Freedom of Religion, Religious Tolerance, and the Future of Christian Mission in the Light of Samuel P. Huntington's Thesis on the Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order[1]

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Introduction

In 1825 a tiny sloop named *Restaurationen*, left Stavanger on a hazardous three-month voyage for New York with 53 emigrants, mostly Quakers. They left for freedom of religion, fleeing from religious intolerance and persecution in their homeland, at odds with the state and the church of the Lutheran Norway. From the time of the Reformation the principle that the one who governs determines which religion or denomination shall be accepted, had been the rule in Denmark-Norway as elsewhere in Europe (*cuius regio, eius religio*).

Religious Freedom and Tolerance –
a Brief Historical Outline

When Christianity under the emperor Constantine attained the status of a legal religion, and later even the *only* legal religion, church leaders amazingly soon forgot the toleration that Christians had asked for in the time of the old church. The authorities' suppression of other religions was normally supported. From the theological point of view the argument for such intolerance was that the matter in question was a matter of eternal damnation or salvation. Among political authorities the common understanding was that freedom of religion would bring about chaos. When enforcing one religion on all people, this would help keep the society together.

Luther's revolt on the basis of his conscience, which he claimed was bound directly to Scripture as the ultimate authority, signalled a change. The same did writings from the hand of his theological rival, Erasmus of Rotterdam, who argued for a peaceful coexistence of the Roman church and the different denominations of the Protestant Reformation. The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* came, however, to dominate most of the European states for another couple of centuries.

Nevertheless, under the influence of various forces the principle became heavily questioned. The notion of the existence of universal human rights began to appear against the background of new ideas on the nature of the state and its power and the matter of natural laws. The concept of natural laws was not new. The so far most comprehensive presentation of the notion was that of Thomas Aquinas. A secular philosophy of natural rights was first developed by the jurists Johannes Althus (1557-1638) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) in the first half of the seventeenth century. In the same period the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the last and worst European religious war – a terrible experience – aroused a lot of debate on the matter of religious freedom.

One of the early representatives of the Enlightenment, John Locke (1632-1704), was deeply engaged in these questions. His famous *Letter Concerning Toleration*, of 1689, against religious intolerance, made a great impact.[2] The same year the English Parliament passed the Toleration Act, accepting certain human rights on the basis of a concept of natural law.[3] As the ideas of the

Enlightenment developed with emphasis on the freedom of the individual person, things gradually began to change. The clearest and most influential breakthrough for religious tolerance appeared in America with the American *Declaration of Independence* of 1776, and the *Constitution of the United States* of 1787. The French revolution with its Declaration on Human Rights, of 1789, was inspired by developments in the USA, together with the writings of Voltaire (1694-1778) and Rousseau (1712-1778). The two revolutions initiated an acceleration of changes in many Western countries.

In this way, freedom of religion was promoted from different stands, by Christian groups – particularly persecuted minorities such as the Quakers, by Enlightenment philosophers, and by state authorities with the USA as the foremost example. However, the changes that were achieved with regard to religious freedom and tolerance in the nineteenth century did not prevent the violations of rights and terrible cruelties of the two world wars of the twentieth century from taking place. And after the Second World War a new effort at securing general human rights was regarded as deeply needed. The United Nations was established, and one of its first major accomplishments was to produce and pass the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*. The human rights issue now turned global. Nevertheless, human rights were still extensively violated, not least in Communist countries.

The Present Development and Samuel P. Huntington
With the collapse of Soviet Communism in 1990 and the end of the Cold War, many people hoped for and predicted a new development of reconciliation and peace. The collapse was seen as the final victory of liberal democracy. It was believed that trade, tourism, media, and the internet were about to generate a set of global cultural features common for all people. However, this moment of euphoria at the end of the Cold War generated an illusion of harmony, which was soon revealed to be just that – an illusion.

One who had no illusion of peace was Samuel P. Huntington, professor at Harvard University. In 1993 he published an article in the journal *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" In this article Huntington posed the question whether *conflicts bet-*

ween civilizations would dominate the future of world politics. The article generated a broad and lengthy debate.

