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Eschatological realism: A Christian view on culture, religion and violence

It was already Hannah Arendt, who, referring to Kant, emphasized the difference between truth and meaning, between practical common sense and opinions¹. It is interesting that the common sense approach is still completely dominant today, even among theologians, who are so often accused of irrationality – or perhaps just because of it. Theology seems to feel compelled to appeal to common sense, to show the modern world, that it is *useful*, or at least that it is not harmful. Our discussion in this essay concerns the relationship between religion and violence. We will try and explore the problem on the fundamental level, with no pretensions to offer yet another proposal in the style of “how to ...”, that modern requirements for practicality require and expect.

First, we will take a very brief look at the underlying reasons for the insistence on practicality and applicability of theology. It was already Ratzinger who showed that the replacement of *Verum est ens* with *Verum quia factum*² is the path to the establishment of the modern secular thought. Between truth and factuality an equality sign was drawn, so that eventually *factum* became *faciendum* – *Verum quia faciendum*³. *Factum* has proven to be insecure and inaccessible, subject to interpretation and interpretation – only *faciendum* remained. So the man became *faciendum*, a “technical” being, managed by the technique, or which can be controlled by using different techniques. The term τέχνη, which originally meant artistic skill, is reduced to the technology as an “organization of knowledge for practical use”.⁴ So religion had to find its technical place in the technical world. Because of the questionable effectiveness, the place of religion can not be other than marginal and controversial.

On the other hand, violence, especially physical, warrior-like and criminal – is very effective, and has taken an honorary place in many accounts. These considerations have, however, as Hannah Arendt observed, mainly dealt with the use of violence and not with violence as such⁵. Religion is in such examinations subordinate – it must show and actually needs to convince a skeptical listener, that it still has some potential to reduce violence, to heal wounds, to repair the damage that has brought violence. In this

¹ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 1981, p. 57.

² Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum: Vorlesungen über das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis*, 2005, p. 23.

³ Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, p. 28.

⁴ Mesthene, “The Role of Technology in Society”, 1997, p. 74.

⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, 1970, p. 8.

way religion is supposed to justify its own existence. On the other hand, religion is accused of fueling, that it is certainly an accomplice if not the main instigator of violence.⁶

We consciously ignore this way of posing the problem, and we will not enter into a debate with *pro et contra* arguments in terms of responsibility and the positive potential of religion in relation to violence. After all, these arguments are sufficiently well known, but ultimately do not give a satisfactory answer.

In addition to these external reasons, there are internal reasons for insisting on the practical applicability of the Christian theological discourse. In addition to the reasons quoted referring to Ratzinger's analysis, we will present another, which we believe to be crucial, and it concerns the self-understanding of the Church. The eschatological dimension that has so strongly determined the Christian identity in the ancient Church, suffered a *moving to the back*. The faith in the presence of the eschaton here and now, although still "mirror, dimly" (1 Cor 13,12) is faded or blurred. The eschatological reality of the Kingdom the faithful lived as a messianic rest in the mode *ὡς μὴ* (1 Cor 7: 29–32)⁷, has grown into a life in the Kantian mode *als-ob* (as if) from where it easy became *let us*. Eschatology was moved to the back, transcended from history, so that the eucharistic service began to be perceived as abstract by the world and man, and more and more frequently the question arose of what we *really* can do here and now specifically. *Here and now* – apart from *that and there* – has become a measure of Christian life, from whence an autonomous, moralistic, pietistic ethics emerged, theoretically loosely and practically almost not at all related to the event of the Eucharist and the Kingdom. *Maranatha* (1 Cor 16, 22) has lost its multi-temporality and moved to the area of the mythical conceptions of the future in a deist key.

The terms "religion" and "violence", at first glance seem clear and self-determined. We all know what religion is and we all know what violence is. These are concepts that we use regularly. What do we really mean when we say *religion* and what do we really mean when we say *violence*? Trying to give a most general definition of religion leads us to the conclusion that things are not at all simple. Perhaps it is comforting that, as Kolakowski notes, even terms like "art", "society", "history", "culture", are not in a better position⁸. There are many attempts to find a proper definition of the concept of religion. The number of attempts is so great that it we could establish a sort of history of defining the concept of religion⁹. One of the most common definitions of religion would be the one in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which states that it is "human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of especial reverence."¹⁰

⁶ Selengut believes that although religion can be misused, it still carries an assumption of conflict. „Each religious community is convinced of the truth and legitimacy of its theological claims and is, on occasion, ready to wage war and engage in violence in support of what it takes to be an absolute religious truth (Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, 2003, p 224).

