

PLURALISM AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

by Alan Geyer

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Any American invited to speak about the role of religion in the political conflicts of Europe must begin by acknowledging the intensity of religious and political conflicts within the United States. In many ways, our American constitutional tradition of separation of church and state that has been a vital guardian of religious liberty--yet its specific implications remain confused and are bitterly embattled at present. Our Christian communions remain splintered into more than two hundred varieties. The ferocity of strife within most of our major communions, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, reflects the so-called "culture wars" that have recently shredded the fabric of our civil society. And there has been serious violence: over sexuality, abortion, and militant cults--and a rise in anti-Semitic vandalism.

In America, as in most societies, religion is the source of serious problems, not just solutions. Any honest discussion of religious freedom in a pluralistic society must begin with the confession that religion itself has often been the enemy of freedom --and often the enemy of peace.

The religious pluralism of Europe today may seem to be a totally new reality. The collapse of communist hegemony has loosed a welter of social forces: some primarily religious, others using religious labels for primarily national, ethnic, or ideological purposes.

But religious pluralism itself is an old, old reality in Europe. Much of the political and military history of Europe has revolved around religious differences. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 gave princes the prerogative of choosing between Catholicism and Protestantism for their realms; it did not give individuals the right to choose. The Thirty Years' War of the seventeenth century represented a terrible Christian failure to accommodate diversity, while the Peace of Westphalia at war's end only affirmed tolerance for interstate diversity and not for religious freedom for individuals. Nevertheless, some European societies, especially in the past thirty years, have achieved new levels of civility and concord among religious groups. One of the conspicuous tragedies of former Yugoslavia is that peaceful pluralistic communities have been ravaged by the deliberate inflammation of old religious wounds.

Far back beyond the modern history of Europe, however, is the reality that, at their very birth, the three prominent world religions of Europe confronted religious pluralism all around them. Judaism originated with Abraham's departure from the many gods, idols, and nature deities of Mesopotamia; Judaism's very life has been shaped by exile and diaspora among the most diverse cultures and faiths. Christianity, in turn, was born within Judaism but, at the Jerusalem Conference recounted in Acts 15, Christianity opened itself to Gentiles--which meant confronting Greek philosophy and religion, mysticism, mystery cults, and the gods of Rome. The history of Christian missions is the history of encounter with Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and animism. Islam began with the acknowledgment of its lineage from Abraham and its honoring of Jesus as a prophet. The militant expansion of Islam alternated with the militant expansion of European Christianity, both of which have left heavy historic burdens upon eastern Europe and the Middle East.

So pluralism is an old fact for all three world religions. Moreover, almost every Christian communion has been both the victim and the perpetrator of discrimination, persecution, and violence vis-à-vis other Christians and non-Christians. We have histories compounded of both grievances and the imperatives of repentance. In most conflicts, repentance is the precondition of reconciliation.

One of the burdens of Christian history is that the mainstreams of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism were for so long unfavorable to democracy and to individual religious freedom as a human right. All of the "Big Four" theologians of Western Christianity--Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin--gave ethical priority to order over justice. José Miguez Bonino, a former president of the World Council of Churches, has written that for Augustine, "the chief purpose of government is the suppression of conflict and tumult. Changes, or the respect for personal freedom or for justice, might endanger that order. . . . Theologically, justice and love are supreme, but historically both are subordinated to order." Together, the "Big Four" left a very problematical legacy of the relation of "classical" Christian theology to democratic political thought and church-state relations. Any adequate theological or ethical rationale for religious freedom or for pluralism as a positive good must look to other sources.

One such source, spiritual and ethical if not precisely theological, is the "Epilogue" from Vaclav Havel's recent essays titled Summer Meditations. Writing of his own homeland but, by extension, of the whole of Central Europe, Havel says:

We live . . . in a place that from the beginning of time has been the main European crossroads of every possible interest, invasion, and influence of a political, military, ethnic, religious, or cultural nature. The intellectual and spiritual currents of east and west, north and south, Catholic and Protestant, enlightened and romantic -- . . . all these have been overlapped here, and bubbled away in one vast cauldron.

Havel deduces from all this a special destiny for Central Europe and for Europe as a whole: Today, for the first time in its history, this continent has a realistic chance to evolve into a single large society based on the principle of 'unity in diversity.' Yet this is more than a continental opportunity: it is, says Havel, a "global interest," It is to make up for the bitter historic fact that, "for decades, Europe has dragged the rest of the world into deadly conflicts."

