



## **Transcendence and Countermovement In and After Auschwitz**

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According to Johann B. Metz, the father of what Carl Schmitt has called the new political theology, since the Second Vatican Council 30 years ago, there had been a great deal of discourse in the Catholic Church about the so called signs of the times, that had to be understood in the light of faith and processed with the power of hope. Metz had quite realistically serious doubts if Auschwitz would be among those signs of the times, which marked the countenance of the 20th century, and which people of the 21st century would still remember, if they would still remember anything, and to which monuments will be devoted and other time- signs. Metz thought it well worth to make a poll in order to find out if believers or non-believers of today would count Auschwitz among the signs of the times.

### **I. God and the World to Come**

In terms of the critical theory of religion of course not everybody has forgotten Auschwitz, or is forgetting it, or will forget it. Thus, e.g. Simon Wiesenthal, the founder of the Wiesenthal Center in Vienna who in 1999 celebrated his 90th birthday, has lived his life as the keeper of the flame of remembrance. In 1999 Wiesenthal stated:

I believe in God and the world to come.  
When each of us comes before the six million,  
we will be asked what we did with our lives...  
I will say, 'I did not forget you.'

It is this kind of remembrance which constitutes the new political theology.

### **Ecclesial Pronouncements**

By 1998 Metz did not yet know of any ecclesial pronouncements on the signs of the times in the Roman Catholic Church, which would have talked about Auschwitz. Metz, as a catholic theologian, nevertheless was willing to recognize Auschwitz, the Shoa, the Holocaust as such a time-sign for the church: the church after Auschwitz. Metz made this rather untimely sign of the times into the topic of public discourse inside the church so that the comment which Elie

Wiesel had made would not be true of the ecclesial lives of the Christians:

Yesterday it went: Auschwitz?  
Never heard of it. Today: Auschwitz.  
O yes, I already know about that.

Metz was convinced, that Wiesel had not made this comment in a denunciatory tone, but more with a tone of sadness. In October of 2001, Wiesel received the Nobel Peace Prize. He is for peace, but he is not a pacifist. Thus he considers war against terrorism necessary – with tears in his eyes. He knows of the ambiguity of peace and everything else in this world. It is of course a general observation, that pacifists of all types, religious or secular, stand up for peace – except in times of war.

### **Mixed Message**

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, which stresses most of all the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular, faith and history and society, it is most problematic that in 1999 Pope John Paul II has beatified Cardinal Stepinac, who was according to Adolf Hitler's diary the pillar of national socialism on the Balkans and who never protested against the two forced labor- and death- concentration- camps near Zagreb, in which thousands of Jews, Serbs, Gypsies, etc. died a most cruel death. More recently the Pope beatified 8 more clerico-fascists from Spain. However, the Pope did not beatify Archbishop Romero and his and other Central and Latin American liberation theologians and members of basic Christian communities, who have been martyred by the El Salvadorian Arena Party and other organizations in Central and Latin America. However, the Pope did also beatify Edith Stein, who died in Auschwitz as a Jew and a Catholic, a Polish priest who was killed in Auschwitz and an Austrian priest who was crucified upside down in Buchenwald. Thus, the Pope has given a mixed message to the Jewish faith community. In addition, the Pope has so far never apologized for the Church's alliance with the same fascism, which was responsible for the Shoa, in the form of the Lateran Treaty and the Concordats and for the many army chaplains who participated in and prayed for the criminal fascist invasions, particularly into the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as potential territories for colonization in the service of Western European capital. It is hard for high officials of church or state to repent and to ask for forgiveness. They think such very human and decent behavior could damage their authority. The very opposite may be true.

### **The Spirit of Christianity**

Still in 1998, Metz had serious doubts if Christians really knew about Auschwitz. He had serious doubts if his Christian brothers and sisters really knew what happened as a result of Auschwitz: what happened to the Christians, to the spirit of Christianity and to their very often so forgetful, so clever talk about God and the world. Metz knew about a statement by Wiesel which sounded awful to Christian ears:

The thoughtful Christian knows that it was not the Jewish people,  
that died in Auschwitz, but rather Christianity.

According to Metz, Christians could stand firmly before Wiesel's pronouncement only, if they did not simply ignore the experiences that prompted it.

### **Concentration Camps**

For the critical theorist of religion, Wiesel and Wiesenthal and many others have articulated those experiences of the innocent victims of Auschwitz and of other concentration-camps in Europe, which constitute the very essence of the critical theory of religion, its theodicy. To ignore or forget these experiences would mean the end of the new political theology. At the same time, the critical theorist of religion knows that even the most masterful use of - what Hegel called - the human potential of language and memory, which Metz and Wiesel are able of, can not fully penetrate the horror of the concentration camps without the other universal-evolutionary categories of work and tool, the struggle for recognition, the nationhood, and even the human potential of sexuality with its cruel sadistic and masochistic components. The concentration camps were first of all camps for cheap labor for Central and Western European corporations, before they became death camps. Traditional and modern civil society has threatened the existence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam long before Auschwitz and the other concentration camps, in which indeed capitalism climaxed in its relentless search for surplus labor and value. The concentration camps were a form of internal colonization which preceded the external colonization of Eastern Europe, which today continues. Here once more historical materialism makes civil society more understandable than historical idealism turned into sheer ideology, understood as false consciousness, masking of national and class interests, shortly as the untruth.

### **Poetry After Auschwitz**

Metz tried to find out what it meant to grasp and characterize the present situation as a situation after Auschwitz. In order to do so, Metz pointed to the statement by Theodor W. Adorno:

After Auschwitz there can no longer be any poetry.

According to Metz, in 1998 few people still dared to cite Adorno's saying without irony or without a shrug of the shoulders. This was so, because the course of time seemed to have long ago proven Adorno's statement to be false. It seemed really far off the mark. Adorno's statement seemed to sound as if, after Auschwitz, birds would be forbidden to sing, the flowers to bloom and the sun to shine. Metz tried to find out what it was that distinguished human beings from birds, the flowers and the sun. For Metz the distinguishing mark between men on one hand and birds, flowers and the sun on the other was the horror, the dismay of the former over the revelation that occurred in Auschwitz at the inhumanity of human beings. For Metz, the distinguishing mark was the horror striking human beings dumb, interrupting their singing, making the sun go dark. Metz asked if human beings were really more humane when they were able successfully to forget such a horrible fact about themselves? It seems to the critical theorist of religion that poetry may very well go on factually after Auschwitz, but being ideological and in any case without being very meaningful. For the dialectical theorist of religion the very fact that human beings may have forgotten Auschwitz may simply mean that they are no longer

human but have become less than birds, flowers or the sun: that they have regressed indefinitely.

### **Prayer after Auschwitz**

Metz wanted to know what *after Auschwitz* meant particularly for the church? Where Auschwitz was concerned, so Metz heard more traditional Christians say, one could hardly be too radical, but one could also be easily too ingenious and too original. Thus, Auschwitz should not be too much on the Christians' minds, even and especially not on the minds of theologians. When it came to the church and to being a Christian after Auschwitz, one thing occurred to Metz above all. Metz had already often repeated the same issue throughout his years as a theologian. The issue concerned the memory of a conversation from three decades earlier, from the 1960s. Metz remembered that at that time a panel discourse was held at the University of Münster, Germany, between the Czech philosopher Milan Machovec, Karl Rahner and Metz himself. Toward the end of the discourse, Machovec reminded Metz of that saying of Adorno concerning Auschwitz and poetry. At this occasion, Machovec asked Metz whether after Auschwitz there could be any prayer anymore for the Christians. Metz responded in the 1960s, as he still would have done today, i. e. in 1998:

We can pray after Auschwitz because even in Auschwitz  
there were prayers - in the songs and in the cries of the  
Jewish victims.

Metz had to admit that not every victim in Auschwitz was a Jew, but every Jew was one of the victims. For Metz being a Jew in Auschwitz meant per se being condemned to death. It meant per se being excluded from the community of human beings. Thus, so Metz concluded, Auschwitz stood for the Jewish fate in the German and European and Western world, in the Christian world.

### **The Hell of the Fascist Empire**

Contrary to the new political theologian, for the critical theorist of religion where Auschwitz was concerned one could not only be too radical but one could also not be too ingenious and too original. For the critical theorist of religion, it would be very desirable that a great radical, ingenious and original artist - one like William Shakespeare, who was able to produce Richard III - or a great thinker like Arthur Schopenhauer, who was able to produce the most pessimistic book The World as Will and Representation would arise in the 21st century, and would be able to reproduce the hell of Auschwitz and of the whole fascist empire to which it belonged, for everybody to see and to remember and thus to prevent for ever. In this sense, the dialectical theorist of religion is convinced that Auschwitz can not possibly be too much on the minds of Christians and theologians, particularly in so far as the church was allied with the fascist states and is thus co-responsible, in spite of the few Christian antifascists who were martyred and are maybe today beatified and canonized: if that is not again neutralized by the beatification and canonization of clerico-fascists at the same time. The critical theorist of religion has problems with Metz's answer to Milan Machovec. It seems to the critical theorist of religion, that prayers may very well go on after Auschwitz, as indeed they do, but they may be ideological and in any case not very meaningful: simply because of a lack of any divine

countermovement to the cries of the victims in their most extreme distress.

