

HOW TO MAKE ENEMIES

by Miroslav M. Kiš

A long-time member of REE's Advisory Editorial Board and previous contributor, Dr. Miroslav M. Kiš is Professor of Systematic Theology and Chair of the Department of Theology and Philosophy at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Around middle the of past century Dale Carnegie published his classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. We learned from him that friends do not grow like weeds in the fields. We must learn the discipline of “planting”, growing, nurturing them. What we did not hear from Carnegie is that while enemies do appear like weeds in a field they too will grow only if nurtured, and cared for.

One decade of savage conflicts in the former Yugoslavia is a case in point. After all, this is Europe, the land where atrocities of WWII drenched the soil with innocent blood and this was the last decade of the twentieth century. Even those of us who were born there could not believe the reports of cruelty, torture and inhumanity imposed on innocent civilians. The surprise is all the greater because Albanians, Bosnians or Serbs are not barbarians as some western commentators insist.

As a Ukrainian minority my family lived in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia for decades and all we remember are different cultural expressions of kindness. I cannot perceive any significant difference in the human quality of life and relationships between the 25 years of living there and over 30 years in the West, nor can I see much difference between “ethnic cleansing” and “segregation,” “holocaust” or “apartheid.”¹ The problem is real and it can surface anywhere. But why? Why is it that as the war erupts, and the civil controls weaken, and food, water, and shelter become scarce, and medical care vanishes, it seems as if social conscience, common sense, international identity, and sense of destiny fade away? This is true at least of a segment of hitherto respectable citizens who overnight turn into terrorists and “butchers.” As if some people were a time bomb ready to explode as soon as opportunity comes.

So I began to wonder about myself. How would my Christianity fare? What would I contribute to such a situation? Could I resist the pressure of becoming an enemy of my fellow

¹Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abington, 1996), 60.

human beings, or am I too, somehow secretly set to explode? How are enemies made? What follows is an account of search for these answers.

DISTANCE

Distance is of the essence in creating and maintaining animosity. It is nearly impossible to kill someone at “close range.” Closeness is an antidote to enmity.

This is the overwhelming message of the Bible. The word ‘*oyebh*’ “enemy” always denotes an assailant which comes from outside to inflict personal (1 Samuel 18:29) or national injury (Esther 7:6). Other synonyms express the notion of distance because enemies are “oppressors” (Numbers 10:9), who “hate” (Exodus 23:5), who “persecute” (Psalm 18:17), who “rise up against” (Psalm 18:48), and who “seek someone to harm” (Numbers 35:23). An enemy is synonymous with a “stranger” (Isaiah 62:8).

In the New Testament *echtros*, (derived from *echthos* “hatred”) means the “one who is hated” and conveys irreconcilable opposition to someone (Romans 12:20). Its synonym *miseo* is found in parallelism with *echtros* (Luke 6:27). *Allotrios* connects the concept of stranger with enemy.

1. All levels of human relationships, the personal, inter-personal and social, experience distancing. On a personal level the human self perceived it first on the day when sin invaded human nature. Genesis 3 depicts that dreadful moment when Adam and Eve “knew that they were naked.” Something new, a frightening, a shameful change struck at the core of human identity. A change that mandated distance from self, a deviation which had to be hidden. And the narrator simply reports that “they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7).

The rest of human history knows much about brokenness, about self-alienation, and about this house divided against itself, which, when tucked away from the public eye becomes a time bomb. Not a brokenness along the lines of body/soul as some may intimate,² but rather internal division of mind from itself and body from itself. The conflicting thoughts begin to accuse or perhaps excuse themselves and the physical needs poise to clamor obsessively for attention at the

2see C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 96-7.

expense of the physical well-being. (Roman 2:15 and 7:13-25) And so, from that moment on “man has always been his own most vexing problem. How shall he think of himself? Every affirmation which he may make about his nature, virtue, or place in the cosmos becomes involved in contradictions when fully analyzed.” How, for example, can a human being be “essentially” evil if he knows himself to be so?³