It was my privilege, as a visiting ecumenical delegate, to participate in the first European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in May 1989. That Assembly, in word and worship and song, resounded with hopeful visions of "a common European house." The Assembly's Final Document rang with calls to metanoia (conversion to God): commitment to seeking ways out of the divisions in which the churches continue to live, out of the suspicion and hostility in their mutual relations, out of the burden of paralyzing memories of the past, out of intolerance and the refusal to recognize religious freedom, into a community which recognizes its needs to be constantly forgiven and renewed, and together gives praise to God for His love and gifts.

Particularly memorable from Basel was the address by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, with his declaration that "'shalom' is the richest and juiciest word in the Bible;" his prayer that the Basel Assembly might be a "a lucid and bold awakening so that, despite the scandal of our divisions, we may together mend our ways and bear witness to the world that the reign of peace and justice is already in the midst of us;" and finally Cardinal Etchegaray's wistful question whether Christians could "achieve the audacity of being a Church which offers to humanity in distress this miniature of paradise, a eucharistic community happy to live fully--if only for a fleeting moment--the peace and justice of God upon Earth."

That little phrase, "if only for a fleeting moment," seemed to be an anticipation that such a eucharistic community and the exhilarating dénouement of the Cold War then under way in 1989, with its "velvet revolutions" and stunning transformations, might be followed, all too soon, by a new time of troubles for Europe. And so it was. But a sign of hope comes from the recent decision in Assisi to hold a second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, June 23-29, 1997, the theme of which is "Reconciliation: Gift of God and Source of New Life." If the preeminent Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant leaders of Europe can continue to manifest a highly visible solidarity for the sake of the common good of Europe, there is indeed hope for the resolution of most religious, ethnic, and political conflicts on this continent.

There is, of course, a reciprocal relationship between the celebration of pluralism and the integrity of religious freedom. Religious freedom itself is a concept that must be understood pluralistically, with a diversity of meanings. It is a many-faceted topic. The great danger in discussing freedom is that we shall neglect some of its facets, so that the existential possibility of freedom is actually precluded.

I shall sketch six facets of religious freedom. Those six I have rather abstractly labeled spiritual, juridical, integral, intramural, ecumenical, and interfaith. But all six are interrelated and inseparable.

1. By spiritual freedom, I refer to our interior life of heart and mind and conscience. It is the freedom, and the strength, to be faithful even in the face of bitter opposition or imprisonment or death. Martin Luther's famous treatise, The Freedom of the Christian Man, testified to the liberating power of God's grace for a life of love and faith, for any person, lay or clergy, in any walk of life, and for the whole of life. Yes, we ought not forget that Luther suppressed heresy and helped princes suppress rebellion. So Luther's preaching of religious freedom was not fully-faceted, to say the least. Still, his testimony to the freedom of the inner life is an enduring treasure of our Christian faith: "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is the dutiful servant of all, subject to everyone."

Luther's words portray Jesus himself: in his whole ministry and especially in his Passion. But the spiritual freedom of many others has also triumphed over external powers: St. Paul, Jan Hus, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ruth von Kleist, Maximilian Kolbe, Martin Luther King, Jr., Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and a host of saints in Central and Eastern Europe who kept the faith during the harsh persecutions of the communist years.

In all of this, we may come to know that freedom is God's greatest gift. St. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "For freedom Christ has set us free." (Gal. 5:1) Such freedom is essential to our very humanity. But such freedom is to be shared with others in the love and peace of Christ. It is a commitment, not a license. Paul also wrote: "Yes, you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence." (Gal. 5:13)

This moral imperative of freedom--freedom as God's costly gift in Christ, freedom as the mark of our humanity as well as our image of God, freedom as the priceless treasure of a loving community--was well understood by perhaps the greatest Russian Christian thinker of this century, Nicholas Berdyaev, whose faith and courage cost him the freedom of his own homeland. Berdyaev especially grasped the imperative of freedom as a spiritual necessity. He once declared: "God has laid upon [humanity] the duty of being free, of safeguarding freedom of spirit, no matter how difficult that may be, or how much sacrifice and suffering it may require." Such soul-filled freedom, while it has led many a saint to martyrdom, has again and again expanded the external living space of freedom within both religious and political institutions. So it is not a purely interior thing after all.