In a book on the same matter, published in 1997, Huntington claims to show how *clashes between civilizations, at the core of which are religions, are the greatest threat to world peace.* He also claims to show how *an international order based on civilizations is the best safeguard against war.* His paradigm or framework for understanding global politics is that the world may be separated into six or eight major civilizations, based primarily on religious and cultural convictions. These major civilizations are the (1) Chinese, (2) Japanese, (3) Hindu, (4) Islamic, (5) Russian Orthodox, (6) Western, (7) Latin American, and (8) the African south of Islam. He questions, however, whether the two last can be regarded as separate civilizations. Future conflicts will most likely emerge in areas of tensions between groups from different civilizations. And religious convictions will in general be the major motivational forces behind the clashes.

Christian Mission – Religious Freedom to Generate Conflicts?
How is Christian mission to be assessed against this background? Freedom of religion and particularly religious tolerance is not what people in general associate with Christian mission. Our own country was christianized partly by the sword. Our missions to foreign countries the last two centuries have frequently been accused of applying manipulating means or even at times cooperated, more than we prefer to admit, with the colonial powers. Even today Christian mission is frequently accused of imperialism. Many people regard the very idea of mission as intolerant.

Huntington's thesis may appear as an additional argument against Christian mission. Mission preaching and teaching may be perceived by receiver groups as religious aggression and provoke religiously motivated violent reactions which may develop into a serious clash between the cultural groups involved – a "clash of civilizations". Nevertheless, human rights documents clearly permit and even protect the right to manifest one's religion in mission, and in a traditional Christian understanding of the Great Commission it is a demand. The question is then: How can Christian mission be carried forward in the future in a way that pay proper attention to the dangers of violent opposition which may

escalate into serious clashes between the cultural and religious groups involved?

In trying to answer this question, I will first examine quite briefly how the notions of *freedom of religion* and *religious tolerance* are to be understood. This examination will first be given from this rather general perspective, before I compare the general view with a specifically Christian one. Then, I will give a brief overview of the major elements of Huntington's thesis, as expounded in his book from 1997. This provides the background for the final point in which I will outline some perspectives on the future of Christian mission as working in the tension between, on the one hand, its Biblical call in the Great Commission and its human right to manifest the Christian faith, and, on the other hand, the danger of generating conflicts, as warned against by Huntington, if he is right.

Freedom of Religion and Belief, and Religious Tolerance

Religious Freedom and Tolerance – Two Sides of the Same Coin
We may describe the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental human right within an ethics of *rights*. The European Court of Human Rights considers freedom of religion and belief as "one of the foundations of a democratic society." Interference with the freedom of religion and belief will by most people be experienced as one of the gravest violations of one's rights, for many *the* gravest.

Religious tolerance may be described as the other side of the same ethical coin, as a concept of an ethics of *duty*. This means that freedom of religion can be seen as a *right* corresponding with religious tolerance as a *duty*. Your rights are my duties, and conversely. Tolerance can in addition be considered as a *virtue*, an attitude. Religious tolerance is demanded of *states* as a *duty*, and of *individual persons* as both a *duty* and a *virtue* or *attitude*.

On the one hand, religious tolerance is not a relativistic and self-contradictory acceptance of every kind of faith. On the contrary, tolerance is particularly relevant when facing beliefs of which one disproves. On the other hand, tolerance implies a basic acceptance, not of other faiths, but of other people's *right* to hold and manifest their faiths.

Aspects of Freedom of Religion and
Belief and Corresponding Tolerance

Now, let us have a look at the documents produced by the United Nations on the subject.[4] Of these documents the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) of December 10, 1948, is the best known.[5] An important aspect of the idea of general human rights was the recognition of the necessity to protect religious minorities. Freedom of religion was, actually, one of the first matters recognized as a human right – placing it at the centre of the human rights thinking. The relevant articles of the UDHR are 1, 2, 18, 19, 20, and 29. The UDHR is not formulated as a law in the strict sense, but as an intentional declaration. The document is the basic UN-text on human rights.

At least two more documents should to be considered as central. A document focussing on intolerance, is the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* (DEID), of 1981.[6] This has the same intentional status as the UDHR. The third is the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), of 1966, which came into force ten years later.[7] As of September 1995, the Covenant had been ratified or acceded to by 132 states. This is the only international, legally binding document that expressly deals with freedom of religion and belief. It is therefore the most important of the three.

