
Mato Zovkić

Efforts of Faith Communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina in Educating their Congregations for Peace

Summary

Mato Zovkic, katholischer Theologieprofessor aus Sarajewo, gibt einen differenzierten Überblick über die ambivalente Rolle, die die Religionsgemeinschaften im Zusammenhang mit dem Krieg im ehemaligen Jugoslawien und im Verständigungs- und Versöhnungsprozess danach gespielt haben. Er erläutert das Problem der Überidentifikation bestimmter Teile des Klerus mit der eigenen Ethnie, Phänomene wechselseitiger konfessioneller Abschottung in der Erziehung, aber auch das Eintreten mutiger religiös bestimmter Persönlichkeiten und Gruppen, nicht zuletzt des von *Religions for Peace* (WCRP) initiierten Interreligiösen Rates (mit muslimischen, serbisch orthodoxen, katholischen und jüdischen Vertretern) für die Konfliktminderung und im Versöhnungsprozess. Im Blick auf die muslimische Gemeinschaft kann er deren mutiges Handeln in den Verständigungsaufgaben unter dem Groß-Mufti Dr. Mustafa Ceric hervorheben, das in Spannung steht zu Versuchen saudiarabischer Einflussnahme durch Moscheebau und ideologische Infiltration. Dabei weist gerade das muslimische Erbe Traditionen auf, die einen genuin europäischen Islam inspirieren können. Besonders schwierig scheint, vor allem auf serbisch orthodoxer Seite, der Umgang mit der eigenen Schuldgeschichte. Zovkić kann schließlich aber auch zeigen, wie in neuen einflussreichen Publikationen (David Steele, Stephen R. Goodwin) die friedensstiftende Kraft der Religionen überzeugend zur Geltung gebracht wird und die Vision eines fruchtbaren Zusammenlebens in einer multiethnischen und –kulturellen Gesellschaft konkret werden kann.

In his book on the role of religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH) during the 1991-1995 war to establish ethnic territories after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenian sociologist Mitja Velikonja accurately says that this was not a war of religions, but that the religious factor was influential. Somewhat inaccurately he points out “the relatively fictional secularization” that took place during socialist regime, and regrets that Catholic Croats were “the least secularized of all nations in the former Yugoslavia”. He sympathizes with Bosnian Muslims whose tragedy in the last war “lies in the fact that they were too Muslim for the West and not Muslim enough for the Islamic world”. He further identifies Catholicism, Islam and Orthodoxy as “the three main religions were voluntarily involved in the war, but in different ways and to different degrees”. While citing different meetings of religious leaders from all three religious communities before, during, and after the war, he nevertheless blames them for not educating their

subordinates for reconciliation. He concludes that “national and religious pluralism remains a necessity, not merely an opportunity” and that “the solution will not be found ... in ignoring or overstating the significance of the religious factor”¹. Leaders and ministers of faith communities in BH reject criticism of left-minded politicians and sociologists who claim that they have sided with ethnic interests and needs of their respective communities in the recent war and in the post-war restoration process. At the same time, they are aware that the November 1995 Dayton Accords have produced only a cease-fire, not a stable and just peace. Religious leaders believe that they can and should contribute towards peace education and building up a pluralistic civil society.

As a Catholic theologian and believing citizen of multi-ethnic and multi-religious BH, I would like to depict how faith communities in my country are taking small steps in simple ways towards educating their congregations for peace. I might remind my audience that BH is a small country where Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam and Judaism have been meeting for centuries. According to 1991 census, BH had 4,377,077 inhabitants. About 44% declared themselves as Bošnjaks-Muslims, 31% as Serbs-Orthodox and about 17% as Croats-Catholics. Muslims in our country are not Turkish or Arab immigrants, but descendants of Slavs who accepted Islam during the Ottoman rule (1463-1878), and are now proud of their religious identity that emphasizes with equal importance being both Muslim and European.

Some institutional tasks and possibilities

1. Confessional religious instruction in public schools

In 1991, immediately after the first democratic elections in BH and before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic religious leaders asked the Presidency of BH to mediate with education authorities and school directors to inaugurate confessional religious instruction in public schools. The permission now has been granted, and in most schools where there is sufficient numbers of students, Muslim teachers of religion teach Muslim children their faith, Orthodox teachers teach their students and Catholic teachers teach Catholic students. There are about one thousand Jews in BH, but they do not have trained teachers of their faith, and their children are dependent exclusively on the example and knowledge of their parents.

