When the Unclean Spirit Leaves: Tasks of the Eastern Europe Churches After the 1989 Revolution

Miroslav Volf
Evangelical Theological Seminary, Yugoslavia

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree

Part of the Christianity Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol11/iss1/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.
WHEN THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT LEAVES

The Tasks of the Eastern European Churches After the 1989 Revolution

by Miroslav Volf

Dr. Miroslav Volf (Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia) is professor of theology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Osijek, Yugoslavia. He received his doctorate from the Evangelical Theological School in Tübingen, Germany, where he is currently working on his habilitation. Originally written for the European Journal of Theology this article was delivered as a lecture at the conference of Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe at Stony Point, October 5-6, 1990, at the celebration of the Day of Reformation of Evangelical Theological Faculty, Osijek, and as one of my Chavasse Lectures at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, November 13, 1990. It was written during my time as a Humboldt fellow in Tübingen, Germany. Used by permission of the author.1

I

In the Gospels, Jesus tells a puzzling story about the unclean spirit who leaves a person only to return with seven other spirits of an even more wicked character. The new state of the person is even worse than the old (see Mt 12:45 ff). I am sometimes tempted to apply this story to the situation in Eastern Europe after the 1989 revolution. The demon of totalitarian communism has just been or is being exorcised, but worse demons seem to be rushing in to fill the empty house. This new attack of unclean spirits explain why the celebration of the 1989 revolution was so surprisingly short lived-anxiety about the future dampened the joy of liberation.

In this paper I will first speak of the demon that has been or is being cast out (II). After a brief reflection on the nature of the economic and political exorcism itself(III), I will discuss the demons who are now rushing in (IV), and what is at stake in the fight against them(V). I will end my paper with some suggestions for what Christians should do in order to prevent the demons from taking over the Eastern European house (VI). But first a few remarks will explain the context, the nature, and the content of my reflection.

My diagnosis and suggestion of a remedy can only be tentative. The events in Eastern Europe are happening hand over hand and are taking surprising turns. What one says about

---

1I am grateful to Mark Gundry for his comments on style.
the situation one day might be outdated the next. I am neither a prophet or a social analyst trained to predict future developments. What I offer here are personal theological perspectives about the tasks facing Christians in Eastern Europe. These perspectives will constantly need to be adjusted according to the changing situation.

I should say at the outset that I am writing about Eastern Europe from a Yugoslavian perspective. The communist rule has pressed Eastern European countries and peoples into an uniform "Eastern Block." It has both masked and suppressed their rich cultural diversity. Since the revolution these differences have begun to resurface, and it is clear that each country will have unique struggles as it faces the future. Yet with more than 40 years of common history, these countries also have common problems which require similar solutions. I hope that what I have to say from a Yugoslavian perspective will reflect at least partly both the situation and the tasks of Christians in other Eastern European countries (with the exception of the former German Democratic Republic).

There is so much talk these days about the wall that crumbled between the so-called First and Second worlds. But another and less visible wall has fallen together with the wall between West and East. It is the wall between Second and Third worlds (or Two-Thirds-World). The fear that the Two-Thirds-World countries are loosing their allies with the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe is at least partly misplaced. Eastern European countries are more and more facing problems similar to those that plague the countries of the Two-Thirds-World. It will take some time before Eastern European countries integrate with the Western World. Before that happens, their people will be fellow sufferers with the people of the Two-Thirds-World.

The time seems therefore ripe for much closer ties between Eastern European and Two-Thirds-World theologians to produce a global theology that will address the crisis they face together. With a few notable exceptions, Christians in Eastern Europe have not reflected extensively about socio-economic issues. They have been prevented from doing so by the policies of the Communist governments that prohibited any appearance of religion on the public scene. Christians from Eastern Europe need to do a lot of catching up and can be enriched by the sustained Two-Thirds-World theological reflection on socio-ethical issues. But they also have an important contribution to make to the search for a theology relevant to the great issues of the day, for their societies have been made the objects of the biggest social experiment in world history. The experiment has failed bitterly. Two-Thirds world

---

2 My comments here are based upon the course of events up to October 1990.

theologians, especially those who took Eastern European societies as models for social transformation, need to learn from this colossal failure.