2. But at the heels of this *inner distance* follows inevitably the *distance from others*. Because the inner conflict consumes all human energies nothing is left for a relationship with the neighbor, except for the reflex of **self-defense**, and **self-absorption**; except for the search for leaves large enough to hide the inner struggle and present to the other a semblance of order. And as time passes and the leaves accumulate, self-absorption becomes **self-centeredness**. Like two lonely islands, standing next to each other, so close, and suddenly so far, Adam and Eve could speak only in **self-defense**, forgetting the other. Just a short time ago, moved by the agapaic closeness they would protect each other with passion. But in the words of Rollo May, love’s opposite is not hate, it is **indifference**.⁴ They stood at the threshold of a new *modus vivendi*. A relationship where human concern for self excludes the other, denies his existence, except for the purpose of laying blame: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate...The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12, 13) So, indifference brings about exclusion of the other. “Sin has its consequences” explains W.R. Miller, “and one of them is that indifference and estrangement provide fertile soil for irrational hostility. Unrepented sin breeds guilt, which in turn creates fear that the latter will plant a knife in it.”⁵

3. This brings us to segregation, and holocaust, and apartheid, and ethnic cleansing. The personal, and interpersonal distancing is now magnified exponentially to cataclysmic proportions: to a social, national or international scale (Exodus 23:2). Why such an escalation? Reinhold Niebuhr proposes an explanation:

“In every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group,

3Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941), 1-2.

4Rollo May, “The Art of True Love” *United Church Herald* (October 6, 1960): 4.

5William R. Miller, *Nonviolence* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 186.

reveal in their personal relationships. The inferiority of the morality of groups to that of individuals is due in part to the difficulty of establishing a rational social force which is powerful enough to cope with the natural impulses by which society achieves its cohesion; but in part it is merely the revelation of a collective egoism, compounded of the egoistic impulses of individuals, which achieve a more vivid expression and a more cumulative effect when they are united in a common impulse than when they express themselves separately and discreetly.”⁶

So we have to conclude that the reason for atrocities, the cause for savageries in the Balkans and elsewhere is sin. Sin creates the inner split and estrangement so that I become my own enemy; and sin generates self-centeredness which isolates individuals against one another who become my enemy; and sin makes it so that when all of us, covered with our fig leaves, come together we become naughtier and feel much less responsible for what happens to others. And again, sin made me do it.

But do we need a reflection, a research to discover the all pervasive contamination of all relationships by sin? What do *I as a Christian member of society* contribute to the bridging of the gap of estrangements around me? Am I immune to creating animosity? What are some of the ways in which I might be collaborating or even making enemies, not friends?

PHASES

Again it happened within the shadows of the trees of the Garden, the place where the first family worshiped and where the two brothers heard about the marvels of Eden. The older, Cain, (meaning “to produce,” “to bring forth”), enjoyed a place of honor in his family. “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord” exclaimed Eve jubilantly after her first child’s birth. Could it be that this is the promised Savior? (Genesis 3:15)

With the younger it was a different story. One has to notice a different mood when Abel arrived. No exclamation, no greeting, just a report of his birth and the naming of the baby boy. He was definitely boy number two. Even the name seems to underline this difference if the correct translation of Abel is “breath,” “vapor,” “transience.”

Then one day the reversal of their standing made of Cain the first human enemy and the first murderer. The setting is worship and the issue is autonomy of Cain versus obedience of

⁶Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), XI-XII.

Abel. Appropriately, God noted the difference and drew the line: Abel, not just his offering, received God's regard, while Cain did not. "So Cain was very angry" and it was just a matter of time before he would even the score (Genesis 4:5).⁷

Several millennia later, Jesus addresses the issue as recorded in Luke 18:10-14. The setting again is worship. "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all I get.' But the tax collector, standing off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other..."

These two stories contain deep insights into the phenomenon of enmity. All enemies of humanity are closely related to Cain and the Pharisee and their victims to Abel and the tax collector. They also point to the incredible complexity of this phenomenon. Like the mysterious scourge of cancer, it silently spreads, forming its deadly network until metastasis. No one simple answer can resolve the question of enmity. It moves through phases, each new one more destructive and each one more advanced, more entrenched. I see four such phases: **phase of identity, phase of reaction, phase of action, and phase of technical rationality.**

1. Phase of Identity

The personal search for identity often proceeds in the negative direction: self-affirmation at the expense of another. We notice several steps descending into ever greater distance and exclusion.

Distance of Difference. It all starts innocently. Jokes for example. We tell them with no hurt, no malice intended. Prudently we ask: "any Americans in the audience?" If not we proceed with our story and we laugh until the tears come at the expense of another. Some nationalities, colors, or races are "safe." Few really tell jokes about Americans in America. But if your parents happen to be "off-color," or "off-nationality," or "off-race," then you are to expect the off-color jokes at your expense and be mature enough, be sport enough not to take offense.