From the already mentioned UN documents we may point out at least three distinct elements of the freedom of religion and belief and religious tolerance: (1) Freedom to convert to another faith or belief, and tolerance of other's freedom of the same kind. (2) Freedom to manifest one's belief so as to be free to practice it, including the freedom to express and proclaim it to others in public places, including the mass media, and tolerance of other's freedom of this kind. (3) Freedom to raise one's children in accordance with one's faith or belief, and tolerance of other's freedom of this kind. For each of these points I will consider whether they are restricted in some respects.

1. The first element of the right to freedom of religion and belief as expressed by both the UDHR and the ICCPR articles 18

is *the right to convert to another faith or belief.* The first part of
article 18 of the UDHR declares this without reservation.

When the ICCPR was drafted Muslim states tried to avoid the
freedom to leave one's religion. The compromise became: "…
include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his
choice, …." This formula is weaker than the corresponding one
in the UDHR, since it only refers to having or adopting a religion,
and does not expressly mention whether this also covers to have
or adopt another religion than the one the person had before.
However, the right to choose expressed in the condition "of his
choice" is meaningless if it should not include the right to change
religion. The *Comment of the Human Rights Committee* confirms
this very clearly.[8] Moreover, § 2 of article 18 of the ICCPR is quite
clear on this matter: "No one shall be subject to coercion which
would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief
of his choice."

Freedom of religion and belief requires, as stated in the DEID,
article 2 § 1: "No one shall be subject to discrimination by any
State, institution, group of persons, or person on the ground of
religion or other belief." It also requires that we all demonstrate a
tolerance of practical respect and a friendly attitude towards peo-
ple of other faiths and beliefs. This is particularly necessary when
people in our own midst convert to another faith.

There are no limitations to the right to *change* religion. The
limitation clause in § 3 of article 18 of the ICCPR solely refers to
the right to *manifest* one's religion.[9]

2. Freedom of religion may be of little worth if persons do not
have *the right to manifest their faith according to its nature in
their daily life.* Such a manifestation is, however, ensured in the
second part of article 18 of the UDHR and in § 1 in the corre-
sponding article in the ICCPR. The UDHR describes this right as
"… freedom, either alone or in community with others and in
public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching,
practice, worship and observance." The corresponding sentence
in § 1 in the ICCPR article 18 differs only in sentence structure.
What is meant by the word "manifest"? The forms of manifesta-
tions are described as "teaching, practice, worship and obser-
vance". "Practice" covers all the mentioned forms, but also other

possible forms of manifestation of a religion or belief. "Worship" covers different kinds of rituals, among them prayer and singing. "Observance" is a wider expression, covering all forms of rites and customs. "Teaching" covers all forms of communicating the religion or belief, including kinds of propagating for one's faith in evangelistic and mission activities.[10]

There is a close connection between the freedom to manifest one's faith and *the freedom of expression* as stated in article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." The freedom of expression shall be exercised "without interference", meaning that no political authority or any people have any right to interfere in order to stop or modify one's expressions. In this sense, the freedom of religion is limited in many countries, especially in Muslim and Communist states.

The *legitimate limitations of the freedom to manifest one's religion* are dealt with in article 18 of the ICCPR, § 3: "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedom of others."[11] A Soviet Union proposal that the freedom in article 18 of the ICCPR should be subject to the limitations of *all domestic laws*, was clearly rejected.[12] The laws referred to, are not any kind of domestic law which a state may pass, but laws which are, as quoted above, "necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedom of others".

A matter of importance for Christian mission is to identify correctly the limitations here mentioned, and what they mean for a legitimate manifesting of one's belief. We may assume that the following limitations are included:

(1) It cannot be acceptable to use coercion, threats, discrimination, the weight of authority of an educational system, and access to health care or similar facilities in order to induce people to change their religion.

(2) It cannot be acceptable to offer money, work, housing or other material inducements as a means of persuading people to

become Christians. Aid must not be made conditional on church membership. Attention should be given to possible misunderstandings in this respect. People may believe for no good reason that there are material advantages connected with conversion and membership of a church. The result is conversions based on wrong motives. It is important to eliminate every uncertainty regarding this matter.