I hope that my reflection from a Yugoslavian perspective will not only facilitate reflection on socio-economic issues in Eastern Europe, but also pay a small contribution to the ongoing dialogue of Two-Thirds-World theologians about the problems plaguing our world. All of us together need to look for ways for making our world reflect something of the new creation that God has promised to God's people. It will be a world in which demons will no longer "deceive the nations," a world in which God will "wipe away every tear" from the eyes of the saints, a world in which peace will reign between human beings and nature, and a world in which the Triune God will dwell with the people (see Rev. 20-22).

II

Massive communist propaganda could not deceive the peoples of Eastern Europe for long. The social oppression caused by the camouflaged demon of totalitarian communism was not to be missed by those who were close. While it took some time to free themselves from the yoke of oppression, they knew all along that they did not want totalitarian communism and they also knew why. The three pillars of that inhumane system had became the threefold chain of their oppression.

First, Eastern European people said "no" to communism because of its conception of human rights. Socialist societies have a typical collectivistic understanding of human rights. Rights are granted to individuals by the state in exchange for loyal social behavior. Such an understanding of human rights was meant to justify the socialist state's cruel disposition over the destinies of the people in the name of revolutionary ideals. The state stripped people of the inalienable rights and in the same breath portrayed itself as their grand benefactor by handing rights out as rewards. Much like the God described in Feuerbach's and Marx's critique of religion, the Communist government "graciously" granted to people what it had first ruthlessly deprived them of. The cynical Communist political discourse, in which the government's "benevolent giving" figures prominently, only underscored the powerlessness of the people and omnipotence of the government.

The peoples of Eastern Europe rejected the politics of perverted governmental grace in favor of the politics of their own personal rights. Human rights are "prior rights"; they belong to every person by virtue of being a person. A human being possesses these rights over against anybody, especially over against the state. "Formal Freedoms" are not a "bourgeois

---

invention" as the old Marxist claim would have it but are a necessary precondition of the respect for human dignity. By rejecting the conception that rights are gifts of the state, Eastern Europeans have pulled down the first pillar of totalitarianism. By embracing the notion of rights as inalienable characteristics of a person, they have erected the first pillar of democracy.

Second, the Eastern European revolution was directed against Communist "command economy." The concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state and the government central planning are not only oppressive, but have completely failed economically. Seventy years after the revolution 48 million Soviet citizens live below the poverty level as measured by Soviet standards. Even bread is in short supply! The economies of other socialist countries have not performed much better. The problem is not merely a moral one—rampant corruption at all levels. The problem is structural. Even the best of bureaucracies cannot gather all the information necessary to make correct economic decisions; and even when a bureaucracy makes the correct decision, it has no means to ensure that it is executed responsibly and efficiently—no means, that is, that respect human dignity. ⁵

Eastern Europeans have decided that the inefficient and oppressive "command economy" has to go and that a "market economy" has to come. The market economy allows more freedom in production and consumption (producer's manipulative power over consumers notwithstanding); it is economically more efficient and hence better capable of satisfying the basic needs of the population (granting its limitations in distribution), and it is more responsible in the use of existing limited natural resources (in spite of being blind to the future of ecological systems). ⁶

Finally, the 1989 revolution pulled down the central pillar in the political structure of socialist societies: the constitutionally sanctioned permanent and unconditional monopoly on power of the Communist Party and its government. This position of the Communist Party was legitimated either by recourse to its historic merits or by the ideological belief that the Communist Party is the authentic interpreter and implementer of the monolithic will of the people since Marxism-Leninism gives it privileged insight into the true interests of the workers. Such an understanding of the role of the party was not only the central pillar of Communist totalitarianism, but was at the same time both one of the main (though not the only) causes of the crisis of socialist societies and the central obstacle in overcoming that crisis.


In the past, all socialist reforms (which regularly consisted in attempts to incorporate elements of the capitalist economic system into socialism) were initiated and controlled by an uncontested Communist government. Under pressure of economic crisis, government would initiate a liberalization intended to increase the efficiency of the socialist system. Liberalization would however regularly be followed by repression which was required to preserve government's existence. In the 1989 revolution, the cycle of liberation and repression was broken because the most important pillar of the socialist political structure—the self-proclaimed avant-garde role of the Communist Party—crumbled. People opted for a limited government, with its temporary character and division of powers; they demonstrated their preference for the distinction between state and society, for pluralism instead of monism.

