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LITURGY AND REVOLUTION PART II:

Radical Christianity, Radical Democracy, and Revolution in Georgia

by W. Benjamin Boswell

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The EBCG, which has always been a minority church, has now gained a foothold in Georgia as a legitimate religious group, and it is now their goal to be the church not only for Baptists, but also for all of Georgia. Georgia may now be on the way to achieving recognizable institutionalization as a liberal democracy, but is that the kind of democracy that Kmara originally intended? How will they prevent themselves from excluding the voice of the people again? Revolution, which has traditionally been associated with violence, came non-violently in Georgia. Theological reflection on the events that have taken place in Georgia may provide the political stimulus for a redefinition of what Christianity, Democracy, and Revolution mean.

Part I of this essay has been an attempt to narrate both the radical democratic liturgies and the radical Christian liturgies that were operating in Georgia during the events leading up to and during the Rose Revolution of 2003. For this purpose, Kmara has served as the primary example of radical democracy and the EBCG functioned as the primary example of radical Christianity. The liturgies of Kmara and the EBCG incited non-violent revolution and therefore their liturgies in and of themselves were revolutionary. Most Christians have not traditionally considered their liturgy to be political and certainly not revolutionary, yet Bishop Songulashvili maintains that it was only through the liturgical reforms that took place within the Baptist church that they were then able to find themselves in solidarity with the movement for democracy.

Liturgy is the domestic work of the church that serves as practice and training for the church's foreign engagement with the world. That engagement then becomes another form of liturgy that forms and informs the domestic practice of the church. Therefore, liturgical development is a perpetual "looping back" on itself through the church's engagement with the world external to the body of Christ. This perpetual "looping back" is itself a form of *re-*

volution, as the word not only means the revolving of the political structure but can also be used in the same vein to describe the revolutions of the Earth on its axis and around the sun in orbit. The Earth's revolutions will serve as the primary metaphor in this essay for the way in which Christian and democratic liturgies are always, already, in and of themselves, before foreign engagement, a revolutionary politics.

It is the thesis of this section that the EBCG's ability, as a monastic movement within the Orthodox Church, to recover a democratic polity in the form of a Free Church ecclesiology, was the most significant reform that enabled their successful participation in the non-violent revolution for democracy in Georgia. In their intentional recovery of a Free Church ecclesiology the EBCG refused to abandon the Orthodox liturgical resources that had enriched their worship since the fourth century. Radical Reformed, Free Church ecclesiology, coupled with the ancient liturgical resources of the Orthodox Church, provided the EBCG with an impetus for a revolution in their social relationships and the practical and spiritual foundation to sustain them.

In Nigel Wright's ecclesiology, the counterpart and corollary to a free church is a free state because what is believed about and lived in the church has direct implications for what is to be believed about and lived in the social order and the state.[1] Wright charts the way in which historians have been careful to point out the influence that participative forms of church government, pioneered by Baptist congregations, have had on the wider political structures of society.[2] While Wright is cautious about attempts to make analogies between liberal democracy, in any of its instantiations, with a particular incarnation of the free church in time, he does find continuity with A.D. Lindsay's claim that democracy represents the social application of the reformation concept of "priesthood of all believers" and that democracy was the political analogy of a democratically ordered religious congregation.[3]

For Wright the rejection of hierarchical sacred power, in both churchly and secular polity, in favor of patterns of government that were based on the consent and voice of the governed, which were espoused by the early Baptist dissenters, led directly to the development of a society based on the freedom of religion where men and women could learn to live in peace with those whom they fundamentally disagreed, without killing them.[4] The fundamental gift that dissenters offered to both the church and the state was a reinvigoration

[1] Nigel Wright, *Free Church Free State*, p. 228.
[2] Ibid., 205.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

of the tradition of dissent itself that called all forms and institutions to remain constantly open to the possibility of change and reformation at all points of its domestic life so that it might serve the kingdom more completely.[5] The reinvigoration of dissent as a gift to the church and society was a form of "looping back" to the origins of the Church's earliest embodiment to recover an essential, ancient, but lost practice. Wright notes:

> In its origins the Christian faith was a movement of both religious and political dissent. It dissented religiously within the established religion of its point of origin, Judaism, because of its belief that the Messiah had come in Jesus. It dissented politically within the Roman Empire because of its belief that Caesar was not Lord, since only Christ could be Lord. This was the ground of its earliest persecution. Dissent is more than a mere historical accident since it captures something that belongs to the essence of the Christian faith to lose which would be to leave Christianity hugely to the poorer. This dissenting community went on to change the course of human history.[6]

The question that one immediately asks is how did a dissenting tradition become socially established in the Roman Empire and in numerous officially and unofficially established state-churches throughout human history?

