give faces to those who will inherit the earth we leave (cf. Mal. 4.6), but this must be only a first step in appreciating the enormity of the moral demand of future generations. The requirement to develop our moral imaginations in this direction is particularly crucial given that the worst effects of failing to reduce carbon emissions now will be felt by those alive one hundred years and more from now. Christians should resist market-based economic analyses that discount the well-being of future generations in relation to those alive today, and thereby portray as unattractive actions that will benefit future generations but which incur immediate costs.<sup>18</sup>

17 In 2005, Lord Robert May, President of the Royal Society, drew attention to the findings that 'climate change, largely caused by a rise in greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, may already be responsible for an increase in drought conditions, and hence for a rise in the risk of famine, in eastern Africa where millions are already at risk of hunger' ('Open letter to Margaret Beckett and other G8 energy and environment ministers', October 2005, <http://royalsociety.org/page.asp?id=3834>). See also Andrew Simms and John Magrath, *Africa-Up in Smoke? 2: The Second Report on Africa and Global Warming from the Working Group on Climate Change and Development*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxfam Publishing, 2006).

18 For a theological discussion of this issue, see Rachel Muers, *Living for the Future: Theological Ethics for Coming Generations* (London: T & T Clark, 2008); for a detailed philosophical and economic analysis, see John Broome, *Counting the Cost of Global Warming* (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1992). See also Herman Daly and John Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

**Reflection 5**

Low-lying countries like Bangladesh are threatened by rising sea levels.

- What would it feel like if your whole community had to leave your homeland?

- What would your concerns be?

Write a letter to a future great grandchild explaining how what is going on in their world came about.

*Attending to other than human neighbours*

Attending to biblical depictions of human obedience to God's will also directs our attention to non-human creation. The creatures of each day of the first Genesis creation narrative are declared good (Gen. 1) and the whole of creation in all its diversity is declared 'very good' at the end of the sixth day (Gen. 1.31). After the great flood, God makes a covenant not only with Noah and his family but with every living creature that came out of the ark (Gen. 9.9–10). The law of Israel protects not only human beings, but the animals they keep, who must not be made to work on the Sabbath (Exod. 20.10) or muzzled while they are treading grain (Deut. 25.4). The Sabbath year is to rest the land and benefit both livestock and wild animals alongside the Israelites and their hired workers (Lev. 25.5–7). When Job questions God's treatment of him he is reminded of the majesty of God's careful provision for every creature, and of God's creation even of creatures like Behemoth and Leviathan who are threatening to humanity (Job 38–41). his attention to creation beyond the human is echoed in the New Testament: where Jesus reminds his disciples of God's concern for birds and lilies (Mt. 6.25–34); the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians emphasize the union of all things in Christ (Col. 1.15–20; Eph. 1.9–10) and the letter to the Romans pictures the whole of creation awaiting its share in the freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8.18–23). This biblical vision of solidarity among God's creatures accords with modern scientific discoveries relating to both the genetic affinity between human and other animals and the radical interdependence of all life on earth.

This biblical regard for creation beyond the human has often been overlooked in interpretations of God's injunction to 'subdue the earth' and 'have dominion' over other animals (Gen. 1.28). This instruction has been seen as giving human beings licence to use other animals as they will, although there is no allowance in these verses for killing animals for food.<sup>19</sup> Many biblical commentators on Genesis are now agreed that identifying human beings as the image of God does not name a particular capacity as God-like, but gives them a

19 Permission is only given for meat-eating after the great flood (Gen. 9.3). Gerhard von Rad is one of many commentators to reject the interpretation of dominion as unlimited license: see Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM, 1972), 60.

particular role in relation to other creatures.<sup>20</sup> Our dominion should therefore be exercised in a way that it images and reflects God's care for creation. This kind of care, made more explicit in the instruction to Adam to till and keep the soil of Eden (Gen. 2.15), has often been described as 'stewardship' of creation, rooted in the image of a person placed in a position of responsibility to manage somebody else's property, finances, or household.<sup>21</sup> This picture of a human role on behalf of the rest of creation can help us recognize our responsibility to care for other life, although it is important to recognize its limitations. God is present and active in sustaining creation from moment to moment. We are not, therefore, stewards acting in place of an absent landlord, but servants called to play our part in response to God's care for creation. This responsibility has obvious relevance to climate change, suggesting that the potential mass extinctions of other species on the planet caused by human activities represent our abdication from a divinely-entrusted duty. Biblical texts testifying to God's concern for creatures beyond the human, together with Israelite law defending them, demand that we should be motivated by love and justice to protect nonhuman neighbours threatened by climate change alongside the human ones.

### Reflection 6

Look up the Bible texts from this section.

- In what ways do animals and nature contribute to your life?
- In what ways can you exercise

### *Bringing God's judgement upon us*

Alongside hope in the future that God is bringing, therefore, comes an urgency to cooperate with God's purposes. Where human beings have wilfully neglected their responsibilities before God, both Old and New Testament texts proclaim God's judgement: Jeremiah prophesies that the rich will not get to enjoy their wealth and Jesus warns those who fail to care for him, embodied in those in need, are not fit for eternal life. The Bible repeatedly tells of a world turned upside-down when God's reign is inaugurated, with those now well-off going hun-

20 See, for example, Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, Word Bible Commentary (Waco: Word, 1994), 30; Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, Nicot (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 135; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 32; von Rad, *Genesis*, 58 and the detailed discussion in J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2005), 93–145.

21 Calvin's commentary on Gen. 2.15 concludes 'let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself disolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.' (John Calvin, *Genesis*, ed. & trans. John King (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), vol. 1, 125.

gry and those now first finding themselves last (Mt. 10.30; Mk 10.31). In encountering biblical warnings about the consequences of failing to love and deal justly with those in need, it is hard to escape the conclusion that in continuing to emit carbon at rates that threaten our neighbours, present and future, human and other than human, we are bringing God's judgement upon us. Even here we should not despair: that God judges rather than abandons us is a sign of God's grace and continuing love for us. But in our encounter with God's word in the context of climate change we should be clear that, while we have grounds for hope in the future God will bring if we act in accordance with God's love for all creation, we also have grounds for fear of God's judgement if we continue to fail to respond to the urgent needs of our neighbours. When the rich man, who had ignored Lazarus begging at his gate, asked to be allowed out of hell to warn his brothers, Abraham replied they already had Moses and the prophets (Lk. 16.27–8). Neither can we say we have not heard.

### III Responding to God's Word

#### *Confession*

In encountering God's word in the context of climate change we have received a vision of hope in God's faithfulness to creation, a call to practise love and justice to our neighbours, and a warning of God's judgement of those who fail to do so. In response our first action must be confession: acknowledging what we have done wrong is the first and necessary step towards the change of direction repentance requires. We must confess that we:

- are heirs to the riches of an industrialized economy that has been instrumental in causing the climatic change already placing our neighbours in peril;
- are so addicted to the fruits of this economy that we find it hard even to want to live lives that do not threaten the future of life on planet earth; and
- know much of the good we should do to live within sustainable boundaries, but struggle to summon the moral will to change.

Our wrongdoing is best understood as complicity in structural sin, a socially embedded and continuing pattern where the rich and powerful exploit those who are poor and powerless, just as they did in the days of the prophets.

South African theologian, Ernst Conradie, has argued that the need for white South Africans to confess their involvement in the structures of apartheid is a good analogy for the confession necessary in relation to climate change.<sup>22</sup> Just as most white South Africans had no direct responsibility for the establishment or

22 Ernst Conradie, *The Church and Climate Change* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008).



maintenance of apartheid but were guilty in benefiting from it and failing to challenge its injustice, so we did not originate the industrialized economies that resulted in climate change but are now guilty of enjoying the fruits of systems that threaten the future of God's creatures. Drawing on Barth's work, Conradie notes that our confession is only possible because of our knowledge of God's grace: it is our encounter with God's mercy that enables us to recognize our guilt. Conradie recognizes, however, that for most of us confession is still some way off, because we are not sure that we can envisage or want to live the renewed and reordered lives that would result from being forgiven. Like the rich man who could not bear Jesus' command to be separated from his possessions and sadly turned away (Mk. 10.17–22), we look at the prospect of lives within levels of carbon emissions that the earth can sustain, and decide we prefer our lives of sin. Here, then, is the first challenge to the church: receive God's grace, come to desire a forgiven life, and thus be enabled to confess current wrongdoing.

### Reflection 7

"Our wrongdoing is best understood as complicity in structural sin" and is compared above with involvement in the structures of apartheid or historical complicity in the slave trade.

Either: Make a list or 'mind map' of ways in which our lifestyles (personal, corporate, ecclesial) are contributing to the high level of carbon emissions which are causing climate change.

- Which of these are easy to forget, or take for granted?

Or: Cut up pictures from catalogues, magazines and newspapers to create a montage depicting the lifestyle we aspire to, or are lured to, or unthinkingly fall into.

