

Evangelicalism and the post-communist reconstruction of culture

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Abstract

Evangelical religion was a recognized force in some periods of history, effective in social and political reform in Britain and America. In post-communist Europe, reconstruction is hampered by a multitude of problems common to all its communities and political systems, in particular by residual effects of Marxist atheistic principles, which, under totality, were applied to the whole way of life and culture. This article offers suggestions of how the past successes of evangelical revivals in the West might provide inspiration for the theological and practical work of contemporary evangelicalism, if it is to help in post-communist reconstruction.

Keywords: evangelicalism, post-communist, reconstruction, culture.

Introduction

“The End of History and the Last Man” – thus Francis Fukuyama entitled the book he published in 1992 after the collapse of the communist economic system in Europe. In it he claims “...liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government," and as such constituted the "end of history.”¹ But by “the end of history” Fukuyama does not have in mind “the end of time” or a catastrophic end of the world. This is a philosophical opinion, according to which, liberal democracy has victoriously achieved its goal.²

This claim reminds us perhaps of a humorous description of the distinction between the optimist and the pessimist, which states: the optimist thinks that we live in the best of all possible worlds and the pessimist is afraid that it is true. Fukuyama, however, does not turn a blind eye to the problems of democratic states. He is aware of consumerism, homelessness, unemployment, addictive substances, crime and pollution of the country. However, he claims that these problems are not without solution and that democratic society has the tools it needs to avoid a collapse similar to communism’s fall in the late nineteen-eighties. Admittedly, this is in contradiction to the opinions of historians such as Toynbee or Spengler, who, in their study of world history, arrived at a pessimistic view of the inevitable gradual decline of western civilization, yet it represents the optimism of the West shortly after the collapse of the communist block with the Soviet Union leading the way. (Since then the increase in the number of ethnic conflicts and mainly unforeseen conflicts between superpowers with small groups of supranational terrorist groups has fractured this optimism).

The leap from a planned socialist economy to a market capitalist and democratic economy has turned out to be a great disillusionment for the majority of the residents of post-communist countries. Instead of a capitalist paradise, there is unemployment, economic fraud, political unrest, degenerate western art and overall disillusionment with uncensored and negative news coverage. The moral capital essential to a functional democracy and a reliable economy has been shown to be lacking, along with a societal solidarity which would limit the harsh impact of the new conditions on workers used to politics of one-hundred percent employment and so-called “free” social state welfare.

¹ FUKUYAMA, F. *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: The Free Press, 1992, xi.

² FUKUYAMA cites the Russian-born French philosopher Alexander Kojeve, who says that „...the Hegelian-Marxist end of History was not yet to come, but was already a present, here and now. Observing what was taking place around me and reflecting on what had taken place in the world since the Battle of Jena, I understood that Hegel was right to see in this battle the end of History properly so-called. (Alexander Kojeve, *Introduction to Reading of Hegel*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969, 160).

A particular problem of post-communist reconstruction is corruption in the political culture and social relationships. Corruption occurs in all political systems but post-communism corruption has its own particularities, which we can only grasp if we understand the theory and practice of the preceding totalitarian regime, which claimed allegiance to Marxist philosophy and its soviet application, so-called "Marxism-Leninism." We have to remember the impact of totalitarianism and its devastating impact on the political culture.³

1. The consequences of a Marxist construction of the future

The problem of post-communist reconstruction, which manifests itself in almost ubiquitous corruption, is, besides other things, in a lack of what someone called moral capital.⁴ The practically forgotten (or hushed up?) historical roots of modern democracy are not only in Athenian democracy (where a large section of the population was slaves and did not have democratic rights) and Roman law, but in Christian respect for the dignity of humans as the image of God – imago dei. While state Marxism suppressed Christianity for ideological reasons⁵, a contemporary politically-correct democracy squeezes it out from public discourse because of pluralism and tolerance interpreted as a leveling of all religions and world views. The moral capital, instilled over the course of history in a Christian cultural consciousness by the Christian Church in spite of all its known shortcomings, during the construction of a communist future was utterly demolished through education, media and propogandist training organized by the communist party. The criterion for the new communist morality was not to be religion, but faith in society and progress.⁶ Re-education was to create an ideal new person, freed from religion and selfishness, and who would find total satisfaction in the fulfilment of his physical and mental needs, as defined for him by the atheistic state.