(3) It is not acceptable to try to impose one's beliefs on an audience, where the listeners have no choice but to be present. This will require some restraint in one's exercise of the right to free speech so as to avoid impinging on the rights of others.

The freedom here outlined requires that we all tolerate others' right to it. This includes that we do not hamper people of other faiths from manifesting what they believe, when it is done within the described limitations, not even when they target us in their mission. We shall rather demonstrate a tolerance of respect, and suggest a friendly dialogue.

3. Regarding the upbringing and education of children, parents have the right to decide within which religion or secular system of beliefs the children shall be brought up, educated and socialized. As expressed in the ICCPR, article 18, § 4: "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions." The same is expressed in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC)[13] and in the DEID, article 5.[14]

This right of parents is, of course, restricted when it comes to all kinds of neglect and abuse which are particularly prohibited in the CRC, article 19, described as "…all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, ….". Regarding religious tolerance, this means for parents that their upbringing of the children in matters of religion and belief shall take place in a spirit of tolerance, and with love and respect. For missions this means that one cannot teach or preach to children when their parents do not consent to this.

Religious Freedom and Tolerance from a Theological Perspective
Christian mission cannot be prohibited on the basis of the right to
freedom of religion and belief or on the duty of religious toler-
ance, provided the restrictions just dealt with are observed. On
the contrary, Christian mission can rather be seen as protected by
the notions of religious freedom and tolerance, particularly by the
right to manifest one's faith.

As a matter of fact, the New Testament and the theology of the
old church, implicate a rather similar understanding of religious
freedom and tolerance. Jesus and the apostles did not manipulate
anyone in any way to faith. They did not coerce or threaten any-
one to believe their story by any means. They did not offer any
material gains or inducements as means of persuading people to
accept their teaching. The "sword" of the church should solely be
the Word of God.

Regarding the Middle Ages and the centuries until modern
times, however, the church of Western Christendom cannot but
confess that it participated heavily in violations of such a biblical
founded right to religious freedom. The Christian leadership in
the West came to suffer greatly from the reality expressed in the
common rule that power corrupts.

Today all Christian denominations acclaim the ideas of reli-
gious freedom and tolerance as notions firmly embedded in the
teachings of the New Testament. Moreover, a good reason to
commend these principles is that Christian churches and individ-
ual Christians are certainly the kind of religious people who are
the most suppressed and persecuted in the world today.

Huntington's Thesis – Prospects on Conflicts
I shall now present a brief overview of the major elements of
Huntington's thesis, as expounded in his book from 1997.

Huntington views the world today in terms of six or eight
major civilizations, already listed. By "civilization" he means "…
the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of
cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes
humans from other species."[15] Religion is the most central and
defining characteristic of civilizations. In the last fifty years we
have seen a global resurgence of religions around the world. As
the next characteristics come language, ethnicity, and history.[16]

A Civilization-Based World Order Is Emerging

Global politics seems to be reconfigured along civilizational lines.[17] Societies sharing cultural affinities cooperate with each other. Thus, political boundaries are increasingly being redrawn to coincide with cultural ones of religious character.[18] The core states of the major civilizations are supplanting the two Cold War superpowers as the principal poles of attraction and repulsion for other countries.[19] When a civilization lacks a core state, the problems of creating order within the civilization in question, or negotiating order in its relation to other civilizations, become more difficult. This is one of the problems for the Islamic civilization.

Cleft countries that territorially bestride the fault lines between civilizations, such as Sudan, face particular problems in maintaining their unity. Efforts to shift societies from one culture to another are usually not successful.

The Western civilization is declining in relative influence. Asian civilizations are expanding their strength. Islam is exploding demographically with destabilizing consequences for Muslim countries and their neighbours. Non-Western civilizations are in general reaffirming their own values, mostly religious values.[20] The relations between civilizations have thus moved from a phase dominated by the unidirectional impact of one civilization, the Western, on all others, to one of multidirectional interactions between all civilizations.[21]

The ongoing modernization and globalization is not necessarily westernization, neither does it require westernization.[22] Modernization may even strengthen the power of the local culture, and generate counterforces of cultural assertion. The world is therefore becoming more modern and less Western at the same time.[23] Religions, including values, morality and institutions, pervasively influence how states define their interests. In this process a revolt against the West has begun. The world is in some sense divided in two: The West and the rest.

