

THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND THEIR WITNESS FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

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1. The holocaust is a turning point in the history of Christianity and the history of our western culture:

a. After the holocaust Christianity recognizes that the traditional controversy between the Christian church and Judaism was a tragic misconception in traditional Christian theology. Jesus from Nazareth does not separate Christians from Jews, rather he binds them together. In the Jew Jesus Christians recognize that the people of Jesus, the Jews, are God's people on earth, chosen to bring knowledge of God, or salvation to the peoples of the world. Jesus opened the gates to the Sinai-covenant, so that the gentiles could join the physical descendants of Abraham as his spiritual children. As a result of the Christ-events of the N.T. Jews and Christians together constitute God's chosen people on earth. The God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who brought Israel out of Egypt, becomes to the gentiles the Father of Jesus Christ. This God established one people on earth as his own people with the knowledge of the one and only God.

b. The holocaust revealed the true character of a secular world as represented by the western culture. Humans without God in a secular world are prisoners of their own ideology which if carried through to their last consequences can drive people to logical insanity. When such people are permitted to use without restraint all available devices of modern technology, the result can be wholesale destruction of human lives that have been designated as victims by the prevailing ideology.

2. The year 1945, when the extent of the holocaust became known, saw the Coincident of the Century. While people were still trying to comprehend the events

of the holocaust the nuclear age was ushered in by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This must lead us to apply the lessons of the holocaust to the future. A secularized and ideologized humanity in full command of technology did engage in the destruction of the Jewish people. The same humanity with even more powerful technological devices is capable of initiating a world wide holocaust with the entire human race as potential victims.

3. This fateful coincident of 1945 poses a Kairos for the people of God on earth, Jews and Christians together who believe to have the true "knowledge of God" are challenged to give a credible witness to the world. The world must be told that God is Lord in this world, that he appointed humanity stewards in his creation and gave his Torah containing guidelines for good stewardship. In the biblical Torah-tradition certain principles and standards are established for human behavior under God's authority. Certain courses of action are commanded establishing criteria for ethical behavior, others are ruled out and declared unethical.
4. The testimony of the people of God begins with the establishment of the fact that the reality of this world cannot be explained without taking into account the reality of God as Lord. A human race without God must fall victim to man-made ideologies. Behavior and actions of godless people are governed by a logic inherent in ideologies that can easily be condensed to principles such as "the end justifies the means," or "man is the measure of all things." On the other hand, since ideologies prevent humans from perceiving and comprehending reality appropriately, humans left completely to their own ideological devices are headed for disaster. The holocaust was the most recent and most dramatic

example.

5. In the area of political decisions where justice and injustice, war and peace are decided, it must be clear beyond any doubt that certain ethical principles must be respected. They take the first place before political decisions are made. They rank above *raison d'etat*, legitimize some courses of actions or rule out others. Any attempt to place *raison d'etat* or political realities first would reduce religion to a servant of national ideologies with the function to bless prevailing policies, weapons or flags. The latest example of this reversal was the German-Christian theology with its shameful inability to protest the Nazi-ideology that swept a whole nation. The model for an appropriate witness of the people of God to secular authorities was given by the O.T prophets who rose against their kings and placed them under the judgment of the Torah-tradition. Only government authority under the Torah is legitimate authority (Deut. 17:18-20).
6. In the nuclear age which began with the holocaust the power of ideologies is still in effect, but at the same time the potential for destruction has multiplied. In view of this potential humans without God are ridden by fear and in their reaction are driven to insane actions. The present arms race with one step following the other may be logical, but this is a logic of insanity, a diabolic vicious circle. The driving force behind this present arms race is not human desire to rule the world. It is the fear of people who are afraid of their fellow men and of the destruction they can cause. However, this fear as the course of the arms race will more likely lead to a nuclear holocaust rather than prevent it.

7. The Christian-Jewish witness to a fearful mankind should first of all be an appeal to honesty and truth. It is an appeal to begin to see reality in the category of truth and not in ideological terms. It is an appeal to stop covering up the truth with ideological propaganda slogans where the image and intentions of the other people are distorted. Such ideological stereotypes are:

Defense: Since the invention of preemptive strikes differentiation between defense and aggression has become obsolete. What according to one national ideology is defense is according to another aggression. Defense is just an euphemism for fear with the purpose to legitimize one's own actions and to discredit the actions of others. Deterrent: This is just a code word for self-righteousness. Bad is only the other side which is characterized by the national ideology as the enemy. He needs to be deterred. Present use of this term in our own national ideology overlooks completely the fact that the Russians never dropped an atomic bomb. We did. We are trying to deter the Russians from doing what so far only we have done. Negotiation from the position of strength: When "strength" in this context means military power, this is a contradiction in terms. Military power dictates but does not negotiate. Strength in this context can only mean justice and truth inherent in my case. The workable basis for negotiations is mutual trust. National Security, national interest: These are ideological wind-eggs without any substantive content. These terms are actually a carte blanche for people who without restraint want to pursue what they see as their own advantage. "Can we trust the Russians?" This is an irrelevant question based on self-righteousness. More important is the other question: Have we done anything special that the Russians can trust us? Many more of such examples could be listed.

8. Christian-Jewish witness must be based on a critical re-examination of our common biblical tradition where we find a strong line of anti-military and anti-war thought, e.g. Deut. 17:16; Ps. 20:7-9; 44:4-7; 60:12-14; Isa. 30:15f; 31: 1.3. 3.10.13ff., to list only a few passages. An impressive summary of this trait is Isa. 7:1-9, where the prophet confronts King Ahas who is inspecting his defense capabilities" with the alternatives: to say Amen to weapons, or to say Amen to God.

During the past centuries the Judeo-Christian tradition has accepted war as a way of life, and any form of pacifism has been labeled as unrealistic and naive. In view of the potential of a nuclear holocaust this needs to be reversed. Continuing to accept war would be unrealistic and naive. It is a certain way to death. Jews and Christians must become more pacifistic. A nuclear war is not war in the traditional sense any more, where one army is fighting against the other. In such traditional wars some ethical guidelines could be imposed. Nuclear war is indiscriminate and total wholesale destruction. The only definition of such a war is "absolute collapse of human civilization" and there can be no justification whatsoever for risking such a catastrophe. It would be an euphemism to call such wholesale destruction war. Theologically speaking, this would be the climax of human hubris, threatening God the creator to blow up his creation. Preparation of such an action or playing around with this possibility constitutes a human race in open revolt against God.

9. The Judeo-Christian witness has to emphasize that a halt to the present insane arms race cannot be the result of negotiations. / Parties that do not trust each other rather, that are constantly threatening one another, cannot negotiate. The only way to stop the arms race is by unilateral action. Actions establish

facts, and only facts can be a basis for trust which can lead to negotiation. Such actions can begin with a nuclear arms freeze, a declaration never to use nuclear arms first, or gradual destruction of nuclear overkill capability. When we are able to start this arms race as a chain reaction of unilateral actions, this trend can be reversed by use of the same logic.

10. This kind of Judeo-Christian testimony is the order of the day. The existence of God's creation and the future of mankind which he made in his image are at stake. Both are so precious that they cannot be left in the hands of politicians, military experts or technocrats. Theologians have profound statements to make in this context and it is up to them to repeat today the prophetic challenge of the O.T., of the choice between the way of life and the way of death, Deut. 30:15ff; Jer. 21:8-10. Would the people of God fail to take up this challenge, they would only continue the traditional way of blessing weapons with political propaganda slogans dressed up as word of God. However, this time the people of God would by default bless nuclear bombs and this would be the worst case of blasphemy.