The Marxist state, which prided itself on egalitarian justice, despite rejecting timeless ethical norms in theory, claimed that morality always has a class character⁷. Some elementary ethical norms applicable for all people supposedly exist, yet are inevitably violated in the class struggle.⁸ The intangible character of such an ethical system is cleverly (brilliantly) incorporated in a dialectical understanding of truth, because Marxist dialectic "...contains the element of relativism, negation, scepticism, though it cannot be reduced to relativism".⁹ The ethical or true – and not relative – had to be determined by the party if there was any doubt,..."Trust the party, comrades!" was Klement Gottwald's appeal and "the term "the party" took on an almost mystical sound".¹⁰

³ "...to surrender to government officials not merely political but also industrial administration is to create a bureaucracy more powerful than the world has ever seen. (Harold J. Laski, *Authority in the Modern State*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1919, 95).

⁴ "Moral capital is moral prestige ...in useful service." (John KANE, *The Politics of Moral Capital*, Cambridge, CUP, 2004, 7).

⁵ Marxism-Leninism was the first to expertly solve the question of culture and its social historical content, because it defined dependence of human spiritual activity on the conditions of the material life of society, on the character of the social and government system...The method of production of material goods absolutely determines the social, political and spiritual life." M. Rozental and P. Judin (eds.), *Kultura*, in: *Stručný filosofický slovník*, Prague, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1955, 235.

⁶ "...the highest criterion of ethics for Marxism is sociability (общественность). It is possible that that which until now has been termed morality will be known as sociability, sociality." (A. V. LUNAČARSKIJ, *Мораль с марксистской точки зрения*, Sevastopol, Proletarij, 1925, 28).

⁷ "Each class works out its particular morality, its ideas of good and evil." F. V. Konstantinov (ed.), *Základy marxisticko-leninské filozofie*, Bratislava, Nakladateľstvo Pravda, 1975, 391.

⁸ F. V. Konstantinov (ed.), *Základy marxisticko-leninské filozofie*, 392.

⁹ A. V. Vostrikov a kol., *Dialektický materializmus*, Bratislava, Pravda, 1974, 217.

¹⁰ Luděk Pachman, *Boha nelze vyhnat*, Praha, Vyšehrad, 1990, 31.

The result of Marxist dialectic and a class approach to ethics was that “...in this supposedly classless society, [had arisen] a class of party functionaries who were as corrupt and privileged as anyone under the old regime, but far more hypocritical.”¹¹ The Czech communist Luděk Pachman, who later became a Christian, notes, that “...our system didn’t remove social privileges, it merely institutionalized and absolutized social oppression”.¹² The new class of party functionaries is described by communist Milovan Djilas as “...the political bureaucracy [that] has all the characteristics of earlier [ruling classes] ... Careerism, extravagance, and love of power are inevitable, and so is corruption. It is not a matter of the corruption of public servants, for this may occur less frequently than in the state which preceded it. It is a special type of corruption caused by the fact that the government is in the hands of a single political group and is the source of all privileges.”¹³

As far as it were possible, the privileges of the new class were hidden, which meant the institutionalization of non-transparency in state administration. The communist party ran the state by means of institutions, which did not officially belong to the party. In 1919 the Bolshevik leadership in Russia declared that party functions must not be replaced with Soviet roles. In practice, however, the party became from the beginning a direct part of the bureaucratic system and its members yielded more to the political leadership of the party than to their own superiors. In the management of the state and the society a double- or even triple-layered “legislation” was developed. One type of laws was intended for foreign countries. These laws secured human rights and civil freedoms anchored in the documents of the UN or later in 1975 in Helsinki. According to these, everything in the communist block was very democratic and free. The second type of legislation, which specified the freedoms mentioned, was intended for the citizens of their own country. Here emphasis was laid on communist party leadership of society. Propaganda did all it could to prove that the totality (this word was not used) of one party was compatible with democracy and freedom of thought.

