

NATION, PEOPLE, AND RELIGION – DIMENSIONS OF MODERN SOCIETY: CONSISTENCY OR CONTRADICTION?

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I. Renaissance of the “Kulturnation”?

Evidently, the French minister of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, had made a mistake when he contemptuously labeled those young people of African origin who caused the riots in the French “banlieues” at the end of 2005 as “scum.” These young hooligans may not be counted as religious fundamentalists; however, those riots showed that the French conception of the “Staats-Nation” and its education, until now, was not successful in making the influence of lifestyle or ethnic origin superfluous as it is induced by being a member of a native people or an observer of a religion.

As if Bußmann could have foreseen this, a long time ago, he stated that the conception of the “Nationalstaat” as it has been formed by the French Revolution, inevitably leads to “tensions and frictions” in regions of mixed population¹.

Nevertheless, the most popular representative of the French conception of the “Nationalstaat”, Ernest Renan, is problematic. He refused every ethnic, linguistic, religious or geographic aspect in the self-understanding of the nation. His definition of the “Staats-Nation” is most popular and widely spread: “L’existence d’une nation est ... un plébiscite des tous les jours”². But even in this case and after this definition, the riots in the French “banlieues” must be understood as a daily plebiscite against the existing French “Staats-Nation” and against the existing problems of discrimination.

One cannot expect that such considerations might find attention in a centrally organized government, as in France. In the European context, however, it might give an impulse to think again about the conception of a nation

¹ **Walter Bußmann.** Art. Nation. – Staatslexikon, Bd. 3⁷. Hrsg. Görres Gesellschaft. Freiburg [u.a.]: Herder, 1987, S. 1268.

² **Ernest Renan.** Qu’est-ce qu’une nation? (1882). – Œuvres complètes. Edition définitive établie par, vol. 1. Henriette Psichari (ed.), Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947, p. 904.

as a “Kulturnation”³ – neglecting that this concept was for a long time regarded as ridiculous, naive or even dangerous.

Nowadays, it might possibly happen that this concept allows the knitting of important aspects of a nation, people and religion together. Finally, it might be that this idea is not yet looked upon as an absurd German idiosyncrasy.

Besides, careful analysis already should have better emphasised that specifically religious observation is not unimportant for people in small European and non-European countries if they start to discover their national identity.

At least, it should be realized that there is a different assessment of religion for states in Eastern and Central Europe in the process of finding out their national identity, compared to some parts of Western Europe⁴.

If it is correct that the phenomenon nation, with all its different accentuations and connections always is a “sich wandelnde geschichtliche Erscheinung”⁵, watching carefully again and again the relations between nation, people and religion and to reflect on them is necessary.

The following reflections shall concentrate on the developments in Central Europe. Because of this limitation, it is not possible to discuss such historical examples of connecting nation, people and religion like in the times of Caesaropapism of the late eastern Roman Empire⁶, the “Nationalkirchentum” in England of Henry VIII, or the Imperial Orthodox Church in Russia from Peter I till 1917. The problems of the present projects of so-called “Islamic republics” started in Iran, Pakistan or Mauritania, exceed the given framework, too.

Furthermore, talking about the very special case of the founding of the state of Israel is not possible. In spite of the very transnational view of many parts of the Jewish people, this must be understood as an attempt to construct a very close connection of nation, people and religion.

³ **Friedrich Meinecke.** *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat.* München: R. Oldenbourg, 1917⁴, S. 39ff.

⁴ **Bußmann** 1987, S. 1267f.

⁵ **Bußmann** 1987, S. 1265.

⁶ **Hans-Dieter Döpmann.** *Nationalismus und Religion.* – *Jahrbuch Mission.* Hrsg. Verband evangelischer Missionskonferenzen. Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 1996, S. 21, here used the idea of a godly accepted “Symphonia” from state and church, of Emperor and Patriarch. It lasted since the Emperor Justinian I (527–565) and meant that Emperor and Patriarch together had the responsibility for body and soul of the people of the Byzantine Empire. He refers that even in 1397 Patriarch Antonius IV. of Konstantinopel wrote to the Grand Duke Vasilij I. of Moskow: “... für uns Christen kann es keine Kirche ohne das Reich geben ...; man kann nicht das eine vom anderen trennen.“

However, in all these exclusive examples, more or less, distinct references to the following topics can be found.

2. Globalisation versus Regionalisation

Besides demonstrating the failed policy of the French government to integrate the many immigrants of foreign cultures in a French “Staatsnation”, the burning car wrecks in the French suburbs possibly could be a further signal. These rebellious actions may also demonstrate an inner contradiction of our present age of globalisation. In these times and in our world of global players and networks, it should be irrelevant where you are living and where you are working or to which country or to what people you belong or what your religious preference is.

Surprisingly, at present, a trend has developed power and force, which emphasises the local, regional and comprehensible. The trend values the traditional and confidential while also recognizing and appreciating the roots of a people inclusive in a particular religion.

After the end of the Cold War, the dynamics of globalisation’s critical counter movement increased more and more. Forces were evident in the background in the process of setting up several new Eastern European or even Asian states or re-instituting former ones.

And in direct connection to the subject of a “Staatsnation” or “Kulturnation”, it must be noted that the “tschechoslowakian Nation”⁷, which has been constructed after the pattern of the French constitution, seventy years ago, has been disintegrating now into the predominantly Catholic nation of Slovakia and into the more secular, although protestant Czech Republic.

One of the reasons why this counter movement against globalisation gained so much strength is the internationality of the post-modern “global village” and the necessity to encounter worldwide competition has forced many to look back on their own position in this competition and therefore, to look back on their own nation, their own nationality and their own people, not only in the former socialist countries.

Global events such as the Olympics, World Cup or even international competitions such as the European Song Contest reveal unexpected and amazing awakenings of national emotions. This happens even in Germany, a country where national identity has been deliberately broken.

Especially in Germany, a considerable gap between the unreflected reactions of a large majority of the people and the more reflected conceptions

⁷ **Kurt Rabl.** Krisis und Zukunft des Nationalgedankens im modernen Europa. – Zeitschrift für Politik, 37. Jg., Nr. 4, 1990, S. 409.

of the intellectual elite is evident. For the intellectual elite, working on these connections between nation, people and religion is unpopular, although this issue is “*unterschwellig*”⁸ or woven into the whole of German post-war history.

Therefore, regarding the present national issue from the German outlook, particularly from a theological and churchly perspective, most of the problems and ambivalences are highlighted⁹.

Such occurrences could merely be appreciated as the happy and gratefully celebrated reconstruction of their own identity as a nation, people and a religious community such as Armenia, Georgia¹⁰ or Poland¹¹.

