

Reconciliation as “deep” Revolution: atonement and the overcoming of enmity in a Brazilian Methodist perspective

Helmut Renders¹

Introduction

The first reason, why I'd like to reflect upon “reconciliation as ‘deep’ revolution” is the context where I live and work. What I want to explore seems so far away from what is now occurring in Brazilian society, and this means also, in Brazilian churches, including the Methodist Church in Brazil. In part, the church seems to be at odds with itself, its past and its present, and the country, not able to interpret the situation and to understand its role and way to the future. I identify in today's Brazilian Methodism a lot of anxiety, a lot of fear, a lot of anger, a lot of verbal, symbolic, visual, communicational, psychological and physical violence and enmity. This describes not Methodism on the whole, nor its majority, but still an alarming number. I see many sad people who feel that they are losing ground and that the new post-colonial world might ignore them more than they can relate too, while the country and the church seem to be trapped in an old-fashioned left-right bias. This is for sure, a relic of colonial times, old and new ones, and a history with relative short periods of democracy and long periods of dictatorships. Interestingly, in “Christological terms”, left and right seem to believe enthusiastically that only a messianic lead figure — “Lula” or “Bolsonaro” — can change the “fate” of the country, only a messianic king will guide the nation to the land of milk and honey.

As a German, I do not believe in the promises of messiah-kings of any type. I have to admit, that even the word leader — *líder* or *líderes* — which became so popular within the practical ecclesiology of the Brazilian Methodist Church in the last ten years, my Brazilian brothers and sisters may forgive me, sounds to me more like *Duce* ou *Führer* than like nurturer or partaker. Whereas my affirmation may be a little to sensible, it is true that interestingly two generations of Brazilian Methodist Biblical Scholars have pointed into a similar direction in there PHD theses. Paulo Lockmann, New Testament scholar and later, Methodist bishop, favored in his work the model of Jesus as messiah-prophet,² and Suely Xavier dos Santos, Old Testament Scholar and Methodist pastor, used the term to describe her Isaiah interpretations³. However, as we shall see, this model of the messiah-prophet has an even longer tradition in Brazilian Methodism within its soteriology, first, centered in reconciliation as overcoming enmity by friendship, later in convivence⁴ and, hopefully soon, in reconciling hospitality.

Now I come to the second part of my introduction. When we initially talked about the theme of this Institute, the first idea was to discuss Methodism within the framework of the Protestant Reformation. Later, other's added “revival” and “renewal”. When I first saw the proposal — reform, revival and renewal — I was not satisfied. To say it with the terminology used up to this point: whereas a messiah-king eventually may even accept, at

¹ Methodist elder serving in the Methodist congregation Vila Floresta, São Bernardo do Campo, SP; professor at the School of the Theology (Bachelor) and the School of Communication, Education and Humanities (Graduate Program in Religion) Email: helmut.renders@metodista.br

² Paulo Tarso de Oliveira Lockmann, *Jesus, o Messias Profeta* (São Bernardo do Campo: Editeo. 2011). PHD from 2009.

³ Suely Xavier dos Santos, *Immanuel e Espírito de Iahweh: Leitura e Releitura do Messianismo em Isaías* (7,10-17; 8,23-9,6; 11,1-9) (São Bernardo do Campo: Umesp, 2011).

⁴ *Convivence*, sometimes translated as living in togetherness, or living with, is a Latin-American term introduced by the German Missiologist Theo Sundermeier to overcome Bonhoeffer's concept of a church for others, understood as to one-sided benevolent. British Methodism developed around the same time a similar idea when it referred in the eighties to “mission ‘alongside’ the poor”.

least under certain conditions, reform, renewal and revival, a messiah-prophet promotes a groundbreaking and revolutionary message. Therefore, I asked to add the word revolutionary, especially as a reference to the people of Latin America. This provoked a vivid discussion. Some were not happy about my approximation of Revolution and Methodism; and I understood their historical reasons.⁵ Others could better integrate my proposal into their life experience and understood that their encounter with Methodism or of Methodism with their world could be faithfully described as a radical turn-around or revolution. For sure, Latin American Protestants have used the term to describe the importance of Jesus in and for their society, and this definitely before the Theology of Liberation occupied this linguistic territory. This happened, for example, in 1962, when the Department for Social Affairs of the Evangelical Confederation of Brazil called its third conference in Brazilian's Northeast "Christ and the revolutionary Brazilian process"^{6, 7}.