III

The recent Eastern European revolution is best characterized as a "revolution of return." It differs from virtually all modern revolutions by its lack of an innovative intention. It was not inspired by visionary solutions to the pressing problems of today and tomorrow; it came about through the belated recognition that the Western liberal democracy was politically and economically more successful, and indeed that the socialist people's democracy and command economy was a dead-end street. The only option was to shift into reverse. So the revolution acquired the character of a restoration. Smith, the realist, was proven right; Marx, the adventurist, had failed. The socialist prodigal son returned in rags as his older capitalist brother had predicted all along.

The prodigal son has come back! But where is the feasting over the fatted calf? Why is the reunited family not making merry? Why does the victory of the older brother lack the flavor of triumph? And why was the joy of the younger brother so short lived. In Jesus' story the prodigal son returns to the father. In the 1989 revolution the prodigal son has returned to his older brother. Both brothers are in the strange land, far away from the Father's household. True, the older brother has been more prudent, more efficient, and yes, more humane than the younger, but neither seems to be willing to return home, and it is not sure that either of them knows the way home. Indeed, they often seem to think that they are home; both brothers give in too easily to the temptation to believe that the liberal-capitalist status quo political and economic non plus ultra.

The sin of which the younger brother is now repenting is not the sin of leaving the Father's home, but the sin of parting ways with his older brother. And sin it was! Economic

7See J. Habermas, "Nachholende Revolution und linker Revisionsbedarf: Was heilt Sozialismus heute?" in Die nachholende Revolution: Kleine Politische Schriften VII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 179–204, 179ff.
inefficiency was the smallest of the trespasses of Marxist socialism. It was oppressive to
people—so much of it produced "mountains of corpses and rivers of blood"—and it was
destructive to nature. The return of the younger brother to the older did not only end to the
feud that threatened assured mutual destruction. It also gave the younger brother political
liberty and was a first step towards replacing his half-torn rags with some decent garments.

The happy embrace of the two brothers should not deceive us; both brothers are still in
a strange land. No doubt the house of the older brother shines on the outside and is nicely
decorated on the inside. But what is going on in its secret chambers? How are his close or
his distant neighbors living (say in Mexico City or Calcutta)? And what is happening to the
land around the glitzy house? When the wall between East and West came down none of the
problems specific to the functioning of modern, economically developed societies was solved.
Within these societies the external costs of the operation of the market continue to weigh on
people and nature. Outside these societies there is abject poverty and oppression, the threat
of ecological disaster and the quarreling of states whom they have furnished with deadly
weapons.

The problems of the older brother are grave. But the problems of the younger brother
are much worse, even after his return. He will use his older brother's plan to rebuild his
house. But this is no mean task. He has to continue living in it while rebuilding it. There
will not only be a threat of collapse, but even if things go in the best order, it will take a
long time before his house starts looking better. And there are voices reminding him that
the older brother's architectural solution might not be as solid as it seems. Will the house he
is building now last? Will he be happy in it?

What are some of the threats to the successful rebuilding of Eastern European societies?
What demons threaten to destroy the work? How should Christians respond?

IV

In the hubbub of the dismantling of Communist totalitarianism, three other demons
threaten to enter Eastern European countries: the demon of cold-blooded economism, of
nationalistic totalitarianism, and of political clericalism. One of these demons—nationalist
totalitarianism—is by itself worse than the first demon, and if all three entered Eastern
European countries together, the last state of these countries would, no doubt, be worse than
the first.

First, cold blooded economism. After a disaster of "command economy," people in
Eastern Europe have directed their hopes to market economy. The choice is right. But
market economy is not only a solution. The motors that keep it running also generate serious
problems which every humane society has to overcome. I will not analyze here the operation
of a market economy but only indicate two of the gravest problems it produces. The first is the marginalization and degradation of people. Placed by the market mechanism before the alternatives of "compete or perish," many people simply have no other choice than to perish. The merciless machinery of the market system crushes them to the ground. The second problem is the destruction of nature. For the market system nature is only a resource to be worked with, a consumer good to be sold or to be bought. And hence individual or corporate desire for profits leads to indiscriminate exploitation of nature.