Catholic teachers of religion follow the plan, program and manuals of the Croatian Bishops Conference, because 98% of Catholics in BH are ethnic Croats. Orthodox teachers of religion use the program and manuals prepared by Serbian Orthodox theologians. In accordance with the guidelines of their religious leaders, Muslim experts in

¹ M. Velikonja: *Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 189, 253, 262, 269, 285, 294.

religious pedagogy, have written new manuals for their students taking eight years of elementary school. In the manuals published during the war there were some illustrations and texts distorting the history, the culture and identity of ethno-religious “others”. An integral part of post-war renewal is the effort to eliminate hate speech from media and textbooks. Along this line, religious educators agreed to revise each others’ manuals so that the presentation of the faith of “others” might be fairly and accurately portrayed. I have seen the first edition of the manual for Muslim children of the first grade in which they were instructed to greet all fellow students and adults with “Peace be upon you!” (*Es-selam alejkum*). In later editions they are asked to greet only their fellow Muslims so, while others should be greeted with “Good day” (*Dobar dan*).

Religious education manuals for higher grades of elementary school or the first two grades of secondary school contain not only basic information about the faith and the feasts of the four traditional religions in BH (Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Orthodoxy) but also about other great world religions. Our religious leaders and believing parents are convinced that as taxpayers they have the right to educate their children in their faith through public school curricula. Minority religious leaders and agnostic parents are not happy about this because their children, who are offered a class in Ethics or similar subjects, feel unfairly treated by majority classmates. This is a sharply disputed question. Left-minded politicians and teachers contend that faith education should be restricted to families, churches and mosques, and are convinced that ethnic and religious differences in the curricula should be reduced to a minimum.

2. The Inter-religious Council of BH

In July 1996, Dr. William Vendley, the (then) secretary general of the *World Conference of religions for peace* (WCRP) centered in New York, visited religious leaders of BH and announced his intention to open in Sarajevo an office which would assist religious leaders and ministers with reconciliation and peace building initiatives. He opened the WCRP office in October of that year nominating a foreign person as director and employed four persons that were recommended by the four religion leaders with seats in Sarajevo. On June 9, 1997 the four leaders signed their Statement of Shared Moral Values and committed themselves to collaborate in peace education. This was the official beginning of the Inter-religious Council (IRC) of BH. The working team of the IRC produced a *Glossary of basic religious concepts* of Islam, Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Judaism. They also drafted the new Law on freedom of religion and the legal status of faith communities in BH, which in 2004 the parliament officially adopted and then promulgated. For about two years following the promulgation, a team of civil law experts and theologians offered a series of round table discussions in different towns of our country, explaining the rights and duties of civil authorities and believing citizens contained in the new law. In the meantime, and thanks to personal contacts of the Jewish religious leader, the municipality of Stari grad Sarajevo gave a suitable office to be shared by the WCRP and the IRC in the

central area of the city. Before that very needed and most welcome donation, the leaders and their collaborators used to rotate the meeting place to the premises of the presiding leader. But now a permanent secretariat could be established and maintained. It comprises a manager accepted by the leaders and four employees, one from each of traditional faith communities. In April 2005, WCRP made it possible for IRC personnel to take over the office, and in December of that year WCRP closed down its office in Sarajevo. As the delegate of the Catholic archbishop to the IRC from its inception, I regret to say that the same donors, who through their financial support from 1996 to 2005 generously enabled the WCRP and IRC to function in BH, are now reluctant to continue their help. We are especially disappointed with State, Federation and Republika Srpska authorities of BH who, when we ask for financial support, look at IRC as just one of 5000 registered NGOs in our country.

3. The Muslim official View of peace building and dialogue in BH

Besides the *Faculty of Islamic studies* (Fakultet islamskih nauka), which was inaugurated in 1977 in Sarajevo and now has about 400 students, Grand Mufti Dr. Mustafa Cerić has opened Muslim teachers' training colleges in Zenica and Bihać to educate teachers of Islam. As I mentioned, religious education manuals have been gradually prepared and approved by religious authorities to be used in public schools.