### *Repentance*

Authentic confession leads to repentance: a turning from past sin to the way God would have us live. As individuals, churches and nations, we need to work towards this about turn, which is the only hope for the kind of societal changes that will avoid our carbon emissions resulting in catastrophic climate change. If we think of this task of repentance only as an individual matter we are likely to fail in our attempts to bring about the change necessary even in our own lives: repentance of structural sin must have a corporate dimension in which, as churches, we take action collectively and turn our practice around at institutional and individual levels. Beyond this, we need to consider what role we can play as churches and citizens in contributing to a similar turning about of our nation, by entering the political arena to make the case for strong action based on our moral duties to our neighbours.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> We outline what signs of repentance might look like in section 'The body of Christ in the World' below.

Even to sinners like us, God promises forgiveness (Rom. 5.6), and in God's name the church offers absolution from sin. Before us, therefore, is the great and joyous prospect of being welcomed home with open arms by our God (Lk. 15.20), released from our burden of guilt and despair into lives as God's forgiven children. It may be that desire for this newness of life, for lives washed clean of the stain of our sin (Ps. 51), is the strongest motivation for the change of life to which God calls us.

## **Reflection 7**

"Our wrongdoing is best understood as complicity in structural sin" and is compared above with involvement in the structures of apartheid or historical complicity in the slave trade.

Either: Tear up the list you made earlier and offer each piece to God, asking for a vision of a better way.

Or: Tear up your montage of a high-carbon lifestyle and stick the pieces onto a fresh sheet of paper to see if you can create a new image of a renewed order of life.

Can you suggest why repentance, in relation to climate change, must be individual **and** corporate?

## *Intercession*

One response of those forgiven by God must be intercession for those threatened by climate change. In confidence in God's good purposes for creation we ask God to:

- protect human populations made vulnerable by changes in climate;
- protect those in generations to come who will inherit the problems we have created; and
- protect those plant and animal species whose habitats will be eradicated by global warming.

As our prayers in this area become more detailed, however, they also become more uncomfortable: we pray for:

nations to recognize the urgency of action in response to climate change;  
 politicians to be bold in setting out strategy to achieve the goals that need to be reached; and  
 the citizens of nations – and especially nations like ours – to be motivated to support costly action to cut carbon emissions and seek to ameliorate its effects for those it threatens.

Our prayers of intercession, therefore, lead us to pray for continuing change in our hearts and minds, allowing us to play a part in changing the hearts and minds of others, and becoming part of the answer to our intercessions.

**Reflection 9**

Look through a selection of newspapers, cutting out stories which address the effects of climate change, particularly in other parts of the world.

Make a note of related stories you hear on the news.

Do you have links with church partners in other countries. How might they be affected by climate change?

Use these stories as a focus for prayers of intercession.

## IV The body of Christ in the world

### *United as Christ's body*

As participants in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, enacted in the sacrament of holy communion, the church is united in its saviour Jesus Christ and nourished to live in holiness as Christ's body on earth. In responding to Jesus' command to eat bread and drink wine as his body and blood in remembrance of him, the material stuff of creation, in the form of grain and grapes, becomes a sign and sacrament of God's presence with us. Through participation in Christ, we are made capable of lives we could not otherwise live. We are transformed from individual disciples into members of his one body, no longer dependent on ourselves but bound together in the life of our Lord. Together we are equipped and enabled to act as God's people in the world, witnessing to what God is doing and serving God and neighbour. Just as the humble bread and wine become sacraments of God's presence with us, so our small acts in response to God's call become signs of God's presence in the world.

**Reflection 10**

Try to bring to mind the most moving Holy Communion service you have attended.

- What does Christ teach us, through Holy Communion, about a more spiritual, sustainable way of life?

### *Judging what repentance requires*

Before we can identify what actions are necessary at ecclesial, individual and national levels, we must determine what reductions in our carbon emissions are necessary in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. The IPCC 4th Assessment Report estimates that keeping the globally-averaged equilibrium temperature increase between 2 and 2.4°C above pre-industrial values will require greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by between 50 and 85% by 2050 compared to emission levels in 2000, leading to an eventual stabilization of greenhouse gases to between 445 and 490 parts per million (ppm).<sup>24</sup> In common with many other interpreters of the IPCC report, the recent first report of the

UK Government Committee on Climate Change judges that ‘the global danger zone starts above about 2°C and that global policy should aim to keep ... temperature increases below this’<sup>25</sup>. However, in making this assessment they note that ‘it is no longer possible with certainty, or even with high probability, to avoid this danger zone’ and therefore ‘strategies for adaptation to temperature increases of at least 2OC’ should be planned, with the additional aim ‘to reduce to very low levels (e.g. less than 1%) the dangers of exceeding 4°C’<sup>26</sup>. In light of this judgement, the Committee on Climate Change concludes that global emissions of greenhouse gases would have to be reduced by 50% below current emissions by 2050. Since ‘it is difficult to imagine a global deal which allows the developed countries to have emissions per capita in 2050 which are significantly above a sustainable global average’ of ‘between 2.1 and 2.6 tonnes per capita’ for the UK this implies an ‘80% cut in UK Kyoto (greenhouse gas) emissions from 1990 levels’.<sup>27</sup> Towards this end, they set three five-year carbon budget targets which would see a reduction in UK emissions of 42% by 2020,<sup>28</sup> achieved through energy efficiency measures and technological developments to de-carbonise power generation and transport.<sup>29</sup>

24 IPCC, ‘Synthesis Report Summary’, 20, Table SPM.6.

25 UK Government Committee on Climate Change, ‘Building a Low-Carbon Economy – The UK’s Contribution to Tackling Climate Change’, December 2008 (London: The Stationery Office, 2008), [www.theccc.org.uk/reports/](http://www.theccc.org.uk/reports/), 20

26 Committee on Climate Change, ‘Building a Low-Carbon Economy’, 20. There is a growing body of opinion that is concerned that observed changes in climate, such as ice melt within the arctic circle, are progressing faster than the IPCC models predict. This has led to proposals for stabilization of greenhouse gases at lower concentrations to reduce the risk of passing dangerous tipping points in our global eco-system. Two significant networks are the 350 network, [www.350.org](http://www.350.org), and the 100 months campaign, [www.onehundredmonths.org](http://www.onehundredmonths.org).

27 Committee on Climate Change, ‘Building a Low-Carbon Economy’, xiv–xv.

28 Following the EU framework, the figure of 42% is the intended budget reduction relative to 1990 that will apply ‘following a global deal on emissions reductions’. Before a global deal is reached an ‘Interim budget’ requires a 34% reduction by 2020 (Committee on Climate Change, ‘Building a Low-Carbon Economy’, xix).

29 Recent documents published by the EU and Australian governments also commend the global target of a 50% reduction in emissions by 2050. However, in aiming towards this, they recently adopted less ambitious emission reductions by 2020: the EU up to 30% and Australia 15%. See European Commission, *Combating Climate Change: The EU Leads The Way* (Brussels; European Commission Publication, 2008), [ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/move/75/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/move/75/index_en.htm) and Australian Government Department of Climate Change, *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme: Australia’s Low Carbon Future* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2008), [www.climatechange.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.gov.au). Again both these figures refer to ‘intended’ targets following a global deal on emissions reductions. Prior to this, ‘interim’ targets of 20% for the EU and 5% for Australia are proposed. For discussion of the viability of a 50% reduction

Meeting the ambitious target of an 80% cut in emissions will not prevent serious damage caused by climate change: a 2°C rise in global temperatures will make areas uninhabitable by humans, lead to droughts, food shortages and large numbers of environmental refugees, as well as the probable extinction of a third of species on earth.<sup>30</sup> While it would be good to do more than this<sup>31</sup> we cannot aim to do less, even if other nations are not yet ready to take similar action. In recognition of the damage we have already done, and in response to our encounter with God's word and with the voiced and unvoiced claims of our neighbours, we must reduce our carbon emissions to levels that the earth can sustain. It is incumbent on those who have generated the most carbon emissions and derived the greatest benefit from relatively cheap and accessible fossil fuels to pioneer the path towards alternative energy futures.

### *Enabling repentance in the church*

In the remainder of this section we set out some practical initiatives at the ecclesial, individual and national level that would be both signs of repentance and first steps toward the forgiven and redeemed lives to which we are called. We have argued that confession is the first step towards repentance and changed life and that that is only possible alongside the hope of a good and God-given future in which we can live forgiven lives before God. As churches we must first seek to enable and equip this change of heart, mind and will through prayer, preaching, bible study, discussion and reflection, leading to corporate liturgical acts of confession. On this change of heart all else depends. These actions are the church's preparation for joining in the redemptive mission of God in this area of life. They lead the church to where its members may hear God's universal call to changed lives in response to the threat of climate change.<sup>32</sup> They are a precondition to the church recognizing that a commitment to living within sustainable levels of carbon emissions is central to Christian discipleship in our days. Through our common worship and common life we are transformed, and become a community capable of transformation.

by 2050 see also Ross Garnaut, *The Garnaut Climate Change Review Final Report* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), [www.garnautreview.org.au](http://www.garnautreview.org.au), and K. Anderson, and A. Bows, 'Reframing the Climate Change Challenge in Light of the Post-2000 Emission Trends', *Phil Trans Royal Soc A*, vol. 336, no. 1882 (2008), 3863-3882, DOI: 10.1098/rsta.2008.0138.