However, the German point of view mostly emphasises the danger and the dark sides of the idea of being a nation, of nationalism and the idea of the people. Thus, for positive considerations, there is little space for present German authors.

This, however, is not remarkable for it evidently mirrors the whole misery of modern German national history and Germany’s guilt due to its nationalism. Indeed, it would not be honest to work on the subjects of nation and national consciousness in the German context, on people and ethnology with their special connections to religion, without remembering the experience and suffering of the rise and fall of the German national consciousness.

⁸ **Nation im Widerspruch.** Aspekte und Perspektiven aus lutherischer Sicht heute. Eine Studie des Ökumenischen Studienausschusses der VELKD und des DNK/LWB. Hrsg. Helmut Edelmann, Nils Hasselmann. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999, S. 61.

⁹ Here at the beginning of the national movement in Germany Herder too talks of ambivalence, when he calls the nation as a “*ungejäteten Garten ... von Thorheiten und Fehlern*”, but he also discovers “*Vortrefflichkeiten und Tugenden*”. Therefore, he doesn’t like to praise the nation “*ex professio*”. **Johann Gottfried Herder.** *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 17. Hrsg. Bernhard Suphan. Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–1913, S. 211.

¹⁰ As **Döpmann** 1996, S. 19 says, making the people in Armenia and Georgia to Christians meant the beginning of an own literarily culture. Thus it was the Church, which these people “*schließlich auch zu einer für die bedeutsamen politischen Eigenständigkeit verhalf – modern gesprochen – zu nationaler Identität.*”

¹¹ **Döpmann** 1996, S. 21 remarks that Poland by the founding of the archbishop-stool of Gnesen in 1000 reached a greater independence from German influence.

3. Are the Roots of the Modern Nation in the Renaissance?

Even if Martin Luther still addresses the “Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation”,¹² he did not use the term ‘nation’ in the modern way but as a compound of ecclesiastical and worldly principalities with the king at its top¹³.

However, the fact that he addresses the Christian nobility of the German nation to enforce ecclesiastical reforms for the people and to do best for the “armen Kirche”¹⁴ shows how inseparably close the connection of religious topics and the topics of the whole society were generally considered.

This specific way of understanding the term nation is possibly much older for there is no distinct criterion passed on to delimit this term to closely related terms¹⁵. But this lack of precision might be generally associated with the character of the national, if Kohn is to agree that nations are the “Wirkungsergebnis geschichtsbildender Kräfte”. Thus, they are changing continuously and are never stiff and rigid¹⁶.

Still, there are good arguments that the ‘nation’ in its modern sense was not primarily developed in Germany but in the 17th Century England¹⁷. And if in the patriotically inspired speech of John of Gaunt in Shakespeare’s drama Richard II. the “frühesten Zeugnisse eines sich selbst genügenden Nationalgefühls”¹⁸ are to be discovered, the religious suggestions and associations are highly visible even in this play:

“Methinks I am a prophet new inspir’d,
And thus expiring do foretell of him:
His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,
For violent fires soon burn out themselves;
Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short;

¹² **Martin Luther** (1520). *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung* (1520). – Martin Luther. *Ausgewählte Werke*, Bd. 2. Hrsg. Hans Heinrich Borchardt, Georg Merz. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1948³, S. 81–150.

¹³ **Ulrich Dierse, H. Rath**. *Art. Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalität*. – *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 6. Hrsg. Jochim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984, S. 407f.

¹⁴ **Luther** 1520, S. 150.

¹⁵ **Dierse, Rath** 1984, S. 407.

¹⁶ **Hans Kohn**. *Die Idee des Nationalismus*. Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1950, S. 34.

¹⁷ **Jörg Rothermund**. *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Begriffe Nation und Volk*. – *Nation im Widerspruch* 1999, S. 116.

¹⁸ **Rabl** 1990, S. 406.

He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes;
 With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder;
 Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
 Consuming means, soon preys upon itself.
 This royal throne of kings, this sceptre'd isle,
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
 This other Eden, demi-paradise,
 This fortress built by Nature for herself
 Against infection and the hand of war,
 This happy breed of men, this little world,
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,
 Which serves it in the office of a wall,
 Or as a moat defensive to a house,
 Against the envy of less happier lands;
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England"¹⁹

The consciousness reflected in this verse could correspond to the thesis of Joachim Track that Protestantism has promoted the development of the modern nation. He reasons: “‘Faktisch hatten die protestantischen Kirchen von Anfang an in der Zuordnung zum landesherrlichen Regiment einen Bezug zur regionalen Sozialität und Kultur und eine ‘nationale’ Anbindung. Durch die Betonung der Landes- und Muttersprache verstärkten sie das kulturell eigenständige Moment. Die Orientierung am Grundsatz ‘cuius regio eius religio’ führte zu konfessionell geprägten Regionen und Ländern ... und zu einer engen Verbindung von Staat, Kultur und Religion. So hat der Protestantismus lutherischer Prägung, trotz seines Festhaltens an dem Gedanken der universalen Kirche, einen geschichtlichen Beitrag zu der späteren Entstehung nationalstaatlicher Entwicklung in Politik und Religion geleistet, ohne diese Situation zum Gegenstand theologischer Reflexion zu machen’”²⁰.

However, it is to be noted in reply that there were some rather different protestant territories concerning landscape, religion and even language, especially in Prussia, which have been so much blamed in later debate on nationalism. Lutherans, since Johann Sigismund (1572–1619), lived under a Calvinist sovereign. Compared with the thesis of Joachim Track, it might also be the other way round. The German landscape with its different territories had enforced Protestantism or even made Protestantism possible.

¹⁹ **William Shakespeare**, *citato loco*:

<<http://212.227.253.8/williamshakespeare/messages/4158.htm>>, (Januar 2006)

²⁰ **Joachim Track**. *Nation in lutherischer Sicht – Schritte zu einer sozialetischen Urteilsbildung*. – **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 248.

Nevertheless, in spite of the antireligious criticism of the age of Enlightenment, the idea of a close association of nation, people and religion must have been widely spread. Thus, Johann Martin Miller could write tersely in his poem “Deutsches Lied” of 1772:

“Daß ein deutscher Mann ich bin
deß erfreuet sich mein Sinn
Denn ein ächter Deutscher ist
immer auch ein guter Christ.”²¹

Simultaneously, it shines through that identification could only be successful in delimiting from others. That is why the thesis of Jörg Rothermundt is not convincing, that there is no national tightness or marking of enemies in the English or later in the French term of nation and that their view had always been directed on the whole of mankind²². On the other hand, Rothermundt reports that the English people were influenced by the Old Testament and identified themselves with the old people of Israel. Thus, they thought that they had to yield freedom to all peoples of the world. That inevitably induces a similar delimitation or marking of enemies as it was strongly executed by the old people of Israel against the so-called “heathens”.