Judging by the significant number of new theological and popular books, one would say that Bosnian Muslims are interested in their faith. A 26 volume Commentary of the Qur'an has been translated from Arabic into Bosnian and published. The Muslim religious leadership approved Besim Korkut's translation of the Qur'an into Serbo-Croatian, first published in 1977. During 1991-1995 war for ethnic territories it was reprinted in a pocket size edition and distributed to thousands of Muslim refugees. Its latest and seventh edition was published in 2005. Besides Korkut's translation, which is a kind of *textus receptus* among Bosnian Muslims, four new translations have been published in last ten years. Mustafa Mlivo published his translation into Bosnian in 1994 (with notes below the text and short topic items; fourth edition in Bugojno 2004). In 1995 Professor Enes Karić, who is now dean of the Islamic Faculty in Sarajevo, published his translation with a parallel Arabic text and exegetical notes. In 2006 his translation was published in a pocket sized edition, but without the Arabic text or exegetical notes, and it is on its way to becoming the new *textus receptus* among Bosnian Muslims. In 2001 Ramo Atajić published his ten-volume translation with commentary intended for Bosnian Muslims living in European- and international-diaspora (printed by Bavaria Verlag, München). Bošnjak poet Enes Duraković published his translation in 2004 imitating the rhythmic cadence of the original. A single-volume Qur'an Commentary by Muhammed El-Gazali was translated from Arabic and published in 2003. Also a single-volume Qur'an commentary by Muhammed Asad (alias Leopold Weiss, a Westerner who converted to Islam) was translated from English and published in 2004.

In his *Declaration of European Muslims*, published in 2005, the Grand Mufti of BH, Dr. Mustafa Cerić regrets the massacres of innocent civilian populations on September 11, 2001 in New York, on March 11, 2005 in Madrid and on July 7, 2005 in London. In the same document he invites the Muslims of Europe to build Europe as the House of peace and security, and asks West Europeans to grant their Muslim fellow citizens equal rights and equal opportunities.

In the section of the Declaration addressed to the Muslims who live in Europe he summons his fellow believers thus:

Muslims who live in Europe should present Islam to the western audience as a universal *Weltanschauung*, and not as a tribal, ethnic, or national culture. The Muslims cannot expect from the Europeans to appreciate the universal message of Islam if they are constantly faced with an ethnic or national color of Islam. It is not only that the European Muslims can impress the European public by a universalism of Islam, but it also is a good place for the Muslims themselves to discover the power and beauty of the universality of Islam².

As the religious head of Bosnian Muslims, he is aware of several gigantic mosques and Muslim Centers built in recent years by Saudi Arabia. Bosnian religious authorities have nominated imams for these mosques, but humanitarian and cultural activities are funded and directed by Saudi Arabians. Some of these *Wahabi* newcomers are striving to convert Bosnian Sunni Muslims to their type of Islam, which includes intolerance towards “infidels”. Bosnian Muslim official leaders believe that young *Wahabis* cannot influence their congregations at a large scale and in the long run, but we Christians are afraid of their presence among us. Some of these are former fighters who have been welcomed by their Muslim brothers in their fight for survival, but later on they married Bosnian women, received Bosnian citizenship and are now legally residing with us. We simple citizens who have no access to the data of secret services cannot know their precise number.

At the request of their religious authorities, three professors of the Islamic Faculty in Sarajevo have prepared a draft text of *The Platform of Islamic Community in BH for Dialogue*. The first section contains basic principles. The second section deals with inter-ethnic and international relations, human rights and violence, and the third section highlights the Bosnian Muslim perspective of the 1991-1995 war in BH, and the post-war restoration of our pluralistic society. The view of the leadership of the Islamic Community is that each faith community or church should condemn and sanction its own individuals and groups who spread religious hatred, hate speech or reprehensible depictions of other people’s beliefs. Common prayers with members of different religious affiliation are unacceptable due to doctrinal and ritual discrepancies. The programs on traditional faith communities in BH should be included in the curricula of

² M. Cerić: *A Declaration of European Muslims* II,6. (English of M. Cerić).

theological faculties, and carefully selected professors should be entitled to teach theology students of other faiths about the doctrine and ethics of their own faith community. The Islamic Community supports tolerance and mutual respect of BH citizens who belong to different faith communities, with a view towards drawing nearer to those countries with high levels of security, stability and respect in a pluralistic society. The Islamic Community of BH condemns any use of violence on behalf of religion, especially on behalf of Islam:

These individuals and groups neither represent Islam nor Muslims of the world, and with their acts, besides violence on the victims, they commit violent acts against Muslims and Islam. Causes of terrorism of this kind should be identified and dealt with in the fight against terrorism. But this fight should be conducted with legal instruments³.