30 See section 'The scientific understanding of climate change' above.

31 The Operation Noah campaign ([www.operationnoah.org/](http://www.operationnoah.org/)) judges that the UK must achieve a reduction in emissions of at least 90% by 2030 and supports the proposal of the Centre for Alternative Technology for zero carbon emissions in *Zero Carbon Britain* (Llwyngwern: CAT Publications, 2007), [www.zerocarbonbritain.com/](http://www.zerocarbonbritain.com/).

32 Where 'church member' is used in this document it is intended to refer to regular participants in the worship and other activities of churches, rather than narrower denominational definitions of the term.

**Reflection 11**

“A commitment to living within sustainable levels of carbon emissions is central to Christian discipleship in our days.”

- How far do you agree with this?
- What, in your understanding, are “sustainable levels of carbon emissions”?

How could this be realistically achieved in your daily life?

*Reducing the carbon footprint of the church*

As churches, we must address the carbon footprint of our own activities. We must first move quickly to discover the current level of our carbon emissions and identify a strategy to enable an audit of carbon emissions at all levels of the church, so that local churches, regional structures, and national church institutions become aware of the starting point for action to reduce carbon emissions. Alongside this we must establish a way of supporting church structures at all levels in making reductions in carbon emissions proportionate to the overall reductions necessary by 2050 of at least 80%, with the urgent and immediate interim steps this requires. National churches will need to provide support and incentives for local and regional structures to meet this challenge. We do not underestimate the magnitude of this task but consider it the minimum adequate response to the situation we face, as well as the only morally authentic basis for calling on church members and the nation at large to make similar changes. We recognize the structural factors, internal and external to the churches, that impede progress towards these goals, and the need for churches to work in partnership with local and national government to overcome the barriers to change. Church policy in many areas, including the investment of church funds, will need to be reviewed in the light of this commitment.

*Helping members of congregations to reduce emissions*

Alongside actions to address the carbon emissions associated with the corporate life of our churches, we need to identify ways of enabling members of congregations to make changes in their carbon footprint matching the minimum of an 80% reduction target together with appropriate interim goals. Again, the first task is to encourage and facilitate an audit of current carbon emissions, followed by supporting individuals in church or small group contexts to commit to reducing their carbon footprint and identifying strategies to do so. We believe that many will respond to the offer of exchanging a general consciousness of guilt for addressing the topic responsibly and realistically in a group context. The early church began as a movement of small groups of Christians who agreed to be accountable to one another. It may be that, if we can recover this sense of accountability which small groups can foster, many may be enabled to make changes that seemed impossible in isolation. If congregations

were able to see the net impact of both corporate and individual commitments to reduce carbon emissions, this might be a significant encouragement and motivation for further action.

### *Engaging politically to work for national and international change*

Finally, alongside movement towards these changes in the corporate life of the church, we need, as churches, to be prepared to contribute to public political debate about appropriate responses to climate change. Our churches should support the UK government in developing a coherent strategy to cut emissions by a minimum of 80% by 2050 and impress on the government the urgency of this task. Our churches have called for action by the UK even in a global context in which others are not yet ready to make matching commitments.<sup>33</sup> The churches must speak prophetically to challenge politics bound by party interest and the horizon of the election cycle; they must also act to build grassroots coalitions so that politicians offering wise and responsible long-term action in response to climate change will find electoral support. Cuts must come from real reductions in carbon emissions from the UK: while support to assist poorer nations in sustainable energy development is crucial, it would be irresponsible for the UK to buy out its responsibility to reduce its own carbon emissions. High on the list of political priorities must be advocacy in support of those poor nations most exposed to the threats of climate change through no fault of their own, where help is owed not only on grounds of charity but also as restitution and reparation for damage done by the activities of industrialized nations. Churches at regional and local levels need to work towards action with local governments. At every level, the corporate commitments of our churches to act in relation to their own carbon emissions will significantly enhance their contribution to this public debate. Effective political initiatives will often come from joint projects with other churches, other faith groups or non-religious groups sharing similar goals, and action to improve understanding between such potential allies and networks is important.<sup>34</sup>

33 Baptist Union of Great Britain, The Methodist Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the United Reformed Church, 'A response to the draft climate change bill consultation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)'. (July, 2007), [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpit\\_climatebilldefraresponse\\_0707.pdf](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpit_climatebilldefraresponse_0707.pdf).

34 We welcome the Church of England 'Shrinking the Footprint' campaign ([www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org/](http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org/)) and the London Roman Catholic Church 'For Creed and Creation' ([www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/environment/For-CreedandCreation.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/environment/For-CreedandCreation.pdf)) as examples of cross-denominational work on this issue.

## *Alertness to disproportionate impact on the vulnerable and poor*

In making these proposals for the kinds of action churches should engage in as signs of repentance and sacramental living, we recognize that, for many members of church communities, action in response to these issues will seem confusing, threatening and unwelcome. Alongside making the case for substantial change, our churches must keep alert to the pastoral implications of the proposed changes for church members. In particular, we must avoid strategies for reducing carbon emissions that have a disproportionate impact on the poor and vulnerable.

## *The need for action in relation to other environmental issues*

In addressing the issue of climate change, we must also recognize that it is only one of many environmental issues requiring attention by our churches: related issues include concern for:

- threats to biodiversity;
- deforestation;
- water shortages;
- depletion of non-renewable resources; and
- the impact of rapid rises in human population.

Climate change is but one manifestation of the impact of a global industrialized economy. Action in response to climate change will ameliorate the impact of some of these environmental challenges, but it is also required in these other areas.<sup>35</sup> Appreciation of the complex interrelationships of environmental issues and other justice concerns is also necessary, such as balancing the economic advantages to poor communities of fairly traded goods from overseas against the carbon costs of such imports. Attention to the challenge of climate change should not be at the expense of concern for other justice issues affecting the poor.

### **Reflection 12**

Look at the four numbered points in the 'Sending Out' section on page 5.

- What are the possibilities for beginning to work on these in your church?
  - What could be your starting point?
  - What is preventing you from taking the action you would like to take as a church?
- How can this be overcome?

<sup>35</sup> The Eco-Congregation initiative ([www.ecocongregation.org/](http://www.ecocongregation.org/)) is one example of an approach to church action on environmental issues taking a range of environmental concerns into account.



## V Sending out

### *A call to action*

We call on our churches to respond to the challenge of climate change:

- as those affirming the hope of God's continued faithfulness to creation;
- as those who have received the call to show love and justice to neighbours present and future, human and other than human; and
- as those who have heard the warning of God's judgement of those who hear and do not act.

We call on our churches to confess their guilt in relation to the causes of climate change, to show signs of repentance and redeemed living and to be a prophetic voice in the life of our communities, through promoting a change of heart among congregations;<sup>36</sup> urgently reducing church carbon footprints at every level in line with national targets;<sup>37</sup> enabling members of our congregations to make similar changes towards sustainable lifestyles;<sup>38</sup> and engaging politically with local and national governments.<sup>39</sup>

### *The way ahead*

We are aware that the responses to the challenge of climate change we call for in this report require our churches to make a considerable journey from where we find ourselves at the moment. This is a journey unlike any other that most of us have taken, and which has a destination only future generations will reach and benefit from. The destination is a promise rather than a recognisable place and the route has not been mapped out. The costs of the journey are to be borne now but the benefits will not be felt in our time. While we live in an age of individuality and immediacy, this is a journey not of individuals but of a community: the people of God and the people of the earth, which requires us to build for the future rather than for immediate returns. Such a journey changed the children of Israel from a disorganised group of refugees into a nation. The beginning of their journey involved giving up the comfort and apparent security of one lifestyle and moving to a more dangerous and uncomfortable way of living. But they gained freedom. The most difficult part of such a journey is the exodus, the leaving without looking back. The Israelites' guide was a God who loved justice and hated oppression, who cared for the humble and opposed exploitation: we believe in the same God who loves those who are exploited and oppressed today. We too

36 See section 'Enabling repentance in the church' above.

37 See section 'Reducing the carbon footprint of the church' above.

38 See section 'Helping members of congregations to reduce emissions' above.

39 See section 'Engaging politically to work for national and international change' above.

set out on a journey of freedom in response to the challenge of climate change, blessed by God's peace, sent by our saviour and going our way in the company of the Holy Spirit (John 20.21–22).

### **Reflection 13**

Return to the questions and thoughts you noted down at the beginning of the study session.

- What answers or responses do you think God has given you?
- As you reflect over what you have learnt from reading the report and doing the exercises, what image, idea or insight most stands out?
- Who can you talk to in the next week about what you have learnt?

Write down three small, practical steps you will make in the next two weeks addressing your responsibility as a Christian in a time of ever-worsening climate change. You may want to encapsulate your commitments in a brief covenant prayer, using words or images that you have reflected on, to commit you.

### **Reflection 14**

Consider signing up for a free email newsletter at [www.creationchallenge.org.uk](http://www.creationchallenge.org.uk) and keep in touch with actions being taken by Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

## **Report Status**

The report *Hope in God's Future: Christian discipleship in the context of climate change* has been produced by three Churches. It has been adopted by the Faith and Unity Executive of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and by the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church. The report has also been received by the Methodist Conference and sections 1 to 4 of the report have been adopted as a draft.



# SEEKING 14

## „Searching for What is Best for the City“<sup>1</sup>

The resistance of the Synod of the Waldensian Church  
to the “pacchetto sicurezza” (Security package)  
of the Italian government.