⁷ Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, 2005, p. 23 *et passim*.

⁸ Kolakowski, *Religion: If There Is No God: On God, the Devil, Sin, and Other Worries of the So-Called Philosophy of Religion*, 2001, p. 9.

⁹ Jensen and Rothstein, *Secular Theories on Religion: Current Perspectives*, 2000; Kunin, *Religion: The Modern Theories*, 2003.

¹⁰ Religion. 2015. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Retrieved 18 February, 2015, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/497082/religion>

Kolakowski offers a definition according to which the phenomenon of religion described as “socially established worship of eternal reality”¹¹, which is a somewhat narrower definition. And the broad-based definition as in Britannica could be further expanded since it does not involve a multitude of other, equally accurate characteristics of religion. Moreover, as we will see later, secularization offers some turnovers in the understanding of religion, which, however, is not essential though it seems to be. Even in a secular society that denies the value of religion, or at least its publicity, religiosity is very much present, but it occurs in the form of political parties, football games, national ideas, scientism or psychotherapy sessions.¹² Religion was suppressed in his usual expression, but its “mechanics” continue to function. The development of secularization in the Christian West is described in detail by Kantorowicz. In his analysis of the development of the idea of the the king’s two bodies, the process of transferring the religious matrix to the secular ones is showed in detail. Kantorowicz proves that secular doctrines of modern society have their roots in the medieval development of the legal system where the learned men, mostly lawyers, were raised to the level of a social group of their own. Simultaneously with the heavenly knighthood of the clergy (*militia coelestis*), armed chivalry of the aristocracy (*militia armata*), originated the learned chivalry, or doctoral knighthood (*militia doctoralis*)¹³. Secularization did not consist of denying the attributes of holiness on either the practical or theoretical level, but they were *passed* on to the secular level. It was this transfer that was crucial to the process and the was of secularization in the contemporary Christian society. Interestingly, the process of secularization here includes creating structures that are taken for granted as secular today. Thus, the royal religious mediation, as Kantorowicz notes, suffered apparent secularization. The King was less and less regarded as *rex iustus* in the rank of Melchizedek and was increasingly losing his messianic and biblical designation. The eschatological picture of the king – “it survived at the price of being transferred from the altar to the bench.”¹⁴ The secularization of the course took place on the property field, too, which leads to the equalization of property rights of the Church and the King. Not only had the relationship *Christus/fiscus* become equal in legal terms, but the *fiscus* received eternal and impersonal (*persona ficta* – a fictitious person) characteristics very similar to those that now has our fiscal system, from which it got its name.¹⁵ In this process, the *fiscus* turned into something quasi-sacred, becoming a goal in itself, starting to represent the state and its ruler, which eventually led to the equalization of the terms *fiscus* and *patria*.¹⁶

Bearing all this in mind, let us return to the definition of religion itself: the broadest definition would be that it is a fundamental sense, or the search for meaning. This way, we leave space to secular and religious practices labeled as religious. Religion – or rather

¹¹ Kolakowski, *Religion*, p. 12.

¹² Additions to this list could be very broad, especially in the field of different ideologies. Fascism was certainly one of the forms of secular religion with the most drastic consequences (Cf. Benjamin, *Secular Salvations*, 1965).

¹³ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 1997, p. 124.

¹⁴ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 1997, p. 140.

¹⁵ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 1997, p. 178.

¹⁶ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 1997, p. 189. It is no coincidence, and not only for pragmatic reasons, that tax evasion is considered one of the worst offenses in the West, even betrayal of the country, for which severe penalties are enforced.

the man himself – can never really be relieved of that what is transcendent. But the platonic ἐπέκεινα can change the place in the ontological orbit. Transcendent becomes immanent – or put another way, what is claimed as a human rises to the point where it becomes transcendent.