In my proposal, I use the term in the tradition of this publication sharing its interest in a Methodism, which cares for the actual situation of the country, asking which of its resources may contribute to reform the nation, especially the Church. Brazilian Methodism did so, as I want to show, by revisiting from time to time its understanding of reconciliation. Its choice was the interpretation of reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship, which led in the eighties to the promotion of *convivence* or dialogue as a form to interact with the world around it. In addition, I'd like to suggest exploring hospitality as *philoxenia* in the sense of a kind of "intern convivence" for our days. The three together form for me the foundation of a "deep" revolution, the reestablishment of hope for real — or deep? — transformation of a real context and its real conflicts. Reconciliation, convivence and hospitality all identify and address enmity as a key problem. The reason for this was different at the end of the nineteenth century, in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century and now. However, in every period it became clear that one can't ignore enmity if one does not want to be ignored by it. We have to admit: for some, it is becoming a Christian virtue to hate, to exclude, to talk in the most negative term possible about the other; and it's getting immoral and costly to establish, at least to declare one-sided or to maintain friendship to those who are considered the scapegoats of their time.

1888-1930: Establishing reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship as a theological paradigm

My first contact with the way how Methodist Brazilian laypeople, pastors, and theologians have reinterpreted the theology of reconciliation in and for their context, I have documented five years ago in my article "To reconcile us to his Father": A unique transla-

⁵ However, Brazil testifies, also, an ambiguous use of the term. For example, the dictatorship hitchhiked it and referred to the military putsch in 1964 as "The revolution of 64".

⁶ Confederação Evangélica do Brasil, *A conferência do Nordeste: Cristo e o processo revolucionário brasileiro*. Vol 1: Narrativa em forma de diário de toda a semana do Nordeste. (Setor de Responsabilidade Social da Igreja. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Loqui, 1962). Online at: <https://archive.org/details/conferenciadonor01conf> Consulted on February 10, 2018. Confederação Evangélica do Brasil, *A conferência do Nordeste: Cristo e o processo revolucionário brasileiro*. vol 2: Reunião de Estudos (Setor de Responsabilidade Social da Igreja. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Loqui, 1962). Online at: <https://archive.org/details/conferenciadonor02conf>. Consulted on February 10, 2018. See also Magali Nascimento Cunha & Helmut Renders, *As igrejas e as mudanças sociais: 50 anos da conferência do Nordeste*. (São Bernardo do Campo, SP / São Paulo: Editeo / ASTE, 2012).

⁷ Within the theory of revolution, it is classified as a lowercase revolutionary process, focused on the creation of alternative spaces and the promotion of horizontal participative decision-processes. See: Thomas Nail, "Revolution". In: Kelly Fritsch, Clare O'Connor, and AK Thompson (editors) *Keywords for Radicals* (AK Press, 2016) 376-377.

tion of the 2nd Article of Religion of the Methodist Church in Brazil and three other Lusophone countries”⁸. I argued in that article, that Brazilian missionaries, soon after their official arrival, did a revolutionary step when they changed the 2nd Article of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church, although it was then already protected by the first restrictive order of the General Conference. Doing so, they left behind Anselm’s Theory of the Satisfaction of the divine wrath as the decisive narrative of salvation. Instead, they reintroduced classical Pauline terms: the human being needs to be reconciled to God, not God to humankind. Enmity is not God’s attribute, enmity is the outcome or expression of the human condition and God’s faithful friendship is a call to overcome this enmity.

In this article, I tried to understand the discussion within the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. I never found the answer why my particular finding — the change of the 2nd Article of Religion — was restricted to the Spanish and the Portuguese missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and this since the late eighties of the 19th century. I suspected that this could only be understood, first, as a response to the missionary habitat and its players; second, to the general discussion about the second article within Methodism and, third, as a type of reception of the theology of friendship common among the emerging social gospel movement. More recently, I specified that, although the Social Gospel was in Brazil linked to what then was called Pan-Protestantism, which echoed a Pan-Americanism, it did develop from a more North American version (destiny manifest) towards a more Bolivarian, liberating and nationalist project.⁹ I understood this Bolivarian reading as a conscious but “discrete” shift of theology developed by the second generation of Brazilian Methodist Theologians committed to a project of a national and autonomous Brazilian Methodist Church, in a wider South and Central American perspective.

Soon, in 1908, had appeared also the Social Creed by whom the soteriological emphasis not only gained a horizontal but a public dimension.