4. To the Self-determination of a Nation

As a matter of fact, the establishment and growth of sovereign territories in the age of absolutism took neither the interests of ethnic groups nor their confessions into consideration, despite the “Augsburger Religionsfrieden”. The separation of a positive law and ethics then followed.

It was Hugo Grotius who then formulated his doctrine of the “bellum iustum ex utraque parte”²³. Therefore, during this time, belonging to a separate people or religion did not become a central characteristic of the sovereign state. Instead, the countries’ unlimited right to warfare (*liberum ius ad*

²¹ **Johann Martin Miller**. Gedichte. Ulm, 1783, S. 180; citato loco: **Wolfgang Hardtwig**. Vom Elitebewußtsein zur Massenbewegung. Frühformen des Nationalismus in Deutschland 1500–1840. Antrittsvorlesung 16. Juni 1992, <<http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/humboldt-vl/hardt-wolfgang2/PDF/Hardt-wolfgang2.pdf>>, S. 16f. (Januar 2008)

²² **Rothermundt** 1999, S. 116.

²³ **Hugo Grotius** (1625). *De iure belli ac pacis*; citato loco: **Wolfgang Huber, Hans-Richard Reuter**. *Friedensethik*. Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: W. Kohlhammer, 1990, S. 82f.

bellum) pushed itself into the foreground²⁴, producing disastrous consequences in the age of the so-called “Kabinettskriege”.

Thus, the thinking of Immanuel Kant found attention. His frequently quoted essay “Vom ewigen Frieden” was based on the idea of freedom, of moral law and on his doctrine of the law. Here he refused the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state of the world. Thus, he gave an outer frame to the modern term of the nation: “Kein Staat soll sich in die Verfassung und Regierung eines anderen Staates gewalttätig einmischen.” ... “Solange aber dieser innere Streit noch nicht entschieden ist, würde die Einmischung äußerer Mächte Verletzungen der Rechte eines nur mit seiner inneren Krankheit ringenden, von keinem anderen abhängigen Volks, selbst also ein gegebenes Skandal sein, und die Autonomie aller Staaten unsicher machen.”²⁵

However, modern history shows that forces were mobilised particularly by mutual interferences in the autonomy of the people, which led to the explication and to the fixing of the modern idea of the nation in its specific connection to religion and people.

If it is correct that a nation in its emergence defines the features which are determining itself²⁶, referring to Germany as the so called “verspätete Nation”²⁷, the age of the Liberation wars must be considered first.

5. The Relations between Nation, People and Religion in Germany as a Reaction to French Aggression

On one hand, the legitimization of the government by the old dynasties and by the religious idea of the divine gift of governmental power were questioned by the French Revolution. On the other hand, the idea of an autonomous people and nation became more and more popular. Thus, no longer should the aristocracy be regarded as the representatives of the state but of

²⁴ **Bardo Fassbender.** Die souveräne Gleichheit der Staaten – ein angefochtenes Grundprinzip des Völkerrechts. – Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, Bd 43, 2004, S. 9.

²⁵ **Immanuel Kant.** Zum ewigen Frieden. – Immanuel Kant. Werke in zehn Bänden, Bd. 9. Hrsg. Wilhelm Weischedel. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983, S. 199.

²⁶ **Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde.** Die Nation. Identität in Differenz. – Universitas 10, Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995, S. 978.

²⁷ **Helmuth Plessner.** Die verspätete Nation. Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994⁵.

the people whoever that should be. Finally, reverence to the king was replaced by a cult of the nation²⁸.

At that that time, the military situation for the Prussian reformers was very difficult, considering the French military forces and their aggression. To counter this, the Prussian reformers saw no other alternative against this menace but to initiate the idea of an autonomous German nation, in their own native country, the “deutsches vaterland”²⁹. Only in changing their thinking up to the brink of self-surrender seemed to open the strategy for survival and freedom. The resulting national effort induced some contradictions within the country³⁰, which, however, could not be stopped.

This national effort joined the church and state in a very specific manner. Respected theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher were very much involved in the development of the new feeling for a nation and “Vaterland”. Aiming in this direction he preached: “Der Sache des menschlichen Geschlechtes dienen, die Beförderung der Tugend der Vernunft der Frömmigkeit im allgemeinen sich zum Wunsch und Ziel setzen, den Einzelnen in dem Maaß lieben als er hierzu beiträgt, das ist herrlich. Aber wie kann sich denn jenes allgemeine Gefühl als Liebe zeigen, als nur gegen diejenigen, die uns wirklich erscheinen, die in den Kreis unserer Thätigkeit fallen im Leben selbst? Umgeben uns nun die nicht am meisten und fordern uns auf, ihnen Beifall und Liebe zu schenken, die mit uns zu einem Volk gehören? Allein auch Andre, können wir sie wol ganz kennen und alles liebenswürdige an ihnen lieben, wenn wir nicht auch auf das wichtige Verhältniß achten was sie einem Volke eignet und mit einem Vaterlande verbindet? Ich weiß, hier eben erheben sich die Beschuldigungen, Vaterlandsliebe mache kurzsichtig, partheiisch, nähre Vorurtheile gegen andere Völker, und mache daß man denen geringschätzig begegne, die ihnen angehören. Aber ist das nicht die Unvollkommenheit der Menschen und keineswegs der Fehler der Sache?”³¹

Ernst Moritz Arndt, among others, also emphasizes the close relationship between nation, people and religion – namely in the tradition of the Reformation, which is based on Martin Luther. In spite of some contradictions for

²⁸ **Martin Honecker**. Grundriß der Sozialethik. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995, S. 325.

²⁹ Cf. Gneisenau in “Volksfreund“ of July 2, 1808: **Reinhard Höhn**. Scharnhorsts Vermächtnis. Bonn: Athenäum, 1952, S. 224f.

³⁰ **Ludwig von der Marwitz**. Lebensbeschreibungen I, S. 443f., see: **Georg Eckert**. Von Valmy bis Leipzig. Hannover und Frankfurt am Main: Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt O. Goedel, 1955, S. 113f.

³¹ **Friedrich Schleiermacher**. Wie sehr es die Würde erhöht, wenn er mit ganzer Seele an der bürgerlichen Vereinigung hängt, der er angehört. – Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. Kleine Schriften und Predigten 1800–1820. Hrsg. Hayo Gerdes. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1970, S. 285 ff.