We mentioned that today there are plenty of religious practices that those who practice them usually refuse to identify them as religious. This way an entirely new species of an otherwise known religious pathology is created. Addressing this issue would lead us away from our subject. We will satisfy ourselves by citing a passage from the excellent book by Ernst Becker – *The Denial of Death*, where he analyzes a specific problem of the end of the psychoanalytic process, where he clearly indicates the religious mode of this secular practice. Becker says: For generations now, the psychoanalysts, not understanding this historical problem, have been trying to figure out why the “termination of the transference” in therapy is such a devilish problem in many cases. Had they read and understood Rank, they would quickly have seen that the “thou” of the therapist is the new God who must replace the old collective ideologies of redemption. As the individual can not serve God as he must give rise to a truly devilish problem. Modern man is condemned to seek the meaning of his life and psychological introspection, and with his new confessor has to be the supreme authority on introspection, the psychoanalyst. As this is so, the patient’s “beyond” is limited to the analytic couch and the world-view imparted there. In this sense, as Rank saw with such deep understanding, psychoanalysis actually stultifies the emotional life of the patient. Man wants to focus his love on an absolute measure of power and value, and the analyst tells him that all is reducible to his early conditioning and is therefore relative. Man wants to find and experience the marvelous, and the analyst tells him how matter-of-fact everything is, how are clinically explainable our deepest ontological motives and Guilts. Man is thereby deprived of the absolute mystery he needs, and the only omnipotent thing that then remains is the man who explained it away. And so the patient clings to the analyst with all his might and dreads terminating the analysis.¹⁷ This quote is primarily interesting for us as a good example of “secular religion”. Far from it that our goal is simple criticism of such practices. Its proponents could definitely easily find sufficient counter-arguments in the classical religious expression, or at least enough of pathology. This is not about what is better for man – to be classically or secularly religious; our observations lead in the direction of the religious practices that are not necessarily identical to the conventional ones, precisely because they are fundamental to the very definition of man. The proliferation of meanings of the term religion, creates the illusion of substantive secularization of modern man and his social relations just for the careless eye. This assertion is easily recognized as the thesis of man as *homo religiosus*¹⁸. The goal is not originality of insight *per se*, but an attempt to create the meta-narrative on the matrices of religion and violence.

It is clear that the naive denial of the religious matrix in secular religious systems actually refers only to the old religious structure, embodied in the “enchanted” world and objects laden with divine power. New religious structures do not provide enough new things to be able to differentiate themselves from religion. On a general societal level, as

¹⁷ Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 1973, 194–195.

¹⁸ Psychological research shows that religiosity (and, we would add culture in general) are quite inseparable from man, it is even immanent in the infantile level of development.

noted by Schmidt, modern concepts of the secular state are secularized theological concepts, and we would say the manifestation of religious matrix. The whole process is successfully described by Kantorowicz through the Christus/Fiscus dialectic. Rene Girard has, in his inevitable study “Violence and the Sacred,” offered some answers, which are, however, only partially satisfactory. Girard sees the necessity of transcendence only in the context of his view, according to which violence is the cause of religion, which aims to restrain it, preventive or curative, in order to prevent anarchic and socially destructive revenge.¹⁹ This view is too one-sided. There’s more than violence (and revenge), which represents the core of the need for transcendence, and that is particularly the need for meaning. We see how the concept of religion is complex, and from the above it is clear that it can easily be problematized further. The answer to the question of why religion is so difficult to define, lies in the fact that religion until recently – and in many societies today – was inseparably united with all the expressions and manifestations of human social existence. Charles Taylor described this oneness well, namely the identity of religion to the structure of human society, so that it makes a fundamental anthropological component. If we accept religiosity, widely specified as confidence in the ontological and ethical purpose, as an anthropological constant, it will be easier for us to understand the deep complexity of the issues before us, as well as the unacceptable superficiality of various pro and anti attitudes that often play parts in the public discourse.

The definition of the term violence is not easier. Today we are accustomed to talking about violence as something exclusive, something that is connected with war – which for most Western countries represents distant events on the TV screen – or something strictly pathological, such as violence in the family or violence against animals. However, the immanence of violence was not missed by many researchers.

And the violence has received its sophisticated shape. This sophistication is best seen in the development of the war technology, which minimizes the participation of more troops, although, paradoxically, increases the number of civilian casualties. On the domestic non-war plan, the violence is even more camouflaged in the form of actual enslavement of broad masses of the people who are forced to work all day, caught in a tangle of credit indebtedness caused by the creation of a consumer mentality. It is clear that violence can not be just physical. But in the end all violence is *physical*. Even if the beating stick is not used, it always stands behind the door, ready to be used should the need arise. As indeed many researchers have confirmed, the state is an expression of power and power is ultimately violence²⁰. Violence, inseparably connected with the powers can be transformed by the brutal use of force over qualified or institutionalized force, coming to technocratic rule of bureaucracy in which Nobody is a tyrant, a tyrant scariest of all.²¹ Here we can draw a parallel between religion as a relationship with God and the supernatural and secularized religious matrix on the one hand and classic violence and its contemporary, so to speak, alienated expression. Alienated religiosity that is not recognized as such and alienated violence (estranged expression of power) that is not recognized as

¹⁹ Girard, *La Violence et le sacré*, 1972, p. 43.