The richer a society is, the more effectively it can deal with what are often called the "negative side-effects" of the market. Eastern European societies are not the poorest of the poor, but they are poor and burdened by international debt. Furthermore, there is a growing army of marginalized people (especially among the young and the retired), and the extent of environmental pollution and destruction is staggering as well. The pressure to succeed economically will make effective care for marginalized people and the despoiled environment extremely difficult. Once Eastern European countries start on the road of market economy, we have grounds to fear that they will succumb to the temptation of cold-blooded economism.

Against the cold blooded economism which oppresses people, Christians need to demand the recognition and implementation of sustenance rights. The respect for freedom as a basic rule of the economic game needs to be supplemented by respect for the right to sustenance. The right is even more basic than the respect for individual economic liberty. The responsibility people have for the material well-being of their neighbors is not just a matter of charity. It is a matter of justice. As N. Wolterstorff argued persuasively, this means that we "have a claim on our fellow human beings to social arrangements that ensure that we will be adequately sustained in existence." In struggle against the demon of economism, Christians will, however, go a step beyond the way of justice and general rights. Inspired by Christ's example on the cross, they will strive to "love kindness" in relation to their neighbors (see Micah 6:8).

Against the tendency to ravage nature, Christians need to stress the need for respect toward nature. Nature is not simply a raw material for human work. It has a value independent of its services to human beings. Human beings therefore need to respect nature in its specific creatureliness. All work must have not only a productive but also protective

---


9See on that M. Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, Chap. V.
Economic systems must be integrated into the given biological systems of ecological interdependence.

Second, nationalistic totalitarianism. In socialist societies the noble goal of proletarian internationalism was pursued on mistaken presuppositions and with the wrong means. The Communist ideology did not recognize loyalty to one's ethnic group as an independent sentiment shaping social life. It mistakenly translated all ethnic problems into class problems. Loyalty to the nation had the same status as loyalty to God; both were illusory attempts to escape from economic oppression. After the independence of ethnic feelings was denied, the way was free for totalitarian suppression of the language, cultural values, and customs of diverse peoples living in the Communist imperium.

When the lid was lifted from the Communist melting pot, nationalistic feelings rose high, as it would have been easy to predict, for the injured collective feeling of a society is the main cause of the narcissistic preoccupation with one's own ethnicity (which generally surfaces at the time of a social or economic crisis). It was also to be expected that the resurgence of nationalism would result in demand for separate nation states. And it is here that the crux of the growing problem lies. We do not need to look far back into history to realize that the ethnocentrism of nation states is one of the most dangerous political phenomena. It breeds totalitarianism in which the priests of the nationalistic idolatry are ready to place everything at the altar of national interests. In relation to other states, nationalistic totalitarianism "acts solely in its own self-interest, breaking treaties when it sees fit, waging wars when it finds the advantage, thumbing its nose at international conventions and organizations. National self-assertion is its only goal. All that restrains it is a balance of terror."11 Within its own state, nationalist totalitarianism knows only of the rights of individuals—not of the rights of individuals that belong to the dominant ethnic group and even less of the rights of those who belong to ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities, which live mixed with the dominant population in all nation states, are left with "only two choices: either to emigrate, under varying degrees of duress, or to accept the status of second class citizens, with varying degrees of deprivation of rights and repression. There is never any other choice."12

Against nationalistic totalitarianism Christians have to affirm that every human being, whatever her national identity, was made in the image of God and therefore possess and inalienable dignity and must be treated with equal respect. The dignity of each person-the

---


11Wolterstorff, Justice, 109

12Ibid., 114.
respect for her right to participate in all decisions that significantly influence her life and her right to be adequately sustained in life—must be the basis of the political order and not the well-being of some collective ethnic entity. The bearer of political sovereignty is not a particular "ethnos," but the whole "demos"—the people made up of the persons from various ethnic groups living in a state as a territorial entity. In states that want to respect human rights, particular ethnicity can have only cultural and not political relevance. As J. Habermas pointed out, all political appeals to a sense of pre-political belonging together testifies "that the universality of equal rights for all and of equal respect for everyone is still a bloodless abstraction."\textsuperscript{13}