It is here that we turn to the trenchant critique of the powerful heresy of Constantinianism that was leveled against the Church by the late John Howard Yoder. It was Yoder's contention that the faithful political life of the Church, which was traded for worldly power and supremacy in the Constantinian shift, was only fully recovered in the Radical Reformation by the Anabaptists, a group of radical Zwinglians that broke from the Magisterial Reformation. Like the EBCG, the early Anabaptists had hoped to be nothing more than a monastic reform movement within Catholicism. Their commitment to remain within the Church proper was fundamentally deterred by violent persecution.

It is quite possible that Wright picked up the correlation between Free Church ecclesiology and democratic polity from Yoder, who also noticed that "there is a widely recognized evidence for a historic link between the Christian congregation (as prototype) and the town meeting, between a Christian hermeneutic of dialogue in the Holy Spirit and free speech and parliament, even between the Quaker vision of 'that of God in every man' and non-violent conflict resolution."[7] Yoder clearly realized that there were three ecclesial groups that continued to claim paternity for democracy as a self-evidently valuable

[5] Ibid., p. 18.
[6] Ibid., p. 214-215.
[7] John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984, p. 166-167.

achievement and those were Augustinians, Enlightenment Liberals, and the Free Churches. The question becomes, what kind of democracy do you get with each one of these groups? With Augustinians you traditionally get representative democracy, and with Enlightenment liberals you traditionally get liberal democracy, but what do you get with the Free Church?

With the Free Church, Yoder believed that a unique form of democracy was recovered that had not been practiced since the time of the early Church. It was a radical form of democracy that did not simply mean that most people get to talk or that everybody gets counted, but that instituted a theologically mandatory vesting of the right to dissent.[8] Yoder states:

> As early Christians met for worship, all of them were free to take the floor. The more talkative were told to listen, and the more timid were encouraged to speak out. The only mandatory guidelines were procedural, so that all might be heard. Though that liberty was understood as the working of the Spirit of Christ, its shape was the same as what a truly open Parliament, therapy community session, community of the whole, or town meeting attempts to be. From this original Christian vision have come the stronger strands of what we call "democracy," a vision which does not say that "the people" are always right, or that a majority is, but only that decisions will be better and community more whole if all can speak.[9]

From there the early Church established ground rules for conversation, dialogue and decision-making. Decisions were made by open dialogue working towards consensus by way of making space for everyone to have the floor. Ground rules were required not only in order to ensure that everyone's voice who was there could be heard, but also so that the Church could assure itself due process and continuity with the rest of the voices of the Church catholic in the past, present, and future.[10]

According to Yoder, the working out of the Spirit in the congregation is derived from Paul's letter to the Corinthians in the fourteenth chapter. The process described by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians is validated by the liberty with which various gifts are exercised by each member, in accord with due process, so that every prophetic voice is heard and every witness evaluated. Zwingli and the Radical Reformers called this process of dialogical liberty the "rule of Paul." In the 'body politic,' for Yoder, there will be agents of direction, memory, order, linguistic self-consciousness, and due process to help guide and shape the conversation so as to keep it in line with the "rule of Paul" and to make it democratic, or open

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[8] Ibid., 168.
[9] Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Public & Evangelical*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997.p. 32
[10] Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, p. 368.

to all voices.[11] Yoder is quite clear that dialogue under the Holy Spirit in accordance with the "rule of Paul" that is practiced in Free Church ecclesiology is the "ground floor of the notion of democracy."[12] It is Yoder's bold assertion at this point that makes possible a claim by his interpreters that "a thick description of a democratic polity (that Yoder simply called "free-church ecclesiology") based on I Corinthians 12-14 among other texts, was Yoder's overwhelming concern, as much in fact as pacifism."[13]

From the Free Church's ecclesiological vision secular society received a redefinition of democracy (a form of politics) as a continual conversation of open dialogical reciprocity with the other. The more voices that are included in the conversation and the more receptive the dialogue is to those voices (particularly minority voices) the closer you are to democracy. For Yoder, Christians can practice seeing history doxologically by learning to claim for the gospel its share of credit for the democratizing thrusts in society which have been created in the North Atlantic, where there is more space for political dialogue than ever or anywhere else before in history.[14] But this kind of space for political dialogue has been created before and is nothing new even if it has not been realized to the extent that it has been in North Atlantic societies of the late-20th century. What was new, according to Yoder, that the Free Church revived for the Church and the world in the Radical Reformation, "was that peculiar commitment to the dignity of the adversary or the interlocutor which alone makes dialogue an obligation, and which can be rooted only in some transcendent claim."[15] Bishop Songulashvili and the EBCG embodied this revolutionary dialogical receptivity to the voice of the adversary as an obligatory out-flowing of their liturgy in the generous hospitality they displayed towards their enemies and the commitment to reconciliation they pursued with their persecutors in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution.