Clashes of Civilizations

The central and most dangerous dimension of the emerging global politics is conflicts between groups from different civilizations. "The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations."[24] The local conflicts which are most likely to escalate

into broader wars are those between groups and states from different civilizations. Thus, conflicts will increasingly be shaped by religious and cultural factors of differences between the civilizations.[25]

Huntington claims that, "The dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness."[26] The most violent fault lines are to be found between the Islamic civilization and those bordering it.

Actually, Huntington has renewed an idea repressed by reductionists for many years, the idea that religions and beliefs are fundamental to conflicts. Political authorities are not so much determined by desire for power and prosperity as usually believed by Western secularists. Religious motivation expressed is not necessarily a substitution for more mean desires and motives. Islamists love to refer to Huntington.

At the global level there is, as mentioned, a particular tension between the West and the rest.[27] The main problem is that what seems to be universalism to the West, and is presented as such, is merely imperialism to the rest.[28] The Western so-called "global laws", "universal human rights", and "the international community" are neither global, nor universal, nor international. Promotion of human rights is by many seen as "human rights imperialism".[29] The West's universalist pretensions increasingly bring it into conflict with other civilizations, most seriously with Islam and China.

Thus, Huntington foresees that the world is poised for future conflicts, not between great national powers, but between competing civilizations. September 11, 2001, indicated that he may to some extent be right.

What Can Be Done to Avoid Civilizational Conflicts?

An international order based on, and respecting, the differences between the major civilizations is the surest safeguard against wars between them. This depends on world leaders accepting and cooperating to maintain a multicivilizational/multicultural character of global politics.[30] More concretely, a key condition for peace and avoidance of major intercivilizational wars is the requirement that core states refrain from intervening in conflicts in other civilizations than their own. A second requirement is the

joint mediation rule that core states negotiate with each other to contain or to halt fault line wars between states or groups from their civilizations. Finally, people of all civilizations should search for, and attempt to, expand the values, institutions, and practices that all people may have in common.

Regarding the Western civilization, Westerners must learn to look at their civilization as one among many, not as universal. The survival of the West depends on this civilization's reaffirming of its identity from its cultural roots. A country of many civilizations, lacking a cultural core, can hardly survive. For example, the USA needs a stronger core identity. Huntington is afraid of the moral relativism and moral decline in the West, far more than he is afraid of economic and demographic problems. Moral decline includes: (1) Antisocial behaviour such as crime, drug use, and violence. (2) Family decay. (3) A decline of social capital, such as membership in voluntary associations. (4) Weakening of the Christian work ethic. (5) Decreasing commitment to learning and intellectual activity.[31]

The Role of Christian Mission in Conflicts

As the final point, I will outline some perspectives on the future of Christian mission as existing in the tension between, on the one hand, its Biblical call in the Great Commission with a human right to continue to "make disciples of all nations", and, on the other hand, the danger of generating religious-political conflicts, as described and warned against by Huntington. Will Christian mission inevitably contribute to such clashes? How can Christian mission be a movement of reconciliation and peace rather than conflict-generating?

Christian Mission as a Basically Non-Political Movement

Emphasis on non-violence and non-manipulation in communication of the Christian message in mission brings up the Christian, and particularly Lutheran, distinction between the spiritual and secular realms. More than most religions, Christianity is, in principle, a spiritual movement, not an ethnic or national religion, and far from a political ideology. This clear distinction between faith and politics should normally provide political authorities with an assurance of non-inference in political matters, except that Chris-

tian ethics certainly may have political implications, and political authorities may be targeted in Christian ethical preaching.

This non-political and spiritual character of Christian mission should indicate that in the escalation of conflicts in Huntington's fault line areas, missions may function as mediators and promoters of peace rather than enforcing conflicts. Christian missions' traditional involvement in aid to those in need and suffering in such conflicts can function as a door opener to peace-promoting and peace-keeping activities.