### **Transcendence without Countermovement**

For the critical theorist of religion, it is also true that not all Jewish victims in Auschwitz continued to pray and that today a majority of Israelis do not pray precisely because of Auschwitz: because of the absence of a divine countermovement in response to the desperate transcending of the innocent victims through prayers and cries in their most horrible situation. The dialectical theorist of religion must ask if it does really make sense to continue to pray in the 1960s, 1990s, or in the 21<sup>st</sup> century after the prayers, songs and cries of the innocent victims really went nowhere in Auschwitz. The only answer to the

Adonai, Adonai, Adonai

cries of the innocent victims was the barking of the dogs of the SS men, and the gas chambers, and the crematoria. In so far as there was still transcendence in Auschwitz, there was certainly no divine countermovement: neither in the form of immediate rescue, nor in the form of a Messianic interruption of the horrible historical continuum of force and counterforce, of the Lex Talionis, of crime and punishment, in which God would have given himself to his people. For the critical theorist of religion, to be a Jew in Auschwitz did not really mean per se to be excluded from the community of human beings, but only from the perverse folk's community of the Aryan race. There is a difference. In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, Auschwitz does indeed stand for the Jewish fate in the Western and European world, but this world was with its Germanic Christianity already in the 1940s very far removed from the Gospels, if it had ever even come close to them. In any case, it had been for a long time - in Kierkegaardian terms - more Christendom than Christianity. It happens sometimes to the new political theologian Metz that his most conservative Bavarian-Catholic background - his almost Medieval hometown Auerbach and vacation parish Litzeldorf - breaks through and weakens his critical capacity. Never was the nearby concentration camp criticized or protested against in Metz's small Bavarian hometown, Auerbach, or in his home church throughout the 1940s. It must of course not be forgotten that the experience of the Transcendence without countermovement reaches far beyond Auschwitz. On the Black Tuesday of September 11, 2001, there was no divine countermovement to the screams in extreme distress of over 5,000 victims in the elevators, staircases, and offices of the World Trade Center Towers calling for God as it became darker and darker and breathing became harder and harder as they crashed into the abyss.

### **The Victims of Auschwitz**

Nevertheless, Metz was sure that he and other Christians could never return to a time before Auschwitz. Furthermore, Christians could never get beyond Auschwitz alone, but only together with the victims of Auschwitz: e.g. with Wiesel or Wiesenthal. In Metz' view, this is what it would cost if Christianity was to continue on the other side of Auschwitz. Metz opposed co-Christians who stated, that there were after all for them experiences of God other than those of Auschwitz. Metz agreed. However, so Metz asked, if there was no God for the Christians in Auschwitz, how could there be a God for them anywhere else. Metz opposed co-Christians who

stated that such a notion of God violated the heart of the Christian teachings that tells the Christians how in Jesus Christ the nearness of God was irrevocably guaranteed to them. Metz opposed such saying, because the question remained, for which Christianity this promise was really valid. Metz was convinced that the promise did not hold for a Christianity that identified itself with anti-Semitism, or more precisely anti-Judaism, and thus was among the historical roots of Auschwitz. For Metz the promise held only and exclusively for a Christianity that could understand and proclaim its own identity merely in the face of this history of Jewish suffering. For Metz the recognition of this salvation-historical dependency was the test, whether Christians were prepared to grasp the catastrophe of Auschwitz precisely as such: whether the Christians were ready to do more than merely exorcise it ethically, as was commonly done, and instead took it seriously both ecclesiastically and theologically.

## **Doubts**

Metz had serious doubts if the Christians' horror, their confession of guilt, their shame about the fact that they had lived and prayed with their backs to Auschwitz were genuine. Metz had serious doubts, if the Christians' dismay could be trusted, their horror over their secret or even open complicity with the murderous persecution of the Jews carried out by the fascists: horror at the indifference with which Christian Germans thrust the Jews, along with those few Christians who stood with them, into deadly isolation. Metz had doubts, if one could trust that Christian theology had finally learned its lesson: that it was on guard against that veiled anti-Semitism that indeed hardly ever emerged in theology in the form of a crude racism, but rather in metaphysical or psychological garb. Metz had doubts, if Christian theology was really on its guard against an anti - Semitism or anti-Judaism that had accompanied Christian theology as a constitutional temptation from its very beginning: since the time of Marcion and since the irruption of gnosticism. Metz had doubts, if the memory of Auschwitz had transformed the Christians in their very existence: as Christians. Metz had serious doubts concerning the fact, that the Christians were indeed a church after Auschwitz. For Metz, it could easily be that the Christians as a church were the same after Auschwitz as they had been before. According to the Christian theologian Metz, it was very much possible that the Christian theologians spoke the same way in 2001 as they had spoken before 1933: before Auschwitz.

## **Church and Synagogue**

The small town of Auerbach in the Upper Palatinate, where Metz was born, belonged to the Archdiocese of Bamberg, Germany. Metz was ordained in the Bamberg Cathedral. In this Cathedral there was besides other famous works of art, the symbolically rich pair of women representing Synagogue and Church. Metz remembered very clearly even after four decades, that - as in the Cathedral of Strasbourg - so also in the Cathedral of Bamberg the synagogue was depicted as a woman with blindfolded eyes. When Metz looked upon this image of the synagogue with blindfolded eyes in 1998 he was deeply troubled by the question of what her eyes had seen, and what they knew of God and what Christians in Christendom had theologically made invisible and silenced: and that frequently with extreme violence. When Metz saw e.g. this image in 1998 he asked himself whether during the Crystal Night, when the synagogues were burning in Germany half a century ago, a wisdom about God was reduced to ashes: a wisdom without which the Christians could not know their own hearts or minds when they said *God* or

when they said *Jesus*. Metz assumed that everybody knew that Jesus was not a Christian but a Jew.

### **Jesus, the Jew**

The critical theorist of religion remembers that during the 1930s in the same Bavaria, where Metz came from, farmers put signs up outside their villages for all potential guests to see, on which was written:

Here Jews are not wanted.

Often these signs were planted right before the crucifix, which decorated the entrance of the village. Those men who put up these signs must not have been aware of the fact that Jesus was a Jew. Whenever these men went to mass on Sunday, they must not have remembered that it was the Jew Jesus who during his last Pasha meal was supposed to have said over bread and wine :

This is my body... this is my blood

and who thus gave himself to the community of his friends. The anti-Semite and anti-Judaist Hitler, who came from the nearby Austrian Catholicism of Linz, must not have been aware of the fact, that Jesus was a Jew, when he praised him in his Mein Kampf. As a matter of fact, Hitler considered Jesus to be of Aryan, i.e. Gallian origin, on his father's side. Those incidences show clearly, how far the church had moved away from its Jewish origin: from the Synagogue.

### **The Biblical Israel**

When in 1998 Metz reflected on the figure of that woman - the Synagogue - he saw it as a symbol and monumental memory of the biblical Israel. Then Metz asked himself - as a Christian and a member of the Catholic Church - how he had to understand and to value Israel's election by God: by the one God of Jews and Christians. Metz asked himself how he had to understand and value the unfinished covenant between God and *his* people. Metz had often asked himself - in complete accord with Paul - what then it was that made even the Christians see Israel as unsurpassable and irreplaceable. Metz wanted to know what it was that allowed Christians to see the finger of God over this Jewish people.

### **Dialectic of the Sermon on the Mount**

The critical theorist of religion is most impressed by the dialectic of the Sermon on the Mount, according to which the ancestors, the law and the prophets, are concretely negated, i.e. not only critically overcome, but also preserved as well as elevated, fulfilled, and completed:

You have heard how it was said to our ancestors ... But I say this to you ... Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them...

It seems that the new political theologian Metz has difficulties with that dialectic of the Sermon

on the Mount. Metz emphasized more what the Church was to preserve from the Synagogue than what it was to cancel critically. According to Metz, too much had been cancelled. The negation had been too abstract. In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, the Church critically negated and preserved, elevated, fulfilled and completed the Synagogue and the ancestors and the law and the prophets remembered in it.

### **Poor in Spirit**

Metz wanted to know what distinguished the biblical Israel as a small, culturally rather unremarkable and politically insignificant desert nation from the glittering high cultures of its time: from Persia, Syria, Egypt, Greece or Rome? Metz remembered, that Israel did not know mythical or ideational riches in spirit with which it could transcend or console itself when it faced its own fears, the alienation of its exile, the history of suffering continually breaking out in its midst. For Metz, Israel remained in its innermost essence mythically and idealistically mute. According to Metz, Israel showed little gift for forgetting. At the same time, Israel showed little gift for the automatic, idealistic handling of disillusionment. Israel also showed little gift for soothing its anxieties. It remained poor in spirit.