Against totalitarian nationalism we need to affirm authentic Christian internationalism. Christian faith is international because Christian salvation is universal. "To belong to Jesus Christ, to live in the Spirit," wrote R. J. Mouw, "is to be joined to a community in which the old barriers of race and gender and ethnicity and nationality are no longer effective as barriers. This community is one in which no other identifying 'blood' counts, save for the blood of the lamb, which made that new community of royal priests and priestesses possible" (Rev 5:9f)\textsuperscript{14} For all its internationalism the Christian faith does not obliterate people's national identities. The eschatological hope of Christians is not a dissolution of ethnic specificity in some heavenly universal melting pot of blessed souls. Everything that is good and beautiful from various cultures will be purified from all evil and preserved in the New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:26). A Christian's attitude toward her own nation will, therefore, be twofold; she will want to work against every egoistic and aggressive national self-aggrandizement and at the same time contribute to the "blossoming of her own nation in solidarity with all other nations" (Sagi-Bunić).

One of the most important tasks of the churches in Eastern Europe in the face of resurgent nationalism might be to nurture the virtue of healthy (self-respectful) national humility. If national humiliation is the cause of the nationalist illness, national humility is its cure. The best road to humility is to stop gazing narcissistically at one's own image and attempt to perceive oneself through other's eyes. Adenauer is reported to have said, "Germans are a strange people; I would not want to have them as my neighbors." Post World War II Germans had every reason to make such a self-critical statement. Most Eastern European nations have more reason then they would like to think to say the same thing about

\textsuperscript{13} J. Habermas, "Die Stunde der nationalen Empfindung. Republikanische Gesinnung oder Nationalbewussein?" in Die nachholende Revolution: Kleine Politische Schriften VII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 157-166, 159.

themselves. If nations do not attune their own perspective about themselves to the perspectives other nations have about them, there will be no reconciliation between nations.

Third, political clericalism. In Eastern European countries the legislation on the separation between church and state and on the privacy of religion was interpreted not only to bar religious communities from political activity but also to prohibit any religious influence on the public scene. "Religious liberty" had the narrow meaning of freedom to believe or not to believe and the freedom to participate or not to participate in the liturgical life of the church. Christian faith had to remain locked in the private, spiritual chambers of people's lives. Worse than the children in bourgeois families, Christians in socialist states were neither to be seen nor to be heard.

During and after the 1989 revolution (in Poland much earlier), the Christian faith walked boldly out to the streets and public squares. As the new governments are reclaiming the national heritage, they are seeking partnership with the leaders of the national churches, who understood themselves all along as the guardians of national heritage. And these churches themselves seem to be jumping at the opportunity to reassert Christian values in public life. With the capital gained by having been seen as a symbol of resistance to the all-powerful state, the churches have acquired a good share of the new market of social power. The more or less open merger between the church and state seems to have been decided. As a result, many smaller, mainly Protestant, churches (and atheists) have an uncomfortable sense that they might be swallowed by the new giants. If the forced Christian political abstinence of the national churches is replaced by or politically active clericalism, then a cultural and political oppression, or at least marginalization, of the smaller churches will result.

Against political clericalism Christians have to affirm the lay-character of the state. The first task of the church in relation to the state is to remain the church. Only if it keeps its distance from the state will it be able to be true to its prophetic calling in a given society. The editorial of the Croatian Catholic weekly, Glas koncila, rightly cautions: "It is timely to warn that a clear distinction between church and the state is to be maintained. As they were distinct in the period of conflict, so they have to be distinct in the period of desired open cooperation. In a democracy there is neither a state religion nor state Church ... The Church needs to remain free and independent, and in the new circumstances it has to fulfill its duty as the critical conscience of the society in which it lives." 15

The temptation of political clericalism underscores the importance of Christian ecumenism. The closer a dominant national religious group comes to the (nationalist) government, the more it will be prone to marginalize its smaller sister churches in a given state and to be antagonistic toward the churches in the neighboring states. Even the little