Muslim leaders of BH are convinced that their fellow nationals and fellow believers have suffered the greatest losses and violent acts in the recent war. Therefore, equating the guilt of each of the nations would mean an insult to thousands of innocent Muslim victims, and would reward the perpetrators of these crimes. It is their faith that gave Muslims of BH the strength to behave in a more humane way than others. In the war 832 mosques were destroyed and 13% of the imams killed.

In summoning their fellow believers to a constructive conduct towards followers of other religions, *The Platform* reminds them of the Qur'an, citing:

“Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of your religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice” (60:8).

A precondition for social restoration is prosecution of war criminals and the return of exiles to their places of origin:

Only a just punishment of criminals can interrupt the vicious cycle of evil that returns with a rhythm of several decades. For the sake of the future, crimes perpetrated in the past must be punished. Prayers and verbal excuses are no replacement for justice⁴.

Reconciliation and forgiveness should not exclude the right to remember. Therefore, Muslims of BH reject “the shameful request to erase from religious education manuals pictures of the destroyed Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka and Aladža mosque in Foča”.

There is no alternative to reconciliation and forgiveness in multicultural Bosnia, and the role of faith communities in this regard is enormous. Dialogue and coexistence are not our tactics or intellectual enjoyment, but our strategic option because we see in them the only way for our survival. Courage is necessary for reconciliation, and

³ *Platforma Islamske zajednice u BiH za dijalog*, II.

⁴ *Platforma Islamske zajednice u BiH za dijalog*, IIIc.

its first sign is refusing to deny the crimes. We regret that the genocide of Srebrenica has been denied except that the Office of High Representative has enforced a confession that it transpired. Upon the Report of the Commission for Srebrenica, an action of judicial and other organisms and institutions of the Republika Srpska and of BH should follow⁵.

In its concluding section The Platform regrets “aggressive secularistic statements” of some politicians and public media against the presence of faith communities in the public life of BH society, and shares the commitment of other religious leaders to moral and spiritual values in society. This document is offered to Muslims and other well-intended citizens for debate before its official promulgation, but it contains standard teachings of Muslim religious leaders and thinkers in BH.

4. *The Serbian Orthodox Church*

in BH is organized in five eparchies: Trebinje, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banjaluka and Bihać. Their Faculty of Theology, opened by Metropolitan Nikolaj of the Dabar-Bosnia Eparchy (whose seat is in Sarajevo) at Foča in 1994, is now part of the State University of Eastern Sarajevo. It educates candidates to the priesthood and lay theologians who would like to be teachers of the Orthodox faith in public schools. The territory of Trebinje, Sarajevo and Bihać eparchies partly extend into the Federation where Muslims or Catholics are now the majority populations, after the ethnic cleansing that took place during the war. The eparchies of Tuzla and Banjaluka are completely on the territory of Republika Srpska from which Catholics and Muslims were driven out, and their return so far has taken place only in symbolic numbers. I have noticed that Orthodox bishops and priests of the Trebinje, Sarajevo and Bihać eparchies are more open for inter-religious and ecumenical meetings, aware that they need peace and tolerance while performing their ministry, but also ready to educate their fellow believers for peace and tolerance.

Orthodox bishops met seven times with their Catholic colleagues after the war, but meetings of Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim religious leaders together at one place, have not yet taken place. Although nothing has been said publicly, I surmise that the main problem is the absence of any (self-) critical evaluation of the recent war or humble admission that one’s fellow believers have committed crimes. Muslims and Catholics believe the conflict to be a war of aggression, but Orthodox clergy and most of their believers state that Serbs could not be aggressors in their own country, and that “others” have committed cruel crimes on their innocent civilians. Recalling the Srebrenica massacre, Muslims especially expect Orthodox clergy to confess and repent of crimes perpetrated by their fellow Serbs and Orthodox. We also disagree about what kind of state we should have in order to feel safe in our ethnic and religious identities,

⁵ *Ibidem.*

taking care of common needs and respecting our diversities. As the majority population, Muslims would like a state with a strong central government, while Orthodox and Catholics insist on protecting and cherishing their ethnic and religious identities in such a state.