It is to the institutional requirements of freedom that we now turn.

2. Juridical freedom is the range of religious liberty defined by law in constitutions and statutes, or advocated in international covenants and declarations and in ecclesial pronouncements. It is the subject of civil liberties and church-state relations.

It is no mere coincidence that, in the same year, the 1948 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the 1948 World Council of Churches Declaration on Religious Liberty were so similar in their articulation of the juridical bases of religious freedom. In fact, it was World Council leadership that decisively shaped the language of the UN Declaration's Article 18 on religious freedom. A first UN draft was brief and superficial, stipulating only that "there shall be freedom of conscience and belief and of private and public religious worship." Obviously, the external expression of religious faith in public witness and service was almost totally lacking in that draft. Thanks principally to the determined efforts of Dr. O. Frederick Nolde of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), the final version of Article 18 was multi-faceted. It reads:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

Those four external manifestations of faith--worship, teaching, practice, and observance--were emphasized in the World Council's Amsterdam Declaration and have been repeatedly reinforced in subsequent WCC statements.

The New Delhi Assembly of the World Council in 1961, in a new statement on religious liberty, provided more specificity concerning the right of public witness, in this wording:

Freedom to manifest religion or belief includes freedom to practice religion or belief whether by performance of acts of mercy or by the expression in word or deed of the implications of belief in social, economic and political matters, both domestic and international.

So, religious freedom is much more than a private privilege of the individual to choose what she or he will believe, or how he or she will pray. It is the right of an organized community of believers and worshippers to address the power structures of society.

With the collapse of communist regimes in Europe, the public witness of the churches has been freed to take new forms, and not simply to return to the old forms of the pre-communist years. Inevitably, this means new controversies and confusions. Here in Europe, and everywhere else in the world, there is great need to think through and articulate what I call "political ecclesiology": namely, the style and shape of the churches' faithful public witness to "the principalities and powers"--faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, responsive to religious pluralism and the construction of a free civil society in which universal human rights are respected and protected.

Vatican II, after struggling through perhaps its most bitter disputes, offered a Declaration on Religious Freedom (contained in the document *Dignitatis Humanae*), affirming that every person has a right to "immunity from coercion" in religious matters -- and admitting that the Church itself has often violated that principle. Subsequent statements from the Vatican have paralleled World Council pronouncements. On the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1988, Pope John Paul II stated that

religious freedom, an essential requirement of the dignity of every person, is a cornerstone of the structure of human rights. It follows that the freedom of individuals and of communities to profess and practice their religion is an essential element for peaceful human existence.

There is thus very wide ecumenical commitment to the idea that religious freedom should be grounded in concepts of universal human rights.

In 1981, the United Nations adopted a document specifically addressed to concerns central to our conference here in Kecskemét: the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Underneath that long and cumbersome title is a clear principle embodied in that Declaration's very definition of intolerance and discrimination: "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis." That comprehensive statement of principle, if fully understood and effectively taught by our churches, is an indispensable moral and spiritual safeguard against human enmity on religious grounds. It is also an implicit curb on proselytism, which is a very troublesome concern in Europe today (not least because of the hosts of imperialistic evangelists gushing forth from the United States). We should recall the New Delhi Assembly's statement that proselytism can corrupt the very climate of religious freedom, by subtle or open "cajolery, bribery, undue pressure or intimidation."

So: Equality among all religious groups is a juridical principle of church-state relations that precludes special powers or privileges for any religious group denied to any other religious group. That principle was already contained in the WCC's 1948 Amsterdam Declaration on Religious Liberty, which stated that the churches' appeal for freedom must not involve asking for "any privilege to be granted to Christians that is denied to others."

Whatever the churches have to say about religious freedom as a juridical principle--as a matter of law--must take account of the fact that the law tends to define church-state relations statically. But there is the much larger dynamic and dialectical reality of relations between religion and politics which cannot be fully captured in law. We cannot, and must not, expect or allow parliaments or courts or executive bureaucracies to have the ultimate word on why and how the churches exercise their freedom. That is a theological task: to provide faith's own reasons for juridical principles.

Moreover, the law of any state tends to see religion as one of the many elements within the state, and therefore to domesticate religion, to encase it and nationalize it. But those Christians and Jews and Muslims who truly affirm a radical monotheism, a universal faith, a world religion will never consent to be thus domesticated.