Yoder's argument, that the positive correlation between the free church under friendly skies and the viability of a generally dialogical democracy needs frequent repetition because it is too easily forgotten under the Enlightenment rhetoric of autonomous human rights and the dignity of the individual,[16] leads us into our discussion of the difference

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[11] Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood," *The Priestly Kingdom*.

[12] Yoder, *Body Politics*: *Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World*. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1992, p. 72.

[13] Peter Dula & Alex Sider, "Radical Democracy, Radical Ecclesiology," *CrossCurrents,* Winter 2006, p. 494-495.

[14] Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, p. 135.

[15] Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, p. 168.

[16] Ibid.

between liberal democracy and the radical democracy of the Free Church vision and its implications for understanding the revolution that occurred in Georgia. If we understand with Yoder that democracy is fundamentally a form of dialogue and not a form of government *per se*, how will we read the Rose Revolution without redefining our concept of democracy? Where did we see democracy in Georgia?

A revolution is a movement that entails a perpetual "looping back" upon itself, and that is why revolution is rarely ever sustained for very long. It takes too much hard work to develop the revolutionary liturgical practices required to sustain revolution for an indeterminate period of time. Often, revolution only has the opportunity to get its foot in the door before it becomes institutionalized and established in ways that dissolve its revolutionary character. The political philosopher Sheldon Wolin has adopted a definition of democracy in continuity with this understanding of revolution. He constructs a definition of democracy that is not conceived as indistinguishable from its constitution, but a definition of democracy that "is inherently unstable, inclined toward anarchy, and identified with revolution."[17] Wolin's *aconstitutional* conception of democracy can be summarized as the idea and practice of rational disorganization, which places limits on the possibility of institutionalization that avoids constitutionalization and makes possible the constant possibility for reform that cultivates a deep political memory, and patiently "tends" to the voice of all people. "Democracy," in Wolin's assessment, "needs to be reconceived as something other than a form of government: as a mode of being conditioned by bitter experience, doomed to succeed only temporarily, but a recurrent possibility as long as the memory of the political survives."[18]

In my estimation, Wolin asks his readers to imagine that democracy means revolution. In institution, constitution, or representation the vision of democracy is lost and the political tends to disappear. Wolin states:

> The lesson embedded in Polybius's cyclic myth and in Locke's myth of an original contract and right of revolution is that, historically, it falls to democracy to have to reinvent the political periodically, perhaps even continually. Democracy does not complete its task by establishing a form and then being fitted into it. A political constitution is not the fulfillment of democracy but its transfiguration into a "regime" and hence a stultified and partial reification. Democracy, Polybuis remarks, lapses "in the course of

[17] Sheldon Wolin, *Norm and Form*, p. 37.
[18] Ibid., 54-55.

> time." Democracy is a political movement, perhaps *the* movement, when the political is remembered and recreated. [19]

Therefore Wolin takes the fundamental problem with Western constitutional democracy to be the overwhelming fear of the successive revolutionary character of democracy, as it is in its essence. This fear is most adequately displayed by Hamilton's infamous employment of Publius' description of the history of previous republics as "continually agitated in a rapid succession of revolutions, and in a state of perpetual vibration, between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy" as a *Federalist* argument for the unification of the states and the dissolution of the Articles of Confederation in favor of a Constitution.[20]

The revolutionary character of "fugitive" or radical democracy is not an attempt for Wolin to "define democracy as institutionalized negativity or 'universal abandon.'" "What is at stake," for Wolin, "is not a vapid issue of dissent but the status of democracy as standing opposition and the importance to it of the continuous recreation of political experience."[21] This form of continuous recreation is identical to the kind of perpetual "looping back" that takes place in revolution. The only politics that provides an alternative that can combat what Wolin calls the permanent revolution instigated and perpetuated by elites that is represented in the corporatist state, is to fashion liturgies of the political that strive to continuously transform the conditions, forms, and prospects of human life in a revolution from below. That kind of revolution from below is identical to the form that democracy took in a place like Georgia by way of the radical democratic liturgies fashioned by the Liberty Institute and Kmara, as well as the radically democratic movement of the EBCG. When that kind of revolution takes place, "we see democracy."

But, on Wolin's terms, the members of the Liberty Institute and their assumption into the constitutional form of Georgian politics known as Parliament, by way of election into office, may be a dangerous mistake. As Wolin claims, "Since, at best, only rarely has democracy 'governed,' then perhaps political theorists from antiquity to modern times have made a category mistake by treating democracy as a possible constitutional form for an entire society."[22] The continued existence of an organization like Kmara does open the door for the hope that the political will not be lost in the election of the founders of the Liberty Institute

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[19] Ibid., 55.