*An interview with Maria Bonafede in January 2010. She is the Moderator of the Waldensian Church.*

**Question:** In January 2009, under the so-called “pacchetto sicurezza”, the Italian government severely tightened the laws for immigrants coming to Italy. How significant are these changes in the law for the situation of the refugees in Italy?

**Maria Bonafede:** The new legal measures laid down by the legislators have in fact had three very drastic consequences:

1. They make both the achievement of the personal right of residence much more difficult and also the chance of allowing families to be united, both already very complicated. One must e.g. pay a certain amount, namely 300 Euros, which is already a hurdle for many. This makes the application for legalization of residence more difficult. Before the new legislation, for example, the uniting of families was in theory intended to take place within three months and in practice lasted at most twelve months. Now the proposed normal period has been extended to six months.



1 Jer 29:7.

2. It has become much more complicated to renew the right of residence, which is why some people already living legally in Italy will again become “illegal”.
3. The ships which want to put in at the Italian coasts can be turned away due to the new measures: How can one then differentiate illegal immigrants from political refugees if the ships cannot land on the coasts?

**Question:** In August 2009, the Synod of the Waldensians clearly demonstrated with a fast to show solidarity and explicit statements its opposition to the Italian government’s new laws which were particularly sharply directed against refugees and those seeking political asylum. What part do refugees play in Italian society?

**Maria Bonafede:** A fundamental role has been acknowledged and it is indisputable that the immigrants are put into the areas of work in industry, trade and agriculture for which no indigenous workers are available. If it were not for the immigrants many branches of industry would have to close. Over and above this there is the large sector of so-called “watchers” or “companions”, i.e. the domestic helpers who care for the older Italian population whose numbers are steadily increasing. Here we are talking above all of Russian, Polish and Rumanian women but also of women from Latin America and Africa who perform a job which demands sensitivity and is indispensable. It is so indispensable that two months after the announcement of the “security package” the government had to create a special regulation to extend the deadline for normal registration.

**Question:** In a report on the Synod it is said that the increase in the number of refugees has also had an effect on the Waldensian congregations. How is this to be understood?

**Maria Bonafede:** Many immigrants – particularly those from Africa but also some from Latin America – are by origin Protestants (Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists) and when they arrive in Italy they encounter Pentecostal congregations with whom they then live the faith and visit the services. On average they need two to three years before they discover the existence of the historically-rooted Protestant churches which are rich in tradition; but when they *do* find them they come immediately in large numbers. Some Waldensian and Methodist congregations in the north-east of Italy (in Lombardy, Veneto and Friuli) have numerically trebled or quadrupled thanks to the foreign believers. Small congregations whose Sunday Schools were visited by only a handful of children suddenly had fifty new children in their ranks. In some cases the old church buildings were too small and they had to rent or buy new premises. There is now also a new intercultural further education – both for the natives and the immigrants. This is indeed a phenomenon which we consider a gift from heaven, on the other hand it needs an immense effort of intercultural me-

diation within our congregational life. We call this task “Being Church Together” (essere chiesa insieme).

**Question:** What concrete effects would complying with the “paccetto sicurezza” have had for the Church’s work with refugees and for the social life of the natives and refugees together in the congregations?

**Maria Bonafede:** As answer I give you a recent example: In Florence the mayor decided from one day to the next to clear a Roma settlement which had existed for years. The Waldensian congregation in Florence saw themselves confronted with the necessity of taking 75 Roma for six days into their church. Among these were a two-week-old baby, a woman in her sixth month of pregnancy and a man in a wheelchair. All these people suddenly found themselves on the street, and that in temperatures below zero. A place for them to stay simply had to be found. So the congregation had to seek help from the ecumenical movement and from voluntary aid organizations, and wrote to newspapers to find at least temporary solutions for them to be taken in as guests; on Sunday one could then celebrate a service together in the church.

**Question:** What were the reactions of the general public to your symbolic fasting and your opposition to Berlusconi’s laws?

**Maria Bonafede:** In Italy it is always difficult to have Protestant statements taken seriously in the media with, but considering the relatively limited publicity which we succeeded in generating the support produced was considerable.

**Question:** In the Report on the Synod one could read that, alongside national and regional politicians the Bishop of Pinerolo also participated in this fast. How was your protest received in the ecumenical movement? Did you get support?

**Maria Bonafede:** At a local level in Piedmont, i.e. in the Waldensian Valleys and the neighbouring province of Pinerolo we had the support of the Roman Catholic Bishop, on a national level there was no reaction.

**Question:** With this action the Waldensian Church is showing her solidarity with the refugees and her commitment to justice. How important for the life of the Church is this stand for justice? Did the Declaration of Accra and the connected worldwide struggle of Reformed Christians for more justice play a part in your manifold efforts?

**Maria Bonafede:** Our congregations have always been concerned with the commitment for justice and have constantly reflected on the topic of “Peace with Justice”. Because they themselves always had to keep alert for the protection of their own rights, they also developed a special feeling for the theme of minorities and their rights in general. The intensive reflection on the “Declaration of Accra” which we discussed extensively over a long period, both in individual congrega-

tions and in the Synod, was certainly useful and necessary, even if it was judged by part of the Church to be so drastic that in the end many thought it was impossible to put into action. On the other hand, the Protestant youth in Italy attached great significance to Accra.

**Question:** What comes next in the “Search for what is best for the city”? How have the congregations taken up the problem of migration as their own?

**Maria Bonafede:** With the consistent continuation of the work in our congregations for a pluralistic and internationally aligned cultivation of hospitality and human rights.

*(Translated from the German translation by Thomas E. Fuchs and Sabine Wolters)*

# LEARNING 15

## Learning Justice - The World is Getting Smaller – Think Large!

Accra and the millennium goals with children and youth

### Preface

In this part we offer stories and work forms which can be used for children (<12) and youth (>12) around the Day of prayer for vintage and labour, Labour-Sunday and Thanksgiving for vintage and labour. The assistances and ideas can be applied at one's own discretion for children's side-worship, club, youth discussion-evenings or catechism. All texts of this part have been made by Hanny van der Stelt, who is employed by the youth-work of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.



### Day of prayer for vintage and labour, March 8th 2006

Mark 4: 1-9, the parable of the sower  
<12 material for club, children's side worship, catechism

### Story

Tell the story yourself (for example from the NBV<sup>1</sup>) or from a children's bible.

### To work

The parable has four scenes or four pictures. Almost as in a comic strip. Draw five rectangular horizontal spaces, as in a comic strip and make copies for each child. Read the story twice. Ask the children to fill in the four scenes of the story (drawing, colourizing). Subsequently discuss the meaning of the parable with the children (see verse 14-21). Finally have the children fill out the last picture with reference to verse 21.

1 NBV = Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling (New Bible Translation)



### Praying for growth

Food, water  
Space, light  
Shelter, love  
A smiling face  
Give me food,  
Give me water,  
Give me a place,

With space and sunshine  
Give me a shelter and  
Give me love  
Give me  
A red balloon

Give me lessons  
Give me life  
Give me a spoon-full  
From the cooking pot  
Give me a little brother and  
A rabbit  
Give me...  
That I am able to give as well!  
Amen

### Choose consciously!

With this slogan active materials for children on fair food have been developed for the lent-period. Day of Prayer for vintage and labour has everything to do with how you handle food production, fair trade and how you handle the earth. The program magazine 'kiOsk' of the youth work of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands has produced a special read- and do-booklet for children together with Kerkinactie<sup>2</sup>! For more information look at [www.jeugdwerkpkn.nl](http://www.jeugdwerkpkn.nl) or on [www.kerkinactie.nl](http://www.kerkinactie.nl).

### Tip

Theatre group Simon en Zo<sup>3</sup> has an act along performance 'Super-cereals', based on this parable. Exciting for children to participate and for elders to watch. See [www.jes55.nl/simonenzo.html](http://www.jes55.nl/simonenzo.html)

2 Kerk in Actie – Church in Action (KIA)

3 Simon en Zo = Simon and so on

## Day of Prayer for vintage and labour, March 8th 2006

Mark 4: 1-9, the parable of the sower

>12 material for discussion groups, catechism

### To work with the Scripture text

Young people want to get going creatively with a Scripture text. And they wonder: what does this mean for me, today? The parable of the sower is excellently suited for this.

### Preparation

Type the text of Mark 4: 1-9 as a normal reading text (so not in columns). Leave the verses out, but do number the lines. Leave space for making notes on the left margin side. Type the text of Mark 4: 13-20 in the same manner, but on a separate sheet. Make sure that both texts are available for each young person.

### Execution

Provide the young people with the text of Mark 4: 1-9 with the following instruction:

Put signs in the left-margin:

(arrow up):	Something on God
(arrow down):	Something on man
(arrow to the right):	Something to do
(arrow to the left):	Something NOT to do
!:	Something new to think over
?:	I don't understand
☺:	Makes me happy
☹:	Makes me angry or sad

Have the young people thought of more signs themselves (for example sms-language)

Subsequently read the text together and discuss it following the signs of the young people.

Next distribute the second text and follow the same procedure.