15 Cit. in Danas, September 11, 1990, p. 34.
ecumenical life that survived Communist strategy *divide et impera* is in some Eastern European countries all but snuffed out. As individual Christians in Eastern Europe today are challenged to show their loyalty to the Church of Jesus Christ is greater than their loyalty to their nation, so the Christian churches are challenged to show their loyalty to one another and to their common Lord is greater than their loyalty to the projects of their national governments. If it is true that there can be no peace between the nations without peace between religious (as Hans Küng emphasized tirelessly in recent years\textsuperscript{16}), then the churches will be able to foster peace, rather than cause strife, only if they take their ecumenical task with utmost seriousness.

Genuine revolutions are acts of liberation. The destiny of a revolution depends on the fate of freedom. Hence, the main challenge for every successful revolution is to protect the freedom newly acquired. No matter how the liberation took place, whether as a gift to the people by the enlightened government or as an act of the people themselves, preserving freedom will have to be the task of the whole people.

One of the most insightful statements on the risks and opportunities of freedom comes from the Apostle Paul. He writes, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. For you are called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (Gal. 5:1,13). I do not want to suggest that we identify the freedom of which Paul speaks with political and economic freedom. But I do believe that the dangers and the challenges of the freedom gained through God's act of grace and that gained through revolutionary action are analogous. Whether Eastern European countries will fall prey to the unclean spirits I described or not will depend on how they master the danger of losing or misusing their freedom and whether they rise to the challenge to preserve their freedom and use it for common good.

The first danger is of falling back into the old forms of slavery. Where nationalist rule replaces Communist rule, one form of slavery is succeeded by another. Bureaucratic socialism understands freedom as assimilation of the individual into the socialist state; nationalistic totalitarianism understands it as incorporation of the individual into the national organism. Both give the name "freedom" to what is in fact slavery. In the name of freedom Eastern European people need to resist the manipulation of their feelings of national loyalty by the leaders who idolatrously exalt national virtues, fabricate national enemies, and

exaggerate wounds their nation has suffered from others—all in order to justify their totalitarian rule. People will remain free only if they refuse to allow the nationhood to dominate their sense of identity and if they reject the notion that their highest purpose is to contribute to the functioning of the national organism. Free people are not the willing slaves of their "fatherly" nation-states.

In the name of their freedom, Eastern European people need to resist any attempts of the Church leadership to treat them as minors and assert itself in the political arena in their place. The people of God need to make a stand against their pastors if these want to portray themselves as the exclusive authentic interpreters of what one might call the economic and political sensus fidelium. It belongs to the ecclesial freedom of Christians to have the right to express their own intelligent opinions about political life from the Christian perspective. Responsible church leadership will respect this right (as was emphasized by the Vatican II). Free people are not the minors of their "motherly" churches. 17

The second danger is the misuse of freedom as "an opportunity for the flesh." According to the popular liberal philosophy that is making inroads into Eastern Europe along with the market economy; to be free means to be one's own master and pursue one's own interests unhindered by others, as long as one respects that same freedom in others. Freedom thus means: I am free from others and they are free from me. No doubt, this is freedom, and such freedom is better than the Communist or nationalist form of slavery. But is this true freedom? Can I truly be free in isolation from others (when I am free from others)? Am I truly free when I pursue my own interests and leave my neighbor alone in her joys and sufferings? Has not the very notion of liberty here been invaded by a slavery to selfish "fleshy" desires? Any freedom in which the chains of slavery to my own egoism remain intact is a deficient freedom. Human freedoms come to its fulfillment only in community, in the mutual service of love. As J. Moltmann writes, "I am free and feel free where I am appreciated and accepted and where I appreciate and accept others. I become truly free when I open my life for others and share it with them, and when others open their life to me and share it with me. Then the other person is no longer a limit to my freedom, but enlarges my freedom ... This is the social side of freedom. We call it love'or solidarity." 18

The unclean spirits threatening Eastern Europe after the collapse of bureaucratic socialism are the spirits of a slavery to powers of totalitarian nationalism and to inhumane egoism. They can be countered only through the implementation of equal freedoms for all.