There was, however, also a third layer of “legislation”, which was intended only for the party apparatus and which was not even publically accessible. It may even have been only verbal decisions, impossible to trace or substantiate with written records. This hidden decision-making of the totalitarian party was actually the most important and, by means of Orwellian “doubletalk”, it was translated into the palatable vocabulary of the so-called “people’s democracy”. This kind of systematic anti-transparent approach to state politics and the management of public affairs naturally has consequences even after its declared abolishment. After the change in the political and economic system, the institutionalized party corruption spilled over into the new structures in hardened (previously “class”) attitudes and pragmatic (previously “Marxist”) ethical actions. It is no surprise that “[p]erceptions of corruption are widespread everywhere in the region.”¹⁴ In a report from 2003 the organization *Transparency International* notes: “The carry-over of communist practices, combined with new opportunities for wealth, make corruption the chief threat to the rule of law in post-communist countries today.”¹⁵ According to this same organization, Slovakia was in 54th place in the worldwide Corruption Perceptions Index in 2016.¹⁶ (In comparison, the Czech republic came in 47th, Poland in 29th and Romania in 57th place.)

¹¹ FUKUYAMA, F. *The End of History and the Last Man*, s. 30.

¹² Luděk PACHMAN, *Boha nelze vyhnat*, 49.

¹³ Milovan DJILAS, *The New Class*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1957, 38, 81-82.

¹⁴ Hans-Dieter KLINGEMANN – Dieter FUCHS – Jan ZIELONKA, *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe*, Milton Park, Routledge, 2006, p.326.

¹⁵ Richard ROSE, *Corruption and trust in the New Europe and New Russia Barometers*, in: *Transparency International Global Corruption Report 2003*, London, Pluto Press, 2003, 278.

¹⁶ *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*, 08.02.2017, <https://www.23degree.org/blog/corruption-perceptions-index-2016/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4eXPBRCTARIsADvOj>

The problem of corruption isn't merely a political issue but rather encompasses the overall ethical problem of society.¹⁷ The historian Arnold Toynbee sees behind every retrogressive division in society a schism in the very soul of humankind.¹⁸ If, therefore, we want to treat the post-communist schism, we need to pay attention to the human mind and a culture of ethical attitudes. While still under totality Václav Havel said: "Spiritual renewal, as I understand it - in my day I called it "existential revolution" - is not something that drops from the heavens into our lap one day, or something a new Messiah will bring to us. It is a task facing every person at all moments. All of us can and must "do something with it" here and now, no one will do it for us and therefore we cannot wait for anyone."¹⁹

The experience of Christianity is that faith in Jesus Christ heals human souls and gives them courage to do what no one will do for them.... Yet it is necessary that Christians in democratic conditions learn their competencies as citizens and as subjects.²⁰ The question is how evangelical theology can contribute to the reconstruction of moral culture.

2. Evangelicalism and society

The French historian Elie Halevy (1870-1937) voiced the often quoted - and frequently contested - theory, that evangelical religion, especially Methodism²¹, saved England from an outbreak of violent social revolution, such as took place at the end of the 18th century in France. He wrote:

""²²

Evangelicalism

Before we take a critical look at this question, it is appropriate to define what we have in mind under the term evangelicalism:"²³

In the Slovak setting this word is slowly being assimilated, though not without difficulty²⁴. In the concise dictionary of the Slovak language (2003) it is not mentioned at all and in the dictionary of contemporary Slovak language from 2006 it is mistakenly defined as an "adherent of protestant Baptist and Methodist fellowships."²⁵ Its use to designate a specific type of Christian faith and godliness can be traced to the work of the Czech historian Rudolf Řičan, who used the Czech term "evangelikalismus" to describe the spiritual revival in 18th century Britain in the sense "...of a return to the joyful gospel about salvation... The old Western reformation ideal of conforming

¹⁷ "Besides fundamental questions of politics, current political development is also being discussed in moral categories more and more." (Carl DEICHMANN, *Der neue Bürger*, Wiesbaden, Aringer, 2015, 9.)