[20] Wolin, Sheldon S. *The Presence of the Past : Essays on the State and the Constitution.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989., p. 94.

[21] Wolin, Sheldon S. *Politics and Vision : Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Expanded ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004., p. 604.

[22] Ibid., 602.

into Georgian Parliament. Institutions such as the Liberty Institute have become a thorn in the side of Saakashvili who thought that he would have more unqualified support from such people and forgot that the dissent part is essential. Saakashvili has been criticized for not having a vigorous enough opposition.

It will be essential for the EBCG to continue to practice radical democracy in their liturgy and polity if by chance other schools of democracy become subsumed into the nation-state, and conversely it will be essential for Kmara to continue to train radical democrats so that if the EBCG becomes Constantinian, a space will be open for the possibility of reform. Without the space for reform and revolution, democracy will be eliminated and something other will take its place. Bishop Songulashvili commented recently, "Genuine democracy will come to this part of the world for sure. It is only a matter of time." But genuine, radical democracy has come to Eastern Europe in the form of Kmara-like liturgies and in the EBCG, they just need the revolutionary eyes to be able to see it when it appears, to sustain it when they can, and to find it when it is lost.

The Church needs radical democracy, and radical democracy needs the Church. In Georgia, the Church even in its liturgical reforms was not able to mobilize the kind of support for opposition that would have been needed to overthrow Shevardnadze. Without the radical democratic liturgies of Kmara the EBCG would have had to carve out its own niche of opposition, which would have continued to be violently persecuted by the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, because the EBCG is a minority church their resources for affecting dramatic revolutionary change in Georgia were significantly limited. While survival should not be a primary goal for any Christian community, EBCG's faithful witness may have been completely lost without the success of Kmara's radical democratic liturgies for reform. The most crucial gift that Kmara may have given the EBCG was their reinvigoration of the possibility of non-violent revolution. In the witness of Kmara, and the liturgical reforms that happened in the EBCG alongside and in response to that witness, the Georgian Baptists recovered the faithful practice of peacemaking and a commitment to non-violence that had been lost in the dark years of persecution under Communist regimes. Only in listening to the voice of radical democrats like Kmara and their reclamation of the necessity of non-violent revolution, that they learned by way of Gene Sharp, were the Georgian Baptists able to

proclaim that "violence will never be a part of Baptist methodology for democracy in Georgia."[23]

On the other hand, Kmara needs to continue to listen to the witness of the EBCG, because the nature of democratic reform that they have help to instantiate in Georgia is dangerously close to liberal democracy, which tends toward oligarchy. Already in only three years after the revolution, observers have noted that the Georgian president "Saakashvili is unique in having two extremely disparate sets of supporters: the desperately poor who have been unable to claim any of the market's benefits, and young Tbilisians who work for NGO's, multinational corporations, or Georgian firms that look West."[24] Who will Saakashvili give his loyalty to: the poor, or multinational corporations that are sympathetic to the West? As Charles Fairbanks explains:

> Every revolutionary or reformist government faces the question of whether it should scrap old, misused instruments of power, or else try and reshape them into tools for positive change. With respect to Georgia's already-strong presidency, Saakashvili has taken the later course with a vengeance.[25]

Fairbanks notes that the "superpresidential" constitution that was operating for Shevardnadze has now become Saakashvili's "hyperpresidential" constitution.[26] According to Sheldon Wolin, no matter what form of presidential power is operating under the constitution, in constitution itself democracy has already been lost. But even Fairbanks has to concede something to Wolin when describing the Rose Revolution, when he asks, "Does not the case of Georgia show that *sometimes* a sudden extraconstitutional expression of public opinion can be good for democratization?"[27]

Wolin would respond to Fairbanks by claiming that not only is extraconstitutional expression of public opinion good for democratization, extraconstitutional expression is democracy. Yet, Fairbanks and many others will want to maintain that while the weakness of the state might aid in democratization, state strength is essential for democracy to endure. However, what Fairbanks and others mean by democracy is not the radical democratic liturgies embodied by Kmara, but quintessential liberal democracy in all its success and failure. He believes, "we should view the Revolution of the Roses without illusions. The

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[23] Songulashvili, correspondence on 4/26/2006.
[24] Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., "Georgia's Rose Revolution," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 15 num. 2, April 2004, p. 117.
[25] Ibid., 118.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 119.