### **Spiritual and Material Poverty**

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, Metz obviously meant this characterization of Judaism as being poor in spirit in comparison with Persia, Syria, Egypt, Greece and Rome in terms of the Sermon on the Mount in its Matthew version:

How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven

In critical praxis-theological view, Israel was not only poor in spirit but also poor in material possessions in the sense of the "Sermon on the Mount" in its Luke version:

How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God.

Metz's description of the material and spiritual poverty and the consequent disconsolate character of Israel comes very close to that given by Max Horkheimer and Adorno when they explain anti-Semitism out of the nomadic character of the people of Israel.

### **Myths and Idealizing Conceptions**

Even when Israel, so Metz explained, was infiltrated by foreign cultures and when then it imported and mimicked myths and idealizing conceptions, it nonetheless was never completely and definitely consoled by them. Metz could almost say that Israel's election, its capacity for God showed itself in this particular incapacity: i.e. the incapacity to let itself be really consoled by ahistorical myths or ideas. In Metz's view, compared with the glittering high cultures of its time - in Persia, Syria, Egypt, Rome and Greece - Israel remained in the final analysis an eschatological landscape of cries: a landscape of expectation, as did, incidentally, early Christianity. For Metz, early Christianity's biography ended with a cry:



The one who guarantees these revelations repeats his promise:  
I shall indeed be with you soon. Amen; come, Lord Jesus.

In Metz's interpretation, this cry was now in the Book of Revelation Christologically intensified. Since early Christianity, Christians had virtually reduced this cry to silence: either mythically or idealistically-hermeneutically. Yet, so Metz had to admit, there lay even over later Christianity a trace of something unreconciled. Even the Christians' Christology was not without eschatological uneasiness. Not vaguely wandering questions, so Metz insisted, but passionate and insistent interrogation belonged to that passion for God that Christians - according to Paul - had to come to terms with in the Jewish traditions. The critical theory of religion cannot forget the "Maranatha" of early Christianity: it is the very core of its theodicy.

## **II. Sensitivity for the Absent**

In 1998, Metz was convinced that there was too much singing and not enough crying in the Christianity, to which he himself belonged. There was for Metz too much jubilation and too little mourning; too much approval and too little sense for what is absent; too much comfort and too little hunger for consolation.

### **Moral Teaching**

In its moral teaching, so Metz argued, the Church was too often on the side of Job's friends and too little on the side of Job himself. According to Metz's interpretation, Job thought faith could include even insistently questioning God. Metz considered it possible that contemporary Christians did not believe in God himself but rather merely in their faith in God and therein in themselves, or in what they would like to hold about themselves. If however, so Metz questioned, the Christians believed in God, could they possibly remove from that faith the elements of crying out and expectation? Here, for Metz one of the constitutional temptations of Christianity was rooted. Metz was reminded of Jesus' cry from the cross

My God, my God why have you deserted me?

From the very beginning, so Metz remembered, the Christian community had found it difficult to deal with the fact that at the center of Christian faith there was that cry of the Son, abandoned by God. The history of the Christian tradition showed to Metz, how the shock that this cry occasioned was later on attenuated. As a matter of fact, the cry was replaced by more pious farewells. In Luke's Gospel, e.g., the cry was replaced by the words from the evening prayer of Psalm 31.6:

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

In John's Gospel the cry was replaced by

It is finished.

Only in the Letter to the Hebrews the great cry with which Jesus died is recalled again:

During his life on earth, he (Jesus) offered up prayer and entreaty,  
aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him  
out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was  
heard.

Against all the Church's attenuation - and harmonization - attempts Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, recalled nevertheless Jesus horrible cry about the God who deserted him in his extreme distress, as the Mathew Gospel and the Hebrew Letter had remembered it. According to Metz, whoever heard the message of the resurrection of Jesus in such a way that in it the cry of the crucified had become inaudible, did not hear the Gospel but a myth of the victors. Twenty days before my wife Margaret died her cruel cancer death on October 20, 1978, she wanted me to buy a cross for my fifty first birthday in her name: it was not to be a cross on which Jesus stood triumphantly, but rather one on which he was hanging and crying his horrible cry of pain, death and human and divine abandonment without any schizophrenia of a double human and divine nature.

### **The Horrible Cry**

While the critical theorist of religion agrees with Metz, that there is too much singing, jubilation, approval and comfort in the Church and not enough crying, mourning, sensitivity for what is absent and too little hunger for consolation, he adds to it that there is too much cult and not enough practical Messianic mimesis aiming at the new heaven and the new earth without tears, death, mourning and sadness. Most important for the critical theorist of religion is the insensitivity of many Christians for what is absent: i.e. the non-appearance of the Messiah without whom there is no genuine solution of the theodicy problem and thus no real singing, jubilation, approval, comfort or consolation. For the theorist of religion there is no other guarantee for redemption than not to call the absent present. While the critical theorist of religion agrees with Metz that Job's faith included the possibility of questioning God - an inquiring theodicy - he thinks nevertheless that precisely thereby the slaveholders' affirmative test-theodicy has been superseded once and for all. The critical theorist of religion agrees with the new political theologians Paul Tillich and Metz, that faith is essentially directed toward the Infinite, and not toward something finite like faith itself or the believers themselves. In this sense, the dialectical theorist of religion distinguishes sharply between faith, which is directed toward the Infinite and belief, which is directed toward finite things, e.g. doctrines, human authorities, etc.. In perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, there were of course some good reasons why the Church had difficulties with the cry of the Son at his execution and tried to attenuate and harmonize the shock which went from it through the centuries mixing itself with the cries of all the other innocent victims of society. Jesus last cry negated all his earlier assertions about God's loving Providence concerning flowers, birds and human beings and about confidence and trust in the latter in the Sermon on the Mount. Also in his cry from the cross Jesus did not call God

his Father

any longer: and where there is no Father there is of course also no Son any longer and vice versa. Finally, nothing proved more clearly the absence of the kingdom of God than Jesus' crucifixion:

there was on Calvary only the old heaven and the old earth, the old Jerusalem, the absence of God, weeping, death, mourning, and sadness. There was only the mass murderer Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldadeska, and the Saducaic priests and their fanaticized and hateful mob.

### **Ideologization**

In the rise of the dialectical theory of religion, not even the author of the "Letter to the Hebrews" was able to bear and endure and suffer the critical memory of Jesus' last cry, but had to attenuate harmonize, and ideologize it already in the next sentence:

Although he (Jesus) was Son, he learned to obey through suffering;  
but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the  
source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed by God with  
the title of high priest of the order of Melchizedec.

For the critical theorist of religion, the authors resignation ends with his regression into the Jewish priesthood. Jesus who had always been critical of the priests and who was therefore killed by the Zaducaic priests of the Temple in Jerusalem, was after his most cruel death made into a high priest himself by his friends. Who has friends like these, needs no enemies. Why - so the critical theorist of religion must ask once more - did Metz - in full knowledge of Jesus' horrible cry against the God who surrendered him to the execution by his enemies - become and remain a priest: particularly after the desertion of millions of innocent victims in Auschwitz by the Adonai? Why did Moltmann become and remain a Protestant minister: particularly after Auschwitz? Or why did Metz and Moltmann not also try to repress Jesus and all other innocent victims' last desperate and inconsequential cry as much as possible as 2000 years of priestly Christianity had done: guided by the order of Melchizedek. For the critical theorist of religion the problem of the dying Jesus was : transcendence without divine countermovement. It remains the problem of the dialectical theorist of religion up to the present - i.e. 2001. It is the theodicy problem. It can not be attenuated, harmonized or ideologized without the betrayal of Jesus of Nazareth and all the other innocent victims since his death and before. It awaits its Messianic resolution.

### **God Beyond God**

While the critical theorist of religion must reject the new political theologian Tillich 's Heideggerian attempt to call the Absolute

Being,

because it violates the radical understanding of the second Mosaic commandment and thus leads back into mythology, he nevertheless agrees with the latter's insight that during his crucifixion Jesus cried out to the God who remained his God after the providential God of the myth of origin, the God of confidence, the God of theism, had left him in the darkness of doubt and meaninglessness. To be sure, Jesus died as a faithful man in spite of the lack of any divine countermovement. Only an extremely faithful man could cry out the first verse of Psalm 21 during his heart attack induced artificially by torture, crucifixion and shock in a still very young man. An atheist would not have cried out at all, or merely for psychological or political reasons,

certainly not for theological ones. In the 1950s my theological teachers told me in the University of Mainz, that Psalm 21 gets better later on towards its end. It indeed does. But what matters here is that with Jesus on the cross things got only worse. What in the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion remained after the providential God of the myth of origin had deserted the dying Jesus, was the God beyond the God of theism, of whom theologians have spoken from at least one of the initiators of what later on in Antioch and elsewhere was called Christianity, namely Paul of Tarsus, through the mystics Master Eckhart and Nicholaus of Cusa to Tillich. The critical theorist of religion can speak here of a mystical atheism or a methodological, i.e. dialectical atheism which is also shared by the critical theorists from Horkheimer through Walter Benjamin and Adorno to Jürgen Habermas.