5. *The Catholic Church in BH*

is organized in four dioceses: Trebinje, Mostar, Sarajevo and Banjaluka. Since December 1995 its bishops form the National Conference of Bishops. Two Theological Seminaries operate in Sarajevo, one inter-diocesan, the other Franciscan. Candidates to priesthood and lay-persons alike undertake studies in these seminaries. Besides offering education to their students, each of these seminaries organizes conferences on historical, cultural, ethical, and inter-religious questions.

Catholic bishops of BH in their Pastoral letter of December 5, 1995 expressed their bitter disappointment with the Dayton peace accords because it legalized the fruits of the aggression in the territory of the Republika Srpska⁶. This did not prevent them from summoning their fellow believers in their Letter of January 25, 1996 to be peace makers by fostering forgiveness and reconciliation, envisioning a common future with fellow citizens of other religious affiliations⁷. Within the Bishops Conference of BH there is The Council for relations with other religions, culture and ecumenical contacts. Bishop Sudar moderates the Council, and is also moderator of Catholic schools in the Sarajevo Archdiocese with more than 4,500 students.

6. *Jewish sources*

According to Jewish sources in Sarajevo there are about 1000 ethnic and religious Jews in BH who live in small communities in Mostar, Sarajevo, Doboj and Banjaluka. Their community is so small in number that they cannot afford to employ a rabbi who would permanently stay with them and educate them in their own faith. We Christian theologians along with our Muslim colleagues miss a Jewish representative who would share with us our social environment and reflect with us from his faith background. As a tiny minority that cannot “endanger” the “big brothers”, Jews of BH are trusted by Muslims and Christians when they speak of our country as a state where we all need peace, justice and stability. In contrast to Bošnjaks, Croats and Serbs who insist on language differences, Jews of BH have no problems with the language, which foreign representatives simply call “local”, bearing in mind our sensitivity to the issue.

⁶ English translation, entitled “The Peace Accords contain some odd contradictions and fatal insecurities”, in *Pastoral Letters, Statements and Appeals of the Catholic Bishops of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1990-1997*, 78-87.

⁷ English translation, entitled “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”, *Pastoral Letters...*, 88-105.

7. Weekly worship services

Weekly worship services in the pre-war, war and immediate post-war periods were often misused to distort the image of “others” as a possible danger to “ours”. Without prophetic courage, which enables us to point at “ours” who have committed concrete crimes on innocent civilians, some religious ministers used hate language and constructed a caricature of other people’s faith. I know dozens of pamphlets and books translated mostly from Arabic in the period 1994-2001 in which Islam is praised as perfect, last, and therefore the best of great world religions, while Jesus of the New Testament or present day Christians are ridiculed. Most of these books were not published by El-Kalem in Sarajevo, the official publishing house of the Muslim community in BH. But nevertheless, they did hurt and still hurt. The Catholic archbishop of Sarajevo, Cardinal Vinko Puljić, in his remarks about such publications, keeps saying that we believing individuals and communities of BH should not explain or defend our faith by attacking or deriding the faith of our neighbours.

I do not know of any scientific research on the sermons in mosques and churches after the fall of communism in our country, but I am firmly convinced that present day religious leaders in BH would not allow in the long term their imams and priests to preach hate language or distort the faith of others in their public proceedings. Weekly worship service is a unique event in our life where we come together as free and believing persons to deepen our friendship with God and with our respective fellow believers. At these liturgical gatherings we all pray, we listen to the Word of God, and we priests and imams preach more or less regularly. This is the unique event and place where we educate our fellow believers in our inherited faith and help them to share our country, our common values and needs with citizens of other beliefs and convictions.

What a chance, what a challenge, what an opportunity!

God’s Commandments as shared ethical values and obligations

Great religions ordinarily extend beyond political borders and ethnic communities, but for centuries in BH ethnic and religious identities have coincided. This is what causes difficulties for leaders of faith communities who are expected by their flock to primarily take care of needs and interests of their ethnic community while performing their ministry. In educating their congregations for peace, they sometimes need prophetic insight and courage to resist populism and pressure of daily politics.