hard leading edge of the fashionable, well-educated crowd that Saakashvili led into the streets, into Parliament, and then into power was a line of young, lower-class toughs in leather jackets."[28] That sort of demonstration of democracy is dangerously radical and does not fit the mold of what Westerners have become comfortable with in their liberal democratic societies. Fairbanks does finally come close to saying that radical democratic liturgies are needed in the transition from dictatorship to liberal democracy, when he claims that, "the Georgian revolution could disrupt so many old patterns only because it was *seen* as a revolution, abrupt and decisive, and because Georgians accomplished it *themselves*."[29]

The success of the Rose Revolution in Georgia allows Fairbanks to put into perspective the United States' foreign policy to bring democracy to the world. Fairbanks notes, "Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq are all in some sort of a mess in part because external powers have tried to consummate a revolutionary democratic task without any revolutionists."[30] Democracy, as seen in the Revolution of the Roses and other color revolutions in Eastern Europe, is not a set of systematic governmental reforms that are in the possession of a nation-state somewhere that can be taken or received by another people. Democracy has to come from the *demos,* from the people, for it to be successful and for it truly to be democracy. That is why President George Bush's association of the military occupation of Iraq and the overthrow of Sadaam Hussein with the movements in Eastern Europe is totally ridiculous. When he claimed on February 24th, 2004 that "we have seen a Rose Revolution in Georgia, and an Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, and now we are seeing a Purple Revolution in Iraq," he fundamentally misunderstood what took place in Georgia and why it was even remotely successful. While Fairbanks would never call what is going on in Iraq a "Purple Revolution," he along with President Bush miss the fundamental reason that the Rose Revolution was revolutionary when he says, "The next time an authoritarian regime is toppled in the post-Soviet world, it may involve open violence. Are we prepared for that?"[31] Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili, the EBCG, the students of Kmara, and President Saakashvili would all answer a resounding "no" to that question. For the EBCG, the non-violent character of the revolution was essential to their participation in it, and for Kmara, the non-violent character of the revolution was essential to its success. That is something both Fairbanks and Bush fundamentally misunderstand.

[28] Ibid., 123.
[29] Ibid., 122.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 123.

The Liberty Institute and Kmara need the EBCG. After gifting the EBCG with a reinvigoration of the tradition of non-violence, which the EBCG reincorporated into their own liturgy as a revolutionary "looping back" upon their own tradition as Christians, now the EBCG has the liturgical resources and ecclesiological polity to sustain the peaceful practices of non-violence that are constitutive of Kmara's radically democratic liturgy. Because the Liberty Institute now has such close affiliation with Parliament, as their founders have now all become government officials, and because the Kmara movement funnels into the Liberty Institute; the future may require the people of Georgia looking to the EBCG to remember and revive the radical democratic liturgy that helped them to achieve the freedoms and liberties that they now hold so dear.

In the words of the political theologian Bernd Wannenwetsch, "to understand the conceptual implications of 'political worship,' a twofold rediscovery is needed: on the one hand of the political dimension in liturgy, and on the other the liturgical dimension of politics."[32] Wannenwetsch's call for a twofold rediscovery is what this essay has struggled to make evident in the politics of the EBCG and the Kmara liturgy. Kmara and the EBCG both practiced different forms of revolutionary liturgy that often had similar ends. In fact, the cross-section between radical democracy and radical Christianity often takes place through shared practices that are sometimes motivated from different assumptions, yet are often directed toward a common goal. The liturgy that most evidently displays this cross-section is the common practice of non-violent revolution that both the EBCG and Kmara participated in together, but that both received from fundamentally different places even though they employed it for the same goal to overthrow Shevardnadze's government. While it is possible that Kmara helped the EBCG remember their commitment to non-violence that has become necessary for the EBCG to be faithful as Christians, once recovered, the practice of non-violence began to flow out of the EBCG's liturgical remembrance and embodiment of Christ's non-violent death on the cross. On the other hand, Kmara's commitment to non-violence was influenced by the writings of Gene Sharp, who is not a Christian, and who believes that the practices of non-violent resistance do not need religious motivation to be successful. Success is the fundamental difference between the Kmara and EBCG liturgies of non-violence, because non-violence for Sharp is only practiced when he believes it can be shown that it will be more effective in generating the kind of change that is desired. For

[32] Bernd Wannenwetsch, "Liturgy," *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, p. 76.

Georgian Baptists, however, success is not determinative of their non-violent participation. The EBCG can only participate non-violently, success does not determine their strategy but the gospel requires it, and therefore the EBCG might be able to risk more than Kmara for the sake of radical democracy because they remain committed to non-violence even if that means they might lose.

