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Coexistence in ethnically mixed areas, historical development and consequences

To live together with a community which speaks a different language, thinks differently and has a different tradition poses many pitfalls and is a great task. On an individual level, however, this may be not such a great challenge. On the other hand, if different ethnic communities end up being in a mutual living space then confrontation is inevitable. The question then arises what will be the result of the conflict. Will the parties be reconciled and will they embark on the road of peaceful coexistence, having gotten over past wrongs or will they continue to harbor distrust letting grievances build up further, or even, might we expect the worst scenario?

Certainly, there may be all sorts of ethnic conflicts, which occur only when two or more nationalities, ethnic groups live side by side in a particular area. In this present world where we live there are just a very few states where the societal structure is homogeneous ethnically. So we can say of every society that throughout its history there have been and there will be ethnic conflicts. And although the average person would be happy to confine ethnic conflicts to the context of the differences between the various recipes and to see that different ethnicities living together disagree over salting and seasoning of food only. In contrast, the stark reality is much different. There are profound differences and conflicts which culminate in bloody clashes. Many times peaceful, friendly relationships and coexistence may turn into unimaginable hostility and ethnic conflict.

Through the lens¹ Darwinism, the formation of nations, ethnicities, are an integral part of developmental biology and linguistic differences also play their part. By taking a look at the evolutionary development branch² you can see exactly how man developed through trial and error

¹ Philosophy based on the theories of Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

² Dawkins, Richard. *The biggest stunt: The evidence of evolution*. Nyitott Könyvműhely Publishing Co. (2009). ISBN 978-963-9725-81-2

and finally we have developed into our present human shape, which is called the Homo Sapiens. According to this system, as early as the beginning, someone had to die in order for the other to continue living on. Death = life. Constant development towards perfection from the state that is not fully perfect. Following this logic, the bigger fish eats up the small fry. And they have proved to be an evolutionary dead-end and so they disappear. If we take into account the development of national and language, it all works the same, if a language is not viable down goes the drain. And a people unfit to survive will face the same fate. In other words, the result of ethnic conflicts, as a rule, will be that one side will lose and because they are unfit to live, they will go down the drain of history. One single Darwinian phrase sums up the extraordinarily inhumane and brutal essence of this: natural selection. Or maybe could the theory of "natural selection" be proved wrong?

From a theological standpoint, the formation of mixed ethnic groups can be pointed back to the Babylonian cacophony.³ When God confused human tongues creating nations and peoples, let us not forget to that this was not a celebratory occasion when it happened, however, God did create languages and along with them linguistic characteristics as well. And it should follow, that even though, the same words are uttered in different languages something entirely different is meant by them. God, the Creator in his design was much more far-sighted than a human could ever be, and this design would turn out to be most auspicious to the benefit of all. We could mention here the different ways of looking at things which results in different solutions to the same problems. Evidence ranges from ancient times to present, from household matters and everyday issues to the world of sciences. The best known example may be the Gordian knot which is not only about a bunch of textile meeting a sharp blade but about two completely different cultures having two completely different answers to the same problem. It is not only the solution but the task which is telling of the thinking⁴ of a particular nation. This is the clash of a violent Balkan mountain people and a sophisticated Asia Minor culture.

³ I Mos. 11: 1-9

⁴ Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great*, 1973, pp. 149-151. ISBN 0-14-008878-4

However, not only languages and peoples appear in the Babelian chaos, and it is interesting to see, that the previously unified humanity gets scattered⁵ in the world. Populating the Earth, therefore, has to do with this divine ordinance, too. This is in contrast to evolutionary thinking, where everything is left to chance and natural selection.

If we accept the words of the Scripture, we must accept the fact that the languages appear in their total complexity. There is no thousands of years of development up till the first voice formation, nor do millions of years pass until the utterance of the first meaningful sentence. But by divine command all languages immediately appear except those which were artificially formed by man. We can mention Esperanto or the Sindarin language or any other artificial language, for that matter. Today, there are circa 6000-7000 spoken languages,⁶ each of them can be linked to a particular nation. More than half of these languages are spoken by people whose mother tongue is not spoken in a country of their own but live in another country as minorities. As for minorities, each state makes attempts to assimilate a minority, whether unwittingly or willfully. And this starts by changing the language of that given minority, and if one loses his language, he has lost his ethnic identity as well. There are always exceptions to the rule and Ireland is a prime example, where the population has totally lost its own language yet, the Irish nation has not been assimilated but was able to establish a country as a nation. Their native language has been enlivened and it is regulated by legislation passed by Irish Parliament that everyone who is Irish should learn their original language.