I believe most Europeans, like most Americans, want a double-edged theology of freedom. We want the church to be free. We want the state to be free. In principle, we don't want either institution to dominate or manipulate the other. We believe that both religious and political loyalties are profoundly important and that they must, and inevitably will, be related. Each needs the other. God speaks through both church and the world outside the church, including government--not just the church.

Again, we need a political ecclesiology that preserves the autonomy of both church and state but somehow connects them dialectically. It is this autonomy of both institutions--and the inevitable conflict in the dialectic between them--that is the foundation and best bulwark of religious freedom. In a fundamental sense, such autonomy requires a secular state: that is, a state in which no decisive political privilege is granted to one religion that is denied to others. Perhaps an essentially secular state may take a variety of forms, including even the symbolic preservation of an historic religious establishment (although we Americans find that hard to comprehend)--providing that religious liberty is a vital juridical and existential reality for every religious community, as it seems to be in Scandinavia and England.

A more fully theological understanding of the dialectic and the conflict requires at least the following four elements: (1) A normative view of the state itself and its purposes in the governance of God. (2) A conception of the distinctive mission and ministry of the church, and the political implications thereof. (3) A perspective on human nature in both its divine possibilities and its empirical realities, also noting the political implications thereof. (4) A doctrine of freedom in which religious liberty is articulated with those other liberties which may make freedom an authentic condition for all citizens.

The New Testament offers both positive and negative views of the state: it is ordained by God and/or it is a great beast. Negative views of the state can claim some theological rationalization from Augustine to Luther to some conservative contemporaries. A generation ago, the renowned Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, offered this somber view:

Every state represents sin on the large scale; in history, in the growth of every state the most brutal, anti-divine forces have taken a share. . . . In the state, we human beings see our own sin magnified a thousand times.

Such a view may commend itself anew to some European Christians who have lived through the hard Bolshevik years that somehow never came close to their utopian promise that the state would wither away. But such a view also has some affinity with the anti-governmental, anti-political sentiments of so many Americans: sentiments very much on the rise again in the conservative revolution that now dominates American politics. After all, we Americans have had a business civilization since 1800: a civilization that

has nurtured our people to believe that business is good and government is bad--and that big business is very good and big government is very bad.

Modern Roman Catholic thought has typically offered a much more positive view of the state, grounded in Creation and the common good, reflecting Aristotle, Aquinas, and all true Christian humanists: we human beings are political animals by the very fact of our humanity (and not simply because Adam ate the apple).

The state's role in promoting and protecting religious freedom has sometimes required the state to offer a truer testimony to religious institutions themselves as to what freedom and human rights really require. Moreover, patterns of church governance in many countries have been rendered more democratic through the modeling of secular democratic institutions.

The state, then, can be viewed as a God-given order of Creation, a covenant for ordering the common good, and even an instrument for the correction of the church itself. It is, of course, the bitter truth that the idea of the state as an order of Creation has been abused by tyrannical regimes for idolatrous and wicked purposes, as was the case in Germany's most corrupted years. Dietrich Bonhoeffer came to prefer the term "divine mandate" to indicate God's imperatives at work in the institution of the state. So if we view the state as an order of Creation, such a doctrine must be stripped of all divine sanctions for tyranny: it must be grounded in God-given human rights and freedoms, the promotion and protection of which is the providential mission of government.

A theological foundation for this topic should make clear that the church and the state have radically different and conflicting claims with regard to time, territory, loyalty, and constituency.

With regard to time, the church has, for Christians, a different claim upon history and the end of history than does a state which has only a provisional status and a limited life span. Nation-states and even the most powerful empires rise and fall in the time perspectives of prophetic theology. Oscar Cullmann's study of The State in the New Testament focuses precisely on this conflicting time-perspective. In Christ, there is a "chronological dualism:" the end of history is now fulfilled, yet its consummation remains in the future. The state's provisional status must be grasped within this historical dualism. Cullmann continues: "Because the Gospel presents itself as the 'politeuma,' the community of the coming age, it must accordingly see as its most intrinsic concern its disposition toward the present 'polis,' the secular state." All of which means that the state can never be regarded as a definitive and ultimate reality. It is accepted for its necessary but temporal and provisional character.