Besides M. Velikonja and other left minded sociologists who point out that the religious factor in pluralistic societies should not be ignored, the number of politicians, social workers and scholars who welcome positive impact of spiritual and ethical values is increasing⁸. An American peace activist of reformed inspiration, David Steele, organized

⁸ I personally was enriched by some of these authors and books, like R. Barot (ed): *Religion and Ethnicity: Minorities and Social Change in the Metropolis* (1993); D. Johnston-C. Sampson (ed):

seminars of reconciliation in Croatia and BH in the mid-nineties looking for courageous individual believers who would cross ethnic and religious boundaries spreading mutual trust after the cruel conflict. He sharply rebukes Orthodox and Catholic bishops in our country for having sided during the war with ethnic interests of their fellow Serbs and fellow Croats. He did not try to collaborate with official leaders of faith communities, but worked with open-minded individual believers. Among Catholics in Bosnia he found Franciscans most open for Muslims and other fellow citizens. His seminar alumni have played the advocacy role, lobbying for refugee return, an end to corruption, and for development of an irrigation system, but the predominant role was peace education, helping to break down the stereotypes and working on cooperative projects. He concludes: "People of faith often bring a depth of hope and inspiration that can energize an otherwise stagnant process. When freed from the nationalistic bondage that is all too often perpetuated within their own institutions, they can inspire politicians and bureaucrats to think 'outside the box' in resolving intractable differences"⁹.

Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish leaders in BH, most of the ministers and ordinary believers do accept European standards of free faith communities in a democratic state, embodied in the concept of the separation of religion and state. But they reject an aggressive secularism that would like to treat religion as a strictly private affair of individual citizens. This would be a new form of a communist concept of freedom of religions that actually meant only a freedom of a cult. We would like to be actively present in our pluralistic society, not to impose our beliefs. We are convinced that our loyalty to God enables us to remain open to our fellow humans. God's commandments are religious sanction of ethical values and obligations. Biblical scholars point out that the Decalogue is a document of covenant: God is Creator and Liberator who brought his people out of slavery in Egypt promising his merciful protection and requesting responsible conduct in one's family and society. The historical introduction to the Decalogue in Exodus 20:2, which states, "I the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" is a kind of summary of all that will follow. Since he defeated their former lord and master, he and no other deity is their God. The commandments within the context of the Old Testament are the key demands of Israel's relationship with God

Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft (1994); Th. Tschuy: *Ethnic Conflict and Religion* (1997); L. S. Rounier (ed): *Religion, Politics, and Peace* (1999); A. Mackenzie: *Faith in Diplomacy* (2002); V. Ruland: *Conscience Across Borders* (2002); D. Hollenbach: *The Global Face of Public Faith* (2003); H. Lehmann (ed): *Multireligiosität im vereinigten Europa* (2003); H. Küng-D. Senghaas (ed): *Friedenspolitik* (2003), especially the contributions of H. Küng, p. 17-69, E.-O. Czempiel, p. 122-144, and A. Hasenclever, p. 288-318; D. Johnston (ed): *Faith-Based Diplomacy* (2003).

⁹ David Steele: "Christianity in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. From Ethnic Captive to Reconciliation Agent", u D. Johnston (ed): *Faith-Based Diplomacy*, 124-177. Similarly in his contribution: "Conflict Resolution Among Religious People of Bosnia and Croatia", in Paul Mojzes (ed): *Religion and the War in Bosnia*, 246-253.

and with one another. They are limited to ten for easy teaching to children, who can count them on their fingers. God of the Covenant asks believers and all human persons to support the values that make individual and common life humane. At the same time the Decalogue code of ethics is a product of experience and human wisdom, because we are all better off if we respect the transcendental value of the human person, if we take care of elderly parents and disabled members of our society, if do not take justice into our own hands by killing or hurting those who have hurt us, if we do not abuse our own sexuality and the sexuality of other persons, if we respect one another's property, if we do not give false testimony in the court, and if we do not covet the property of our neighbors¹⁰. The Qur'an contains its own version of the Decalogue in 6,151-153 and 17,22-35. Beside proper relationship to God and to humans, the Qur'an expressly instructs Muslims to look for justice and for truth¹¹.

A recent Book on peace efforts of faith communities in BH

The book by Stephen R. Goodwin on the role of faith sodalities in peace building in BH is a result of both studying scholarly texts and of field research. In his chapter on "The limitations of Western intervention towards peace and social restoration" he submits to critical evaluation the successes and failures of post-war initiatives by the international community to restore civil society in BH. He admits with Ralph Roloff that peace-making by diplomats is limited in its capacity for social restoration on the ground, that local actors must be included, and that Western analysts overlook faith communities in their capacity of contributing towards tolerance and understanding at the local level.