Finally you can discuss a number of personal questions:

- in which of the four 'types of soil' do you recognize yourself? What do Jesus' words say to you?
- What does that mean 'to yield fruit'? Can you give examples?

### To work from the Scripture text

'but the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.'

Maybe this text is painfully appropriate for rich Westerners. Did you know that

we, with 20% of world-population, are accountable for 86% of consumption? The world food supplies are not inexhaustible. Commodities and usable soil are only limited. That is not a problem, as long as we do not spend it too quickly and use it wisely. If all usable space on earth would be divided among all people and we give nature enough to survive, than each inhabitant is annually entitled to 1,7 hectares (17.000 m<sup>2</sup>, about three soccer-fields). This is called the fair-earth-share or global footprint. But ... if you put the footprints of various countries next to each other, you will soon notice that the footprint of the rich countries is much bigger than the footprint of the poor countries. If everyone on earth would live like the average North-American we would need two extra globes.

Calculate your own footprint and get startled!

Look at [www.voetenbank.nl](http://www.voetenbank.nl).

### Extra work-form: to work with 'Fair F8'

'Fair F8' (fair faith) is a trendy booklet for the Passion Week in lent-time, publication KIA in cooperation with the magazine 'Gr!p' of the youth work of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. For each day a Fear Factor, a Fair Factor, a Faith Factor and a Fun Factor around food, clothing, cosmetics, etceteras. To order the booklet check [www.jeugdwerk.pkn.nl](http://www.jeugdwerk.pkn.nl) or [www.kerkinactie.nl](http://www.kerkinactie.nl).



## Labour Sunday, April 30, 2006

Luke 24: 36-48

<12 material for club, children's side worship, catechism

### Information

'Jesus said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.' In this text is becoming acquainted with Jesus and wondrous signs, which can occur because of that, connected with doing the Law of Moses. In Matthew 25: 35-41 it says: I was hungry and you fed me. Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!

How do we deal with food? How do we produce food, how do we transport and eat it, how much do we throw away? In the Netherlands we do not die from hunger, but sooner from abundance! Did you know that 800 million people in this world are undernourished? Not because not enough food is produced to feed the entire world-population. The main reason is the unfair distribution of food!

### To work

In '*Choose conscious*' the campaign-special of KIA at Kiosk, you find ten pages of games, a test, a comic strip, a puzzle, action and information around food and lifestyle! Choose one or two things for your group. Subsequently read the text from Matthew 25.

With your group make up five manners (one for each finger of your hand) how we can distribute food more fairly in the world!

## Labour Sunday, April 30, 2006

Luke 24: 36-48

>12 material for discussion-groups, catechism

### Information

'Jesus said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.' In this text is becoming acquainted with Jesus and wondrous signs, which can occur because of that, connected with doing the Law of Moses. In Matthew 25: 35-41 it says: I was hungry and you fed me. Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!

How do we deal with food? How do we produce food, how do we transport and eat it, how much do we throw away? In the Netherlands we do not die from

hunger, but sooner from abundance! Did you know that 800 million people in this world are undernourished? Not because not enough food is produced to feed the entire world-population. The main reason is the unfair distribution of food!

### **To work**

When are you  
A follower  
Of Jesus, the girl  
Of thirteen asked.  
If you do no longer

Want to possess than  
What is necessary and  
When you donate to the poor  
What you have more  
Was my answer.

Than you are not the one  
She promptly said  
(Geert Boogaard, 'Leven voorgoed'<sup>4</sup>, Callenbach)

Read the preface with the young people.

Subsequently read the poem of Geert Boogaard.

Distribute the first part of the poem (until girl of thirteen) on paper. Let the young people finish the poem themselves. This can be done with their own words, but also with a collection of newspaper-articles or in msn-manner with 'emoticons' or with graffiti.

## Thanksgiving for vintage and labour: November 1, 2006

Mark 4: 26-34: the parable of the mustard-seed

<12 material for club, children's side worship, catechism

### **Information**

The mustard-seed appears to be a small and meaningless seed, but it has a lot of power inside. When it sprouts it can bring about a great deal. If you sow it, it does not seem much, but the yield is enormous. The kingdom of God is compared with a mustard-seed. Sometimes it seems as if you don't notice it. It is similar with faith. Sometimes you notice little of it, at first sight, but like the mustard-seed it has more influence than you think!

4 Leven voorgoed = living forever/living for good

## Tip

Three weeks in advance sow a number of mustard-seeds.

One week in advance sow another part.

Thus you demonstrate the germinative power of the mustard-seed.

## Story

In '*Woord voor Woord*'<sup>5</sup> (Karel Eijkman and Bert Bouman, Publisher Zomer en Keuning, Ede) the parable of the mustard-seed is told according to Luke 13.

Read the story and discuss it using the following questions:

- Show what a mustard-seed looks like and show the sprouting after one and after three weeks.
- What happened with the mustard-seed in the story?
- What happened in the end with the castle?
- At the end of the story the story-teller says that they have to return in fourteen days. What do you think will happen with them?
- What advice did Jesus give at the end of the story?
- What do you think of that? What would you do?

(From 'Kiosk', 1998, Nr. 2)

## To work

Materials:

Un-valuable materials (all kind of waste-material, paper, plastic, wood, etceteras), paint, paper, drawing chalk, scissors, pricking pen.

If seeds grow out into plants, new life originates. These plants bear fruit as well in order to for new life to originate from that again. And where there is life, there is hope.

Assignment: make a symbol which expresses life. You can work individually as well as in groups. Free material offers a lot of possibilities, but drawing chalk too. For example: fill the paper with different colours of drawing chalk and you cover these with black drawing chalk. The colours disappear beneath the black layer. Subsequently you carefully scratch a pretty symbol with scissors, pricking pen or an empty pen in the black drawing chalk. The beautiful colours beneath appear again!

## Thanksgiving for vintage and labour: November 1, 2006

Mark 4: 26-34: the parable of the mustard-seed

>12 material for discussion-groups, catechism

## To work

Young people want to get to work with a Scripture text in a creative manner.

5 Woord voor Woord = Word for Word (Children's Bible)

And they wonder: what does this mean to me, today. Here is a second manner to get to work creatively with the parable of the mustard-seed.

## Preparation

Type the text of Mark 4: 26-34 as a reading text, not in columns.

Add the following questions:

- Which sounds do you hear in and with the story?
- Which smells has the story, of which smells does the story remind you?
- Which colours has the story?
- Which animals play a role, what are they doing and what does that mean?
- Which plants and vegetation appear in the story and which meaning could they have?
- Which contradictions appear in the story (big-small, much-little, light-dark) and what do they mean?
- Which significant objects appear in the story and what could they mean?
- Which verbs or which “words-of-life” occur to you because of this story? (growing, waiting, hope, fear, anger, etceteras)  
(With reference to Willemien Wikkers and others, ‘*Het verhaal, het Kind en de Verbeelding*<sup>6</sup>’)

## Execution

Have the young people read the text and answer the questions (possibly in two’s or three’s). Subsequently go through the text together by following the questions. Finally you could add a number of personal questions. For example: The Kingdom of God can be explained as: where and when God is in control. What would be different in the world if God is really in control? What would *you* compare the Kingdom of God with?

## To work from the Scripture text

Small things can make a big difference. What could you contribute for the reduction of poverty in the world by 50% and ending the distribution of HIV/Aids? These are just two of eight millennium-targets which the Netherlands has underwritten together with 188 other countries. Please check [www.maakhetwaar.nl](http://www.maakhetwaar.nl) for all kind of information and actions. You could at least wear the ‘white band’, in order to remind yourself everyday that you make the difference!

**You feed the hungry**  
*Ernesto Cardenal, Nicaragua*  
We believe in God:

<sup>6</sup> ‘The Story, the Child and the Imagination’

He loves those  
 Which abide by the law.  
 He offers a home to strangers.  
 He helps the  
 Victims of violence.  
 We believe in Jesus Christ,  
 Son of God,  
 Our brother and saviour.  
 He fed the hungry,  
 He brought light to those who lived in darkness;  
 He brought freedom to prisoners.  
 We believe in the Holy Spirit.  
 She gives new courage  
 To those who despair;  
 She brings truth  
 To those who live in lies;  
 She gives hope of life to those who live in mortal fear.  
 Amen.

*(From: 'Geef ons heden ons dagelijks brood'<sup>7</sup>, Ned. Missieraad<sup>8</sup> Dutch Missionary Board 2003)*

## Extra work-form Junkart

*Creative work-form, usable for both Day of Prayer as well as Thanksgiving*

### Programme

Purpose: to get young people acquainted with the re-use in art. Size of the group: from 3-20. Duration: 5 minutes (meeting 1) and at least 60 minutes (meeting 2). Materials: packaging material, waste, used objects and potter materials (glue, scissors, drawing chalk, paper), Scripture texts printed at large size.

### Junkart

Each day each Dutchman throws out 1 kilogramme of waste- and packaging-materials. Taking better care of the earth, of each other and yourself can easily be achieved by not-using plastic bags and other extra packaging materials. It is however possible to re-use packaging materials in a creative manner. And did you know it can be used to make art? And that an art-school, which protests against the waste-mountain, was named after this? Junk Art is the name, for fifty years already. Make art from waste yourself and surprise yourself with the results.