Arndt, it is true that: “Es gibt Ein Volk, Eine Religion, Einen Frieden, nach welchem auch ewig gerungen werden soll. Die würdig sind, sie zu erkennen, erkennen sie wohl dieses heilige Einheit aus der Vielheit, diese unsterbliche Menschheit und Gottheit”³². Und deswegen “soll dir nächst Gott Teutschland der heiligste Name seyn, bei welchem du betest und schwörst, und jeder Mensch, der teutsch gebohren ist, soll dir lieb und werth sein, als wäre er dein Bruder; denn er ist mit dir aus Einem Lande. Und wenn du diese Liebe und Treue inniglich fühlst, so wird Eintracht und Glaube an Gott und das Vaterland die verlorene Freiheit wiederbringen.”³³

It must be criticized that during that time, contributions like this helped the national war of liberation against Napoleon take on the character of a “holy war”. In addition, in this context, such terms as “salvation” or “reconciliation” or “rebirth” had been robbed of their biblical meaning³⁴. At the beginning of the development of the German national consciousness, the necessary traditional and theological distance between the church and state³⁵ also had been surrendered. On the other hand, who can deny that in the age of European national feelings Germany was no exception?

But compared with other European nations, there have been many specific reasons for a forced development of national consciousness in the German countries. At that time, the territorial revolution caused by the “Reichsdeputationshauptschluss” of 1803 had put together many different peoples within new borders, and they longed for their integration. Therefore, the reformers of politics, education, the military and church realised that from now on, every form of political government cannot be newly founded without the principle of the sovereignty of the people.

Until the beginning of the forties in the 19th century, the “Nationalgemeinde”, which enthusiastically sought German unification, was rather small³⁶. But they gathered in clubs and associations, which met initially under several different interests, but every time combined with the common aim of national unification. There were, for instance, gymnastic clubs and

³² **Ernst Moritz Arndt**. Staat und Vaterland: Eine Auswahl aus seinen politischen Schriften. Hrsg. Ernst Müsebeck. München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921, S. 6.

³³ **Ernst Moritz Arndt**. Kurzer Katechismus für teutsche Soldaten. Berlin: Verlag des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung, 1956, S. 50.

³⁴ Cf. **Johann Gottlieb Fichte**. Reden an die deutsche Nation. Hamburg: Meiner, 1978, S. 128ff. Cf. also the analysis by **Manfred Spieker**. Nation und Konfession – eine katholische Perspektive. – **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 304.

³⁵ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 46.

³⁶ **Hans-Ulrich Wehler**. Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Bd. 2. München: C. H. Beck, 1987, S. 394f.

from 1814, flourishing student associations³⁷. Furthermore, there were choir clubs for men, clubs to support the Greeks, and Polish clubs to support those who were refugees from the Polish areas in rebellion or those who were driven out as Polish independence fighters from 1830/31³⁸.

But, according to Hans-Ulrich Wehler, before the revolution of 1848, there were “rund 250.000 Männer in Vereinen formal organisiert, die auch Wert auf national-deutsche Gesinnung legten”³⁹. Finally, nationalism had given rise to the determining political power in the German countries. And, what has been elected as a motto for the Leipzig student association may be representative of the relationship between nation and religion: “Gott, Ehre, Freiheit, Vaterland”⁴⁰.

According to historical research, the Rhine crisis of 1840 is usually regarded as the crucial date for the transition of nationalism into a popular movement⁴¹, and sometimes it is accused of being reactionary. But the perspective of German nationalism around 1840 undoubtedly meant a progressive and modernizing force compared with the existing structures of the “Deutschen Bund” and its distribution of competences⁴². Moreover, this driving force in the background was stimulating Bismarck’s minor unification of the German countries, excluding Austria. Concerning these proceedings, there were reservations, especially in Lutheran society. Nevertheless, no one later doubted that this nation would be “von Gott gewollt”⁴³ since a German national self-assurance took place with regard to the “deutschen Luther”⁴⁴. And at this time, Luther was wrongly accused by respected Roman Catholics, that he had “sehr wohl verstanden, das deutsche Nationalgefühl ... in den Dienst seiner Sache zu ziehen”⁴⁵.

Besides the desire for national consciousness, Europeans longed for political power for all people and also for peoples all over the world. The new German nation claimed political influence and respect, too. And partly,

³⁷ **Wolfgang Hardtwig**. *Studentische Mentalität – Politische Jugendbewegung Nationalismus. Die Anfänge der deutschen Burschenschaft*. – Wolfgang Hardtwig. *Nationalismus und Bürgerkultur in Deutschland 1500–1914*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994, S. 108–148.

³⁸ **Hardtwig** 1992, S. 18f.

³⁹ **Wehler** 1987, S. 412.

⁴⁰ **Karl Hammer**. *Deutsche Kriegstheologie 1870–1918*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974, S. 147.

⁴¹ **Hardtwig** 1992, S. 24.

⁴² *Ibid.*, S. 24.

⁴³ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, S. 51.

⁴⁵ **Ignaz von Döllinger**. *Luther, eine Skizze (1851)*. – *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* Hrsg. Heinrich Bornkamm. Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1955, S. 255f.

it was supported by a special theological access to the creation, the “Schöpfungstheologie”⁴⁶.

The other world powers looked suspiciously at these German claims for international emancipation and were not simply willing to accept them. Finally, it was the German nation that was guilty of drawing the whole world into a war, the horrors of which are still unforgotten.

6. The Error of an Exaggerated Nationalism in Germany

At the end of the 19th century, in the newly founded Wilhelminian German Reich, Albrecht Ritschl and his pupils asserted a very close connection between the so-called “Culturbewegung” and the kingdom of God⁴⁷. There were strong warnings. For example, Ernst Troeltsch in Eisenach in 1896 alarmingly shouted: “Meine Herren, es wackelt alles.”⁴⁸ The “Kulturprotestantismus” meant a certain national symbiosis of worldly and spiritual kingdom. And that meant that essential distinctions of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms⁴⁹ were practically surrendered in such a close relationship between nation, people and religion in Germany. But further on in the enthusiasm of war at the beginning of World War I, which over all confessions had the effect of a national “Integrationsideologie”⁵⁰, the national, the “Völkische”, and religion increasingly became woven together. Thus, patriotism and the idea of the people practically gave rise to a new, separate national religion⁵¹.

This may be demonstrated by Ernst von Dryander’s sermon, the Oberhofprediger at that time, held at the opening session of the German parliament on 4 August 1914 shortly after Germany declared war against Russia and France. In his sermon he refers to Rom 8,31: “Is God for us, who can be

⁴⁶ Compare for example the hint on Holl at **Heinrich Assel**. Nation und Konfession in der Lutherrenaissance bei Karl Holl, Rudolf Hermann und Jochen Klepper. – **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 204.

⁴⁷ **Kurt Nowak**. Geschichte des Christentums in Deutschland. Religion, Politik und Gesellschaft vom Ende der Aufklärung bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts. München: C. H. Beck, 1995, S. 161.