⁷Cornelius Platinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 158-59.

Admittedly, the distance between the “safe” and “unsafe” nationalities is small, but it could be an important one. It is safe to be a Pharisee, not so with tax collectors. Each time I paid visits to the war-torn Balkans I heard a dozen jokes at the expense of warring parties. Most stories were identical the actors only “changed” nationality. And as expected, no one told a story about their own. As I laugh, I feel so thankful that I am not like those other guys. Between us there is a *distance of difference* which I recognize and emphasize with fun.

Distance of Derision. Just one step from jokes is ridicule. The intention is not simply to have fun, but rather to make the other look funny or stupid. I remember a girl in my seventh and eighth grade. Powerful girl. Not because of muscles or grades. Mockery was her weapon. In no time she would come up with a slogan or a jingle, and your enemies first, followed even by your friends join in on the malicious fun. On the Balkans side, stories abound about the stupidity of the other side and how “our side” outwitted “them.” Slogans, jingles, and even songs immortalize the *distance of derision* which sets “us” above “them.”⁸

Distance of Defamation. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:47) Rhetorical question? Of course! But can it? Ask me about Jesus. Can a bastard amount to anything, ever? Ask me about Socrates. Name calling, assumptions, innuendos, guilt by association: “Japanese are traitors,” “Jews are filthy,” “Americans are bombers,” “Albanians are dangerous,” “Germans killed my father,” “Serbs are butchers,” “Samaritans are dogs.” LIES! Germans are my friends and so are Albanians and Serbs and Japanese and Americans. And Jews are among the cleanest people I have met.⁹

Distance of Indifference. By the time we resort to defamation of character, slander and ridicule, indifference sets in. The other simply disappears from my screen. I become oblivious to my neighbor who lies in the ditch covered with blood (Luke 10:30-37) and unmindful of anything that happens in the yard next to mine, be it Auschwitz, Treblinka, or Vukovar. I mind my own business and my neighbor must mind his own. Did not Cain ask God a rhetorical question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9)¹⁰

8Volf, 74-5.

9Donald W. Shriver Jr., *An Ethic for Enemies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 124.

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Shriver, 125.

2. Phase of Reaction

“Those who crusade not for God in themselves, but against the devil in others, never succeed in making the world better, but worse than it was, before the crusade began.”¹¹ They function in a reactive mode.

We now pursue further the downward spiral to enmity through several steps.

Compartmentalization. Indifference to the plight of others is an incubator where the enemy in me grows increasingly aggressive lying in an ambush to strike when confronted with evil against my skin or my kin. My world is divided into “us” and “them.” I become detached from “them” as humans. Albert Speer, Hitler’s minister of armament said about Jews, “If I had continued to see them as human beings, I would not have remained a Nazi. I did not hate them. I was indifferent to them.”¹² Like thick walls indifference separates a Pharisee from a tax collector.

Projection. Furthermore, indifference in a relationship signals disappearance of genuine care for the plight of others. “In the absence of love the other becomes a blank screen onto which we project our anxieties: the stranger is always potentially a scapegoat for our own unconfessed sins.”¹³ In the same vein of thought Carl Gustav Jung asserts that “anything which disappears from your psychological inventory is apt to turn up in the disguise of a hostile neighbor, where it will inevitably arouse your anger and make you aggressive.”¹⁴ The natural human response is self-preservation. Consequently to indifference we react with counter-indifference and to projected hostility, with even more intense hostility.¹⁵ Unable to face himself, or strike back at God, Cain projected his own guilt onto Abel and killed him (1 John 3:12).

11Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of London* (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), 192.

12Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 315.

13Miller, 186.

14Carl G. Jung, quoted in Rajendra Prasad, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, vol. 1, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1956), IX.

15See also Volf, 87.

Memories. Unfortunately, the experiences of hostility find their way to our memories. They become an integral part of our identity. In some cultures these memories acquire a status of sacred tradition which no son or grandson dares to forget. “Je me souviens” is the logo of the Province of Quebec. “I remember” both the good and the evil done to me and my own. The folklore and oral traditions keep these memories of enmity and past sufferings fresh. On the one hand there is a good side to this custom. History is an excellent teacher and memories, films, books, memorials, and monuments serve as a deterrence. On the other hand, such remembrances may become vehicles of perpetuating hostilities. Just to mention a name or a nationality and the surge of anger erupts. Only under very tough dictatorship of Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia could such deep seated hate be controlled for almost 40 years. Controlled but not eradicated.