### **Death, Guilt and Meaninglessness**

In view of the dialectical theory of religion, even today - in 2001 - one can still become aware of the God beyond the providential God of the myth of origin in the anxiety of fate and death, when the traditional theistic symbols, which for centuries enabled the believers to withstand their vicissitudes, have lost their power. In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, one can still today become aware of the God beyond the God of theism in the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, when the traditional theistic symbols that have enabled the believers for centuries to withstand it, have lost their power. In perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, one can still become aware of the eschatological God beyond the God of the myth of origin in the anxiety of meaninglessness, when the traditional symbols that have enabled believers for centuries to withstand it, have lost their power. For the critical theorist of religion as for Tillich's friends Horkheimer and Adorno, when the God of the myth of origin has disappeared in the anxiety of death, guilt and meaninglessness, there appears the longing and the hope for the totally Other than this world as the source of unconditional meaning and of ultimate validity claims and of a possible theodicy solution. For the critical theorist of religion, the world is not nothing - as for the Buddhists - nor is it all - as for the Hindus and other traditional and modern pantheists and bourgeois skeptics and positivists - but it is becoming - as for the philosophers from Heracleitos to Hegel and Marx and for the Christians. In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, while Marxism is certainly atheistic in a sociological sense - directed against bourgeois religion - it is in reality rooted in the modern form of pantheism a la Spinoza: Deus sive nature; the world is, but it moves. The critical theory of religion goes further. For the dialectical theorist of religion the becoming of the world - which includes in itself its being and its nothing - is directed and moving with great speed toward the entirely Other than this world: as the radical but still determinate negation of the perils of human existence: death, guilt and meaninglessness. The totally Other is the negation of all pantheisms: the world is not all there is.

### **Shema Israel**

Metz remembered in 1998, Wiesels's report of his reencounter with Auschwitz in 1987 that

on the walk to the place where the slaves had built their gas chambers and crematoria it was necessary to clamp one's teeth.

And every wish to wail, to cry out, to weep, had to be suppressed.  
At one point, at which we were in the antechamber of death, we  
who had been here once before felt the need to reach out to each  
other. The need to support one another? For an endless stretch  
of time we kept very still. Then, very quietly at first, but finally  
crying out louder and louder, like madmen we began to speak  
that eternal prayer of the Jews: Shema Israel

Hear oh Israel, God is our God, God is one -

once, twice, five times. Did we do this because the victims, who  
sensed that the end was near, began to speak the same prayer?  
Because, in the end, on the threshold of death, all words  
turn into prayers, and all prayers come down to that one?

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, maybe this transcendence of the innocent victims, this "Shema Israel," found its divine countermovement: because the prisoners were rescued from the gas chambers. But how many times, so the critical theorist of religion must ask, did this "Shema Israel" go nowhere: eliciting no countermovement whatsoever, neither a human nor a divine one? That and alone that is the theodicy problem in all its brutal sharpness. It finds its expression in the shame of the survivors who can help themselves beyond it only by giving a voice to the now voiceless innocent victims!

### **History of Religion**

For Metz religion had obviously been a primordial phenomenon of humanity. In Metz's view, the history of humanity had always been also the history of religion. In the

Shema Israel,

so Metz explained, for the first time and in a unique way in the religious history of humanity, the name

God

was laid upon human beings. According to Metz, what later came to be named biblical monotheism was rooted in Israel's passion for God: in the dual sense of a passion for God and as a suffering unto God. For Metz, this monotheism was not, as despisers like to caricature it, a totalitarian ideology of domination. It was, if Metz understood it rightly, much more a pathic monotheism with a painfully open eschatological flank, than it was a monotheism of power politics. Metz asked himself again and again, how it had been possible at all that what Jesus had prophesied of himself could be more clearly discerned in the fate of Judaism after Christ than it could be seen in the destiny of Christianity itself? The critical theorist of religion can not emphasize enough the painfully open eschatological-apocalyptic flank of Jewish, Christian and Islamic monotheism - the non-appearance of the Messiah - in its struggle against Machiavellian, Social Darwinistic and fascist power politics all around the globe: the militaristic power politics

of NATO against the sovereign state of Iraq, Yugoslavia, or Afghanistan, which continually justifies its own crimes through those of the enemy in terms of the Lex Talionis: retaliation and retribution.

### **Religion and God**

In Metz's view, as long as Christians were merely talking about religion, as that is understood in our mythically enthralled, pro-religious postmodern world, one could certainly dispense with Israel and the Jewish traditions. But, so Metz argued, if it is God and prayer that are at stake, then Israel is indispensable, not only for the Jews but also for the Christians. For Metz, Israel, rejected and persecuted, was and continued to be the root for the Christians, and also for Islam. Thus in Metz's view Auschwitz was and continued to be an attack on everything that must be holy to the Christians. Unlike Metz, the critical theorist of religion does not share the deconstructionist's notion of the postmodern world. He has the suspicion that deconstructionism is not really post-modern but rather in a neo-romantic sense anti-modern. The critical theorist of religion remains closer to the Hegelian idea of a postmodern, post-bourgeois, post-European American and Slavic world, which so far has not yet come about. Whatever the Americans and the Slavs are doing so far - particularly in the family, the economy, the polity and religion - is still by far too European.

### **III. Normality and Continuity**

Metz insisted that Auschwitz was not to be functionalized or instrumentalized politically or religiously. In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, that means that the victims of Auschwitz were not to be made into an ideology in order to legitimate new crimes by another state against other victims: e.g. by the State of Israel against the Palestinians, or by the NATO alliance against the Yugoslavs. As President Bush had called President Saddam Hussein of Iraq another Hitler, so President Clinton called President Milosovich of Yugoslavia another Hitler. On May 15, 1999, Ms. Clinton compared the refugees from Kosovo in Macedonian camps with the Jewish prisoners in the movie "Schindler's List" being transported in animal train cars to Auschwitz. Of course, also Chinese student protesters called President Clinton another Hitler after the NATO bombardment of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

### **The Memory of Auschwitz**

The German political theologian Metz agreed with the Jewish historian Wolfsohn, who had stated, that since Germany had not been geographically divided on account of Auschwitz, but rather because of power politics and ideological motives, it needed not to continue to be divided on account of Auschwitz. For Metz pressing questions arose of course after the reunion of Germany in 1989. Now, so Metz asked, that what belonged together had come back together again, would the wound that bore the name of Auschwitz be opened again? With the passing of the so-called postwar period will the Germans also bury the memory of Auschwitz? Metz saw the danger that with the unification of the Germans they would return to an allegedly seamless normality and continuity of German history. But, so Metz argued, such unification would not be a unity built on a responsible awareness of history. Metz foresaw, that such unification would

only stir up new fears. This would happen not exclusively only for the Jews living among the Germans in Germany: though in a very particular way for them. What Metz had foreseen was unfortunately realized only too soon in Germany's participation in the Euro-American war against Yugoslavia in 1999 and against Afghanistan in 2001. Interestingly enough, in the case of Afghanistan, John Paul II returned from the "Augustinian Seven point Just War Theory" to the "Sermon on the Mount" and forbid Jihad as well as Euro-American retaliation. The Vatican was upset because it believed the Pope had made an anti-American statement. In reality, the Pope had made a genuine Christian statement.

### **Sensitivity and Respect**

In 1998, the German political theologian Metz was afraid that the Germans, particularly the German Christians, did not have enough sensitivity and respect for new fears arising among the Jews in their midst: the few who were able to save themselves and who had risked remaining among them or returning to them. According to Metz, for a church that wants to understand itself as a church after Auschwitz, a new arena had opened up after the reunion of Germany, in which it had to prove itself anew. For Metz, it was precisely the church that had to insist that the Germans' newly won unity would not forget the horrified faces of their Jewish fellow citizens. The church had to insist, that Christians could not tolerate and encourage any understanding of German unity that overlooked anew, or even secretly excluded the Christians' elder brothers and sisters in faith. John Paul II had called the Jews the Christians' elder brothers and sisters. In Metz's perspective, that precisely was what the Christians among the Auschwitz generation had to pass on to the next generation.

### **Unification and Recent History**

In the German new political theologian Metz's perspective, for the Germans all came down to that one point: it was precisely because of the unification of West and East Germany that the Germans were confronted once again with their recent history. The Germans were all together drawn into a post-war history, in which the memory of Auschwitz had too often been repressed in the West, while in the East it had at best been ideologically functionalized. For Metz, this recapitulation harbored an opportunity, but also a growing danger against which the Germans had to be on their guard. For, so Metz explained, it was precisely repetitions, lags in political history, that could quickly lead Germans astray into resentment, into zealously sharpened attitudes. They could easily promote aggressiveness and latent violence.