²⁰ Cf. Mills, *The Power Elite*, 2000: 171. Drawing on Bertrand de Jouvenel, Hannah Arendt rightly raises the question of whether the end of the war would lead to the dissolution of the states and whether the disappearance of violence between states meant the disappearance of power? (Arendt, *On Violence*, 1970.p. 37).

²¹ Arendt, *On Violence*, 1970, p. 38.

such are elements of the alienated world of the modern man who still lives in the modes of religiosity and violence, but it does no longer recognize them.

How then should really understand our topic on relationship between religion and violence – or how to ask the question? If both religion and violence are anthropological constants, if they build humanity itself, how it is possible to analyze them as independent or at least sufficiently separate phenomena? Here we return to Girard and his thesis on the fundamental violence. In his argument certainly there is a lot of truth. Yes, violence is inherent to man as well as culture, which is by definition religious. In this sense, religion *is* certainly an answer to violence. But the question is what is behind the violence? Girard himself says that in the animal world there is no threat of mutual annihilation. The existence of such dangers is inherent in the human species. It is obvious that in man natural (instinctive) mechanisms that regulate the level of violence are not functioning enough so that it provides security and not endanger the survival of the species. What is hiding behind the uncontrolled violence that has to be reined in by religious introduction into the symbolic order of reality? Here we come to what Girard failed to analyze sufficiently, and that are the funeral customs, which indicate the relationship to death. In the act of burying our loved ones – in relation to the death – hides the real foundation of religion and violence. It is burials that represent a specific human feature, which shows the man as the one who does not accept, who is not at peace with death. The earliest expressions of religiosity, and thus culture, were not rituals of sacrifice, but burial ceremonies. It is certainly not a coincidence that the Tumulus de Barnenez, the oldest known human structure, is actually a cemetery.²² It is this “moment” when a man buries his loved one, when he lays stones around his head while burying him in the ground, is the basis of man’s religion and culture. It is a transformation, or perhaps a manifestation of the spirit of God blows into our nose. The sacrifice here has the function of maintaining or restoring a dead man in the community – that is a *function of denial of death* and striving to *overcome it*. Sacrifice is sharing with the dead one,²³ communion with him, which is essentially the negation of his death as the final – biological – cessation of existence.

This radically dislocated encounter with death, actually the relocation of the death out of the natural order, forms the basis for the transformation of violence from natural to cultural. Cultural violence has objectives that differ from the natural. Education of the social order, including the order of sacrifices, is based in the relocation of death or rather its negation. Because it denies death, the man forms a society that is different from the horde, pack or herd. Because he does not want to accept death, man establishes the society as a means to fight against death. As Baudrillard notes, no death was natural for primitive peoples, but it is always a social act and the act of opponent will and not biology.²⁴ The foundation of human society is the tomb of a loved one. When people first gathered to bury a neighbor, then their communities structured, of course, not intentionally, but spontaneously. We must be careful with this “first time”. This “first” is the only thinkable but not really available. It is rather in the realm of the Lacanian Real, which we had to forget to be people.²⁵ This is a basic step, connected with the phenomenon of reflection

²² Cf. Le Roux et Lecerf, *Le grand cairn de Barnenez – Mausolée néolithique*, 2003.

²³ Cf. Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, p. 203.

²⁴ Cf. Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, p. 251.