¹⁸ "Schism in the souls of members of a disintegrating society displays itself in a variety of shapes because it arises in every one of the various ways of behaviour, feeling and life which we have found to be characteristic of the action of human beings..." (Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, London, Oxford University Press, 1960, 429.)

¹⁹ Václav Havel, *Dálkový výslech*, Prague, Melantrich, 1989, 6.

²⁰ William L. Miller – Ase B. Grodeland – Tatyana Y. Koshechkina, *A Culture of Corruption?*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2001, 6.

²¹ "In Britain the movement was known as Evangelical or Methodist revival (the terms were interchangeable) (A. Skevington Wood, *Awakening*, in: Tim Dowley, *The History of Christianity*, Oxford, A Lion Handbook, 1992, 436-457, here: 436.)

²² Elie HALEVY, *England in 1815*, London, Ernest Benn, 1949, 590.

²³ David W. BEBBINGTON, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London, Routledge, 1989, 1 and 4.

²⁴ "...evangelicals are disliked more than any other population sector with the exception of prostitutes. (David COBIA, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Evangelical Christianity*, New York, Alpha Books, 2007, 4.) This kind of attitude towards evangelicals is probably a mainly American phenomenon, but through films and popular American programmes it is spreading quickly into the whole world.

²⁵ Klára BUZÁSSYOVÁ – Alexandra JAROŠOVÁ (eds.), *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka*, Bratislava, VEDA, 2006, 919.

the entire world to the Lordship of Jesus Christ was revived here, warmed by a fervent understanding of the gospel concerning the salvation of sinners." Říčan notes at the same time, that "evangelicalism ... simply wasn't calculated to appease the misery of poor people."²⁶ In our day world evangelicalism is represented by the Lausanne Movement.²⁷

Criticism and Support of Halevy's thesis

There is significant opposition to Halevy's thesis. We will mention, for example, the claim of the British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012), according to which it is erroneous to attribute Britain's immunity to revolution, such as happened in France, to Methodism. He substantiates it by revivalism's focus on moral and religious campaigns, foreign mission and agitation against slavery and alcoholism. "New sectarianism of the Methodist type was anti-revolutionary," therefore, according to Hobsbawm, we cannot attribute a political influence to it.²⁸ This kind of thinking is, however, typically Marxist. Hobsbawm as a Marxist automatically considers pietistic morality to be self-righteous, unintellectual, and inevitably accompanied by hypocrisy.²⁹ For the Marxist, religion is already by definition unscientific and regressive. Engels declared it to be "a fantastic reflection (Widerspiegelung) of external powers in people's heads".³⁰ In society "...it always plays a reactive role... it aids towards suppressing the workers ... it was and is an irreconcilable enemy to progress and science"³¹ It is completely understandable that, from the standpoint of this kind of worldview, it is impossible to attribute any positive political or economic effect to the activity of religious faith.

As we see, theology (especially conservative, which evangelical theology is) is, in the spirit of Marxist philosophy, hardly expected to be a source of social reforms – and not only in the East. According to Marxism, religion is a kind of passive or uncreative element of culture.³² Under the influence of state atheistic propaganda, an implicit opinion was cultivated in society that the criticism of capitalism and any type of social injustice belonged solely to the philosopher and politician of Marxist persuasion. In reality the unjust relationships between employees (in Marxist vocabulary "working class" or "proletariat") and company owners ("capitalists") garnered criticism from thinkers such as, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805 - 1859) or from Pope Leo XIII (1878 – 1903) or Pius XI (1922 – 1939).³³

In support of Halevy's thesis, let us mention at least a few examples: the founder of the Salvation Army, Methodist William Booth, was not only a sympathetic but also a practical Christian. He wrote: "... while we desire to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and provide shelter for the shelterless, we are still more anxious to bring about that regeneration of heart and life which is essential to their future happiness and well-being. But no compulsion will for a moment be allowed with respect to religion."³⁴ Similarly, Anglican evangelical William Wilberforce, who fought successfully for the abolishment of the British slave trade, linked faith with activism: "But fruitless will be all attempts to sustain, much more to revive, the fainting

²⁶ Rudolf ŘÍČAN, *Od úsvitu reformace k dnešku*, Praha, YMCA, 1947, 284.