### **Bombardment of Belgrade**

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, the present historical repetitions go far beyond Auschwitz and the problem of a new anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism. Over 50 years ago, Hitler and his fascist Germany bombed most barbarously and criminally Belgrade and other parts of Yugoslavia in alliance with other Western European fascist states, particularly Italy. In 1999, Germany found itself once more in a group of neo-liberal Western European states plus the United States, who are most savagely bombing Belgrade and other parts of Yugoslavia. I still remember my late philosophy professor Holzammer, when as a fascist radio reporter he described with a heroic voice the bombardment of Belgrade by the German airforce. The

American television reporter described with the same heroic voice the bombardment of Belgrade and other places in Yugoslavia by the American and Western European airforces producing over 10,000 civilian dead so far and thousands of civilians wounded and hundred thousands of refugees. While Hitler respected the sovereignty of Yugoslavia at least to that extent, that he did not bomb the Kings palace in Belgrade, the NATO bombed the residence of the President. International morality has regressed further. There has been progress as well: the radio has turned into a television. All this precisely is the kind of barbarous anti-socialist atmosphere without which Rightwing extremism and anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism could not possibly have arisen again in Europe and America. It was a good sign of the time, when John Paul II protested against the barbarous NATO strikes against Yugoslavia on Palm Sunday 1999, and asked them to be stopped. In 1914, Pope Pius X. had asked the Austrian Emperor to punish the Serbs even if that meant a world war. Pope Pius XII had not protested against the Hitler bombardment of Belgrade. At least in this respect, there has been political-theological progress in the church between Pius X and John Paul II.

### **Anti-Semitism**

Thus, so Metz warned in 1998, the Germans must not in any way be indifferent to the rising anti-Semitism or more specifically anti-Judaism, or more generally, to a growing xenophobia in Germany. According to Metz, German unity was never to be gathered beneath the banners of anti-Semitism, or anti-Judaism, or xenophobia. Such signs of the times were to be particularly resisted by the church in Germany, from their very beginning and without compromise. That would have to be that way, if the church understood itself as a church after Auschwitz. In Metz's view, such a stance did not preclude critical questions for the contemporary State of Israel. A wholesale suspension of critique, so Metz argued, would here be more a withdrawal from solidarity, containing once more the germ of new anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish thinking. According to Metz, many varieties of a vague Philo-Semitism or Philo-Judaism carried in themselves such anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish germs.

### **Critique of the State of Israel**

To Metz, two points seemed to be important for a German critique of political Israel. First, no German critique of the State of Israel could be made unless such criticism was present in Israel itself. Secondly, it was precisely as Germans that Metz and Germans in general were supposed to be the last to object to an exaggerated need for security and preservation among the Jews. For Metz that was so in the face of the fact that the Jews were brought to the verge of annihilation in recent German history. According to Metz, the Germans were supposed to be first in giving the Jews the benefit of the doubt when they asserted that they defended their state not out of Zionist imperialism, but rather as a shelter against death: as the final refuge for a people that has been persecuted down through the centuries. In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, because not only the Germans but also other Europeans and even the Americans were directly or indirectly engaged in and responsible for the Jewish catastrophe in this century. Not only German but also other political theologians of other nationalities would do well to take seriously Metz's caveat concerning any critique of the State of Israel. On the other hand, since Jewish political theologians have problems with the State of Israel's crimes against the Palestinians, also the critical theorist of religion will not take Auschwitz as an excuse



for such crimes, and will not allow that its victims will be once more ideologically functionalized and instrumentalized.

## **Europe**

According to Metz, in 1997 German television ran a four-part series by the journalist Lea Rosh on the fate of the Jews in Europe under fascist rule. It came with a commentary by the historian Eberhard Jaekel. Metz remembered that the final line in the last installment of the four-part series was

Europe - a cemetery for the Jews.

In Metz's interpretation those concluding words were not meant to deflect German guilt for the mass-murder of millions of Jews, which was what for him the name Auschwitz stood for. After all, so Metz explained, the whole four-part series had appeared under a title borrowed from Paul Celan:

Death is a Meister from Germany.

According to Metz, the concluding words of the series did also not intend to throw doubts on what the series itself had documented: namely that in many of the countries allied with or occupied by fascist Germany, especially in Fascist Italy, there was highly courageous resistance against this tidal wave of annihilation.

## **Death as Meister**

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, unfortunately death was and is not only a Meister from Germany, but from Europe and even from America. All of capitalist Western Europe marched under Hitler into socialist Eastern Europe and devastated it with the intent later on to colonize it. With the support of its European allies fascist Germany bombed Belgrade and Yugoslavia over half a century ago. In March and April 1999 planes from all over capitalist Western Europe and America bombed once more socialist Belgrade and Yugoslavia. Of course, Germany is once more part of the barbarous and criminal attack. The last socialist country in Eastern Europe is to be annihilated by Western European and American airforces. The hate of bourgeois Western Europe against the last Eastern European socialist state, Yugoslavia, was so great in March and April 1999, that NATO preferred at least momentarily a premodern fundamentalist-Islamic greater Albania, including parts of Serbia and Macedonian, on European soil over the former. Such Islamic State had just been prevented in Bosnia-Herzegovina. All this betrays not only a German, but rather a European pattern of barbarism and criminality. Later, NATO changed its mind and secured the integrity of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo and Montenegro, by treaty.

## **Anti - Semitism and Anti - Judaism**

In recent years, I have experienced more anti - Semitism and anti -Judaism in the streets of Frankfurt and other German cities than in the fascist period. But I am afraid that the Right-

wing extremism in the form of which this new anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism develops is not only a German but a European and even an American phenomenon. When after the catastrophe of World War II the chance was missed to transform the bourgeois identity of the capitalist Germany and Europe and America and when it was instead restored, it could easily be predicted that not only the Soviet Union would be dismantled some day and Belgrade and Yugoslavia would be bombed again, but that also anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism would rise again in the form of a new Rightwing-extremism. Unfortunately, Hitler's Machiavellianism and social Darwinism and fascism have not died with him. If this new Right-wing extremism can not be stopped, Europe will become once more not only the cemetery for the Jews but that of many other people as well - e.g. the cemetery of the Yugoslavs. Unfortunately, Hegel has once more been right over Immanuel Kant as his teaching has once more been verified that the internal negativity of the modern nation states can not be overcome by any international organization: be it the Holy Alliance, or the League of Nations or the NATO or the UN. Hegel gave for a reason that also those alliances have their own negativity again and that they hold together only as long as they exclude and isolate and demonize other nations outside of themselves: be it Iraq, Yugoslavia, or Afghanistan. In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, here following Benjamin's political theology, only the Messiah can interrupt the horror of the historical continuum of national and international most violent negativity.

### **Jews and other Innocent Victims**

Metz asked himself and other Europeans, if they could possibly come to terms with such words as Europe as a cemetery for the Jews at a time, when Europe had once again become the focus of their interest. Metz tried to discuss this question from the perspective of a church after Auschwitz. While here the critical theorist of religion accepts the new political theologian's question as being valid, he would have nevertheless included into it other potential victims of the United Europe as well: e.g. the Gypsies, the Yugoslavs, the Turks, the Albanians, etc. At Easter 1999, the NATO engaged in barbarous and criminal bombardments of Belgrade and Yugoslavia as fascist Germany had been over half a century earlier. This high-tech bombardment drives millions of Orthodox Yugoslavs into air shelters and makes refugees of ten thousands of Muslim Albanians. While Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christians remember the execution of the communist Jesus of Nazareth, NATO tried to eliminate the last socialist state in Eastern Europe by a bombardment, which violates all international morality and legality. NATO asks that three American prisoners are to be treated by Yugoslavia according to the same Geneva Convention, which it violates by bombing open cities. Yugoslavia was to be bombed into signing a treaty, which has lost all content by the NATO bombardments. Even if the treaty could have been forced upon Yugoslavia, it would have had no validity, because it would have been signed under duress. By the NATO bombardment a fundamentalist Islamic state is prepared on European soil, which had been avoided in the case of Bosnia - Herzegovina with a high price of human lives. In NATO policy one antinomy follows the other with great speed. In 50 days of Yugoslav war, the war goals were changed at least 5 times. Might wins over right! Decisionism, articulated by Carl Schmitt, Hitler's jurist and political theologian, conquers the normativism of international and national law! Something similar happened again in the case of Afghanistan in 2001: all in the name of the Lex Talions, which is present in the Torah and the Qur'an, but is broken in the New Testament: in the fourth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount.

