# Uprising Today: Session 1

## "Knowing the Boundaries of Strategic Location In Historic Struggle"

**June 20, 2004 | 3:30-5pm | IDF**

***Led by Rev. Jim Holiman***

I. Introduction: opening comments and introductions of the group and asks for thoughts from last week…"vague and unclear" – Participant
Hopefully this will help to make things more clear…
Passes out the Expressed Social Justice Concerns: Tabulations are skewed because some people said all of the above.
Any Observations?
Looks like you can almost place them in categories—Participant

Jim runs with this and puts up a chart (looking specifically at foreign policy)

II. There are some levels, I called them structures. Here is a chart that we use:
It's called a tree Chart (out of the Liberation theology movement) that shows three ways of thinking:
Economic
Political and
Ideological: way people understand things on the street, how we understand reality

The purpose of the chart is how people understand things—lets look at one area in particular

Claire suggests US Foreign Policy

So we fill in the above chart---people make suggestions as to where things go…

When Jim suggests that we don't put much stock in ideology because people are not filling it out—we begin a discussion on ideology—what counts? Capitalism?

Imperialism—

Durl: When I look at ideology, I consider people's worldview, like religion, conservatism—whatever ideology becomes the predominate, that is the path that country tends to take

Durl: I don't see ideology as the leaves, but as the roots of the tree because the other two might flower from them.

Claire: "I want to follow up on the religious aspect, particularly looking at religious fundamentalism especially since it is the focus of our worldview particularly at this time"

Jim: Fundamentalism seems to be cropping up.

Aaron: Going off of something you mentioned last week, I want to mention the Monroe Doctrine, going from Hemispherical dominance to Global dominance (neo-cons) today when we tend to feel that we need to control everything now.

Where would the military go?
I would put in state, but it has economic ties.

| Structures | Local | State | Regional | Global |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic | Campaign $<br>In God We trust | Campaign Contributions<br>Capitalism<br>Subsidy<br>In God We trust | UN, Nato and American States<br>World Bank<br>IMF<br>In God We trust | US Transnationals<br>UN-Financial support<br>In God We trust |
| Political | Urbana as City of Peace<br>UI as Research Institution<br>God is on our side | White House<br>Congress<br>Subsidies<br>Military<br>God is on our side | UN and Nato<br>God is on our side | Foreign Policy<br>UN—Punitive<br>God is on our side |
| Ideological | Bumperstickers:<br>God, Guns and Guts<br>Fundamentalism<br>Grassroots Resistance | Fear<br>Imperialism<br>Best in the World<br>Freedom<br>Free Market Capitalism<br>Militarism | Monroe Doctrine | UN—the whole world debates many issues through the UN<br>Might makes Right |

III. Now that everything is filled in, what might we conclude? That everything is interconnected

Joe: Also that it just goes to show that foreign policy is not singly decided by the international community, it is the rightful concern of local communities.

This is an example of the Hermeneutical Process of Social Analysis
Hermeneutical just means interpretation or reading

So the next big thing would be, if we want to bring about change in foreign policy, where would this change begin, in what area, from what approach?

So we might want to say, we want to change Foreign Policy in Iraq and then work back to find the source so that we might begin to change.

Where is the first step? What's the first step we must take

If you miss the first step then you might miss the whole process, that is you miss making any change?

Jim: In the US, we might say, "Oh, we've gotta have an expert! As I said last week with the clergy, we don't need that. We need a group of people sitting around a table debating things to figure it out, like we are doing now.

For my part---

IV. I want to bring out a book---Christ and Culture

He wrote the book in the midst of WWII. So, he was thinking about the issues that developed out of that time

Helmut Richard Niebuhr:
1894-1962 Professor of Christian Theology and Social Ethics at Yale.
Most influential theologian in 20th Century—highly debatable—many enemies in academics and religion.

He advised Presidents and taught a whole generation of Pastoral and Academic Theologians for 31 years
==those people remain on the cutting edge of social ethics. So, he impacts all of us.
Brother was for a long time a labor organizer, but Rockefeller wanted him out, so helped him into a good job to get rid of him. They then diverged greatly over issue of CO's.

Letters have been published recently because of the war in Iraq.

Brother very opposed to conscientious objection.

Someone offers: Aren't they local? Born in Lincoln and educated here.

Still a standard in academic and religious institutions: Philosophy, PSC and Religion.

His basic thesis: the problem of social change as far as Christian orgs. are concerned is the relationship between Christianity and civilization. That's the basic problem of theology. The enduring problem in Western culture for all institutions, religious or secular, Marxist or Capitalist, etc.

Niebuhr calls it the enduring problem that every person must face.

He says this because West Civ. is THE Predominant Civilization of the world.

He traces the problem and outlines the strategies in a chronological way

He gets slippery with his major terms:

Like the term Christ---first as Jesus of Nazareth, later as a Principle

He's consistent with the term culture.

Culture: total process of human activity and the total result of that activity
So everything in the table is the activity. The connection is the result of the activity.

V. First two are extremes:

Christ Against Culture (has to do with dualism and that the world is evil, so consequently, those who wish to have a better world must withdraw from this place into an alternative world…vows of poverty, communalism, monasticism)
Main point: Reality is divided and is divisive and will stay that way, so you must pull back.