²⁷ *Lausanne Movement*, available on the internet: <https://www.lausanne.org/> [20.11.2017].

²⁸ Eric HOBSBAWM, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, New York, Vintage Books, 1996, 227.

²⁹ Eric HOBSBAWM, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, 187.

³⁰ Karl MARX – Friedrich ENGELS, *Werke 20*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1962, 294.

³¹ M. ROZENTAL – P. JUDIN, Náboženství, in: *Stručný filosofický slovník*, 328-329.

³² According to Marxism "Culture includes two types of activities: reproductive, recreating, duplicating things already achieved and creative, creating something new and original. Religion is basically connected with the reproductive element of spiritual culture." (Composite authors, *Culture and Religion*, in: *Ateistický slovník*, Bratislava, Pravda, 1984, 298.)

³³ Louis O. KELSO – Mortimer ADLER, *The Capitalist Manifesto*, New York, Random House, 1958, 5.

³⁴ William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way out*, London, International Headquarters of the Salvation Army, 1890, 140.

cause of morals, unless you can in some degree restore the prevalence of evangelical Christianity.”³⁵ It can be said of American evangelicalism that it had great political influence, encouraged civil responsibility and involvement in the political process. It shaped the relationship to political parties, platforms and programmes. In this way it gained credit in the political arena.³⁶

Evangelicalism’s possibilities in post-communist reconstruction

Historical studies reveal interesting characteristics of evangelicalism to us. As we saw above, David Bebbington, in his history of British evangelicalism, mentions four typical signs of evangelicalism: (1) conversionism, (2) biblicism, (3) crucicentrism, and (4) activism. Straightaway we must remark that the intensity or “quality” of Bebbington’s categories is clearly evident and socially effective during times of spiritual revival.

From a critical standpoint we must say that contemporary evangelicalism in our culture often professes these values sincerely but so far with little effect. This, however, doesn’t eliminate the possibility of renewal and the application of evangelicalism consistent with inspiring historical models. The history of Christianity may be seen as alternating decline and renewal of a true “religion of the heart”. From this point of view, post-communist reconstruction is an invitation for evangelicals to return to their heritage, as we see it in Britain and America of the 18th and 19th century, when Methodist-evangelicalism was a real revolution and led to transformation in all areas of social life.³⁷

I proceed from the conviction that, in the new historic situation of post-communist reconstruction, historical theological and practical emphases of evangelical Christianity can play an analogous role to the one they had in Britain of the 18th century. This is testified to by the current research results in Eastern Europe, which say that Protestantism has a positive impact on corruption levels in post-communist countries.³⁸ Let us, therefore, use Bebbington’s analysis of evangelicalism and mention examples of ways his four characteristic features can be applied to the residual effects of the totalitarian system still persisting in the political culture of Eastern Europe.

Conversionism and the post-Marxist social lie

“One of the essential characteristics of totalitarian regimes in communist Europe was their persistent effort to stimulate mutual distrust among the general public.”³⁹ Václav Havel, in an open letter to Gustav Husak, characterized the political system as “based on fear and apathy, a system that drives everyone into a foxhole of purely material existence and offers him hypocrisy as the main form of communication with society.”⁴⁰ Cultural habits cannot be replaced as quickly as the rules of a political or economic system. Distrust and lies continue to hinder the healing of the social atmosphere, although they manifest themselves in different structures.

³⁵ William A. WILBERFORCE, *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System*, Glasgow, William Collins, 1837, 392.

³⁶ Richard J. CARWARDINE, Lincoln, Evangelical Religion and American Political Culture in the Era of the Civil War, in: *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 18 (Winter 1997/1), 27-55. Available on the internet: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.2629860.0018.104>, [1.11.2017].