## **Crime and Chaos**

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, as always in Europe's history, international crime leads into international chaos. A series of crimes leads to an unending chain of chaos. Hitler bombed Belgrade in the framework of his wider scheme of colonizing Eastern Europe, which failed. The NATO tried the same through the credit system and succeeded in 1989: the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated, except the residual Yugoslavia which is now under attack militarily. Marshall Tito gave Kosovo autonomy. This autonomy was abused by the Albanian majority against the Serbian minority in Kosovo. Therefore, Yugoslavia rescinded Kosovo's autonomy. The Kosovo Muslims tried to gain back their autonomy and even total independence by establishing the KLA, which the CIA first considered a terrorist organization and then supported with money from drug traffic and prostitution without permission of the American Congress. A treaty was imposed on Yugoslavia which no sovereign state could possibly accept: it included total control of Yugoslav airspace from Hungary to Albania. The KLA was finally supported by the NATO airforces and their terror attacks on Yugoslav territory. The Iran Contra Affair comes to mind. It is all in the defense of private property. Civil societies need colonies for cheap labor and other resources in the interest of an always-larger private appropriation of collective surplus labor and value. Socialist Yugoslavia stands in the way. It must go. The Euro-American death drive breaks through all boundaries set by national and international morality and legality. The bourgeoisie does not obey its own laws. The world would be a better place, already, if it would.

## **Greek Spirit, Christianity and Jewish Spirit**

According to Metz, what people in 1998 called Europe, as Europeans had come to know it from its 2000 - year history, was shaped by the Greek spirit on the one hand and by Christianity on the other. The Jewish spirit, so it would seem, did not belong to this definition of Europe. It would seem that the Jewish spirit had no right to reside in Europe. Metz explained, that

right of residence,

was a technical term for the legal right of Jews to live in a given region of Europe. Unlike other residents, Jews were not guaranteed this right simply by being born in a certain region of Europe. Rather, up until the end of the eighteenth century, this right had to be negotiated and paid for by the Jewish community. According to the critical political theology, Horkheimer emphasized the importance of the presence of the Jewish spirit in Europe. Benjamin did not join Zionism and did not immigrate to Jerusalem, because he considered the presence of the Jewish spirit to be most important for Europe. The other critical theorists shared this opinion more or less expressively: mostly by their very decisions and actions.

## **The Emancipation of the Jews**

According to Metz the emancipation of the Jews carried on since the modern bourgeois enlightenment of the 18th century was only supposed to be possible under the presupposition of their emancipation from the Jewish spirit. Metz remembered that Johann G. Fichte, the exponent

of a German idealism, that influenced and defined not only the German spirit but the European spirit as well, said about the Jews and their human rights:

They must have human rights... but I see no other way of  
granting them civil rights than this: one night all their  
heads have to be removed and replaced with others  
that contain not even one Jewish idea.

### **The Immoral Notions of the Jews**

The critical theorist of religion remembers with great discomfort the other German and European idealist Hegel's critique of the wrongheaded and immoral notions of the Jews. Hegel pointed to the sad condition of the Jewish nation, which parked itself more and more on German and European territory. For Hegel the Jews were the serving property of their God. Toward the end of the 18th century the Jews were as such in a base, vile, mean, low, lousy, rotten, beastly, miserable and dreadful condition. The fate of the Jews was the fate of Macbeths. Hegel spoke of the dungeon of a Jewish soul. The Jews don't believe themselves to be punished, when the Christian throws them down the staircase. The nation of the Jews has gone into hell in their heinous hate.

### **The Jews in Civil Society**

Hegel was aware of the fact that there were people in civil society who appealed to formal right against the Jews in consideration of the granting them civil rights because they were to be seen not only as a separate religious group but also as members of a foreign nation. Hegel criticized that the shouting, yelling and screaming of these people out of these and other points of view has overlooked, that the Jews were first of all

human beings

and that this was not only a shallow and abstract quality. For it was rather so that in this determination of the Jews as human beings there lay that through the granted civil rights came about the

self-feeling

to be recognized as legal and legitimate persons in bourgeois society. Out of this infinite root, which was free from everything else, came about the demanded balancing, equalization and reconciliation of the way of thinking, cast of mind, outlook and attitude. Without the granting of civil rights to the Jews, so Hegel argued, the separation, of which they were accused in civil society, would rather have maintained itself and that would have rightly turned into the guilt and reproach for the excluding state. This would have been so, because that excluding state would have misunderstood and misjudged its own principle, the objective institution and its power. According to Hegel, the assertion of the exclusion of the Jews by the state, while thought to be extremely in the right, has proven itself nevertheless in experience as something most stupid. On the other hand, the Prussian government's way to act - namely to grant civil rights to the Jews -

proved itself as being wise and dignified.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion as Anti-Socialist Strategy**

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, present day capitalist states follow the same wisdom when today they establish trade relations with socialist states, e.g. Cuba, North Korea, China, etc. and try to strengthen and promote human and civil rights in them in the hope thereby to undermine the socialist spirit: inclusion as anti-socialist strategy. Such wisdom is certainly more effective than the opposite one, namely to bomb socialist states into submission, e.g. Iraq or Yugoslavia: exclusion as anti-socialist strategy. Every rocket which the alliance of capitalist NATO states fired into socialist Yugoslavia, as fascist Germany had done over half a century ago, and every civilian who was wounded or killed thereby, revealed civil society as the value free or simply immoral and criminal animal society which it has been from its very start, and thereby only produced more socialists in the Russian Federation for the Fall elections, and beyond that for all of Eastern Europe and even around the globe. Here the critical theorist of religion does not forget that the bourgeois states granting of human and civil rights or economic advantages to the Jews or to the socialists in order finally to deprive them of their Jewish or socialist spirit remains hypocritical and treacherous: well worthy of a - as Hegel put it - spiritual animal society.

### **The Frankfurt School as Incarnation of the Jewish Spirit**

In the view of the dialectical theory of religion, while Hegel - unlike the anti-Semites in Prussian and other European civil societies - agreed with the Prussian government's granting of civil rights to the Jews, it was nevertheless to be done only for the price of the liquidation of the Jewish spirit. Here Hegel agrees with Fichte. Hegel's intent to liquidate the Jewish spirit is one of the reasons why the new political theologians Metz and Jürgen Moltmann became anti-Hegelian Hegelians and why they were quite willing to learn from the likewise anti-Hegelian-Hegelian Frankfurt School, in which the Jewish spirit had newly been incarnated. While even Bertolt Brecht was critical of the "Judaisms" in Benjamin's work, he nevertheless remained solidary with him beyond his death. Precisely because the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt was a new incarnation of the Jewish spirit, it was closed by the fascist Cultural Ministry of Prussia in 1933, when at the same time all civil and human rights of the Jews were cancelled. When after World War II the Second German Republic reintroduced human and civil rights for Jews again, also the Institute for Social Research was able to return and with it the Jewish spirit which it continued to represent at least to some extent. In any case, fortunately in the Bonn Republic neither the attempts to exclude the Jews - e.g. in terms of Rightwing extremism - nor the attempts to include the Jews - in terms of the government's granting to them full human and civil rights - have so far been successful in leading to the decomposition of the separate Jewish spirit.

### **Pure Product of Thinking**

According to Hegel, in Judaism the pure product of thinking came to consciousness. In the Jewish religion of sublimity appeared a moment of exclusiveness. The Jews had what they were through the Eternal One. In Hegel's view, the Jewish history was polluted through the holy

exclusion of the spirits of the other nations. Hegel had no doubt, that the Jewish nation had world-historical significance. For Hegel, the Jewish feeling persisted in the reality. It demanded the reconciliation in the reality. Hegel remembered that the Spanish inquisition had been instituted in order to persecute secret Jews as well as Arabs and heretics, and that it soon took on a political character as it directed itself against the enemies of the state. Hegel appreciated the sublimity of the Jewish religion and its holy poetry. Hegel found in the Jewish nationality the firmer independence of the character as well as the wildness of revenge and of hate. Hegel criticized that only the narrow-minded Jewish national God could not tolerate other Gods besides him. Hegel found some similarity between the Jewish religion of sublimity and the Persian religion of light and darkness, good and evil. God was One in the Jewish nation. According to the Jewish religion of sublimity the Jewish nation and all other nations were to praise the Lord. In Hegel's view, because of a lack of freedom the Jews have not differentiated enough between the Divine and the Human. The Jews suffered the pain which came from universality. The Jewish religion of sublimity contained already the moral commandments. Hegel stressed the difference between the Jewish religion of sublimity on one hand, and Islam and Christianity on the other. Hegel was interested in the notion of God developed by Platonic Jews and Judaism. God was the simple essence of the Jews outside their self-consciousness. According to Hegel, Philon presupposed the history of the Jewish nation. Hegel was interested in Jewish mysticism: the Kabbala. In Hegel's perspective Jews and Arabs were to be noticed in relation to the Christian world only externally and historically. In Hegel's view, as a Jew Spinoza superseded the dualism of the Cartesian system. For Hegel, the root of the spirit of Judaism was the objective: the service of something foreign.