⁴⁸ On an assembly of the “Freunde der Christlichen Welt”. **Walther Köhler**. Ernst Troeltsch. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1941, S. 1.

⁴⁹ **Uwe Rieske-Braun**. Mißdeutet – Mißbraucht – Noch brauchbar? Überlegungen zum Umgang mit der Zwei-Reiche-Lehre im 20. Jahrhundert. – **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 243.

⁵⁰ **Nowak** 1995, S. 200.

⁵¹ **Hammer** 1974, S. 151.

against us” and can declare: “Im Aufblick zu dem Staat, der uns erzogen, zu dem Vaterland, in dem die Wurzeln unserer Kraft liegen, wissen wir, wir ziehen in den Kampf für unsere Kultur gegen die Unkultur, für die deutsche Gesittung wider die Barbarei, für die freie an Gott gebundene Persönlichkeit wider die Instinkte der ungeordneten Masse ... und Gott wird mit unseren Waffen sein! Denn mit der deutschen Gesittung hängt auf das engste zusammen deutscher Glaube und deutsche Frömmigkeit”⁵².

At the beginning of the war, the song of Martin Luther “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” was as frequently sung as a national song, “Wacht am Rhein” or “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles”. In this situation, many pastors realised for the first time that the Protestant Church as “Volkskirche” was a church of the people⁵³.

The unity of nation, people and religion was similarly implored from the highest authority of the German Empire, Kaiser Wilhelm II.⁵⁴: “Wir Preußen sind es ja gewohnt, gegen einen überlegenen Feind zu kämpfen und zu siegen. Dazu gehört das feste Vertrauen auf unseren großen Alliierten dort oben, der unserer gerechten Sache zum Siege verhelfen wird. Wir wissen es aus unserer Kinderzeit, und als Erwachsene haben wir es beim Studium der Geschichte gelernt, daß Gott nur mit den gläubigen Heeren ist. So war es unter dem Großen Kurfürsten, so war es unter dem Alten Fritz, so war es bei meinem Großvater, und so ist es auch unter mir. Wie Luther es aussprach: “Ein Mann mit Gott ist immer die Majorität”. Einen Vorteil haben wir gegenüber unseren Feinden: Sie haben keine Parole, sie wissen nicht, wofür sie kämpfen, für wen sie sich totschießen lassen. Sie tragen den schweren Tornister des bösen Gewissens, ein friedliebendes Volk überfallen zu haben. Wir aber ziehen gegen den Feind mit dem Sturmgepäck des leichten Gewissens”⁵⁵.

Apparently in this symbiosis of nation, people and religion, nobody was able to hear the critical and reminding sounds of religion, especially of the reformer Martin Luther. Indeed, for instance the professor of theology at the University of Rostock Wilhelm Walther⁵⁶ examines the theology of the

⁵² **Ein feste Burg.** Predigten und Reden aus eherner Zeit. Zum Besten der Nationalstiftung für die Hinterbliebenen der im Kriege Gefallenen. Bd. 1. Hrsg. Bruno Doehring. Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1914, S. 14f.

⁵³ **Wolfgang Huber.** Kirche und Öffentlichkeit, Stuttgart: Chr. Kaiser, 1973, S. 141f.

⁵⁴ From the “Danziger Zeitung” of March 5, 1915. It was a stenographic reported speech, which the Kaiser held after a Field-service.

⁵⁵ **Reden des Kaisers.** Ansprachen, Predigten und Trinksprüche Wilhelms II. Hrsg. Ernst Johann. München: dtv, 1966, S. 128.

⁵⁶ **Wilhelm Walther.** Deutschlands Schwert durch Luther geweiht. Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1915⁴.

reformer but he does not succeed in accepting the seriousness of his criteria when he argues: ““Es kann nicht der leiseste Zweifel darüber bestehen, daß als Mittel zum Siege in dem wirtschaftlichen Wettbewerb unter den Völkern die Entfacherung eines unermeßliche Ströme von Menschenblut fordernden und himmelhohe Berge von Jammer und Elend auftürmenden Krieges absolute Sünde ist. Und diese furchtbare Schuld haben unsere Feinde auf sich geladen ... also unseren Feinden gegenüber dürfen wir ein ruhiges Gewissen haben: Unsere Sache ist gerecht. Darum, wie einst Luther schrieb..., so können wir auch sagen: “So nun unser Gewissen in solchem Fall unschuldig, rein und sicher ist, so laß fröhlich hergehen und aufs ärgste geraten, wie es Gottes Zorn verhängen will ...”⁵⁷.

7. Overcoming the National by International Treaties?

If the 19th century stands out as the age of the development of the nation state on the one hand, then on the other, it is also the age in which the vision of a pact or system of pacts to include all nations became increasingly popular. Hope grew that such an international association would abolish all bellicism and all military actions of the nation states against each other.

However, such visions that culminated in the founding of the League of Nations and the United Nations did not grow without historical references. Indeed, the disintegration of the “corpus christianum” in the time of the reformation had set the starting point for the development of sovereign principalities, founding their perfection in the setting of the nation state in the 19th century. But there never was a total isolation of nations or a demolishing of the intellectual, spiritual or economic discourse. And the idea of a secular state of the world, of a world government and one world society was sufficiently painted in the work of Dante “De Monarchia” (1310) or even in the Visions of Abbé des Saint-Pierre⁵⁸ or in the popular essay of Kant “Vom ewigen Frieden”.

Helmut Thielicke, however, criticizes such projects of dissolving the national into an international world order. He sees it as an attempt to cancel the “particular character of sovereignty”, which followed out of the “Babylonian judgment” and “to make undone a part of the history of God with mankind” looking respectively at the unity of the coming kingdom of God to override

⁵⁷ **Walther** 1915, S. 27.

⁵⁸ **Ernst-Otto Czempel**. Frühe Projekte internationaler Friedenssicherung. – Die Blauhelme. Im Einsatz für den Frieden. Hrsg. Ernst Koch. Frankfurt am Main/Bonn: Report-Verlag, 1991, S. 24–32.

“a part of the history of God with mankind” and thus to try to “overcome the sin of hybris with a new sin of hybris”⁵⁹.

There is a contrast to the Roman Catholic tradition where the aspect of a “global peace order” never felt strange due to worldwide papal imperial claims. But out of his reformatory concept, Thielicke argues that the Babylonian “guilt-fate”, which he realises is in the background of the nationally divided world, is not overcome by “good works” in the institutional area, as for example, by the implementation of international unions and associations⁶⁰.