³⁷ “...Wesleyanism ...in the best sense it was, and is or ought to be, a revolution ...It is revolution but not rebellion.” (Mildred Bangs WYNKOOP, *John Wesley: Christian Revolutionary*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1970, 13, 15.)

³⁸ “A Protestant tradition was also significantly and robustly linked with lower perceived corruption, a lower bribe burden, and lower perceived corruption obstacles.” Daniel TREISMAN, Postcommunist Corruption, in: Jan FIDRMUC – Nauro F. CAMPOS (eds.), *Political Economy of Transition and Development*, Boston, Kluwer, 2003, 219.

³⁹ Ivana MARKOVA, *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*, Oxford, OUP, 2006, 9.

⁴⁰ Václav HAVEL, *Prezident v Bratislave*, Bratislava, ARCHA, 1990, 9.

If, though, “the lie is the immortal soul of communism”, as the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski said,⁴¹ then radical truthfulness is the essence of Christian conversion, also called repentance (metanoia – a change in the way of thinking) in the New Testament. Metanoia requires a confession of sins before God and (wherever possible) reparation of damages to people. This takes place, not under the threat of the law and punishment but under the pressure of the conscience. Typically we notice significant and influential personalities, who, by their Christian conversion, have effected great change in their setting. Yet, in order to restore to health a culture used to hypocrisy and (Orwellian) “double-talk”, it is more important to influence the “average” person in his day-to-day life to have the Christian courage to live consistently with the truth while trusting in the reality of God’s salvation.

Biblicism and short-term gain in post-communist capitalism

Evangelical biblicism, which is the successor to Wesleyan tradition, is not merely textualism (“spouting verses”), which has a Biblical quotation for everything. It reads the Bible in the sense of Wesley’s words, as the great manual for salvation: “Let me be *homo unius libri*.”⁴² Wesley had a very realistic relationship to possessions. In the sermon *The Use of Money*⁴³ he urges: “Earn all you can! Save all you can! Give all you can!” and it is because of the third principle that we have the first two.

The effort to get rich quickly led to the abuse of privatisation, to “tunnelling”, economic inequality and unemployment. New owners raised on Marxist propaganda had no relationship of loyalty to the firm’s brand, or consideration for the more distant future of the state or nation. From the religious standpoint, the Marxist satirical expression is echoed here: “We will leave heaven for the sparrows!”⁴⁴ Evangelicalism pits the eschatological dimension of human life, which John Wesley expressed with the words “I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God”, against the force of quasi ubiquitous corruption and a sense of powerlessness. Max Weber shows how Methodism, in spite of what he calls “asceticism”, led to economic prosperity.⁴⁵

Crucicentrism and conformism

Every totalitarian system fears any kind of non-conformism, not only political.⁴⁶ The repetition of political phrases and mottos was boring and far from reality. Nevertheless, it was the only path to a career and a better standing. Václav Havel labelled it as “open bribery”⁴⁷. Conformism is the path of least resistance. In a post-communist democracy, it assumes a form of “political correctness” but lives on in a mistrust of individual initiative.

Crucicentrism is a theological principle which places Christ’s cross (crux) at the centre of life and faith as the atoning sacrifice brought on people’s behalf by God’s initiative. At the same time, it is a call to a sacrificial following, which has the courage to risk its life to follow Christ. The significance of the crucifixion is paradoxical, so that even the apostle who proclaims it, states that it is “folly to those who are perishing” (1st Corinthians 1:18).

The evangelical message of the cross and discipleship is paradoxically both a call to subordinate obedience and yet non-conformist courage. Understandably, communication with secular historiography gets into difficulties here— one side sees an “English counterpart to the democratic revolution”⁴⁸ in evangelical Methodism of the 18th century while the other side sees

⁴¹ Frequently quoted on the internet. Vladimir TISMEANU, *The Devil in History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012, 190.

⁴² John WESLEY, *Wesley’s Standard Sermons I*, London, The Epworth Press, 1951, 31-32.