Non-violence is not the only liturgical practice that Kmara and the EBCG share that is conducive to the possibility of democracy as a continual conversation of open dialogical reciprocity. Several other liturgies are necessary to make possible a dialogical democracy where all voices, even those of the minorities and the enemies, are heard. Kmara and the EBCG can share in these liturgies together, even if for different reasons, to ensure the possibility of democracy in Georgia. First, the EBCG and Kmara can both continue to practice dissent by holding open the constant possibility for reform within their own domestic liturgies and in their liturgical engagement with outsiders. Both the EBCG and Kmara have embodied this radical practice of dissent in their dialogical reciprocity toward one another and in their incorporation of the "others" liturgy into their own. This practice of dissent, or radical reform, is a movement that entails a perpetual "looping back" upon itself in the form of a revolution that mirrors the Earth's revolution on its axis internal to itself and its revolution around the Sun. Continual conversation in the form of open dialogical reciprocity toward the other, the stranger, and the enemy is only possible if liturgies are in place that leave an opening for the constant possibility of reformation and revolution.

In order to ensure the constant possibility of reform as a practice of dissent that is conducive to dialogical reciprocity toward all others, which has been described above as democracy, liturgies of memory, repentance, patience, and hospitality will be necessary. Through Kmara, liturgies of the memory of fascism and communism were reinvigorated and revived so as to remind the people of Georgia of what their lives were like under those oppressive political regimes. Coupled with the memory of fascism and communism was the memory of the Serbian resistance and other non-violent revolutions in Czechoslovakia as well as the political memory of Gene Sharp that allowed them to out-narrate the corruption of Shevardnadze's regime and offer a alternative that was open to radical democratic possibilities for all people. The EBCG employed the same practices of memory in their own liturgy in order to revive the historical Christian commitment to non-violence and to draw upon the liturgical resources of the Orthodox Church that was persecuting them and to offer

an avenue of hope for reconciliation along common Eucharistic lines that combated the threat of Constantinian forms of Christian existence with a radically democratic free church ecclesiology. Through these practices of memory that both Kmara and the EBCG employed in the preparation, duration, and aftermath of the Rose Revolution, the people of Georgia were able to confront the powerful anti-liturgy of religious nationalism.

This practice of memory enabled repentance by the EBCG for their participation as a church in the communist dictatorships that ruled Georgia in the past. Bishop Songulashvili states:

> Liturgical reforms paved the way to a wider reform of the church, which has ultimately forged the new identity of the Georgian Baptists in the post-Soviet reality of Eastern Europe. It was through the liturgical development that the church apologized for the dark spots in the past of the Church. Already several years ago the church confessed its sin of collaboration with the communist authorities infiltration of our fathers' church and asked forgiveness both from God and the people of Georgia. To the best of my knowledge the EBCG was the only church in the East that has to this point confessed their sin of submission to the Soviet government.[33]

Only through their repentance were the Christians of the EBCG able to make meaning of their past complicitness with corruption and oppression and only in their own repentance were they able to open up space in themselves to forgive those from the Orthodox Church who had become their persecutors. This political practice of reconciliation flowed directly out of the liturgy where Jesus teaches his disciples to pray that if they desire forgiveness then they must forgive those who have "trespassed" or sinned against them. Reciprocal forgiveness that is practiced in relationship to God within the domestic liturgy of the church depends upon their participation in reciprocal forgiveness practiced externally to them, with their enemies. In this way, the EBCG's liturgy is revolution in that it entails, for its fulfillment, a revolutionary act of embodied forgiveness with those other than itself. The continual return of "looping back" in on itself and its own liturgy, by the church, provokes an obligatory "looping out" or giving and receiving from others.

In their radical and revolutionary "looping out" the EBCG found itself compelled to practice liturgies of hospitality toward the poor, the destitute and the disabled, toward their brothers and persecutors the Orthodox, and toward their vulnerable enemies the Chechen Muslims. Each liturgy of hospitality revolved around a "moving Eucharistic table" that the EBCG used to feed the poor, care for the sick, and to eat with their enemies. Sometimes the

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[33] Songulashvili, correspondence on 4/26/2006.

revolving and mobile Communion table was offered to those who were their brothers and sisters within EBCG body, sometimes that table was extended with a large "leaflet" toward their enemies in an act of Eucharistic reconciliation, and sometimes the table was uprooted from its fixed location and moved into the mountains in an act of revolutionary hospitality to those who operated from an entirely different narrative; their neighbors and enemies the Chechen Muslims. If radical democracy as embodied in the liturgies and free church ecclesiology of the EBCG can create a movable Eucharistic table that extends its invitation to "come and eat" even to its enemies, and not just any enemies, but enemies that are not part of the universal "body of Christ," then there is hope that radical democratic groups like Kmara can practice this hospitality as well.