Christ of Culture: Christ is seen in terms of the best values of the culture and the best values of the culture are seen in terms of Christ. These two are synonymous. No disparity is seen between reality and what one believes about Christian values,

consequently one is happy. In whatever culture you are in, if you are happy with that culture, then there won't be tension.

Since 1700-1914—the latter was the dominant Christian viewpoint. And that all such things as liberalism, conservatism and fundamentalism all which develop within this time period represent the latter viewpoint.

Fundamentalist: believe that no one should stomp on God's promised land (U.S. in most recent history)
Liberals: Hey, we're free isn't that great?
Conservatives: Hey, we're rich, isn't that great?

He points out the weakness in each:

The former will believe this while still using the English language, sitting in chairs made by capitalists, etc.

The latter (libs, fundamentalists and cons) have plenty of inner-conflict and differences of opinion.

VI. The next two are the mediating positions—trying to bring things into balance. Sometimes things will shift back and forth in this:

Christ and Culture in Paradox: They try to keep the dialectic going instead of trying to reach a synthesis. They will work within religious institutions AND public groups to facilitate that dialectic rather than keeping them separate.

They will incorporate religious values in civic discussion and vice versa…
They will be interested in class struggle within their own religious institution, or they will try to find religious points of view in class struggle, might hedge on one or the other position as is pragmatically necessary.

Christ Above Culture: Interest in affirming both Christ and culture and trying to find a way to synthesize the two without losing the distinction. They look for religious institutions and they are civic minded

They will be really engaged in political parties (the real activist will be involved in all Parties) and will be pretty faithful to the tenets of their own religious institution.

The dichotomy they try to overcome will not engage both at the same time but will keep them somewhat separate in discussion

So they might not be public with their religious views.

He finds examples of these mediating factors in the 2nd Century up till present day particularly in Agnosticism

VII. The Fifth one: Christ Transforming Culture

Perhaps the most theological of Niebuhr's language.

In Christ the world has been reconciled, so there is no reason for Christians to have any concern for this culture overcoming the sacredness of life.

God is creator and everything that God created is good.

Culture has problems and flaws and that's due to systemic violence created because human beings have tried to impose systems of order on the world, and these systems are flawed. The "fall" originates in these flawed choices, rather than some inherent imperfection in humanity. Sin is a choice, so human beings are capable of solving all their own problems, because we have created them.

The original fall and sin comes about when we engage in systemic activities like paying taxes, which leads to agreement to underwrite a military regime.

Convertive of society and systems, when people get together to discuss and change these problems.

Sin came from human beings trying to create order in their lives, since we have never been able to do that we have created systemic violence.

All human problems are created by human beings, therefore human beings can solve all problems. ---JFK

Systemic violence shapes the way we think, value and act so if we engage in that system from the time we are young we are going to continue to create and fall into those traps. Which is why we get caught or undermined by our own actions.

EG:
The idea that was kicked off two years ago that civilization has progressed to terrorism, which has taken us beyond the bounds of the Geneva Convention so we must come up with news rules---the war on terrorism.

VIII. A few things to remind or draw attention to:

Niebuhr he differentiates sacred strategy development from secular strategy development:

Sacred makes references to Jesus

Eg: Bishop called for a meeting of the committee and Jim had a dinner and the Bishop said the problem with IDF is that you don't ever mention Jesus in your social justice work.

Do you confess your religiosity upfront and scare off the Marxists or do you keep you it secret so the atheists come to join or do you claim there is no such thing as the resurrection and scare off the religion people

There is something of value to that strategy: it won't maybe scare people off either way

But you have to pick a strategy.

These are the strategies that have worked since Constantine regardless of what our theological point of view is. We are the inheritors of that empire.

IX. The second thing I want to say is that there are two ways of looking at power:

From above (dominant, authority) or From below (heretics)

If you are Constantine than you give the order that everyone is going to do things this way or you will lose your head

If you are Arius then you won't like that, so he had to run. He became one of the first heretics of Christianity.

When Constantine got to Germany, he found Aryan Christians everywhere.

X. Left-Wing Christianity Characteristics to remember:

1st Characteristic: Jesus Christ is lord (translated Jesus is political liberator)

2nd: God's will can be known and done

3rd: Don't take community of faith and conscience for granted---its got to be built, so there are going to be risks. If you like the current order you might not like that people discuss social justice change.

When people talk about change, there might be risks.

People build the movement through praxis:

1st act: to engage in social justice change

2nd act: to reflect on what you've learned

Some think you do this the other way around---the first act is always the heavy one, because you engage in a public act of social change. Regardless of the outcome, the community licks its wounds and figures out what to do differently.

The word praxis is from the New Testament, Karl Marx picked the word up and used it.

Praxis involves action and reflection as opposed to practice which insinuates just action.

Misc.

Types of discussion:

You must be able to argue someone else's position before the council before you can speak against it

Sobernost—when a basic issue has been raised, all of the people will make arrangements in their life to go to a place to debate an issue for as long as it takes until they reach a firm consensus (the longest was ten years).

**Reading Assignment:**
*Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*
p. 3-154 (the first two sections)
See where your religious institution fits with regard to Niebuhr's 5 positions.

**Next Session:**
"Radical Alienation Or Safe Accommodation: A Hard Look At Our Concerns and Expectations"
June 27th, 2004 from 3:30-5pm at the Illinois Disciples Foundation