However, Thielicke would have been misunderstood in discrediting the contribution that international associations helped to make in restraining evil power. But he intends to reduce the high expectations of the peace movement of the 19th century of internationalism as an adequate and realistic measure in this imperfect world and to keep them away “vor schwärmerischen Exzessen”⁶¹.

It was because of the overemphasis of national sovereign interests rather than such sober theological arguments that an effective realisation of such an idea of a League of Nations took place, although not until after the First World War⁶². Corresponding to the fourteen-point-plan, the crucial declaration of the allied objectives of war⁶³, of the American President Woodrow Wilson⁶⁴, the League of Nations was founded in Paris on 28 June 1919.

This new but euro-centred League represented the insight that had been gathered during the First World War, which is that there must be a tight organisation of the nations to reduce the aggression of the nation states against each other and to protect peace in the world. The covenant of the League of Nations was inserted as Part I Article 1–26 in the Versailles peace treaty of 28 June 1919, which was forced upon the German Empire.

But against some popular euphemistic evaluation of the history of its founding⁶⁵, this fact particularly demonstrates how difficult it must have been to understand the League of Nations, dominated by Great Britain and

⁵⁹ **Helmut Thielicke**. *Theologische Ethik*, Bd. II/2. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Siebeck), 1966², S. 541f.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ **Thielicke** 1966, S. 543.

⁶² **Eva Senghaas-Knobloch**. *Frieden durch Integration und Assoziation. Literaturbericht und Problemstudien*. Stuttgart: Klett, 1969, S. 26.

⁶³ **Paul Barandon** Art. *Völkerbund*. – *Wörterbuch des Völkerrechts*, Bd. 3. Hrsg. Hans-Jürgen Schlochauer. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1962, S. 598.

⁶⁴ Compare the last of the fourteen points from Wilsons speech to the Congress, January 8, 1918. – **Fontes Historiae Iuris Gentium**. *Quellen zur Geschichte des Völkerrechts 1812–1945*, Bd. 3/1. Hrsg. Wilhelm G. Grewe. Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 1992, S. 673.

⁶⁵ **Czempiel** 1991, S. 28.

France, as not being a coalition of the World War I winner nations at the expense of the defeated nations.

Now, the League of Nations should guarantee the territorial integrity and the political sovereignty of its members. However, a clearly defined mechanism of sanctions against aggressors was missing⁶⁶. That was consequential in so far as the League of Nations should not abolish the national states and their sovereignty. And if up to then, a characteristic of a sovereign national state was the free right of warfare, the covenant of the League of Nations could not contain a fundamental ostracising of military violence of one nation against another. Article 11 clearly states: “Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations.”⁶⁷

However, a total renunciation of the free right of warfare as an expression of national sovereignty was, for the first time, fixed in the Briand-Kellogg Pact of 1928. There it says: “The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.” (Art. I) Furthermore, you can read: “The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means” (Art. II)⁶⁸.

The renunciation of the free right of warfare actually demanded a search for a new expression of national sovereignty. But this was apparently prevented by the rapid approach of the Second World War.

After the war, this specific question arose again and was involved anew in the old polarity of “Staatsnation” and “Kulturnation”.

Existing in a “Staatsnation”, especially in France, the connection of the nation to people and religion was intentionally refuted. In Western Germany, however, the reconstruction of state and society commenced with the close cooperation of the state and church. That was understood as one of the lessons Germany had learnt from history. For the reconstruction of a nation

⁶⁶ **Christian Tomuschat.** Art. Völkerbund. – Evangelisches Staatslexikon, Bd. 2. Hrsg. Roman Herzog. Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1987³, S. 3871.

⁶⁷ **The Covenant of the League of Nations.** – The Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. Yale Law School, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art11>, (March 2006)

⁶⁸ **Kellogg-Briand Pact 1928.** – The Avalon Project. <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/kbpact.htm>>, (March 2006)

constituted in a so called “wertneutralen Ordnung”⁶⁹ there seemed to be, at least for Germany, no further chance as it was spellbound by the evil experience of World War II. Such a “wertneutrale” nation, which should have been created by the Weimar constitution of 1919, did not possess the fundamental values to defend itself against ideological conquests from the inside, as is evidenced by Nazism and its resulting confusion.

8. The Confusions of Nazism in Germany

There is no need to answer the question, whether German Nazism could or could not have been recognized as wrong and confusing from the start. However, it must be emphasised that Nazism’s programme of connecting the nation, the people and the religion was attractive for many Christians. The “Nationalsozialistische Partei” pretended at first to stand for a “positives Christentum”⁷⁰. And from the view of the Christian confessions, there were several reasons to agree to the Governmental Declaration of Adolf Hitler on the 23 March 1933. Hitler said: “Die nationale Regierung wird in Schule und Erziehung den christlichen Konfessionen den ihnen zukommenden Einfluß einräumen und sicherstellen. Ihre Sorge gilt dem aufrichtigen Zusammenleben zwischen Kirche und Staat. Der Kampf gegen eine materialistische Weltauffassung und für die Herstellung einer wirklichen Volksgemeinschaft dient ebenso sehr dem Interesse der deutschen Nation wie denen unseres christlichen Glaubens. Unser Rechtswesen muß in erster Linie der Erhaltung dieser Volksgemeinschaft dienen ... Nicht das Individuum kann der Mittelpunkt der gesetzlichen Sorge sein, sondern das Volk! ... Das Volk lebt nicht

⁶⁹ The German Bundesverfassungsgericht emphasizes, “daß das Grundgesetz, das keine wertneutrale Ordnung sein will (BVerfGE 2, 1 [12]; 5, 85 [134 ff., 197 ff.]; 6, 32 [40 f.])” and “in seinem Grundrechtsabschnitt auch eine objektive Wertordnung aufgerichtet hat”. Cf. **Das Bundesverfassungsgericht**. Entscheidungen. <<http://www.bverfg.de/cgi-bin/link.pl?entscheidungen>>, (Januar 2008)

⁷⁰ In the 19th century that meant being true to bible and confession. But that was never intended in the programme of the NSDAP. That ist to recognize by the following restriction: "soweit es (das positive Christentum) nicht dem Sittlichkeits- und Moralgefühl der germanischen Rasse widerspricht". This restriction of the Christian position of the party at first only should be valid for faith-communities outside both great churches. But later that referred to those too. See the complaints about this development in the “Denkschrift der 2. Vorläufigen Kirchenleitung an den Führer und Reichskanzler“ in spring 1936, see: **Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland**. Jg. 60–71, 1933–1944. Hrsg. Joachim Beckmann. Gütersloh: R. Bertelsmann, 1976², S. 133f. Compare too: **Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz**. Nationalsozialismus und Kirchen. Religionspolitik von Partei und Staat bis 1935. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1974, S. 40ff. and S. 53f.

für die Wirtschaft, und die Wirtschaft existiert nicht für das Kapital, sondern das Kapital dient der Wirtschaft und die Wirtschaft dem Volk.”⁷¹

And besides, several religious leaders also observed the success of Hitler’s movement in mobilising religious fundamentals of reality. All of a sudden for the churches, there seemed to grow some hope of the re-Christianisation of society⁷².