Liturgies of radical democracy and radical Christianity will take time to cultivate and they will take time to sustain. Constructing a polity that will remain open to the voice of all people and engage in practices of dialogical reciprocity open to the constant possibility of reform in the form of dissent is not an easy undertaking for either society or for the Church. For Baptist and Free Church Christians there are good reasons to work for both from the liturgy they ascribe for themselves. The witness of the EBCG for Free Church Christians is their radical receptivity and openness to the tradition of their persecutors, the Orthodox. To the extent that the EBCG was able to incorporate the deep liturgical resources of the Orthodox tradition within their own Free Church polity, they embodied the most radical form of the "rule of Paul," in that they were open not only to hearing the voice of the other, of the enemy, but they were open to learning from and embodying the best of their interlocutors practices into their own liturgies as a sign of reconciliation and revolutionary dialogical reciprocity. As the Baptist theologian Steven Harmon claims, "Occasional conflict between Orthodox Christians and Baptists in post-Soviet Eastern Europe should underscore for Baptist theologians in particular the importance of retrieving for Baptists the Eastern patristic heritage they ought to share in common with their Orthodox brothers and sisters."[34] Harmon's suggestion was embodied by the EBCG in and through their liturgical incorporation of the Eastern tradition, where they were able to find continuity between themselves and their enemies in a way that fostered reconciliation within the community of faith, without sacrificing their own identity as uniquely Baptist. It is quite possible now that the liturgical reforms that took place in the EBCG's worship and ecclesiology could spill over

[34] Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, vol. 27; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), p. 148.

ecumenically into the Orthodox Church of Georgia and move toward attaining more fully the EBCG's goal to become not only the church for Baptists in Georgia, but *the* Church in Georgia.

Could the "*perichoretic* dialogical reciprocity" that has traditionally been associated with the Triune God continue to foster dialogical reciprocity between the Baptists and Orthodox in Georgia? Could the intra-Trinitarian *dance* be an analogy for the relationship between Baptists, Orthodox, and Muslims' in Georgia? Could the intra-Trinitarian *dance* be an analogy for the reciprocal relationships of dialogue that take place between the church and the world? As Paul Fiddes explains:

> There is, to be sure, no straight line between the notion of 'three persons' in God and a truly democratic society, as if the Trinity simply provides a model for pluralism in government. As we have already seen, the point of Trinitarian language is not to provide an example to copy, but to draw us into participation in God, out of which life can be transformed. But the language of Trinity certainly encourages the values of relationship, community, and mutuality between persons. It is about interdependence not domination.[35]

There is a shared resource in the intrinsic liturgical worship of the Triune God that opens up possibility for open dialogue between ecclesial traditions that can be "looped back" upon as a narrative for reformation when it is needed, and for reconciliation when it is desired. "Looping back" entails, promotes and incites a "looping out" that incorporates the lonely, the destitute, the poor, the stranger, and the enemy. It might also incorporate the radically "other" into the body of Christ in an unimaginable or mysterious way. We can be almost certain that the liturgy of the EBCG was a form of radical democracy and therefore it was and is revolution. But we might not be able to know whether the radical democratic liturgy of Kmara could be a form of "church." Only in so far as they profess the Lordship of Christ (even if implicitly) in their liturgical acts can we say when looking at them, "but we see Jesus."

The liturgy of the EBCG is like the Earth in that it "loops back" on itself in the same way that the Earth revolves on its axis, and it "loops out" around the world the way that the Earth revolves around the Sun. As the Earth's revolution (on its axis) internal to itself perpetuates the revolution that the Earth makes externally around the Sun, so the EBCG's intrinsic liturgical revolution produces an extrinsic participation in the revolutions for democracy that are taking place in Eastern Europe. Kmara's radical democratic liturgies

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[35] Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity.* Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001., p. 66.

involved the same "looping back" and "looping out" that constitutes a revolutionary politics. In both instances, liturgy incited revolutionary politics. Yet, in so far as the "looping back" that the EBCG and Kmara engage in intrinsically in their domestic worship is a form of revolving, one could claim that *liturgy is revolution*. If democracy is revolution (Wolin) and liturgy is revolution then can we say that democracy is liturgy, or that liturgy is democracy? The radical democratic ecclesiology of the EBCG and the radical liturgical democracy of Kmara cause us to attend to that possibility.

Appendix: Evangelical-Baptist Church Liturgy
Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili

The Cathedral Baptist church follows the liturgical calendar and Bible Lectionary, Revised Common Lectionary specifically.

Holy Week which we call Passion Week is the highest liturgical time in the life of the Cathedral.

The week starts with celebration of *Palm Sunday*. In the morning a group of people meet at the *Beteli* Center which is 10 kilometers from the Cathedral. They have a short service which is made up by Gospel reading and prayers. Then they process with palm branches and a nice donkey toward the Cathedral. At noon time people meet the procession outside the Cathedral. At the gate of the Cathedral a short litany is read and the people enter the church to celebrate the day.