²⁵ If we stick to Lacan, then we would say that it is impossible to imagine the origin of language or what

Chardin²⁶ was talking about, equated with cognition of man as one who knows. When the neighbor is buried, when his death was denied, the regulated relations between people are constituted: family, genus, tribe. Through the funeral rites the dead not only remain in communion with the living, but structure their relationships²⁷. Only if the death by exchange was introduced in a social relationship, then the relationship can be real. This reality is based just on the fact that displaces real/realistic²⁸ from man's existential horizon. Only when death is seen as outdated, human relations can be structured. This structuring is manifested as the creation of family and kinship relations, and the emergence of the first elements of the law by prohibiting murder, incest, etc²⁹. As noted Zsolt Lazar³⁰, over time society deposits taboos, customs and social norms that seem meaningless, but which have their roots in the establishment of the original order. Only in a society that is already structured and in which the symbolic order is used to protect from the real one, there is the possible emergence of a real fundamental violence as described by Girard and its overcoming through the sacrificial crisis. Fundamental violence is essentially biological, driven by a common biological motifs (meeting basic needs, the struggle over women, the desire to dominate), but it is only in a structured community that it occurs in its frantic version that endangers the biological survival of the whole group. Cultural violence hides the potential to "go wild" just because it's always repressed by the cult, which includes at least some kind of law. Structuring the human community is unnatural and therefore the natural regulators of violence can not adequately function in human society. Structuring human society is pervasive. Its roots go back to the very beginning and define the man, changing his biological givens. In contrast to the animal world food must be prepared, children are born without the ability to self-survival, violence is restrained by cult and legally (although this is not separable). Fundamental violence, therefore, is not fundamental at all, it is implied by the structuring of communities that is enabled by the attitude towards death or the dead. The occurrence of such violence is a reaction to the unnatural structuring of the human community. Going into the symbolic order of the human world is what makes a man a man, but the price is paid at the level of animality.

it was before language, as we can imagine only within the symbolic order. In other words, how much are we as listed in the symbolic order in general able to imagine human reality that was pre-symbolic? Specifically, how human would such a reality be at all?

²⁶ de Chardin, *Le Phénomène Humain*, 1956, p. 181–182.

²⁷ With this structuring occur phenomena that we consider anthropological constants. Structures are materially changed even in the elements which seem to us as the most fundamental. But the content of structure is not the most fundamental. It is a variable while the structures themselves are secure. On the transformation of cultural and ethical structural content in ancient Greece see Dodds (Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 1973, p. 28–64). What always remains is the structure of religion/culture.

²⁸ Cf. Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, p. 204.

²⁹ So, sexuality is not the ground on which nature and culture first met, as Baumann claims citing Lévi-Strauss. This view is based on nineteenth-century *Scientia Sexualis* based on Freudian generalization of specific cultural patterns of certain social circles of the epoch. Bauman himself notes that Freud's conception according to which in the civilized sexual morality the original sexual goal of is sublimated into a socially useful goal, today no longer stands since sexual objects and aspirations no longer masquerade as socially useful, because "It seems that the link between the sublimation of sexual instincts and its repression, deemed by Freud to be indispensable condition of any orderly social arrangement, has been broken." As Baumann himself notes (Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, 2003, p. 54–55.) sexuality is not a fundamental element which forms a cultural reality. In the 19th century it seemed that this is so, but today we can see that it is not. It is obvious that something else is the *ἀρχή* of human culture.

³⁰ Lazar, *Značaj primitivne magije, Antropološko-sociološki pristup*, 2008, p. 164.

Man's natural self has to suffer in its entirety, man is torn between the two laws, the laws of biological needs and desires and laws of social structure that often stands against those needs and desires. That frustration creates the basis for the emergence of frenzied violence that causes unclear ἄτη described in the Homeric writings³¹. Frantical violence occurs as a rebellion against the structured order of the community. Through the denial of death, through a non-natural attitude towards death, violence is transformed into something non-natural. It no longer serves only to maintain life or fight about women, but expresses the aspiration of the individual towards authenticity. The attitude towards death changes the perspective of self-understanding. A man "does not live on bread alone" anymore. Once he expressed his belief in immortality by burying his neighbor, he expressed his belief in his own immortality and uniqueness. This uniqueness, as noted by Gorazd Kocijančič, the *individuum ineffabile* (unutterably individual) is ontological by nature. Being what I am is for me to be at all, in which there is no exterior, and each reflection and introspection is mediated by hypostasis as being³². Death is not the final point anymore, but that point which can, which must be overcome. Violence becomes one of the fields of authentication. Violence is a way for a bully to impose himself as unique, as the one who is. This applies to internal violence in the group but also for outside. The war was also relocated from the natural order of battle for resources. Therefore, the war is often being led without real biological reasons. In the history of mankind wars waged because of the pressing need for survival, are the exception and not the rule.