### **From Judaism to Christianity**

In Hegel's view, Christianity originated from Judaism as the depravity which had become conscious of itself. From its very beginning, Judaism constituted this self-feeling of invalidity: a misery, vileness, baseness, nothing, which had life and consciousness of its own. This singular Jewish point became later universal-historical in its time. Into this Jewish element of the nothing of reality the whole world has elevated itself: precisely out of this Jewish principle, however into the realm of thought. The Jewish nothing turned dialectically over into the positive reconciliation in Christianity. For Hegel, there was a second, Christian creation of the world, which came about after the first Jewish one. This second creation is the one, where the spirit has understood itself first of all - as Johann G. Fichte put it - as  $I = I$ : as self - consciousness. According to Hegel, this second Christian world was first of all likewise immediately in the self-consciousness in the form of a sensual world: in the form of a sensual consciousness. What of the notion entered into that form the Church fathers have received from the Greek, more specifically the Platonic philosophers: their trinity. That happened insofar as a rational thought was in the trinity, not a mere representation, as well as other ideas. However, what differentiated the Church fathers in general from the Greek and particularly Platonic philosophers was, that for the Christians this intelligible world had at the same time this immediate sensual truth of a common happening as portrayed in the Gospels. According to Hegel, this sensual form the Christian intelligible world had to have and to keep for the generality of all human beings.

## **IV. Jewish and Christian Spirit**

Here where Johann G. Fichte and Hegel granted the Jews human and civil rights in German and European civil society in order ultimately to liquidate the Jewish spirit was the location where Johannes B. Metz's question of 1998 arose for Christianity and for the church after Auschwitz. Metz was of the opinion that the Jewish spirit should have been propagated together with the Christian spirit by the Christians in Europe.

### **The New Jerusalem**

According to Metz, the Jewish spirit should have been propagated together with the Christian spirit by the Christians in Europe for no other reason than the fact that Jesus was a Jew, and that his friends and disciples were Jews. Very early on in the history of the church, so Metz argued, a problematic and momentous strategy for spiritually disinheriting Israel set in. That happened firstly ecclesiologically and secondly theologically. In Metz's perspective, firstly the church understood itself too exclusively as the New Jerusalem: as the authentic people of God. The foundational significance of Israel for the church, so Metz made clear, as Paul had emphatically urged it in his letter to the Romans, was too quickly suppressed. The root of Jesse was reduced to a now-surpassed presupposition within the church's salvation history. For the critical theorist of religion the identification of the church with the New Jerusalem or with the New Creation or with the People of God stood in utter contradiction to the Christian apocalyptic eschatology and was thus entirely ideological. For the critical theorist of religion the only guarantee of redemption is not to call realized in history what has not yet happened.

### **Israel and Athens**

In Metz's view, secondly very early on in church history something he called the bisection of the spirit of Christianity set in theology. The Christian theologian could certainly appeal to Israel's faith tradition, but the spirit was exclusively drawn from Athens: from the Greek Hellenistic traditions. It looked to Metz as if Israel and the Jewish-Biblical traditions had no spirit to offer to Christianity and therefore to the European spirit as well. But, so Metz insisted, there was such a Jewish spirit offered to the spirit of Christianity and to the European spirit. Only, so Metz argued emphatically, when this Jewish spirit had the right to reside within the European spirit the synagogue would as well be not merely endured, but rather recognized and appreciated. While in the perspective of the critical theory of religion, Metz took the notion of spirit obviously from Hegel's dialectical philosophy, he rejected nevertheless the latter's one-sided greater inclination toward Athens and Greece rather than toward Jerusalem and Israel.

### **Jewish Memory**

In 1998, Metz described the Jewish spirit as the power of memory. This power was unknown or repressed in Europe. According to Metz, Jewish memory resisted forgetfulness. It resisted even the forgetfulness of the forgotten. In the final analysis for the Jewish memory wisdom was a form of sensing absence. Jewish memory did not only resist just the forgetfulness that wants to wipe away every trace so that finally nothing can be remembered. In Metz's view, precisely that the fascists tried to do with the demolition of the death chambers. According to

Metz, the Jewish memory did not resist just this intentional suppression, but even also the forgetfulness that lay hidden in every pure historization of the past. Such Jewish remembering was not only a matter of individual ethics. It was also not merely a matter for science alone. Jewish remembering was a concern for culture. Jewish remembering was the expression of an anamnestic culture that was at home in Judaism. According to Metz, this Jewish culture of remembering was lacking both in European Christianity and in the European spirit as a whole.

## **Repression**

In the perspective of the dialectical theory of religion, not only the Jewish spirit as power of memory is continually repressed in Europe and America, but also its incarnations in the critical theory, in the new political theology and in the critical political theology. Without such continual repression such barbarous as well as criminal acts as the bombardment of Belgrade and Yugoslavia by planes of fascist Germany half a century ago could not now be repeated again even in an exaggerated form by NATO planes: including the destruction of civil trains and their passengers and the killing on refugees on the roads between April 12 and 14, 1999. Without such repression the fascist inversion of cause and effect would not have been possible in fascist Germany and now again in the NATO. The German fascists said: where there is smoke there must be fire and meant that it was the Jews own fault that they were sitting in the concentration camps. Even now, the Mato tells world with unbelievable arrogance that not the American rocket hit the train to Tessaloniche on April 12, 1999, but that the train drove into the rocket. On April 14, 1999 the NATO told the world that not three American airplanes killed over 70 Albanian refugees, but the Yugoslav airforce which they had claimed to be destroyed in the past ten days of bombardment. When the lie did not stick the NATO told the world that the American airforce only killed the Yugoslav military escort and that then the escort which had just been killed went back and killed the refugees. Without the repression of the Jewish spirit the European and American civil societies could not possibly lost once more in the recent Iraq and Yugoslav bombardments of 1998 and 1999 all civility and they could not have revealed themselves as outright animal societies with an overdeveloped death instinct. The critical theorist of religion can not even speak any longer of civil societies as spiritual animal societies, as Hegel still called them all too euphemistically. Civil societies repress all incarnations of the Jewish spirit as power of memory in order to continue to hide their continual, massive re-barbarization and criminalization throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The Euro-American civil societies behave in the last year of the 20th century as cruelly and inhumanely as they have behaved throughout the century. They are beyond rescue. On October 12, 2001, the Pentagon announced that it had hit accidentally a citizen area in Kabul: collateral or unintended damages! The first week of American-British bombardment of Afghanistan have all ready cost the lives of 300 civilians, including 4 UN workers. Of course, over 5,000 citizens had died in the World Trade Center catastrophe and in the Pentagon in Washington D.C., September 11, 2001. This Lex Talionis continues and so does the Parousia delay, the apousia – the nonappearance of the Messiah. On October 21, 2001, the American Airforce hit a hospital in Afghanistan and killed all 100 patients, doctors, and nurses. The incident is called “collateral damage.” It contradicts the not only the first and fourth commandments of the Sermon on the Mount but also the “Augustinian Seven Point Just War Theory.”



## **Anamnestic Culture**

In Metz's view, the European Christians had become blind to the dignity of the Jewish anamnestic culture. The European Christians have already placed themselves too far beyond the Jewish culture of remembering and have cast it off as archaic and premodern. However, in Metz's view it was true also for the faith of the Christians that it not only *had* a remembrance, but that it *was* a remembrance: the memory of the suffering, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to Metz, the Christians had certainly preserved this remembrance-structure of their faith in their cult. Metz quoted Jesus' statement during the Last Supper in the Calcedron Valley under the walls of Jerusalem:

Do this in remembrance of me.

However, Metz had to admit that the Christians had not cultivated enough the remembrance structure of their faith in the public sphere. The Christians had not formed and defended the remembrance structure of their faith in the intellectual and cultural spheres. In those places the Christians had rather continued to be latter-day Platonists.

## **Easter Celebrations**

The critical theorist of religion remembers that the Patriarch of Rome asked the NATO to cease bombing at least during the Roman Catholic Easter celebration in April 1999. One week later the Patriarch of Belgrade asked the NATO to cease its bombardments at least during the Orthodox Easter celebration. The Bourgeois-Christian NATO continued its bombardments during both Easter celebrations in the most - according to the Pope's words - diabolical way. No Easter memory could move the new barbarians. When once Hitler was told that he was a barbarian, he stated that he wanted to be a Barbarian. Obviously the NATO insists to be even more barbarous than Hitler. The critical theorist of religion must ask how Christians can possibly cultivate enough the remembrance structure of their faith in the public, in the intellectual and cultural spheres under capitalist and NATO domination.

## **Eschatology and Apocalypticism**

According to Metz, the Christians have forgotten that Christianity was not only deeply indebted to the Greek spirit, but has also again and again foundered against it. Metz knew of this foundering from the earliest history of the church: from the Acts of the Apostles. They tell that on the Areopagus in Athens Paul certainly was able to find common ground with the Greeks there concerning an

unknown God.