Sometimes in the beginning of the service the Bishop, being accompanied by children, approaches the altar and throws from the altar some money coins that had been piled there and destroys some vessels in remembrance of Jesus' entrance to the Temple.

The next Service is *Great Thursday* (Maundy Thursday). In the evening main Eucharistic Service is held at the Cathedral. The procession brings to the altar two sets of liturgical vessels for foot washing (a Jar of water, a basin, a towel) and for Eucharist (Chalice, Patten, Bread and Wine).

12 people (men and women) selected from the community participate in the foot washing. The Bishop washes their feet and then immediately continues with the Eucharist.

On *Red Friday* (Good Friday) the Cathedral church observes 6 hours of Jesus on the cross. The Procession of the cross starts at 9 am in the Old Part of Tbilisi at the 7th century Armenian Apostolic Cathedral, the passion story is read from the first Gospel. Then the procession leaves the Cathedral and moves towards the Roman Catholic Cathedral where the second Gospel is read and prayers offered. From there the procession walks on the main street of the capital city and moves towards the Lutheran Cathedral where the third Gospel is read. From the Lutheran Cathedral the procession goes to the Baptists Cathedral where the main service is taking place. At 3 pm the service ends to mark the death of the Lord at 3 o'clock.

Great Saturday is observed by the entire congregation in private devotion. At the end of Great Saturday, the Easter vigil starts at 11:00pm and continues till next morning about 9 am.

The main *Evangelical Mass* with baptismal service and Eucharist is followed by the Easter festival with a lot of dancing and music. In the morning at about 5:30 people are bussed to the mountains to have Easter Morning Prayer and an Easter party with a lot of music.

Passion Week is preceded by the Great Fast (Lent).

Each week of Lent is dedicated to a certain theme. For instance we have the week of orphans, the week of prisoners, the week of the sick, and the week of ecology. The entire congregation is involved in observing those weeks by practical activities: visiting prisoners or the sick, planting trees, cleaning contaminated places in the city, etc. People start their fast on Thursday evening and finish on Friday evening in the Cathedral with Eucharist.

Passion week is followed by the *Feast of Ascension* which usually is taking place on a mountain under the open air. The Eucharistic service is followed by a party with folkloric dance and music.

The *Feast of Pentecost* is celebrated in the Cathedral. All the ministers of the EBCG attend the service. Before the Eucharist the oil is being consecrated and given to all the ministers of the church.

On 19 August the church celebrates the *Feast of Transfiguration* on a mountain overlooking the capital city.

Advent is observed with weekly Eucharist and Christmas vigil.

The *Feast of Baptism of Jesus* is celebrated on January 19, usually accompanied by baptismal service and renewal of Baptismal vows.

The regular *Eucharist* is celebrated once a month, on the first Sunday of the month. The Eucharist service is usually high and solemn. All human senses are able to participate in the service. The service will include introductory prayers, affirmation of Christian faith, Bible readings, sermon, litanies, songs, liturgical dance, censing of frankincense, usage of real bread and real wine, thanksgiving and intercessory prayers, Blessing and anointing of the children, Benediction. (In general, children actively participate in service).

The Main Characteristics of the Baptist Cathedral Liturgy:

All the liturgies in the Cathedral are participatory services where the entire congregation participates by singing, responsorial readings, lighting candles, dancing whenever it is appropriate, spontaneous prayers at less formal services.

Children are actively involved in the worship: they participate in processions, they bring water and towel for the Celebrant, they participate in blessing of church objects (bells, crosses, icons), they are also regularly blessed and anointed, they read creeds and gospels, they sing and dance, participate in drama.

Women are fully involved in the worship services (for which we have been criticized by our Eastern European Baptist Churches particularly in Russia, Moldova, Belarus and Kazakhstan).They plan the services, they participate in Bible readings, preaching, they are concelebrating the Eucharist (only ordained women) with the Bishop, they bless and anoint people. Obviously they also sing in the choirs (there are three choirs) and teach at Sunday school.

Ecumenical guests are always welcomed to participate in worship services at the Cathedral by celebrating Eucharist (Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Free church ministers), by preaching (Orthodox, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Lutherans and other Protestants), by participating in the special services such as procession of cross, feet washing, blessing of Children (Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenian Apostolic, Protestants), in ordaining of Baptist ministers (Lutherans), in services dedicated to global events and disasters (All Christian ministers, plus Muslim and Jewish leaders).

For the worship the Cathedral uses:

Different symbols: cross, icons, bells, cymbals...
Different objects: fire, water, oil, ashes, snow, palm and box tree branches, bread, grapes...
Different animals: doves, donkeys, lambs, calves...