War is an expression of the ambivalent need to preserve the social structure at all costs – since it is based on the non-biological notion of death – and to confirm the authenticity of their own through the negation of the structure. The individual, in order to overcome this ambivalence, identifies with his group, and for the confirmation of his uniqueness seeks to destroy another group or by imposing their own identity onto someone else. War is because of that both natural and unnatural. What we are afraid of and to what we have been so inclined. War represents both affirmation and negation of social order and identity. Through the negation of another's social order and identity the own is determined because we take our charge against our own symbolic order out on the enemy, without adverse consequences. On the contrary, the own social structures and identities are confirmed and determined. War has always been a motor that brought together and united a society at war. Not only did the war confirm the identity and social structure but also created them, they were created in the war. Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, as Heraclitus spoke. Throughout the war the identity and state organization are determined and confirmed but created, too. Foucault reversed the famous aphorism of Clausewitz showing that politics really is war by other means, which implies that after the war the actual political power has a role in society that maintains a kind of silent war, or that the balance of power acquired in the war is enrolled into existing institutions. But not only in institutions, but also in language, in economic relations, primarily in inequality. "Politics is the confirmation and renewal of the imbalance of forces that participated in the war."³³ This tells us that the violence of war is actually immanent to every society. When a society is in crisis, when its structure is dysfunctional and when it can not maintain internal

³¹ Cf. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 1973, p. 3–5.

³² Kocijančič, *Razbiče: sedam radikalnih eseja*, 2013, p. 32 et passim.

³³ Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société : Cours au Collège de France (1975–1976)*, 1997, p. 21.

equilibrium, it is prone to war, which appears as a cathartic means to re-establish order. In this sense, Heraclitus argued that “war is the father of all things” because “things” are the social structure that is – it should be noted – quite inseparable from man’s “second nature,” which he defines as Aristotelian ζῷον πολιτικόν (social animal). War is an essential horror to achieve peace, constitute and preserve identity.

It has already been pointed out that religion and violence can not be seen as separate phenomena. Actually in general can not be regarded as phenomena, much less as objects, as already Heidegger claimed³⁴. Both religion and violence are at the core of humanity. Here we can look back at the eschatological realism of St. Basil the Great, who says that being a man is not something given but set as a goal. The only optimism can be eschatological. Violence is impossible to overcome in the human world as we know it, it is in its very foundation. It more or less can not hide its face (behind the TV, the moral indignation or bow tie and briefcase), but, as the writer Bukowski says, it always shows “that behind paper masks is that old dad.” The Christian faith is hoping for the new heavens and new earth, when the religious matrix will really cease to exist because the reason for their existence will cease to exist – and this is essentially a death. The same is true for violence. There is no use to build an optimistic picture of the world with false hopes. Violence has been there and will be until the end of time. Christians, even when they are the majority, are still the “little flock, the chosen people”, the rest who manifest something that still isn’t there because religion is the “hypostasis of things we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb 11: 1). In the Christian experience there is no room for optimism in this world, but there is room for optimism for the future, when the truth will show itself as identical with the life and structure with freedom. Our hope is that the last enemy – death – will be abolished and our mission is to preach “until that comes”. Of course, this approach is extremely impractical from the viewpoint of the world. But practical advice should not be expected from theologians, at least Christian. Being impractical at the present time is unpopular, perhaps even dangerous – in fact, it was always so. Christ himself is condemned because it was not practical. Impracticality should not be declared for quietism because it is not the same. Christian action is the right action but not by the standards of this world.

Concerning the practical tools that are available to us, they are generally known. Increasing awareness among the people about the value of every man, instilling strong moral beliefs, democratic control of government through free media, etc. This is all so familiar, though, and so ineffective. If violence, at least in mediated form can not be overcome, perhaps, just perhaps, the correct approach lies in Žižek’s proposal to replace the meaningless reasons for hatred with less meaningless: “The way to fight ethnic Hatred effectively is going through its immediate counterpart, ethnic tolerance; on the contrary, what we need is even more hatred, but proper political hatred: hatred directed at the common political enemy.”³⁵ But this approach remains within the boundaries of this world and is bounded by its possibilities and impossibilities. The impossibility is hidden in the fact that the violence, whatever its motive, at the end shows that it has no true reason – it will prove to be a goal itself in itself. In this regard, all violence is in the final analysis wild, no matter how strongly it is disguised in the face of reason. The only

³⁴ Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, (II. Abteilung, Vorlesungen 1919–1944), 1995, p.