Causes of one nation coming into contact with another are not always the same. In ancient times, just as today, there was a certain amount of economic migration which resulted in tensions, just as today. It may have been called something else such as war campaign, pillaging, taking over territories. God's people also were called by God to migrate to Egypt and out of Egypt as well.⁷ Following that, the nation is commanded to exterminate the Kaanites and then to treat mercifully the arriving newcomers.⁸

⁵ IMóz1: 8

⁶ HVG How many languages are there in the world? 30 September 2010

⁷ IMos 45-46, II Mos 3-33

⁸ VMos19: IIMos, 22: 21

The nation receives a new commandment which goes beyond the ethnic lines and according to which everyone should receive news of the Christ and be brought to Christ by those who have already sought refuge in the living God.⁹ And once they have been christened they should receive the Holy Spirit. And He will wipe away all borders which have come between man and man in Babel, for there shall be one common tongue again and one single people for all.¹⁰ The Pentecostal miracle stands before our eyes as an anti-Babel, but this can only be granted by non-other than the living Lord.

This we can see, that there have existed since the time of Babel tribes, peoples and nations which have quarreled with one another without end. If you want a good example of an ethnically mixed area then take a look at Europe, but let me give you three examples, which are the Carpathian Basin, South Africa and Israel. Where ethnic conflicts are present even this very day and these three examples represent three entirely different models.

Carpathian Basin

The Carpathian Basin saw the coming of the 20th century as an ethnically divided and partitioned region which has been broken into several smaller states. This, in and of itself, would not be worth considering, however, preceding the 20th century this region formed a unified whole, where the inhabiting nations lived in interaction with each other under the rule of one single sovereign. The ethnically diverse country came into existence following the Turkish wars because as a result of wars fought with the Turkish and later during wars of independence and religious conflicts the population of the country became depleted.¹¹ Thus, several regions were settled. Serbs and Croats came to the southern counties and Romanians settled in the Transylvanian counties. Slovaks from the Hungarian Highlands were settled in the in central Hungary and also some parts of the Great Plains, and this is how large numbers

⁹ Matthew 28: 18-28

¹⁰ Matthew 2: 1-11

¹¹ Ervin Liptai: Military History of Hungary, Zrínyi Military Publishing (1984)

of German speaking people were eventually settled within the country too.¹² The relatively homogeneous population of the Carpathian Basin within barely a hundred years has become a kingdom inhabited by several nations. Here, until the willful formation of nations ethnic issues were not a significant source of conflict as the Transylvanian Romanian herdsman and a Hungarian husbandman as well as a Croatian peasant or Serbian border guard hailed the king in unison – only each in their own tongue.

The 1920 Trianon decision did not prevent ethnic conflicts. What it did was make sure the existence of separate nations so that there would be more unrest and distrust than ever before. Trianon was a gain for one party and a demise for the other.¹³ In addition, the geographic unity was not broken despite the artificial borders and the road and rail network followed the pre 1920 country structure and that is why that the quickest way to get from Kassa to Pozsony was through Budapest. The Southern railways of Hungary became impassable due to a 10km section which was dismantled on account of the newly drawn borders. So if you want to travel by train to Szeged from Nagykanizsa you have an almost 400 km journey to look forward to involving several changes instead of the not quite 300 km direct passage.

We could go on and on about things that have been economically useless or cumbersome ever since but the list is too long and the point of the matter would be lost amongst all the economical obstacles. That is to say, that the arbitrarily drawn seven borders are not good and do not lead to peace for any of the nations and peoples. For the “victorious” nation cannot be lighthearted as a neighbor of the subdued, and representatives of that people ended up within the bounds of the won-over state in significant numbers too. In light of the above and the recent events, the conflict actually appears to be irreconcilable.

The solution is rooted in the Christian dialogue and perhaps in the warmth of voice of the peacemaking priests and pastors. The 20th

¹² Ferenc Mitták: *Hungarian History in Pictures*; By Tóth Bookstore and Publishing Ltd., 2006 ISBN 978 963 596 629 5

¹³ József Gálántai. *Trianon and the protection of minorities. Maecenas* (1989). ISBN 963-7425-12-8

century sought to cure conflicts by human means through population exchange, ethnic cleansing, and violent assimilation and village demolitions.^{14,15,16,17} We could go on forever listing the mutual and one-sided insults and prejudices, however, these should all be cast aside, because Christ's commandment is above all nations: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.¹⁸ And all of us who live in the Carpathian Basin belong to a Christian culture because each state's Christianity was the main foundation on which these nations were built and all of these nations have a Christian societal structure at present. So even in the face of all difficulties arising from ethnic or historic disagreements we all have one common point of agreement which is Christ Jesus. And He lived as an example of love and forgiveness. And if you want to say that He did not have a Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian etc. neighbor who could have betrayed him stabbed him in the back then just think of the fact that it was his own people who betrayed him and had him crucified by the occupying power.¹⁹