17 For "Father State" and of "Mother Church" terminology in a somewhat different context see J. Moltmann, "Is Protestantism the 'Religion of Freedom'?” in On Freedom ed. L.S. Rouner(Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion, 10; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 30–45,30.

18 J. Moltmann, "Die Befreiung des Lebens: der Herr ist der Geist" (unpublished manuscript), 15

22
citizens, irrespective of their ethnic or religious belonging, and by the affirmation of solidarity, especially with the growing army of oppressed and marginalized people and the endangered nature.

VI

Together with peoples of other religions and with atheists, Christians in Eastern Europe have a responsibility to prevent the sweet fruit of the 1989 revolution from turning bitter. The unclean spirits of slavery must be resisted by establishing appropriate social institutions and nurturing a dialogical culture of solidarity. Institutions and cultural sentiments are inseparable; both are necessary, and both reinforce each other. Without institutional backing, cultural sentiments are impotent; without appropriate cultural sentiments, institutions are ineffective. (Correspondingly, there is also reinforcement between irrational institutions and totalitarian culture. Bureaucratic socialism provides a case study in how an irrational and oppressive system makes corruption and oppression in the exchange between people rational.)

A revolution will be short lived if it rests only on the sentiments and efforts of individual persons. Its achievements need to be institutionalized. It is not enough, for instance, to recognize the right to participate in political life. This right has to be enshrined in constitutional provisions for popular elections, which seem the best way for securing political participation in modern societies. "Elections must be regular, at specified times. They must be contested, as open as possible to every viewpoint and all interested parties. They must be decisive, effectively bestowing governing authority upon the elected party or persons." Similarly, institutional provisions must be made to secure other rights, including the right of sustenance.

In Eastern European countries the institutional changes are the first order of the day. In the last days of the Communist regimes, totalitarian demagogues were trying to persuade people that they were not ready for democracy. Yet totalitarian schools are not the place to learn democracy. Like walking, democracy is best learned by trying, by taking the first, maybe still insecure, democratic steps.

Important as institutional changes are, they cannot stand on their own feet. Without corresponding sentiments and behavioral habits, they are little more than empty shells. In many Eastern European countries "totalitarian culture" is dominant; a nation or group towers on the value-scale over the individual person; solutions for problems are expected from strong leaders; personal opinion is identified with absolute truth, and compromise is deemed

---

a loss of honor. These cultural traits were exploited and reinforced by Marxist-Leninist ideology with its holistic view of society, its stress on the avant-garde role of the communist party with the great leader at its head, and its pretension of non-fallibilistic knowledge. In the face of this "totalitarian culture" Christians in Eastern European countries should foster acceptance of a culturally, ethnically, and religiously pluralistic society, bolster trust in and (though not relativistic) perspectives on social visions. These features of democratic culture are the condition for solving the normative problems of common life through responsible and respectful mutual persuasion, rather than through the open or hidden use of brute force.

Democratic culture by itself, however, will not suffice. Democratic procedures are only the form in which the problems of market economy, such as marginalization of social groups, destruction of nature, or monetarization of relations, should be solved. These procedures do not provide the content of the solutions. Along with other social groups, Christians need to assert their own vision of the good life in public moral discourse, based on the revelation of God in Christ and expressed in their hope for the new creation. They should participate in the social interchange in which particular social players mutually enrich their own perspectives on common life and in this way contribute to the formation of mature democratic opinion and the animation of responsible democratic will.

Christian testimony about the good life in society will be credible and effective only if Christians can live it out before the world in their ecclesial communities. The structures of the church and the ways of relating to one another in the church should reflect the reality of the new creation they are attempting to bring to bear on the great issues of the day. Furthermore, they should strive to anticipate the new creation in a small and broken way through their transformative actions in the world, at the same time protesting against the destruction of life and the perversion of justice through their prophetic withdrawals from the world.

Through the double testimony of life and of public moral discourse, Eastern European churches should keep the demons of cold-blooded economism, nationalistic totalitarianism, and political clericalism at a distance and direct the united capitalist and socialist brothers on the way toward what should be their common home in the household of the Father.