Even in temporal terms, the church is a community with continuities over the generations and centuries and millennia which stretch far beyond all modern nation-states. The Church of Jesus Christ is much older than any Western sovereignty. So, church and state have different time-frames.

With regard to territory, the church cannot be domesticated within the boundaries of any nation-state. The church proclaims a sovereignty above all pretentious state claims to sovereignty: the Lord God is Sovereign over all the nations. This conflict of sovereignties means that the church not only acts within the state: the church acts upon the state from without. The church comes to the state in some respects as a stranger, an alien. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose martyrdom in Nazi Germany incarnated these conflicting sovereignties, testified that the church is foreign to the world; . . . Yet even this is always only an ever-renewed consequence of that fellowship with the world which is given in the Body of Christ. The Church is divided from the world solely by the fact that she affirms in faith the reality of God's acceptance of humanity, a reality which is the property of the whole world.

So, the dialectic between church and state involves conflicting territorial claims and radically different boundaries and conflicting sovereignties. Perhaps we need to redefine the theology of church-and-state to become a "theology of church-and-states." Which is to say that, at least normatively, we must speak of the unity and universality of the church over against the multiplicity of states. (Of course, the empirical reality of the church is hardly one of unity.)

With regard to loyalty, the church cannot make any state the object of absolute devotion, for that would be idolatry. Paul Lehmann viewed the church's loyalty in terms of *koinonia*, the beloved community of the New Covenant which tests every other loyalty by its understanding of God's providential love in history:

The koinonia is the outpost of God's judgment upon every pattern and structure which seeks to preserve and to justify itself by the idolatry of the status quo. And the koinonia is the outpost of God's renewal, establishing new patterns and structures, commensurate with God's new possibilities of living on the other side of those which are played out.

So, conflicting loyalties are central to political ecclesiology and the dialectic of church and state. And the vindication of religious freedom, as well as other liberties, has often depended upon maintaining such conflicts. Not all conflicts are to be resolved: some are to be preserved!

With regard to constituency, the church claims a much broader base than can any state or empire. After all, the church is a transnational corporation, commissioned to serve the interests and needs of all peoples everywhere. The *oikoumene*--the common household of faith among all the peoples of all the inhabited Earth--offers a unique vantage-point from which to survey the claims and deeds of any state. Ecumenism may, and must, seek to vindicate religious freedom, and other fundamental human rights, wherever in the world they are abused or threatened. That means, all too often, coming into conflict with officers of state and particular groups in various countries. It may indeed mean being dragged before governors and kings, as Christ promises--or perhaps before courts or police forces.

But ecumenism itself must be more richly interpreted as a new synonym for peacemaking. And peacemaking, which in secular language is concerned with "conflict resolution," is at the very heart of the Gospel's "ministry of reconciliation."

If our practical agenda for "Christian Faith and Human Enmity" may indeed be the resources and skills of conflict resolution, those cannot be just matters of technique for us: they must be the instruments of grace empowered by the message of reconciliation.

The other facets of religious freedom can be more briefly stated--or, at least, they must be more briefly stated in this paper.

3. To say that religious freedom is integral is to recognize that it is inextricably linked to all other human rights. We need an expansive, wholistic conception of what religious liberty requires in any modern nation. All those other freedoms--speech, press, assembly, petition, property, education, association--are the necessary conditions for the fullness of religious freedom. A human right, to be meaningful, must be vindicated with a substantial opportunity to practice the right. The social, political, and material facts of life must not thwart such opportunity. Such a view of humanity in its wholeness is ultimately a theological conception of abundant life as invited by Christ that expands and enriches our notions as to what religious freedom is all about. Surely religious freedom must mean something more than atomistic individualism within a free-market, laissez-faire economy.

Earlier I mentioned the May 1995 meeting in Assisi to project the next European Ecumenical Assembly in 1997. At Assisi, Father Waclaw Hryniewicz, professor at the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Lublin in Poland, had this to say:

Collective materialism has been expelled from Eastern and Central Europe. Is it only to be replaced by an ideology of individualist materialism? To survive, our culture needs a deeper meaning, a truly ecumenical spirituality of the wholeness of our common life. It would be tragic if the churches of Europe fail to lay that lasting foundation of a new Europe.

While constitutions, laws, and covenants provide the sanctions of last resort in defense of religious liberty, the ultimate defenses must be nurtured and fortified in the attitudes and relationships among religious and

other groups in civil society. The three remaining facets of religious freedom concern just such defenses. All of them involve the creation and reconciliation of true community.