Spite. “Inat,” they call grudge or spite, which lingers for generations, while the stories are told and retold. Memories of pain and suffering are transformed into debts to be collected, scores to be evened. The children or grandchildren inherit either guilt of their forefathers or the duty to even the score. The stage is set, the time is ripe. All that is needed is a spark and the old atrocities will rage again out of control.

3. Phase of Action

The personal feelings of rancor and bitterness are easily exploited by concerted efforts of several elements of society so as to provide the spark and ignite a new inferno. Spite in action is what we call revenge.

Propaganda. Here is how Miroslav Volf describes the advent of revenge.

“In extraordinary situations and under extraordinary directors certain themes from the ‘background cacophony’ are picked up, orchestrated into a bellicose musical, and played up. ‘Historians’- national, communal, or personal interpreters of the past- trumpet the double theme of the former glory and past ‘victimization;’ ‘economists’ join in with the accounts of present exploitation and great economic potentials; ‘political scientists’ add the theme of the growing imbalance of power, of steadily giving ground, of losing control of what is rightfully ours; ‘cultural anthropologists’ bring in the dangers of the loss of identity and extol the singular value of our personal or cultural gifts, capable of genuinely enriching the outside world; ‘politicians’ pick up all four themes and weave them into a high-pitched aria about the threats to vital interests posed by others who are therefore the very incarnation of evil; finally the ‘priests’ enter in a solemn procession and accompany all this with a soothing background chant that offers to any whose consciences may have been bothered the assurance that God is on our side and

that our enemy is the enemy of God and therefore an adversary of everything that is true, good, and beautiful.”¹⁶

Scapegoat. The holocaust is instructive here because it illustrates a well orchestrated tragedy. By the government’s analysis, society was faced with the “Jewish problem.” All societal evils have been diagnosed with this term. In order to find a “solution” Jews have been resettled in Poland and society has been cleansed of a “blight.”¹⁷ The poverty and miserable conditions of the ghettos intensified the anti-Semitic feelings and provided both a scapegoat and justification for the “final solution.” Adams and Balfour quote a government-sponsored magazine’s comment in 1944 on the conditions in Poland.

“Millions of Jews lived amidst other ethnic groups in the territory of today’s Government General. Here, in a breeding ground of modern World Jewry, the Jewish Problem reached its zenith... *We had a moral obligation to wipe out breeding places of the most horrendous, the most inhuman and the most beastly vice that, arising from Poland, infested the whole world. It was a task which, in its fulfillment, was meant to bring salvation to the whole of humanity.*”¹⁸

Similar means have been used on Balkans, in Africa and elsewhere.

Universalization. Concerted efforts focused on legitimizing the atrocities. The above quotation illustrates how one government attempts to justify genocide by claiming that the “scapegoat” is not just a local problem but also a universal plague. Here again, such slanders are not limited to the Holocaust.

Particularization. The opposite measures can be equally disastrous. Some post-Holocaust writers present the Holocaust as a particular problem of Jewishness. Marc H. Ellis contrasts Elie Wiesel who claims that the Nazi assault targeted specifically “the Jews, Jewish history, and the Jewish God,” with Hannah Arendt and Victor F. Frankel who see in the Holocaust universal human tragedy which teaches some important universal lessons.¹⁹ By trying

16Volf, 88.

17 Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), passim.

18Guy B. Adams and Danny L. Balfour, *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 145. Italics mine

19Marc H. Ellis, *Unholy Alliance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 9 ff.

to isolate Bosnia or Kosovo as particular cases, the warring parties on all sides could “justify” exceptional actions and unusual inhumanities.

4. Phase of Technical Rationality

Adams and Balfour ascribe both effectiveness and efficiency of the Nazi machine to invasion of the scientific and technological world view into all realms of human life. This was the time when technical thinking became the supreme vehicle of hope in the social and political arena and at the same time a supreme instrument of destruction. Several factors must be emphasized.

Loss of the Human Dimension. Human conflicts are to be understood as problems fit for engineering solutions. Humans became cases without history, without individuality, without dignity. Human action was explained through the development of general laws and models independent of time and space. Just like understanding that centrifugal force or gravity do not need the personal or human dimension so also the issues of personal concerns, in society and politics must be dealt with in strictly impersonal, scientific, and objective fashion.²⁰

Human Beings as Commodity. Humans became a mere commodity. Mere tools, instruments to accomplish a task. Test mice for experimentation. Bruno Bettelhem quotes from a correspondence between Auschwitz and the nearby I. G. Farben chemical trust:

“& ‘In contemplation of experiments with a new soporific drug, we would appreciate your procuring us a number of women.’