³⁵ Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?*, 2000, p. 11.

(Christian) response is eschatological charity, accepting that “maybe” as the sole determination of the other, the other as a possible but not certain. As Derrida notes, “some possible that would only be possible (but not impossible), a safe and a certain, acceptable in advance as possible, it would be bad possible, possible with no future, one possibility already put aside, if you could call it that, is doomed to life. It would be a program, i.e., it would be a causality, a development, a reeling without event.”³⁶ Or, to use Kožev’s remark that theology without teleology is nothing but causality³⁷. The eschatological love presupposes eschatological freedom. But as the eschaton is made present in history although “in the mirror and dimly”, so is freedom. Accepting the other as a unique and irreplaceable necessarily makes our future uncertain. As Zygmunt Bauman observes, “making someone else determined by means presenting an indefinite future.”³⁸ And that ambiguity and uncertainty of future is pledged to death as the ultimate separation as “death is suffering brought to the most intense peak of Solitude” as noted by Lubardić interpreting Shestov³⁹. Now we come to the point where we can answer the question of what is an authentic Christian action?

The eschatological orientation towards the heavenly Jerusalem as the only true city does not mean that Christians have no other social responsibility in a historical world except that the preaching and manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Christian eschatology is not passive, it is not reduced to waiting for the end. It involves the active participation in the event of the realization of the Kingdom which is through the Holy Spirit present here and now in history. This preaching and manifesting of the Kingdom is a key action and main service of the Christians as a rest, which gives them an identity, making them what they are. The offering of the Eucharistic gifts to God the Father is to introduce the world to a new mode of existence that changes his *τρόπος τῆς ὑπαρξεως*. This is an act that no one except the Church of Christ can do. This change in the way of the existence involves a change of structure as the last enemy that is death will be abolished. With the abolition of the death, all structures and modes of existence will be transformed, since death was the cause of structuring the “old man”. Due to death, man’s mode of existence is disrupted. Every struggle for a better world if not Eucharistic is essentially doomed to failure. In the best case. At worst it is an apocalyptic scenario of nuclear or other disasters. It is not necessary to have special knowledge of history to know that the tendency of mankind to such failures proved almost as a rule.

But to even be able to exercise their mission, Christians must be human, which, let us remember again st. Basil the Great, has not been given but set out as a goal. The Eucharistic service of the world is given to *man*, and to be a man means social responsibility and sensitivity. More precisely, the lack of concern for others, for their misery and despair, agony and suffering brings into question our own humanity, and thus our service to the Sacrament of Christ. The good Samaritan is the paradigm of Christ, and the Christian paradigm of acting here and now – “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Mt 5, 16). The lack of charity

³⁶ Derrida, *Politiques de l’amitié: Suivi de L’oreille de Heidegger*, 1994, p. 46.

³⁷ Kožev, *Kant*, 1976, p. 117 (serbian translation).

³⁸ Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, 2003, p. 20.

³⁹ Lubardić, *Filosofija vere Lava Šestova: Apofatička dekonstrukcija razuma i mogućnosti religijske filozofije*; 2010, p. 221.

or worse hatred of one's neighbor, prevents Christians to exercise their mission of "royal priesthood". Christians are not of this world (Jn 15, 18), but their service for the life of the world. Peace will be realized only when Christ comes but peacemaking is a manifestation of humanity. If you are not a Christian peacemaker then you can not inherit the land which shall transform. That is why Christians are "doomed" to actively participate in the things of this world, because this meets the basic precondition of their mission, and it is to be human, to be people who are still in this world. Humanity is not biological, but a moral and ontological category. And here we have in mind the ontology which is relational and dynamic and not static and hermetical. The ontology includes man's relationship with God through a relationship to man, and that relationship fortifies the special ontological Christian ethics.

Christian action, to the extent that it is authentic will never be effective. Efficiency is inconsistent with authenticity, because to be effective we have to forget the specific nature of our service. Those who are outside will always be more efficient because the "children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Lk 16: 8). But the presumed inefficiency should not be an obstacle to the operation, because taking action (or inaction) determines the ecclesial identity. Christians must not forget that they are not of this world and that their service to the world is different. On the other hand it must not be forgotten that the lack of concern for one's neighbor, or even causing a neighbor pain, calls into question their service and very ecclesiality, since "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Lk 3:8).

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