The international community acting as an external force has not resolved the conflicts in BH, and military success in ending the war did not translate into established peace... Although the international community recognizes the need for a value based approach to address the human dimension, they concede this effort is beyond what an external body can provide... The realm of peace-building and restoration arguably lies beyond the secular institutions embodying a materialist worldview. The act of reconciliation is most naturally situated in the locus of the personal and relational, not the structural and institutional. Peace-building and restoration are pre-eminently human endeavors involving the moral and ethical will of individuals

¹⁰ Cf. M. Zovkić: "The Ten Commandments: religious sanction of ethical values and obligations", in S. Schreiner (ed): *Visions of a Just society*, 35-39.

¹¹ Cf. commentary of God's commandments in Qur'an by Muslim professor of theology in Sarajevo Dr. Enes Karić: "Deset zapovijedi u novijim komentarima Kur'ana" (= Ten Commandments in recent commentaries of the Qur'an), in his book *Kako tumačiti Kur'an* (= How to interpret the Qur'an), Tugra, Sarajevo 2005, 307-316. A. Houry: *Der Koran Arabisch-Deutsch, Band 6*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh 1995, 352-364. A. Houry: *Der Koran Arabisch-Deutsch, Band 9*, Gütersloh 1998, 135-146. H. Küng: *Der Islam – Geschichte, Gegenwart, Zukunft*, Piper, München 2004, 129-130 (Der gemeinsame Grundethos der drei prophetischen Religionen).

and communities alike. It is for this reason that religion – with all of its known difficulties in the Balkans - can play an integrally positive role¹².

Having interviewed 28 persons in BH of Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Reformed affiliation who are inspired by their personal faith in reconciliation and peace activities, he finds that the capacity for peace building and social restoration in religious persons and religious faith sodalities is greater than in the institutions and official leadership of the religious communities. Some of the interviewees represent so called ‘civilian diplomacy’, wherein religious persons influence both high levels of society and the masses. Since such persons or religious leaders “have access to all levels of society through formal and informal mechanisms, they are key figures for substantial peace-building and social restoration”¹³.

He concludes the chapter on views of religious students for peace-building and social restoration with this statement:

While there may be doctrinal or theological differences that are irreconcilable, their beliefs demonstrate a need for personal transformation that becomes the basis for new and peaceful encounter with others. In their expression of religious faith is found a dynamic that leads from fragmentation to wholeness in the person, in relationships and in newly formed communities. Their words and actions amply support the fundamental hypothesis that religion, expressed through personal faith, can be a source of mediation towards peace-building¹⁴.

The author laments that “on the whole, clerics in BH use the power of their position to advance nationalist causes, and ostracize those few clergy willing to reconcile with persons of other ethno-religious groups” (p. 205), but also points out that “unfettered by the constraint of preserving nationhood, individual clerics, women and young people are at liberty to contravene rigorous codes of conduct, and encounter each other in effective and meaningful ways. They are able to trespass the barriers of cultural and national identity because they consciously choose to respond less to the values and constructs of nationalists and more to what they perceive as the essential nature of humanity as created by a merciful and moral God” (p. 207). Such courageous individuals need faith sodalities, which “provide a sacred space for understanding and healing” (237). In the conclusion to his book, Goodwin points out that efforts of the international community in BH have been based on two myths: The first is that liberal democratic values and methods of operating are shared by the local population. The second is that superior military power together with political and economic incentive would be sufficient to transform a divided society characterized by continuing fragmentation. Because these assumptions proved false and insufficient, religion in BH, therefore, can comple-

¹² S. R. Goodwin: *Fractured Land, Healing Nations*, 79-80.

¹³ S. R. Goodwin: *Op. cit.*, 141.

¹⁴ S. R. Goodwin: *Op. cit.*, 198.

ment, not substitute, secular initiative. Religion in BH can have resources for peace building in the following ways:

- By clarifying issues of identity and values that are especially important factors in periods of social upheaval;
- By accessing the Bible and Qur'an, which describe and define the domain of peace beyond the cessation of war and move in direction of societal security and wholeness of being;
- By recognizing that religions in BH are the basis for ethics and human rights, and that they can be a dynamic resource for social restoration;
- By acknowledging that religious actors can influence their communities in extending peace building to reconciliation and social restoration, because faith-inspired activity shifts the social situation from fragmentation and division towards wholeness and unity (264).