& ‘We received your answer but consider the price of 200 marks a woman excessive. We propose to pay not more than 170 marks a head. If agreeable, we will take possession of the women. We need approximately 150.’

& ‘We acknowledge your accord. Prepare for us 150 women in the best possible health condition, and as soon as you advise us you are ready, we will take charge of them.’

& ‘Received the order of 150 women. Despite their emaciated condition, they were found satisfactory. We shall keep you posted on developments concerning this experiment.’

²⁰Adams & Balfour, 40.

& ‘The tests were made. All subjects died. We shall contact you shortly on the subject of a new load.’”²¹

Efficiency. Organization of work with a view of mass production gave birth to assembly lines so effective in gas chambers. Mass murder demands organization. Repeated killing is not a deed, a single act, but an activity with all the distinguishing features of work: a task done methodically, according to plan, over time, oriented to a goal, marked by bureaucratic efficiency and routine.²²

Legalization of Evil. From the early nineteen thirties a careful stream of legislation in Germany, piece by piece prepared the legal support for ethnic cleansing, concentration camps and genocide. Each act of legislation stood on an “innocent” foundation and only when taken together could the tragedy be foreseen.²³

Expediency over Principle. Expediency became more attractive than principle. Public administrators and citizens alike saw advantage in replacing substantive, even moral values with procedural ones. “Doing things the right way and protecting organizational interests can define or supersede doing the right things and make it easier to commit or contribute to destructive acts by separating -mentally- the doer from the deed.”²⁴

HOW TO MAKE ENEMIES?

This then are some aspects of the most pernicious kind of human phenomenon: enmity.

It is evident that enmity has countless sources, innumerable forms and intensities. It is a paradox. In the first place, I must admit that every person, including me, is, or can become my enemy. This fact calls me to prudence, and caution. I must not be naive.

In the same way I must be responsible. Responsible enough to resist violence of any kind, to stand firm against injustices, and part company from those who plot evil, even if such actions

21Bruno Bettelhem, *The Informed Heart* (The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 248.

22Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 111.

23See Adams and Balfour, 60 ff.

24Adams and Balfour, 135.

create new enemies. Consequently, in some ways we cannot avoid having, or making enemies, because the decision is not ours only. This is why the Apostle Paul urges his readers “If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:18) Best intentions and the most benevolent deeds can be taken as insult and cause distance between the best of friends.

So we ask again. Who is *my* enemy? The first answer may sound something like this: *Everyone who by their own choice, through ignorance, or because of a situation out of control stands far off from me to hurt me. Distance is of the essence.*

At the same time the Bible presents the opposite answer: *No one. No one is my enemy.*

As I read the Bible I wonder how would a Kosovar relate to his neighbor-enemy who hid most of his exposed valuables from looters during ethnic cleansing and returned all of it when the exiled Kosovar returned home. Or what chance would enmity have in Bosnia if a Muslim with his car in the ditch is pulled out by a Serbian passing by on his tractor. (Exodus 23:4, 5)

What about those guards in concentration camps who would smuggle a piece of bread to an inmate on a fairly regular basis? What about their relationship in spite of vastly different fortunes? (Proverbs 25:21)

History remembers those unusual survivors of decades of imprisonment by reason of their faith, because in their hearts they refused to hate their torturers. Even the extreme mistreatment during “re-education” periods in Gulags could not break their will nor extinguish their hope. Their secret? Regular prayer sessions with fellow inmates interceding for their enemies. These are the sons and daughters of their Father in heaven, says Jesus. That is, they are like God who makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:43-48)²⁵

Think of a mother who when asked to identify the murderer of her son and his family refused to do so. She remembered the words of Paul, “Beloved, never avenge yourself, but leave it to the wrath of God.” (Romans 12:17-21) How strange! Is the criminal worth it?

D. Bonhoeffer thinks so. In his sermon on Romans 12, on January 23, 1938, he said:

²⁵Richard B. Heys, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 319-29.