Each of the countries concerned are unable to resolve the ethnic conflicts, which again and again will revive. Which conflicts, if you look at through the lens of Darwinism, are needed for progress, and at the same time, looking at actual historical developments they are not the drivers of development but of demise. A dialogue in Christ within the Carpathian Basin would result in mutual reconciliation and peace making which would not mean the renunciation of national identity nor total assimilation with the other side. For the Lord hath commanded that there be nations and it is only Him that shall have the right to do away with them. In the meantime, however, to live with one other and discuss

¹⁴ Mihály Andó – Mihály Antal – Imre Majlath – György Szincsek – Mátyás Lugosi: History of Tótkomlós. Tótkomlós City Government, Mari-LIIS, 1996, Gyula: The history of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange. (Manuscript – Hungarian Academy of the Sciences and the Arts)

¹⁵ Tibor Cseres: *Vendetta in Bačka Magvető*, Budapest, 1991, ISBN 9631418150

¹⁶ Fifty thousand Hungarian martyrs report of the Hungarian Holocaust in Yugoslavia, 1944 – 1992 Edited by István Nyárády (1992),

¹⁷ Péter Sebestyén *Bözödújfalú – 275 years. Erdőszentgyörgy*, (2004)

¹⁸ John 13:35

¹⁹ Matthew 26 – 27, Mark 14 – 15, Luke 22 – 23, John 18 – 19

conflicts and find solutions can only be through a Christian dialogue and only this can bring success.

South Africa

The large black continent's southernmost state has had the most bizarre history of our present world. A state whose history begins in the year 1652 when European settlers arrive and slowly expand their settlements from the south to the north subduing the "new land". One cannot think of two more totally different cultures, and here we have a clash of the mainly hunter and sometimes herding Negro culture with the trading and cultivating white settlers. They began having conflicts on the basis of racial differences right from the outset. The 19th century saw the emergence of bigger conflicts when Dutch settlers migrated to the north and founded a state there. At the same time, the Zulu are spreading into the south from the north so even from their very beginnings, ethnic conflicts become bloody in character. Later South Africa becomes a British colony where strict rules of racial segregation were put into effect and they remain unchanged even when the country becomes independent and are abolished only in 1992. In 1992, the notorious apartheid ended with sudden quickness and it left more questions open than it solved. Whites and blacks lived in complete isolation during the apartheid system and contact between them was strictly regulated.²⁰ The white population held the economic, political and all other sorts of power. There was no real dissent on the part of the church either, it simply integrated into the existing power "tower".²¹ South Africa was a very ethnically divided, conflict ridden country in 1992 and remains so to this day.²² The emblematic figure of the changes of 92 is Nelson Mandela in whom many placed their confidence hoping for peaceful transition. As is well known, the transition was peaceful, however, the situation at present in this country is quite alarming where politicians – just like anywhere else

²⁰ *Throughout Africa from Cairo to Cape Town, the thousand faced world series.* Dunakönyv. ISBN 963-7961-34-8 4

²¹ *Countries of the World.* Nyír - Karta Ltd. (2004) ISBN 963-9516-64-3

²² Gábor Búr: *Apartheid in South Africa* Rubicon, 2008/10.

in the world – campaign by demonizing their political opponents to win elections. Having the “race card” up the sleeve is a very popular gimmick in those circles and they are happy to play it in order to pit people against whites and Boers. The saddest, perhaps, when the head of state Jacob Zuma sings “Kill the boer” in front of a large audience.²³

The victims of ethnic conflict since 1992 have been mostly whites, who were murdered by members of the black majority society in racial conflicts. However, the black population is not unified as it is divided along lines of racial identity. The Zulu and Kosa tribes could be mentioned here whose opposition is not limited to giving the suspicious eye, but armed conflicts have erupted between them. Between the years 1992 and 2000 conflict victims amounted to more than 4,000 people.²⁴

South Africa's democratic rearrangement unfortunately followed the pattern of the rest of Africa's former colonies where perceived or real wrongs were avenged on the descendants of colonialists. It can also be said that the smallest form of racism can explode into gory, brutal violence or even genocide, as we have seen in Rwanda.