It was already very late when many representatives of the church recognised that this hope was deceptive. After all, the German nation was responsible for many of the horrors during World War II and for the horror of killing more than half of the European inhabitants of Jewish origin. That seemed to be the final destruction of all national consciousness and patriotism in Germany.

The time following 1945 and after confessing their own guilt in the “Stuttgarter Schuldbekentnis”⁷³, theologians and the church supported the attempt of politicians of the young German federal republic, with great engagement, to bear the national guilt and responsibility or to mitigate it as well as to act cautiously with the still open wounds and anxiousness of former enemies or victims.

Close to the post-war history of the newly formed western part of Germany was the membership of the Federal Republic to the western treaty system and to the European unification process. To do without or to give up some parts of national authority has been accepted as a counter gift for regained sovereignty. In contrast, it was understood as a chance – if it should be true that nationalism or national authority is an “überholtes und zu überholendes Phänomen gesellschaftlicher Selbstverständigung und politischer Gestaltung”⁷⁴.

However, after the rejection of the European Constitution by important European nations, a process of rethinking had started. Possibly, it is correct that the European Constitution, which is almost concreted as a European “Staatsnation” and has primarily an economic orientation, still is felt insufficient, by the European people. Thus, the demand can be heard quite often

⁷¹ Still out of the Governmental Declaration from the March 23, 1933, see: **Reden des Führers**. Politik und Propaganda Adolf Hitlers 1922–1945. Hrsg. Erhard Klöss. München: dtv, 1967, S. 99f.

⁷² **Kurt Nowak**. Protestantismus und Weimarer Republik. Politische Wegmarken in der evangelischen Kirche 1918–1932. – Die Weimarer Republik 1918–1933. Politik. Wirtschaft. Gesellschaft. Hrsg. Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1987, S. 235ff.

⁷³ From: **Verordnungs- und Nachrichtenblatt**. Amtliches Organ der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Nr. 1, Januar 1946, citato loco: **Die Schuld der Kirche**. Hrsg. Martin Greschat. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1982, S. 102.

⁷⁴ **Track** 1999, S. 245.

that Europe needs “a soul” since presently the former balance of politics, science, religion and the arts is broken. It is also deplorable that an interdisciplinary discussion, in which ethics and morals matter, does not take place⁷⁵. This way all of a sudden, ideas are emerging, which are closely connected to the traditional concept of the “Kulturnation”.

But if nowadays the concept of the “Kulturnation” should again be actualised in the European context, some fundamental theological considerations are inevitable.

9. The Nation is no “Order of Creation”

All too apparently, in the more recent history of the church and theology, acceptable theological borders were violated as the nation and people were raised up from the worldly, temporary and vanishing and were put very near to the kingdom of God⁷⁶. And one of the theological instruments to manage this border passing was to award the nation or people the dignity of an “Order of Creation”. Mainly, Paul Althaus is responsible for this concept, for he can say, for example: “Das christlich-sittliche Denken erkennt in der völkischen Gliederung der Menschheit und in der Verbundenheit unseres Lebens mit dem Vaterlande Gottes Schöpfungsordnungen, daher auch in der Vaterlandsliebe Gottes Wille und Gabe ... Die Vaterlandsliebe empfängt, über die bloße Triebhaftigkeit hinaus, die Würde und den Ernst eines göttlichen Gebotes.”⁷⁷

He is blamed for having applied the category of the “Order of Creation” to the people such that it became the “Norm des Staates”. Thus, he had implanted a new impulse into political ethics, which was unknown to Lutheran Theology until then⁷⁸. For setting people as the highest norm of a state, there must be a rather uncertain instance to appeal to, which is not able to find a governmental order or to bear it⁷⁹.

⁷⁵ **Carola Kaps**. Europa braucht eine Seele. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 30.1.2006, S. 12.

⁷⁶ **Heinrich Assel**. Der andere Aufbruch. Die Lutherrenaissance – Ursprünge, Aporien und Wege: Karl Holl, Emanuel Hirsch, Rudolf Hermann (1910–1935). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994, S. 252.

⁷⁷ **Paul Althaus**. Art. Vaterland. – Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft. Hrsg. Hermann Gunkel. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Siebeck), 1926ff², S. 1442.

⁷⁸ **Theodor Dieter**. Das Volk als Schöpfungsordnung bei Paul Althaus. – **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 194.

⁷⁹ **Dieter** 1999, S. 195.

But especially after Paul Althaus and Werner Elert had announced Hitler as ““frommen und getreuen Oberherrn”⁸⁰ in their “Ansbacher Ratschlag” zu der Barmer “Theologischen Erklärung”⁸¹, Lutheran theology was discredited overall and not only from the view of people and nation and the mixture of nationalism and religion⁸¹. And that happened although Lutheran theology had the so-called “doctrine of the two kingdoms” as the crucial instrument for differentiation⁸² in its hands until then⁸³.

However, the current biblical criticism of a concept of an “Order of Creation” and even on people and nation should have been familiar: For in the bible, where there is no differentiation between people and nation⁸⁴ there is a concentration on the people of God. And that is called in Hebrew אָמ (am) and in Greek λαός (laos) in contrast to the people of heathens, which are called in Hebrew גּוֹיִם (gojim) and in Greek εἶθνος (ethnos).

And in later Christian communities, the differentiation of cultural and ethnical origins became irrelevant since they all became the “one in Jesus Christ” and one people of God by baptism⁸⁵.

Thus, in some aspects, Christians are cosmopolitans (cpr. Gal 3,28) and worldly without a home because they have their eternal home in the Kingdom of God. And it is true that the Kingdom of God is and must remain beyond this reality, and is not to be tightly joined to such worldly and vanishing categories as people, nation, state or government. Evidently, the national exists under the experience of being temporary and being broken and being a sinner as does economy, marriage, and family and thus, cannot demand direct obedience of faith.

Realising this, Edelmann and Hasselmann can correctly resume: “Weder wird... die Pluralität der Völker im Schöpfungswillen Gottes begründet, noch gar wird deren Wahrung als göttlicher Auftrag herausgestellt... Kurz: Die Rede von Völkern und Nationen als Schöpfungsordnungen hat im biblischen Zeugnis keinen Grund”⁸⁶.

⁸⁰ **Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung**. Leipzig: Dörffling & Francke, 1934, S. 584–586.