Goodwin concludes the book with this final assessment:

“Ultimately the success of the state rests in the hands and goodwill of its citizens. The religious faith sodalities have already demonstrated results of individual and communal movement from fragmentation towards wholeness, and continue to make significant contributions to sustainable peace and social restoration. Empowering them assists in the creation of a stable nation committed to the sacredness and dignity of all human life, and promotes much needed healing in this fractured land”¹⁵.

Conclusion

All citizens and ethno-religious communities of BH need material and spiritual support of a united Europe to live their shared values, to take care of their common needs and to respect their differences. Results of faith communities in educating their congregations for forgiveness and stable peace have been modest so far due to the wounds of recent war for ethnic territory after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the coalescence of ethnic and religious identities. But we are aware that our faith enables us and motivates us to contribute as believing individuals and communities towards a pluralistic civil society with justice and freedom for all. May God help us in this noble endeavor!

Selected Bibliography

Alibašić, Ahmet- Grabus, Nedžad- Karčić, Fikret: *Platforma Islamske zajednice u BiH za dijalog*, 2006.

Cerić, Mustafa: *A Declaration of European Muslims*, 2005.

Fitzgerald, Michael: “Religious Pluralism in Europe: A Reflection”, *Pro Dialogo* 2006, 1, 11-23.

¹⁵ S. R. Goodwin: *Op. cit.*, 269.

- Goodwin, Stephen R.: *Fractured Land, Healing Nations. A Contextual Analysis of the Role of Religious Faith Sodalities Towards Peace-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (Studien zur interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums 139), Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M. 2006.
- Ikić, Niko: "Die Politische, kulturelle und religiöse Situation in Bosnien-Herzegovina", *Transit auf dem Balkan. Dokumentation*, Evangelische Kirche in Rheinland, Düsseldorf 2006, 21-25.
- Johnston, Douglas and Sapsomson, Cynthia (ed): *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, Oxford University Press, New York 1994.
- Johnston, Douglas (ed): *Faith-Based Diplomacy. Trumping Realpolitik*, Oxford University Press, New York 2003.
- Hollenbach, David: *The Global Face of Public Faith. Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D. C. 2003.
- Lehmann, Hartmut (ed): *Multireligiosität im vereinten Europa. Historische und juristische Aspekte*, Wallstein Verlag, Göttingen 2003.
- Leimgruber, Stephan: *Interreligiöses Lernen*, Kösel-Verlag, München 1995.
- Karić, Enes: *Kako tumačiti Kur'an* (= How to interpret Qur'an), Tugra, Sarajevo 2005.
- Küng, Hans-Senghaas, Dieter (ed): *Friedenspolitik. Ethische Grundlagen internationaler Beziehungen*, Piper, München 2003.
- Küng, Hans: *Der Islam, Geschichte, Gegenwart, Zukunft*, Piper, München 2004.
- Mackenzie, Archie: *Faith in Diplomacy. A Memoir*, Caux Books, 1824 Caux, Switzerland 2001.
- Mojzes, Paul (ed): *Religion and the War in Bosnia*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia 1998.
- Pastoral Letters, Statements and Appeals of the Catholic Bishops of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1990-1997, Sarajevo 1998.
- Rounier, Leroy s.: *Religion, Politics and Peace*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 1999.
- Ruland, Vernon: *Conscience Across Borders. An Ethics of Global Rights and Religious Pluralism*, University of San Francisco 2002.
- Silajdžić, Adnan: *Muslim perception of other Religions. Experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, El-Kalem, Sarajevo 2006.
- Schreiner, Stefan (ed): *Visions of a Just Society. Fears, Hopes, and Chances for Living together in a Globalized World from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives. International Consultation Sarajevo (BH), 13-16, November 2005*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Sarajevo 2006.
- Tschuy, Theo: *Ethnic Conflict and Religion – Challenge to the Churches*, WCC Publications, Geneva 1997.
- Velikonja, Mitja: *Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Texas University Press 2003.
- Zovkić, Mato: "Reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the prospective of its Catholic inhabitants", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol 39, No. 1-2 (Winter-Spring, 2002), 181-185.