“Who indeed would be more worth of our love, who could stand in greater need of our love than those who hate? Who is poorer than those who are more in need of help, who is more in need of love than my enemy? Have you ever looked upon your enemies as those who, in effect, stand destitute before you and, without being able to voice it themselves, beseech you: ‘Help me, give me the one thing that can still help me out of my hate; give me love, God’s love, the love of the crucified Savior?’ All the threatening and showing of fists is really the result of this poverty: it is essentially a begging of God’s love, for peace, for community. When you reject your enemy, you turn the poorest of the poor from your door.”²⁶

But this is so detached from reality! In fact it seems that this conclusion itself is only loosely related to the body of this essay. Distances on all levels are real and so are their consequences.

Yet this unexpected conclusion is alright. It must be so for several reasons.

First, just as the origin of enmity starts on personal levels so also the antidote to it, its countermeasure must stem from the core of our being. If the world will see a reduction ever so slight in wars and their atrocities, I must not indulge in attitudes that create distance. “If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, *but you must master it.*” (Genesis 4:7) (italics mine)

Second, a dialogue between Christians and Marxists, Christians and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, between neighbors, or between fractions of an embattled self can happen only if the two sides take each other seriously. We must hear both Wiesel and Buber.

In the Summer of 1967, just before the war, E. Wiesel wrote about the need for realism.

“The Jewish people entered into a covenant with God. We are to protect His Torah, and He in turn assumes responsibility for Israel’s presence in the world. Thus, when our spirituality - The Torah - was in danger, we used force in protecting it; but when our physical existence was threatened, we simply reminded God of His duties and promises derived from the covenant. Well, it seems that, for the first time in our history, this very covenant was broken. That’s why the Holocaust has terrifying theological implications. Whether we want it or not, because of its sheer dimensions, the event transcends man and involves more than him alone. It can be explained neither with God nor without Him.”²⁷

26 Kelly B. Gefferey and Burton F. Nelson, eds., *A Testament to Freedom* (San Francisco: Harper, ?), 288.

27 Elie Wiesel, “Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future,” *Judaism* 16 (Summer 1967): 281.

This statement of Wiesel should be enriched with the introspective analysis of Buber who said:

“When I think of the German people of the days of Auschwitz and Treblinka, I see, first of all, the great many who knew that the monstrous event was taking place and did not oppose it. But my heart, which tells me of the weakness of men, refuses to condemn my neighbor because he was not able to bring himself to become a martyr. Next there emerges before me the mass of those who remained ignorant of what was withheld from the German public, but also did not undertake to discover what reality remained behind the rumors which were circulating. When I think of these men, I am seized by the thought of anxiety - likewise well-known to me - of the human creature before a truth which he fears that he cannot stand. But finally there appears before me, from reliable reports, some who have become as familiar to me by sight, action and voice as if they were friends - those who refused to carry out or to continue to carry out the orders and suffered death or put themselves to death, or those who learned what was taking place and because they could do nothing to stop it they killed themselves. I see these men very near before me in that special intimacy which binds us at times to the dead and to them alone; and now reverence and love for these German men fills my heart.”²⁸

Third, a Christian behavior can not, must not be a reaction to the conditions around him/her.²⁹ The answer must be found outside the vicious circle. The willpower, the emotional energy required to do so is of superhuman proportions. It must come from God or it will never come. Peace brokered by diplomats and enforced by the U.N. is only a temporal, a superficial peace. It is only a more powerful lid that holds the steam inside. Alone, without God it is just a big fig leaf. True peace comes from forgiveness and that is a gift of faith. A gift which makes me see the reality about myself in a different light.

S There may be those who hate me because of something I do or do not do. But they are not *my* enemy because they do not hate me, they really hate my behavior.

S There may be some who do not like my color or my race or my accent. But then they do not reject me because of who I am. They are not *my* enemy because they reject some unessential part of me. They reject painful memories that keep their wounds bleeding.

28Martin Buber, “Genuine Conversations and the Possibilities of Peace,” *Cross Currents* 5 (1955): 292-93.

29Volf, 53.

S There may be people who see me as an obstacle to their advancement so they try to trip me, they slander me with false accusations, they bring up my confessed and forgiven sins. But they are not *my* enemy because I do not compete for advancement. They reject a fictitious me.

S There may be those who disagree with my beliefs and my theological orientation but they are not *my* enemy. They hate my ideology and the views I hold.

S Finally there may be a distance between my neighbor and me. But there need not be any distance between me and my neighbor. I need not be determined from the outside, I am directed from above.

Then there will be peace.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.”

(John 14:27)