<sup>7</sup> 'Give us today our daily bread'

<sup>8</sup> Dutch Missionary Board





The richer the USA and Europe became, the more waste they produced. Artists witnessed this sadly, until they got the idea to make art from this waste. 'Junk', which means 'waste', became 'Junk Art'. The most amazing creations came into being. For example Arman filled Perspex cabinets with the content of waste-baskets. Spoerri made things even more exciting with his Eat Art: his art consisted of leftovers!

## Preparation

Tell the youth something about Junk Art in an introductory meeting (search with Google). Three days before the next meeting they should collect as much as possible from their own waste, packaging materials and used objects: from rinsed milk-packages to used matches, from an empty cream-tube to pet-bottles.

## Execution

Put all materials on one big table. Each young one picks no more than three materials/objects most appealing to work with. Draw numbers or talk it over if certain objects are chosen by more than one person. Subsequently ask the young people to pick a bible-story they want to use as the basis for object of art. Another possibility is to let the young people pick a text from the Scripture with the subject of handling creation or the private environment and to use that in their object of art. For example Genesis 1: 28, the parable of the rich fool, Proverbs 11: 11, Isaiah 55: 1-2 or [www.loesje.nl](http://www.loesje.nl) or [www.plint.nl](http://www.plint.nl)

Let everybody tell what he or she will use.

## Discussion

Make a small exhibition of the works of art. Let the young people decide on which work of art they want to elaborate (majority decides). The chosen work of art is placed for everybody to see. Ask one of the young people: 'what do you see?' The others add (not the artist!). Subsequently ask with the same procedure: 'What does it bring to your mind?' (opinions, feelings). Finally ask: 'what do you recognize in your own life?' Do not forget to ask the artist to explain his work and to react!

Ask for the relation with a (scripture)text or (scripture)story. Time allowing you can review several works of art this way.

## Tip

If there is a museum with a modern art department in the neighbourhood, inquire after works of art of recycled materials. For preparation on creation of art (to get inspiration) you could go there with the group or as continuation of the making of Junk Art.

(*'Gr!p'*, number 5, author: Tanneke de Mol)

## Essential

*Leslek Kolakowski*

People need a Christianity  
which helps them to liberate themselves  
from the pressure of life  
which defines the inevitable limits  
of human fate  
and enables them to accept,  
a Christianity  
which teaches them the simple truth  
that there is not only a tomorrow  
but also a day after tomorrow,  
and that the difference between success  
and defeat is seldom clear  
(From: *'Vredesnaam'*<sup>9</sup>, Justitia et Pax 2003)



# GLOBALANCE

## 16

### Globalance - Christian Perspectives on Globalisation with a Human Face

Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches

#### Summary

#### Introduction: Emotions and Divided Opinions

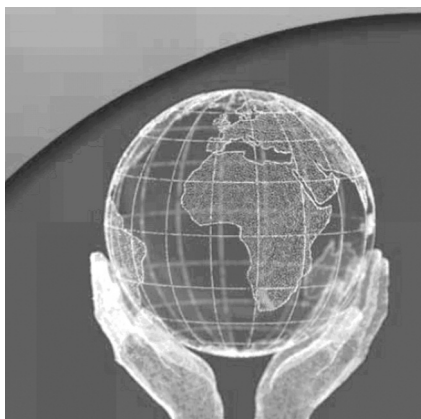
Sending short text messages from cellphones in Europe to the Philippines and receiving replies immediately, enjoying eating mangos from Cameroon, outsourcing the textile production to Asia, collecting billions of dollars for tsunami aid in a few days only, watching Hollywood movies in the slums of São Paulo, taking note of a merger between two multinational companies –

these are only some examples for how globalisation impacts our daily lives.

The debate on globalisation raises emotions and divides opinions. Some people hold that globalisation processes lead to economic, political and cultural openness, to economic growth and to more freedom, peace and international cooperation. Others argue that globalisation widens the gap between poor and rich, deepens injustice and promotes exploitation of people and the environment. It is argued that globalisation leads in many countries to higher unemployment and a weakening of the welfare state.

Many people share concerns about the fact that power and the means of production are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few.

As a consequence, political and ethical recommendations may differ. Whereas some voices are calling for an acceleration of globalisation processes by promoting liberalisation and privatisation in all areas of life, others are requesting for an alternative globalisation to promote core common values such as justice and the respect and implementation of human rights.



## Definitions: Globalisation and Globalance

In this position paper, globalisation is defined as an intensification of exchange and linkages between people and their values, cultures, capital, goods, services as well as institutions, states, organisations, sciences and religious groups. These linkages are complex in nature and often independent of location and time. They differ in quality and quantity as well as in regard to gender and class. Globalisation processes cross and transform political boundaries. As a consequence, multilateral political processes can lead to globally sustainable solutions of problems that go beyond the capacities of nation states.

«Globalance» means a global development based on a balance of values such as «justice and freedom» which have to be kept together (see section Globalance as a Balance of Values below). Globalance aims to shape global relations in a balanced way, balancing the economic, political, social, cultural and religious aspects and its global, regional and local necessities.

## The Ecumenical Debate:

Common ground and Conflicts Since the Eight Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare in 1998, consensus has been reached in the ecumenical debate on globalisation on mainly four points. First, Christian faith has to shape and influence economic decisions by reflecting God's love and justice. Second, human dignity, human rights and global justice have to be universal reference points for economically acting people. Third, the current economic globalisation processes have the potential to increase wealth, exchange and communication between people. Simultaneously, however, globalisation deepens injustice in many cases. There is urgent need that they are identified, named and overcome. Fourth, although the analyses of economic globalisation differ among churches consensus has been reached and need to be further elaborated in future on many practical recommendations addressing churches and political and economic decision-makers.

However, the ecumenical debate on globalisation is also struggling with conflicts. First, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) yet not the World Council of Churches and not the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), called for a «processus confessionis» against the neo-liberal economic globalisation. Second, the view that globalisation is driven by new imperial powers and dominated by neo-liberal ideology is shared by statements of WCC, WARC and LWF. How to deal with this question is most controversial in the ecumenical debate. Third, the socio-economic situation of each church has an important impact on the way it articulates its position. In many countries, churches experience a minority position without having any influence on decision-makers. The cries of the powerless are voiced loudly. Churches in many developed countries articulate their position in a different way since their concerns often has an infl

uence on political and economic decision-makers. Fourth, the major conflict between churches concerns the question of which economic system and political strategies are the most appropriate to address the negative consequences of economic globalisation. Some churches such as EKD in Germany and FSPC in Switzerland argue in favour of a market system that is strongly regulated in the social and environmental areas. Other churches oppose private property and free markets more generally.

## Globalance as a Balance of Values

The Federation of the Swiss Protestant Churches believes that we need a global balance of values to strengthen the weak. Economic globalisation will serve peoples when extremes are avoided and a balance is created between different and sometimes opposing values. For example, the values «justice» and «freedom» may oppose in a specific situation. Yet, from a Christian perspective both values belong together and can not be fulfilled in its true meaning without each other. Globalance calls for five pairs of values:

- Freedom and justice: There is no freedom without justice and no justice without freedom.
- Transformation and conservation of creation: Transformation is necessary in order to enable all people to live in dignity but only as far as the integrity of creation is maintained.
- Empowerment and responsibility: Empowerment of the weak is a precondition for justice. Yet, all kind of power is inseparably linked to responsibility in its use.
- Participation and solidarity: Globalisation with a human face requires that all human beings are empowered to participate in decision-making processes and support each other in solidarity.
- Unity in diversity: The unity of the global village is only sustainable when it respects the beauty of its diversity of languages, cultures, economic and social systems and its religions.

## Churches, Politics and Economy: Globalance from the perspective of global governance

From a political economy perspective, a socially and ecologically sustainable and balanced globalisation needs a strong multilateral system to reach key goals as poverty eradication, the full implementation of human rights, a balanced and fair international trade system, stable financial markets, decent work, environmental protection, peace and security, gender justice and a broad access to technologies. Reaching the Millennium Development Goals is crucial for strengthening the weak. Strong efforts are especially important given the following observations:

- In many developing countries the terms of trade – defined as the quantity

of one good that exchanges for a quantity of another – have fallen because of trade liberalisation. Given the low degree of diversification in export production, many developing countries are much more vulnerable to external shocks and price fluctuations.

- It is most likely, that the WTO Agreement on Trade in Services will increase the pressure on developing and developed countries to open up their social services sector.
- Only about 5% of the globally floating capital finances the international trade transactions and foreign direct investments. The liquidity of the financial markets is a major reason for financial crises with their severe social and economic consequences. Churches in many countries such as Argentina and Indonesia have voiced loudly that financial crises both deepen existing inequalities and create new social and economic insecurity and political instability.
- Given the exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation, we are facing severe ecological consequences as the loss of biological diversity, forest damages, climate change and ozone reduction, soil degradation and water scarcity.
- Roughly about one billion people are seeking a job. They are either unemployed, underemployed or are unable to earn enough money to keep their families above the poverty line. The unemployment rate of youth is in many countries above the average. In addition, the unemployment rate of women is in many countries much higher than those of men. Women are still highly engaged in the informal and the unpaid caring work.
- Technological innovations in the areas of transport, energy and communication technologies smoothed the path of globalisation and enabled many of its processes. However, the access to technologies and the right of their use are unequally distributed worldwide.