The intense and incredible situation which is present in South Africa has gone way beyond limits by now. An ethnically divided population is bled on the altar of economic and political interests, in a country where public safety indicators are also disastrous.

The human response soon could be given to this and the former the colonizers, like in the case of other colonies could return home to their European “country.” This would not even be a problem, if South Africa had not been their home for almost 400 years and if they had some sort of connection with their “homeland”.

And there is no one single “just add water – satisfaction guaranteed” panacea that magically removes all the pain and takes care of this country's ailments, we shouldn't rule out, however, the existence of a cure that could prove useful on the long haul. The Christian answer and solution raises difficulties on two points. The first is probably the historical one – that the church assisted and served the apartheid. The second is that there is no

²³ David Smith for the Guardian theguardian.com Network Africa, Thursday 1 November 2012 13:41 GMT

²⁴ Csaba Németh *Ethnicities, religions and conflicts*; Ambrózia Publishings, 2000. ISBN 973-98717-1-2

single religious stance on certain issues on the part of denominations in the state, and also, in certain cases, they remain silent in the context of events where they should raise their voices, and I refer here to the high rate of migration of the white population. One additional difficulty is that 20% of the population may not be religious or they may be non-Christian.

Let us not forget that Christ did not give the commandment of having to be tolerant towards other religions but to make everyone a disciple - His disciple. Although, in a society where the past was built on a highly repressive system where religious institutions also assumed a role, there cannot be an excuse for the lack of mission and the preaching of Christ's peace. To strive for the repentance and forgiveness of sins is not just a phrase, and one should not even be allowed to think about it that way, but as a constructive power and a power bringing down all obstacles which appears in prayer.²⁵ Divine order must be set above all racial differences, no matter the color of the skin or lineage: salvation is for everyone.²⁶ And so is the peace of Christ.

This is how an ethnically diverse but not divided South Africa could be built up and its economic and spiritual values could be utilized and multiplied standing in contrast to an exploited and oppressed South Africa the curse of which poisons the very soul of this country.

Israel

As for ethnic conflicts, Israel might be a country in one of the most difficult positions in the world because ever since the Balfour Declaration this state has been struggling with these problems.²⁷ The long growing pains of Israel began when the First World War ended. When the area came under British rule Jews came from Europe and other parts of the world. And it did not constitute a single unified nation, and to this day it is not a single nation. The dividing lines within the nation are drawn between the Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Ethiopian Jewry, amongst whom there is an existing tension. Looking further beyond this, we can see

²⁵ John 15/7

²⁶ Romans 3: 22-24

²⁷ Peter Ujvári: *Hungarian Jewish encyclopedia*. Budapest: Hungarian Jewish Encyclopedia. 1929

that there is a large Palestinian minority in Israel.²⁸ These Palestinians, in fact, do not have the same rights as a Jewish Israeli citizen does. Facing several difficulties, the State of Israel is a military state where both women and men are required to serve in the armed forces and the Palestinians and Arab Muslims are exempt from military duty.

As we can see, Israel has an internal ethnic divide and a surrounding Arab bloc, which is also religiously divided. The majority of Palestinians are Muslims (90%); however, the part of the population of Christian faith is not negligible (10%) either. Yet it can be said that the state of Israel does not regard Palestinians as equal citizens, and this is indicated by the fact that the Israeli parliament has only one representative of Palestinian origin. The conflict is not being relieved, although the Israeli army is probably the best in the Middle East, while the Palestinians have no regular armed power (no tanks, helicopters, boats). What they have are groups organized on a religious basis which are political parties, aid organizations and also militias. The two major ones worth of mention are Fatah and Hamas often quarreling with one another which quarrel also a lot of people have fallen victim to. Their fighting assets are terrorist bombings and other attacks, however, they also use the means of peaceful demonstrations and strikes of which the mainstream media does not inform the public in prime-time reports. Other means are not available for lack of regular armed forces.

Observing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more closely grave issues become evident, as we are looking at the expansion of a conquering nation on Israel's end and a defensive nation whose homeland is being usurped on the Palestinian end. If that's all we say and look at, then it would seem impossible to see the peaceful and tranquil coexistence in Israeli and the Palestinian territories. For there is opposition and conflicting interests collide giving rise to tension. Yet, do not look for human response, because if you are looking for that you have just endorsed the legitimacy of continued bloodshed in the Holy Land.²⁹

²⁸ Nyír – Karta Ltd. (2004) ISBN 963-9516-64-3

²⁹ Csaba Németh Ethnicities, religions and conflicts; Ambrózia Publishings, 2000. ISBN 973-98717-1-2

The theological reflection here faces other difficulties than in the two Christian cultural regions discussed earlier, that is to say, Islam is facing Judaism here and Christian faith is followed in the buffer zone between them. Christianity is in their midst as there are Christians on both the Palestinian and the Israeli side, and their number is growing despite the fact that the state of Israel passed a law against the missions and missionaries. Amongst Muslims Koran prohibits any other religious conversion. Yet even in such an environment Christ lives and many are baptized in his name, despite the threat.