Christian Mission as a Cross-Civilizational Movement

Christianity has from its very beginning demonstrated an enormous faith in words as carriers of power to condemn and justify, to bind and liberate, to tear down and rebuild. It has, however, no respect for particular languages and language borders. Hebrew was not a holy language, neither was Jesus' dialect – Aramaic, nor the language of Hellenism – Greek. Unfortunately, when the Roman church gained power and established the culture of Christendom, Latin became almost as holy for the Western church as Arabic for Muslims. Only recently has the Catholic Church abandoned this view. Christian missions cross language borders, translate the Bible and establish contextualized versions of the message in the languages and cultures of local peoples everywhere. Just as no language is holy, nor is any place, nor any ethnic people. This "disrespect" for holy languages and places coupled with a feeling of a unity in Christ, in the message, and in the call to mission, across all ethic borders, contributes to the formation of a mission-oriented kind of Christians across all civilizations and cultures.

Today the majority of Christian missionaries no longer originate from, or have their sending agencies, in the West, but actually in the rest. The major mission agencies are churches in for example South Korea, Brazil, India, and Nigeria. The Christian church and Christian mission is a global movement, not a specifically Western religion. It is present in virtually all nations. Maybe Huntington should leave room in his paradigm for this most global of all movements. And maybe he should rely more on this movement as one of the best agents in solving conflicts and providing reconciliation and peace in fault line conflicts?

Respecting Freedom of Religion, Demonstrating Religious Tolerance

A great advantage for a Christian promotion for reconciliation and peace is that most Christian missions without reservations accept not only the freedom to manifest one's faith as expressed in the declarations on human rights, but also the limitations and restrictions with regard to this freedom as they are included in the concept of religious tolerance. Such a tolerance includes acceptance of other religions' right to manifest their faiths in similar tolerant ways, even when their truth claims directly contradict Christianity.

Well-meaning attempts at solving conflicts by diminishing contradicting truth claims in emphasizing rather relativistic attitudes to the question of truth and the truth contest religions are engaged in, may actually appear as quite intolerant. To blame religions and beliefs for propagating their doctrines as universal truths, and demand that they stop such activities, can only intensify conflicts rather than promote tolerance and peace. Thus, it is definitely no condition for peaceful co-existence that truth is relativized. It is rather a condition that it is not. Relativism and respect for others' freedom of religion seem to be difficult to harmonize.

In respect for all people's right to a free choice of faith, Christian missions shall be free to proclaim the gospel even when being persecuted for that reason. The word "martyr" originally means a witness, and came to mean Christians being persecuted and killed because of their witness. This combines two thoughts: Christian mission is witness, but rather than defending one's life in counterattacks when attacked, one takes the risk of losing it in martyrdom for the message. In this way one testifies most strongly both to the truth of one's message, and to the importance of communicating it in a non-violent and peaceful manner.

Christians as Dialogue- and Peace-Promoters in Clashes of Cultures

A document on mission presented by the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS), *Worldwide Joy*, dated 2004, seems to recognize Huntington's emphasis on religions as a source to conflicts, but highlights even more Christianity's role in "promoting peace and reconciliation".[32]

It may be hold that Christians should first overcome their own disagreements before trying to help others. However, the problem in focus for Huntington is conflicts of violence and war, not disagreements in doctrinal matters as such. Christian denominations of differing views in doctrinal questions can demonstrate better than many comparable groups of beliefs and ideologies how it is possible to co-exist and cooperate in a civil society and in matters of belief although one does not agree in all doctrinal questions. Violent conflicts between Christian groups on Christian doctrines are rare today, or scarcely exist. The most important consequences of Christian ecumenical consultations are their removing of misunderstandings and their promotion of mutual respect and tolerance rather than establishing agreement on how doctrines are to be interpreted.

In Christian mission it is of great importance to demonstrate how Christian denominations can relate to one another and to other religions in tolerance and respect, and thus function as models for other groups of opposing views. This is not least important in the so-called fault line areas of the world where conflicts are most likely to escalate, if Huntington is right. Christian missionaries trained in dialogue should, in addition, be qualified as promoters and mentors of respectful dialogues between conflicting faiths in areas of cultural and religious conflicts. For this purpose the kind of dialogue which concentrates on matters of common concerns in the civil society, for peace and joint action, must be emphasized. The increasing number of Christian missionaries from non-Western civilizations may be particularly capable as promoters of peace, especially when their cultural background is that of another civilization than those conflicting. In this way Christianity may also exhibit the fact that it is not a particular Western religion but a global movement, present in virtually all nations.