Such kind of misleading developments needs to be addressed by a global structural policy as it is elaborated in the Global Governance concept. Global Governance does not call for a global government but intends to create a strong multi-lateral system that is organized in a subsidiary and decentralized manner. The overall goal is to shape globalisation by strengthening the international institutions with reforms and a close international cooperation. It is hold that the current trend of concentrating the economic power in the hands of a few endangers economic justice. Therefore, power needs to be more equally shared among the different actors of the globalisation processes.

## Recommendations

The position paper contains more than fifty recommendations. They address churches, governments and the private sector. Some examples of the recommendations of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FSPC) are mentioned below:

Within churches in regard to faith commitment FSPC recommends

- integrating the issue of economic globalisation and economic justice in preaching and in confession in worship services; and
- integrating discussions on the final document of the 24th General Council of WARC in Accra and on the results of the 9th General Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre in preaching and teaching. Confession during liturgy should be inspired by these events.
- Following the Accra action plan FSPC recommends promoting «gender equality in all economic and environmental efforts of the churches such as leadership, employment, finances, inheritance.» Gender needs to be integrated as a cross cutting issue. Towards the governments
- FSPC recommends increasing the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to attain the internationally agreed ODA target of an ODA/GNI ratio of 0.7% until 2015. We further recommend implementing new and innovative financing mechanisms to mobilize financial resources.

Towards the private sector

- Following the Accra plan of action FSPC recommends promoting «the implementation and recognition of human rights, especially workers' rights, including migrant workers' rights, according to ILO standards»; and «to orient their activities towards economic and environmental justice.»

## Key issues

In its final chapter, the position paper includes various recommendations on the following key issues:

Bearing witness of the faith by word and action:

- Confessing faith
- Strengthening faith
- Practicing faith
- Taking political and economic responsibility
- Creating decent work for all
- Shaping global trade in a fair and justice manner
- Stabilizing financial markets
- Promoting sustainable development and protecting the creation



- Developing and using technologies in an ethical and development friendly way
- Sharing power
- Reaching the Millennium Development Goals and strengthening the weak
- Promoting Global Governance
- Financing Global Public Goods
- Creating peace and enhancing security
- Empowering women

# POVERTY

## 17

### „Don't Leave Us Hanging! “ – Against Child Poverty

A Campaign by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia

Praeses Alfred Buss, Bielefeld, Germany

#### Preface

A child appears in dirty clothes and shapeless shoes, in winter wearing summer clothing; another comes without sandwiches for the interval, without a writing-block or drawing-pad; one is always ill when an outing is planned, makes excuses when the group wants to go together to the swimming-baths. These are everyday observations in our day-nurseries, schools confirmation classes, work with children and young people. Newspapers report that children steal others' sandwiches; pastors tell us that parents abstain from baptism or confirmation because there is no money for the celebration.

In some parts of the town this occurs only rarely, in others frequently. It can no longer be denied: Here in Germany there are once again poor children, children who do not have the bare necessities, children who cannot always participate in the daily life of their friends in the group or school class. We see ourselves challenged as the Evangelical Church of Westphalia to name child poverty in a wealthy land what it is: a scandal. Consequently we are now conducting a campaign against child poverty. The motto is: "Don't leave us hanging!"

Those who receive, for example, feel that they have been left hanging. "Poverty does not exist first in the underprovision of material goods but is already there when people cannot take part with their abilities in the life shared by all" I said to our Regional Synod in 2006. The core of poverty is the lack of participation, i.e. exclusion.

"Poverty hinders people from committing themselves and their talents to their own survival and the good of all." It is a vicious circle – no school certificate, no



#### GEGEN KINDERARMUT

Eine Kampagne der Ev. Kirche von Westfalen

training, no job, no money, no prospects. This vicious circle affects human dignity. Children from poor backgrounds must also develop, evolve their talents and should be able to participate with equal rights in the economic and social life in solidarity with the others.

When he spoke of the Good Shepherd (John 10:10) Jesus said “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

As his Church we understand this promise as a mission. Children should experience their lives as valuable and be able to exhaust all its fine possibilities, they should know that they are wanted and loved by God and learn to shape their everyday lives with confidence.

We do not simply want to shake people up; we want to act, simply with the many small possibilities open to each congregation and institution. We want to get together with others to overcome child poverty structurally. In the process two questions should guide us: What do children need in order to gain the fullness of life – fair participation? And: How can we help so that they achieve precisely this?

A campaign can only be successful if many people participate constantly over a long period. The recommendation on hand is intended to give you, our congregations, church circles, works, associations and institutions, support in this and to stimulate imagination and creativity.

## Background



### *The task of the children*

Poverty in a rich country is not necessarily visible. One talks of the new “hidden poverty”. Many of those affected attempt to keep up the outward appearance of normality. They conceal their situation, fearing that they may be stigmatized. Yet we too as a church can no longer close our eyes to the facts.

Since the Resolutions of the Regional Synod in 1997 on the change of perspective in our work with children and young people, our church has been endeavouring to allow children to have their authentic say on the situation. One of the many forms is the regional-wide Children’s Summit in the grounds of Haus Villigst.

These two matters of concern came together when the Department for Youth Work of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the partners in the “Project

Group Children's Summit 2006" resolved to make poverty the theme of the Fifth Children's Summit.

The children in the congregations and associations were asked to keep their eyes open and to think about the topic in totally different ways. The children's authentic results, worked out in groups, were summarized and gathered together. Out of this arose the following Children's Resolution which was signed by 500 children during the Westphalian Children's Summit from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2008:

*Don't leave us hanging!*

*To have or to have nothing – that is here the question.*

In our country there are rich and poor people

And many poor children!

*We children ask: Why is that so?*

Poor children have poorer quality clothing, too small or shabby. They are made fun of and have few if any friends. Usually they stand on the edge.

*We children ask: Does this not make you sad too?*

Poor families have very little money because the parents have no job or do not earn enough. When parents are poor, the children are poor as well.

*We children ask: Have you already noticed this?*

Poor children have little to eat and go hungry. They have no snack for the break or eat unhealthy things. That makes the children ill.

*We children ask: Can't you do something about this?*

Poor children are often not so good in school subjects. They don't have the proper school things and often their parents cannot help them with their homework.

*We children ask:  
should poor chil-  
dren remain stu-  
pid?*

Poor children are not only sad but sometimes become angry because they feel shut out. We already noted that in the last Children's Summit.



*We children say: Do something against poverty!*

We have discovered what children urgently need for living: Food, clothing, a home, parents, friends, love, security and acceptance.

*We children say: Not all the children in Germany have all these!*

There are so many poor and sad children in our country and in the world!

*We children find that this cannot go on!*

This is a scandal!

You grown-ups, do something, don't just talk!

Resolved by the Children's Summit children on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at the Children's Summit<sup>1</sup> in Haus Villigst.

## Why a Campaign against Child Poverty?

*The Social Background.*

2.5 million children currently live in poverty or are threatened by it according to the German Institute for Economic Research. The Social Report of the provincial government put the number at 825,000 in North Rhine – Westphalia in 2007.

The situation is, however, very varied in the individual towns and districts: In Gelsenkirchen in 2005 33.5% of all children received social support, but in the administrative district of Coesfeld only 7%. There can be no talk of the same living-conditions and equal prospects – e.g. in the area of education, particularly when the number of those affected by poverty is currently increasing: In 2000 18.9% of the citizens belonged to the stratum in danger of poverty; in 2006 it was already 25.4%.



In the European Union those count as poor who have at their disposal less than 60% of the national average income. In Germany the poverty-line lies at present at €800 a month. Behind this definition is the attempt to determine the minimum a person needs to participate adequately in society.

We describe these poor people on

<sup>1</sup> The Children's Summit is documented under [www.kindergipfel.info](http://www.kindergipfel.info).

our doorstep as relatively poor, because with reference to the world as a whole any one who has less than \$1 per day at her or his disposal counts as absolutely poor.

*The children in Germany are relatively poor.*

But this in itself is bitter: Their poverty is frequently not recognized as such. Here, however, the reasons for poverty are obvious. The most important causes: job problems such as (long-term) unemployment, low incomes, Hartz IV dependence, and social problems such as excessive debts, separation/divorce or handicap/illness. Of these it is above all immigrants, single parents and families with many children who are affected. Poor children have poor parents. And if nothing happens they remain poor.

Relatively arm – these are children whose parents cannot afford lunch in the day-nursery off in all-day schools; children who come to school in winter wearing sandals and thin coats; children who, in their shame, hide the fact that they cannot afford the class-outing nor private tuition; not to mention visits to the cinema, piano lessons, riding or ballet; children whose parents are so preoccupied with the daily battle and frustration that they no longer have any loving care left; children who are excluded from many of the usual things in our society; children who spend most of their free time in front of the television and are too overweight. Poverty denies these children their rightful place in our society. That is not only true for the present but also for the children's prospects for their whole lives: The connection between poverty and educational success cannot be denied. At present it decides – and probably will to an even greater extent in the future – about sharing on equal terms in the economic, social and community life in society. If nothing happens poor children remain captive in a vicious circle; no or only an inadequate educational qualification, no training, no job, no money, no prospects. Here one can only agree with the children: The grown-ups in church and society must do something!