The state of Israel, was founded on the principles the Jewish religion of the Old Testament by the Zionists who wished to gather all Jewry in the diaspora from all corners of the world to one single state. They were only partly successful in this, because although the Jewry built a state of their own, yet the fiercest opponents of this come not from outside, but from within. Some Orthodox rabbis hold blasphemous this Israeli state of today, because it is only possible to revive the state of Israel once the Messiah has come. And it follows that the present country should fully be Palestine.^{30,31} The rabbis opinion on this, however, is not uniform so other rabbis proclaim biblical legitimacy of the state of Israel.³² Even though that the words of rabbis disagree here, what is certain is that Jewish piety, by the grace of our Lord, is able to overcome all conflicts for it is God's chosen people to whom the proclamation of promise was made, and God does not change his mind, does not go back on His promise.³³ Those who have the Lord's promise can be peacemakers by the living word of God,³⁴ so as Christians so the Jews have a destined fate, and it is not to be sought in futuristic times, but in this present situation which has evolved so far, despite the of Jewish-Christian opposition.³⁵ The state of Israel is thus the most likely to be able to settle the emerged conflict, because she has the scriptural grounds as well as the necessary economic power. The benefits of the peaceful settlement of the conflict for the State

³⁰ <http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=151>

³¹ <http://www.nkusa.org/>

³² http://www.zsido.com/szoveg/51/Jona_Metzger_Budapesten

³³ II, Gen. 6: 7

³⁴ Isaiah 62

³⁵ Romans 11:28

of Israel may be listed without end and we can only become aware of those benefits in the face of the present disadvantages. We can mention here the release from the clutches of the enemy countries, the huge security costs, putting an end to the population's living in constant fear etc.

Israel does not have to give up its own nationhood and she does not need to evacuate or to drive off the Palestinian population, because the command given to Moses and Joshua to conquer is no longer valid whereby all the Canaanites had to be killed off, and banished from their home.³⁶ The new state, at the same time, had her foundations laid down on human decisions and intentions what the Lord can bless and turn into one of the most wonderful places in the world where Arab, Jew, Palestinian can live side by side in peace.

Afterword

Our world is full of ethnic conflicts where nations are often involved in conflicts along lines of individual self-interest, using the majority against a minority. And as all the hurts and offenses are felt legitimate, so is the havoc wrought in return legitimate. But long stretches the limit of legitimacy and who is to decide where a conflict should end? It would be very easy to say that it goes on and on as long as man says "Enough !" but we took only three countries as examples, put them under scrutiny and none of them cried "Halt !" as they were moving from the 20th to the 21th century. They did not say that "from now on we will be trying to walk on the road of mutual coexistence, helping, and elevating each other." This step cannot be done without God, one can strive, think, plan, and however, the realization is only up to God. A man created super state which has come into existence in the world has proclaimed total world peace forcing those involved in conflict to a peaceful life with the use of terror. This, on the other hand, is no more than the peace of captivity and the serenity of oppression, and should the gates of the dungeons be opened, anger and animosity will start all over again, exactly from where they have left the conflict off.³⁷

³⁶ Gen. V 7

³⁷ Soviet Union, Yugoslavia

The forgiveness of God is at work in human hearts, which begins with the admittance of sin, becoming aware of our sins and taking responsibility for them.³⁸ It continues with the forgiveness of sins by virtue of which the confessing and repenting individual and community is absolved, which can only be granted by the living God. This can only be expected of God and not of people or communities, and once our sins have been forgiven we have to strive to peaceful and pious life. As to when the other party involved in the conflict realizes this is up to the grace of God. Out of the sins of man arose nations on divine command, and out of sin animosity was born in the midst of peoples. Along this logic peace can become a reality by living a life without sin and as the majority can help the community walk in the footsteps of Christ the stronger side involved in an ethnic conflict should do the same.³⁹ To many, putting an end to racial altercation may seem far off in light of the power of God's forgiveness, however, we have come to see, that in the absence of His power it is virtually impossible.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi 4,7).

³⁸ Jer 5: 1, Isaiah 55: 7

³⁹ II Chor 2,