A More Tolerant Way of Promoting Human Rights
How universal is, actually, the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights?* From the Western point of view – in the contexts were these rights were developed – they were thought of as self-evident truths that all people would embrace if they only could be made sufficiently conscious of these ideas.[33] As Huntington main-

tains, the UDHR is definitely not universally accepted, and not as self-evident as Westerners like to believe. Several of its basic ideas are questioned, modified, or even disclaimed by other religions. This has prompted other religious traditions to produce their own alternative set of rights, such as the Muslim *Cairo Declaration of Human Rights*, of 1990. Articles 24 and 25 in this declaration place the Sharia laws above the human rights in cases of contradiction. Confucians claim that human duties and virtues should be more emphasized than rights. The Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago in 1993 could not even agree upon the most basic human rights matter, the belief that all humans are of equal worth.

This raises a problem Huntington points to, the problem of Western arrogance in promoting something as universal which, as a matter of fact, is primarily Western. With a more open attitude to the question of how human rights can be argued for and evidenced as valid, a more respectful discussion on these matters may be developed. The mission approach of *discussions on beliefs from a basis of truth indicators or truth criteria which both parties can agree upon* would be a less conflict-laden way of dealing with such questions. Moreover, to *witness about what the Christian values mean to us* – the human rights included, rather than blaming other cultures for not accepting some foreign ideas as self-evident, is also an aspect of a better way of promoting human rights, tolerance and peace.

Conclusion

Huntington may be right in many respects and mistaken in others. Religions will certainly be involved as major factors in future conflicts, as they have been in the past. This is particularly the case for the politically oriented Islam. His perspective on Christianity in this connection is, however, too narrow and not updated. Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity is no longer a specifically Western religion. And the West has in many ways distanced itself from its Christian foundation. Mission-oriented Christians are aware of representing something different from a civil religion and a particular civilization. They are conscious of a cross-cultural identity as a universal people of God. Therefore, they may to a great extent function as conflict-moderators rather than conflict-

generators. With regard to the future, as foreseen in the light of Huntington, Christian missions may need to strengthen their consciousness of this role as reconcilers and promoters of peace.

Notes

[1] Second trial lecture in Doctor Disputation at the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, May 5-6, 2006

[2] See John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (http://www.constitution.org/jl/tolerati.htm), 1689.

[3] See English Parliament, *Toleration Act* (http://www.jacobite.ca/documents/1689toleration.htm), 1689.

[4] See this page for links: http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ or this: http://www2.unog.ch/intinstr/uninstr.exe?language=en

[5] See http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.pdf

[6] See http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/religion.htm

[7] See http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/ccpr.pdf

[8] "The Committee observes that the freedom to 'have or to adopt' a religion or belief necessarily entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including the right to replace one's current religion or belief with another or to adopt atheistic views, as well as the right to retain one's religion or belief." § 5.

[9] See the ICCPR General Comment § 3.

[10] See the ICCPR General Comment § 4.

[11] This paragraph is almost identical with article 29 of the UDHR, §2: "In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society."

[12] See Forum 18, *Freedom of Religion: A report with special emphasis on the right to choose religion and registration systems* (2001), 10.

[13] See http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm. Article 5 says: "States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention."

[14] See http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/religion.htm. Article 5, § 1 says: 1."The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organize the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up."

15 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 43.
16 See ibid., 59 and 70.
17 See ibid., 125.
18 See ibid., 20.
19 See ibid., 155-156.
20 See ibid., 20.
21 See ibid., 53.
22 See ibid., 58.
23 See ibid., 78.
24 Ibid., 28.
25 See ibid., 36.
26 Ibid., 183.
27 See ibid., 183.
28 See ibid., 66: "The non-Wests see as Western what the West sees as universal."
29 See ibid., 192-198.
30 See ibid., 20-21.
31 See ibid., 304.
32 NMS. *Worldwide Joy: A Living, Acting and Missional Church in Every Country*! Basic Document on Mission, Considered by the NMS' National Board, item 24/04 (June 2004), 27-28.
33 Confer for instance the American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that …all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." *Declaration of Independence* (In Congress, July 4, 1776).

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