4. To speak of intramural freedom is to vindicate the rights of expression and dissent within any particular church body. While this issue is perhaps most vividly dramatized within such a hierarchical polity as the Roman Catholic Church, it is by no means absent in most Christian churches. Mainline Protestantism in the United States is currently beset with cries of "heresy!" and by a punitive mentality on the part of reactionary groups, some of which are well-funded by corporate economic interests. (Can you imagine why?) The climate and spirit of freedom within the church is therefore subject to secular pressures from without. It is also profoundly affected by perceptions of the political roles played by church leaders. In some of the churches of Central and Eastern Europe today, the possibility of intramural freedom is constrained by bitter conflicts over the real or alleged collaboration of Christians with previous political regimes, whether fascist or communist. In my country, some church members are frank to say they find it more difficult to be honest in the church than in any other institution or setting--such are the social pressures and the constraints against controversy and an atmosphere of full and free expression.

In 1987, the Human Rights Advisory Group of the World Council of Churches declared that "churches should apply to themselves and their functioning as organizations the same norms of behavior and parameters they may request state or civil authorities to respect." That declaration implies a very demanding standard of ecclesial freedom paralleling civil freedom in all our nations. At the very least, we may say that churches which do not, or cannot, practice respect for pluralism and freedom of belief and conscience within their own fellowship may tend to give their members a trained incapacity to cope with extramural pluralism and the freedoms of other citizens in their society.

5. To speak of ecumenical freedom is to advocate the fullest possible freedom to encounter, cooperate with, be recognized by, and participate in the life of, other Christian communions. The World Council's historic 1982 Lima Text on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry marked significant progress toward mutual recognition in all three matters but (in Paragraph 26 on the Eucharist) confessed: "Insofar as Christians cannot unite in full fellowship around the same table to eat the same loaf and drink from the same cup, their missionary witness is weakened at both the individual and corporate levels." In an earlier paragraph (20), the connection of the Eucharist's potential power with the issue of freedom was poignantly expressed:

The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic, and political life. All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity.

The Final document of the 1989 Basel Assembly, in quoting that very same paragraph, lamented that "the separation of our churches is made most painfully aware to us at the Lord's table."

So, full ecumenical freedom remains an elusive and perhaps distant dream.

6. The final facet is interfaith freedom. Here the basic issue for freedom is whether the adherents of one religion are able to discover and deeply respect the truth and the holiness in other religions as manifestations of the spirit of one Living God and whether they will defend the freedom of other religions as earnestly as they would their own. This is the ultimate test of religious pluralism and religious freedom. It is a test which perhaps most of our nations have failed in the past. The peace of Europe and of the world may well depend upon how Christians meet that test in times to come. Interreligious dialogue and practical cooperation in works of justice and common service seem to be the main requirements.

In Barcelona in December 1994, in connection with UNESCO's 1995 "Year of Tolerance," leaders of fifteen religions joined in a Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace. Noting that even religiously-inspired "political regimes may do serious harm to religious values"

themselves, as well as to the common good, the signatories pledged: "We will remain mindful that our religions must not identify themselves with political, economic, or social powers."

Another gift to all of us from Vatican II was Nostra Aetate, the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. While that document offered no detailed agenda on strategy, it did encourage Christians

prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, to acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people, as well as values in their society and culture.

In the spirit of Nostra Aetate, the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1990 offered a set of guidelines for dialogue between Christians and Muslims: guidelines whose spirit and essential norms are applicable as well to ecumenical relations, intramural and congregational life, and civil society generally. Notwithstanding their particular reference to Christian-Muslim relations, I am moved to suggest that they are an appropriate conclusion to this entire discussion of "Pluralism and Religious freedom":

We cannot restrict the encounter between Christians and Muslims to circles of specialists or to visits by the leaders of communities. Dialogue includes all aspects of life and can be found in every place where Muslims and Christians live and work together, love, suffer and die. In fact the distinctiveness of dialogue is not found in its purpose, but in a pattern of behavior, by which other persons are welcomed, their speech is carefully heard and the fact of their differences accepted. To behave in that way, we do not have to be great scholars or theologians, nor even to be advanced in the ways of holy living. It is enough to be people of faith and hope, of good will and practical charity.