People who give poor children practical help and tackle their situation will at some point meet their own fears of impending poverty. Is one's own family income sufficient to support one's own children in a satisfactory way? How secure is one's own job? Are provisions for old age and health insurance enough to guard against social relegation? The newspapers report that the middle class is crumbling. This raises fears even in our congregations and also among those who work in the church and social welfare organizations.

This fear of social relegation is in the meantime almost omnipresent in our society. It prevents people from approaching the children affected in a respectful way and this hinders the necessary change in attitude.

Engagement against child poverty demands that one tackles this fear. Where so-

cial fears grow there also grows the tendency to dissociate oneself and exclude others. “Problem areas” are described in which those affected become unreachable. They are ever more seen as the cause of their own plight. The impression arises that one cannot do anything at all, and everything is only a drop in the ocean.

Engagement against child poverty demands the courage to confront one’s own fear of poverty. This is also true for our congregations. It is also true in a figurative sense: Fear of the insignificance for society of our church life quickly leads to resignation in the face of socio-political challenges.

By contrast effective help demands courage and the readiness to take risks. The Good Samaritan could only help the one who had fallen among thieves because he showed courage. He got down from his mount and entered the “area of risk” in which one must assume there were still other robbers. Tracking down such areas of risk in which involvement demands the courage to confront one’s own fears is a reliable direction-finder for the development of further effective projects against child poverty.

### *Theological Approaches*

When the Evangelical Church of Westphalia now asks its congregations and church circles, works, associations and institutions to participate in a campaign against child poverty, it is not a question simply of a community or social welfare task. For the church it is the most elementary matter of faith.

All church action is based on Jesus Christ’s command to missionize and baptize. A church which baptizes little children and in so doing receives them into the community of the faithful does not only take over responsibility for their religious upbringing and education. She is also required to make participation in church and society possible for all, but particularly for the poor. With the heading “Option for the Poor” the Evangelical Church of Westphalia refers to central biblical traditions. In the Old Testament God’s proximity to the poor is constantly based on the primary experience of Israel, the liberation out of Egypt. Not only the Ten Commandments but also other social protective rights such as the care of the poor, of widows and orphans, of strangers are introduced or summarized by reference to this.

In the New Testament Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born in a stable and grew up while fleeing. His appearance and proclamation were interpreted as a fulfilment of Old Testament promises (Luke 4:18-21). In the Parable of the Last Judgement (Mt. 25:31-46) the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, the sick and prisoners were identified directly with Christ. Paul interprets his death on the Cross as a sign that God has chosen precisely what to the world seems of little importance, the weak (1 Cor 1:27f).

This well-founded option for the poor is summarized socio-ethically in a three-fold way:

- It does not play off the poor against the rich. Certainly it makes the prosperous responsible but aims for the inclusion of all in the economic and social processes.
- It is not a paternalistic option. It is an attempt as far as possible to enable those excluded to overcome their exclusion.
- It is not concerned simply with material poverty but on the whole with the fair sharing of all in all social processes.

Poverty damages a person's dignity in the social life of a community. However, the democratic and social state under the rule of law has the duty to respect and protect this dignity.

Our land is in its own estimation capable of being reformed. That is why the campaign is closely connected to the main presentation<sup>2</sup> "Shaping Globalization": With this the evangelical Church of Westphalia reminds the state on the one hand of its task of providing every single poor person, over and above basic material security, with the opportunity to participate in the shaping of society. Only so can democracy be lived. And at the same time the Evangelical Church of Westphalia recognizes that it is a responsible part of this society who is prepared with other partners to intervene in the shaping of the civic society. Our faith moves us to give no young person up for lost.

## The Aims of the Campaign

### *The Resolution of the Regional Synod in 2007*

Taking up the concerns of the Memorandum of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) on poverty in Germany, "Fair participation - the ability to participate and have solidarity", and the main presentation "Shaping Globalization", the Regional Synod of our own church in 2007 unanimously resolved the following:

"The Regional Synod requests the governing body of the Church to appoint a working-party with the task of developing a Common Project against child poverty, internally with regard to our actions as a Church and outwardly with regard to our share of responsibility in society, and to accompany the implementation of the project. In the process partners from society and from other Churches should be included from the start.

<sup>2</sup> A main presentation is a main theme laid down by the Regional Synod. It should awaken dialogue inside and outside the church and lead to positions.



The aim of this project is

- to make child poverty publicly a scandal in the sense of the UN Children's Rights;
- to make use of the resources and experiences of congregations, social welfare institutions, church circles, offices and works of our regional Church in order to develop concrete projects and carry them out locally;
- to thematize Child Poverty at all levels of church action in politics and society in order to combat it structurally and prevent it;
- to start up a campaign against child poverty in our land and participate in this campaign.

The project should be developed in connection with the main presentation 'Shaping Globalization'."

## The challenges

### *For Politics*

Child poverty is a scandal – and must in the end be combated structurally. It is a matter of controversy which concrete political demands result from this. The majority of fundamental recommendations can be summarized in one statement: The situation of families with children must be improved. How this can best be achieved is likewise controversial – whether by raising the child allowance, by giving a basic security or something quite different. Many opponents of such solutions are worried that the money would not reach the children but would be used for other purposes by the parents. Consequently others demand other solutions: More money must flow into the system of teaching, education and child and youth aid. Only so can we ensure that the children are actually reached. The political controversy, however, dare not further obstruct effective help. Therefore the steering-committee appointed by the government of the church has decided on another approach. A change in perspective means starting with the children's basic needs. Food, a home, clothing, health provisions and education must be guaranteed in sufficient measure for all children.

We assume that all children have the right to

- a warm meal per day;
- a free place in day-nurseries or all-day schools;
- free school books and equipment;
- free access to computers and the internet in public teaching, education and care;
- free participation in school trips;
- free access to public cultural and leisure activities.

All these rights could be provided if a comprehensive social pass were introduced for children from families who receive Arbeitslosengeld II (unemployment relief), social support and/or rent rebate. The pass must be organized by the state since the communities – particularly those with the highest proportion of those affected are themselves poor – are not in a position to do this comprehensively.

### *For the Church*

The demands of the campaign, however, are not only directed at the state but also at our own church. To cope with the transition until the realization of the demands to the state and effectively to help the children affected even now, the potential in the civil society must be roused and organized. For this purpose there should be set up in every community and every church circle a Round Table “Against Child Poverty” for better interconnection and opening into society. Related directly to the communities and church circles are the demands for

- a self-commitment to make available for every holiday-course for children and young people 20% free places;
- free confirmation classes;
- the involvement of municipal partners in the campaign.

Protestant schools should set a good example in public education, training and care.

### *The practical aims.*

The campaign “Don’t leave us hanging!” against child poverty is a campaign where people can join in. Its success depends upon the participation of church congregations, church circles, associations, works and institutions of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia. In concrete terms the aim of this campaign is:

- To encourage congregations to integrate poverty in their midst;
- to develop common models and forms of protest action;
- to organize possibilities for children to participate in the theme of poverty.

## Recommendations for Action

SO THAT IT IS SPOKEN OF THROUGHOUT THE LAND...

It is one thing to provide information quickly about something; it is another to ensure that one’s own message is on everyone’s lips. The concern of our campaign is that the necessity of actually doing something about child poverty is spoken of about everywhere in the land. It is a matter of bringing the children’s messages in a clear and communicative way into discussion and spurring those responsible to action

The use of traditional methods does not always succeed. Most people cross the



street to avoid the classical information table. Only insiders are reached. And a poster on the pavement — do we really read it?

This alone is sufficient reason to reach out to the general public and thereby also the media in a more lively way. Here are some examples:

## *Making numbers visible*

Here, for example, for every poor child a white disc was laid on the street. In the middle there was an explanatory text: “There are sooooo many children living in poverty, and everybody says that children are our future. So we say this problem must really be tackled.”

Here lies a white point for every (tenth) child.

## *We won't let ourselves be excluded!*

In the centre of this action a large barrier stands in the middle of the marketplace. The other “borders” are indicated to right and left with red adhesive tape. On the right side of the line (border) thus drawn one places about ten papers (say German size AO) with texts written by children who are comfortably situated – e.g.:

“I can afford to go to the cinema with my friends two or three times a month or to buy something for the class-outing”

“I find it super now and again to get a smart branded product to wear.”

On the left side lie large texts by children who live in poverty – e.g.:

“Somehow I must find an excuse why I can't go on the class-outing. Mum can't manage it financially.”

“I would really like to go to Anton and Susi's birthday party, but everyone is expected to bring something. And Dad says that is not possible for us.”

In addition an info cube is erected upon which there is information on the subject.

## *The action "Hiding is no use!"*

Through the pedestrian area run huge cardboard boxes upon which is written diagonally "Hiding is no use!"

Below stands e.g. that it does not help simply to be in favour of a society which is fond of children and at the same time to ignore child poverty. That we cannot speak of the importance of education for the future of us all when many families cannot afford it. Or when we talk of the importance of a healthy diet for children and at the same time tolerate increasing child poverty.

In the boxes are active participants who, for example, walk together with you through the pedestrian area.