However, when Paul spoke to the Greeks on the Areopagus of what tied the Christians absolutely to the Jewish traditions, when he spoke to them of eschatology and apocalypticism, of the God who raises the dead, then according to the Acts of the Apostles

some scoffed; but others said, 'We will hear you again about this.'

At that point Paul left them.

In Metz's view, the Jewish spirit of remembering that is at work in the biblical stories of hope cannot simply be - in Hegel's word - sublated into the Greek spirit. But who then, so Metz asked, has saved and preserved this Jewish spirit of remembering - for Christianity, for Europe?

### **The Totally Other**

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, the new political theologian Metz has overlooked that also the Jewish God is unknown in the sense of the second and third commandment of the Decalogue: the prohibition against making images or naming the Absolute. In the Frankfurt School Horkheimer and Adorno emphasized the second and third commandment of the Mosaic law and the imageless and nameless and thus unknown totally Other. Benjamin and Adorno stressed the eschatological and apocalyptic element. Adorno combined the notion of the nameless and imageless entirely Other on one hand and eschatology and apocalypticism on the other: both of course no longer in a religious, but rather in a secular form.

### **Progressive Loss of Remembering**

In Metz's perspective, Christians were totally lacking the Jewish culture of remembering in Europe. The modern European person was less and less his or her own remembrance, and more and more only his or her own experiment. From this Metz concluded that in Europe authentic progress is the progressive loss of remembering. The recent dispute among historians over the evaluation of Auschwitz always aroused in Metz the question whether the Germans and Europeans and Christians were dealing with this catastrophe in such an uncertain and divisive way because they lacked the spirit which was supposed to have been definitively extinguished in Auschwitz: if it was not because they lacked the spirit of memory which would be needed to perceive what had happened in a catastrophe of this sort, even to Germany, to Europe and finally to the Christians.

### **Lack of the Spirit of Memory**

In the eyes of the dialectical theory of religion, the Europeans' lack of the spirit of memory - of communicative and anamnestic rationality and action - makes possible new catastrophes. Would the NATO have barbarously and criminally bombarded Belgrade and Yugoslavia over Easter of 1999, if they had still remembered Hitler's barbarous and criminal attack on the same city and the same country a little bit more than half a century ago? Would the American Secretary Albright, a Jew from Tschechoslovakia, have promoted the new bombardment of Yugoslavia, if she would have remembered that she was rescued from fascist persecution by the Yugoslavs and that she lived as a refugee in Belgrade only half a century ago? Would the Jews have driven the Palestinians out of their homeland, if they had remembered their own expulsions from European countries only a short time earlier? Even the Jews can lose the Jewish spirit of remembrance. Remembrance is indeed a weak category. In addition, fundamental anthropological conditions seem to be in the process of being changed in Europe and America: there seems to happen a strong anthropological shift from the human potential of language and memory to the evolutionary universal of work and tool. In any case, the present

NATO attack verifies once more Hegel's statement, that the only thing one can learn from history is that people do not learn anything from history.

### **Liberation from Fascist Rule**

On May 8, 1990, so Metz reported, participants in the Jewish World Congress gathered in the front of the so-called Wannsee villa in Berlin, in order to commemorate the liberation from fascist rule 45 years earlier. At that meeting, so Metz remembered, a text by Wiesel was read in Hebrew, German, and English. Wiesel's text recalled the plan for the annihilation of the Jews conceived by fascist party and government officials at Wannsee. Metz quoted the final passage of Wiesel's text:

But Wannsee also means for us Jews that memory is stronger than its foes. It means that the hope of the Jews has triumphed over their fear. It means that coming back to Wannsee and listening to the hard, dark echoes of those voices, we Jews want to save coming generations from having our past become their inheritance for the future.

According to Metz, this was the Jewish dowry for Europe, for humanity, for a church after Auschwitz. In the perspective of the critical theory of religion this Jewish dowry has to be translated into political praxis: even into a political praxis against the murderous NATO when in the name of 285 million Americans and 360 million Europeans it most savagely, barbarously and criminally bombs small and pitifully poor third world countries like Yugoslavia, Iraq, or Afghanistan into the stone age in a Machiavellian, Social Darwinistic and fascist spirit. To help to overcome this most inhuman, this animal spirit, is the main task of a critical theory of religion inspired by the spirit of Jewish prophets.

### **V. Theology as Theodicy**

The new political theologian Metz started his discourse on "Theology as Theodicy" of 1998 with a reference to his own theological biography. Metz had to confess that only much too slowly he became aware that the situation in which he as a theologian tried to talk about God was the situation after Auschwitz. In 1998, the realization of how long he had hesitated to recognize the situation of his theology to be one after Auschwitz made Metz even more uncomfortable.

### **Horror**

Auschwitz signaled for Metz a horror that was beyond all the familiar theologies. It was a horror that made every situation less talk about God show up as empty and blind. Metz asked himself if there was a God whom one could worship with one's back turned toward Auschwitz. Metz asked himself, if any theology worthy of the name could keep on talking about God and about human beings after such a catastrophe as Auschwitz, as if the presumed innocence of our human words would not have to be scrutinized in the face of such a catastrophe. Metz became uneasy. Metz asked himself why one saw so little or even nothing at all of this catastrophes of

Auschwitz in theology: not to mention of humanity's histories of suffering in general. In Metz's view it was not possible or permissible for the theological discourse to proceed at a distance from the human history of suffering in the same way as perhaps it was for philosophical discourse. Metz was disturbed by the large amount of apathy in theology. Metz was disturbed by theology's astonishing and obdurate befuddlement. Theology reminded Metz of an idealism which fancied that it had sublated the negativity of human histories of suffering into the fully grasped self-movement of the absolute Spirit. The theme "after Auschwitz" signified a fissure in Metz's Christian and theological biography. The critical theorist of religion remembers of course that the greatest idealist, Hegel, had called history a slaughter bench and a Golgatha and that according to him the human histories of suffering were not sublated into the absolute Spirit without the great riddles of Providence, the misery of the innocent victims, by which already Thomas Aquinas had been deeply disturbed.

### **Thinking about Being**

Since this fissure occurred in Metz's Christian and theological biography, he has asked himself whether in his theological work he was categorically oriented too much by subjectless and

human-empty

thinking about Being, under the leveling view of which even the singularity of this catastrophe of Auschwitz vanished. Metz asked himself whether, therefore, he paid too little attention to the way the Bible thought. The Bible thought in terms of covenant and justice, which was to see the human person not primarily as a

neighbor of Being

but rather as a neighbor to the person, especially to the stranger who suffers. That way of thinking, so Metz concluded would urge not ontological but eschatological differences, calling them to the attention of the most progressive consciousness.

### **Christian Theology and Ahistorical Gnosticism**

Since that fissure produced by Auschwitz in his Christian and theological biography, Metz's theological work has been defined by the insight that in view of Auschwitz Christians and theologians need to examine not only their Christian theology - their Christian theologizing about Judaism - but also examine Christian theology - the Christian discourse about God - as a whole. In short, what according to Metz was needed was the long overdue dissolution of the clandestine marriage between Christian theology and an ahistorical gnosticism.

### **God-Question as Theodicy Question**

As Metz became conscious of the situation after Auschwitz, the God-question forced itself on him in its strangest, most ancient and most controversial form: the theodicy question. The theodicy question forced itself on Metz not in its existential but, to a certain degree, in its

political garb. For Metz, discourse about God became the cry for the salvation of others: of those who suffer unjustly, of the victims and the vanished in the human history. Metz realized clearly, that after Auschwitz one could not ask about one's own salvation without asking this theodicy question. In Metz' view, this was so because discourse about God was either about a vision and promise of universal justice, touching even the sufferings of the past, or it was empty and void of promise, even for those alive today. For Metz, the question immanent to this discourse about God was first and foremost the question about the salvation of those who suffer unjustly. The truth that guided the discourse about God was known only in committed resistance against every form of injustice that creates suffering.

### **The Piety of Theology: The Questioning of God**

In taking up once again the theme of theodicy in theology, Metz was not suggesting - as the word and its history might indicate - a belated and somewhat obstinate attempt to justify God in the face of evil: in the face of suffering and wickedness in the world. What was really at stake for Metz was the question of how one was to speak about God at all in the face of the abysmal histories of suffering in the world: in his world. In Metz's view that was *the* question for theology. Theology had not to eliminate the theodicy question or over-respond to it. For Metz the theodicy question was *the* eschatological question. Before the theodicy question as eschatological question theology did not develop its answers reconciling everything. Theology rather directed its questioning incessantly back toward God. That for Metz was the real piety of theology. In the face of the continuing, massive experience of transcendence without countermovement beyond Auschwitz, the dialectical theorist of religion can only long and hope for the imageless and notion less totally Other than nature and history as food chain and as the possible source of unconditional meaning and moral validity claims and new eschatological apocalyptic theodicy attempts.