⁴³ John WESLEY, *Wesley’s Standard Sermons II*, London, The Epworth Press, 1951, 309.

⁴⁴ Heinrich HEINE, Wintermärchen, in: *Gesammelte Werke 2*, Berlin, Grotte, 1887, 183-256, here: 191.

⁴⁵ Max WEBER, *Die protestantische Ethik and der Geist des Kapitalismus*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2016, 118-119.

⁴⁶ The Soviet daily political newspapers were ... monotonous and conformist”. (

⁴⁷ Václav Havel, *Prezident v Bratislave*, 7.

⁴⁸ Bernard SEMMEL, *The Methodist Revolution*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, 7.

“...a cult of ‘Love’ which feared love’s effective expression, either as sexual love or in any social form which might irritate relations with Authority”⁴⁹ All the more convincing is the observation by the same author that “...Methodism has familiarized the lower classes to the work of combining in associations, making rules for their own governance, raising funds, and communicating from one part of the kingdom to another...”⁵⁰ Following Christ isn’t a summons to rebellion, nevertheless, with its non-conformist practical content, it shapes civil attitudes that are essential to a functional and stable democracy.

Activism and civil passivity

The communist system cultivated in people an exaggerated reliance on the state,⁵¹ which led to passivity and inadequate political and social initiative. We must note that even evangelicalism, which was a significant force in the 18th and 19th centuries, efficacious in the success of social reform⁵², gave up an agenda of social reform in its disputes with liberal theology and, in the United States particularly, took on the form of fundamentalism. After the Second World War, in a book by C.F.H. Henry *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, the call was sounded to return. He wrote: “Against Protestant Fundamentalism the non-evangelicals level the charge that it has no social program calling for a practical attack on acknowledged world evils.”⁵³ The contemporary evangelical movement under the title “The Lausanne Movement” connects the proclamation of the gospel with social activism in its documents, but more so in its many social and political initiatives aimed at improving welfare conditions in society. The third Lausanne congress for world evangelism characterized Christian mission as “...evangelism, bearing witness to the truth, discipling, peace-making, social engagement, ethical transformation, caring for creation, overcoming evil powers, casting out demonic spirits, healing the sick, suffering and enduring under persecution. All we do in the name of Christ must be led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁴

Conclusion: “duelling discourses” and evangelical theology

In the contemporary, postmodern duel of discourses, where the subjects of discourses are mutually exclusive but simultaneously call one another to tolerance, evangelical theology can only assert itself “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1st Corinthians 2:4). The forecasted *fourth man* “who no longer responds to any spiritual appeal”⁵⁵, has not come into existence and it appears that secularization has not shown itself to be “...the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage”.⁵⁶ Rather it has left people at the mercy of the most varied spiritual streams, which revive ancient pagan worship of nature or a “scientific” version of spirituality behind which is hidden the power of evil.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Edward P. THOMPSON, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, Penguin Books, 1991, 44.

⁵⁰ Edward P. THOMPSON, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 49.

⁵¹ Francis FUKUYAMA, *Trust, the Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, New York, The Free Press, 1996, 40.

⁵² Let us mention the work of Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885), the president of the Evangelical alliance, who achieved significant social reforms on behalf of the factory worker.

⁵³ Carl Ferdinand Howard HENRY, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1947, 16.

⁵⁴ *The Cape Town Commitment*, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>, [19.11.2017].

⁵⁵ Kornelis MISKOTTE, *When the Gods Are Silent*, New York, Harper and Row, 1967, 1.

⁵⁶ Harvey COX, *The Secular City*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1971, 15.

⁵⁷ C. S. Lewis expressed this shift in science in the Screwtape Letters in the words of the senior demon: “I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mythologise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The “Life Force”, the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful.” (Clive Staples LEWIS, *The Screwtape Letters*, Toronto, HarperCollins, 1996, 31.)

In a situation where discourses logically rule one another out and yet tolerate or even acknowledge one another sociologically, it is important to “practice humility and cooperation to achieve modest and attainable goals for the good of society”⁵⁸ The history of evangelicalism is familiar with the implementation of such goals.

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