⁸¹ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 59.

⁸² **Rieske-Braun** 1999, S. 242f. But compare too **Track** 1999, 265ff., who criticises that orders historical are more variable than Luther thought. And he points out the dimension of the quality of the orders.

⁸³ Based on this experience, later for example in 1990 in Curitiba the resolution of the Lutheran World Federation to the Baltic States was passed through without explanation, as there was the fear of mixing up nationalism and religion. **Curitiba** 1990. Offizieller Bericht der Achten Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes. LWB-Report Nr. 28/9. Genf, S. 153.

⁸⁴ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 66ff.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, S. 76ff.

⁸⁶ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 79f.

10. To the Theological Right of Nation and People as Expression of Real Human Moulding

However, a nation can be understood by its elementary functions alone as a community of similar historical experience, as a community of similar emancipation, as a community of similar political responsibility and as a community of similar socialization⁸⁷. That is not grown out of theological insights but from of a functional understanding of a nation⁸⁸, which is enriched by knowledge of the human sciences⁸⁹. From this point of view, the nation would be a phenomenon, that “dem Glauben und der Theologie vorgegeben ist und nicht aus ihnen begründet werden kann”⁹⁰.

If theology would be reluctant concerning such a functional understanding of a nation and would like to ignore it, it would be a crucial mistake. For in this case, in contrast to the message of Barmen II in the church struggle from 1933 to 1945, theology would run the risk of accepting something like a new constitution of an ethical autonomous legality, a so called and labeled “Eigengesetzlichkeit”.

Therefore, theological reflections about nation and people are needed, in any case, to prevent, “Bereiche unseres Lebens ..., “in denen wir nicht Jesus Christus, sondern anderen Herren zu eigen wären, Bereiche, in denen wir nicht der Rechtfertigung und Heiligung durch ihn bedürften”⁹¹. As it was formulated in the “Barmer Theologische Erklärung” from 1934.

Without missing the point that the nation belongs to a certain theological point of view ““in den “Bereich” des weltlichen Regiments Gottes”, i.e., “in den Bereich des Vorletzten”, where they have “ihr Recht und ihre Würde” and where at the same time they experience “ihre Relativität und Begrenzung”⁹², it must be allowed to ladle from other fountains of theological work: Why should it be inadequate to have a look on the fact of how intensely Christianity tries to protect all the several species and the variety of the species beyond the plants and the animals? That it should be a special character of the will of the good God to fulfill this creation⁹³. Who was able to

⁸⁷ Track 1999, S. 265ff.

⁸⁸ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 21.109.

⁸⁹ Ibid., S. 88.

⁹⁰ Ibid., S. 29.

⁹¹ **Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung**. Einführung und Dokumentation. Mit einem Geleitwort von E. Lohse. Hrsg. Alfred Burgsmüller, Rudolf Weth. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984³, S. 35.

⁹² Track 1999, S. 264.

⁹³ **Gott ist ein Freund des Lebens**. Herausforderungen und Aufgaben beim Schutz des Lebens. Hrsg. Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland/ Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999, S. 38.

explain whether Christianity would not be willing to accept a similar appreciation and acknowledgement of the several species of mankind and people, as a lot of Christians like to do, concerning the developing countries?⁹⁴

Perhaps, the first article of our confession of faith, the often criticized sentence of Paul Althaus, might be read soberly and without the wrong hypostasising: “In dem Glauben, dass mich Gott geschaffen hat, erkenne ich mein Volk als Gottes Schöpfung” and “In der Vielheit und Verschiedenheit der Völker sehen wir die Fülle des Schöpfers. Die eigene Art jedes Volkes ist uns als ein besonderer Schöpfergedanke Gottes heilig”. And in any case he knows to confirm: “Es ist sterbliches Leben”⁹⁵.

Perhaps the second article of our confession of faith might be accepted, too. Jesus Christ is truly a human and eternal God who took upon Him man's nature. And how then could the human beings following Christ live without world, without location, without body, without language or without history?

And although one can praise the Lord for a healthy body, he must be allowed to praise the Lord for the godly gift to be anchored and rooted in people and in a nation. Consequently, as an answer to the gift of God, there must be the duty to exercise and to cultivate this real worldly moulding of man as well as his body. The misuse of a worthy gift of God in past times may have but must not prohibit the correct use at present and in the future.

In that way, respect, esteem and certainly gratitude and joy of the variety of the creating thoughts of God the creator is due⁹⁶ to one's people and to one's nation and if necessary to a European nation, as penultimate, that is simply as an “von Gott zugewiesener Raum für den aus Glauben entspringenden Gehorsam gegenüber dem Willen Gottes”⁹⁷.

This rather sober unfolding of the religious estimation of one's people and one's nation might be curious to some modern German citizens, who want to be proud of their nation, as to other Europeans, who still remember lots of evil and pain caused by nationalism and Nazism. Perhaps, it would help not to start the theological refurbishing of national identity with the

There is said: “... geschützt werden sollen die Lebensmöglichkeiten für die notwendige Vielfalt von Lebenwesen”. **Gottes Gaben – Unsere Aufgabe.** Die Erklärung von Stuttgart. Forum „Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung“ der Arbeitsgemeinschaft christlicher Kirchen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Berlin/West) e.V. EKD-Texte 27. Hrsg. Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland. Hannover, 1989, Nr. 4.35 Arten- und Tierschutz: “Eine wichtige Aufgabe der Bewahrung der Schöpfung ist der Artenschutz. Die Vielfalt der Schöpfung ist ein Abglanz der Herrlichkeit Gottes, und sie ist unbedingte Voraussetzung für die globale ökologische Stabilität.”

⁹⁴ **Track** 1999, S. 246.

⁹⁵ **Paul Althaus.** Grundriß der Ethik. Gütersloh: R. Bertelsmann, 1953², S. 124.

⁹⁶ **Nation im Widerspruch** 1999, S. 109.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, S. 87.

sentence “I am a German”⁹⁸. Certainly quite a few things were easier and could also ladle out of the fountain of Lutheran theology, if one could start the reflections with the sentence: “I am a Dane” or “I am Swede” or “I am an Estonian”.

For some time ago, these or other adjacent peoples to Germany were evidently not willing to accept German occupation in the interest of a modern internationalization.

And they found resistance against the German attacks on their own nation not only because of the NS-arbitrariness but also because they esteemed their national idiosyncrasy as worthy and precious. Until now, some Scandinavians who are opposed to the European Union are only to be understood from this strong estimation of their national peculiarity.

Perhaps this attitude to admit other peoples their national idiosyncrasy as a godly gift, even in the framework of the European Union, marks the important border that separates theologically justified national feelings from nationalism that is exaggerated and unjustifiable.

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