The Social Creed’ as a responsible “social teaching” seems to be the first official document engaging the authority of the [Methodist Episcopal, the author] Church. The shift in the nature and exercise of authority seems evident. In the first place we have [...] ‘middle axioms’ [...] These are not rules addressed to individuals to regulate their social behavior, it is not in the first place teaching for the church [...] It presents itself as a witness to society.¹⁰

The format of a Creed means that the Methodist Episcopal Church responded to social justice claims of urban industrial workers with a religious confession, which worked exactly as an interface between social doctrine, liturgical life and Christian militancy. The church made an effort to embed social justice claims in church life as a whole and classified this statement by its form as a kind of *status confessionis*, at least a faithful form to testify Christ. Concerning the Methodist Episcopal Church, this was in 1908 in one sense only partially the case, as the Creed was located only in the appendix of its book of discipline, the part which is currently referred to as the Book of Resolutions of the General

⁸ Helmut Renders, “To reconcile us to his Father”: A unique translation of the 2nd Article of Religion of the Methodist Church in Brazil and three other lusophone countries”. In: *Methodist Review*, New York, vol. 5, p. 25-51 (jan./dez. 2013). Online at: < <http://www.methodistreview.org/index.php/mr/article/view/73/97> Consulted on March, 12, 2018.

⁹ Helmut Renders, “Teologia Panprotestante e o 'Evangelho Social' no Brasil”. In: Claudio Ribeiro de Oliveira (ed.), *Teologia protestante latino-americana: um debate ecumênico* (Osório, RS: Edições Terceira Via, 2018) 63-88.

¹⁰ José Miguéz Bonino. “Reflections of the Church’s authoritative teaching on social questions”. In: *Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies*, (1987) 61-62.

Conference, which contains the non-binding but suggested ethical appliance of doctrine. The MEC, S, accepted the Social Creed in 1918,¹¹ and this most probably occurred under the strong influence of World War I. Nevertheless, the MEC, S, went a step further and included the Social Creed in the constitutional part, that is, the binding part of the Book of Discipline.

1930-1971: Unfolding reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship in its public dimension

The autonomy of the Brazilian Methodist Church was achieved in 1930, however, the young Church preserved the change of the 2nd Article of Religion, now itself protected by a restrictive order, and it maintained this change in its Book of Discipline until today. In the first thirty years, works from authors like Walter Rauschenbusch were studied in Brazilian Methodism soon after their publication. Concerning atonement, his contributions definitely affirmed the path already chosen, introducing solidarity as a key term of his theory of atonement, in substitution to classic atonement theories:¹²

How did Jesus bear sins, which he did not commit? The old theology replied, by imputation. But guilt and merit are personal. They cannot be transferred from one person to another. [...] Imputation sees humankind as a mass of individuals, and the debts of every individual are transferred to Christ. The solution does not lie in that way.

Neither is it enough to say that Jesus bore our sins by sympathy. His contact with sin was a matter of experience as well as sympathy, and experience cuts deeper. Childbirth and travail reveal the realities of life to a woman more than sympathetic observation.

How did Jesus bear our sins? The bar to a true understanding of the atonement has been our individualism. The solution to the problem lies in the recognition of solidarity.

By his human life, Jesus was bound up backwards and forwards and sideward with the life of humanity. [...] Palestine was only a little corner of the Roman Empire, but the full life of humanity was there, just as a man's little finger is filled with the flow of life, which nourishes his whole body. [...] The stronger and more universal a human personality is, the more will he / consciously absorb the general life and identify himself with it. To a genius, or to one whose social feeling is made vivid and sensitive by love, even small experiences unlock life, and from a small circle, one may prolong great sectors into the wider concentric circles. Jesus had an unparalleled sense of solidarity. Thereby he had the capacity to generalize his personal experiences and make them significant of the common life.¹³

A little further on, he addressed forensic (Anselm and Calvin) and governmental (Grotius) theories.

¹¹ Igreja Metodista Episcopal, Sul. *Credo Social. Doutrinas e Disciplinas da Igreja Metodista Episcopal, Sul, 1918*. Edição brasileira (São Paulo: Casa Publicadora Metodista, 1919) 404- 405 [§808].

¹² "None of the later theories of the atonement is taught, or even touched, in the sayings of Jesus, except perhaps at the Lord's Supper. The only clear interpretation of his death from his own mind is this, that he ranged his sufferings in line with those of the prophets. This lifts the experiences and functions of the prophets to a very high level in the redemption of mankind". Walter Rauschenbusch, *A theology for the social gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918) 260.

¹³ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A theology for the social gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918) 245-246.

But, taken in connection with his life, as the inevitable climax of his prophetic career, his death had an essential place in his work of establishing solidarity and reconciliation between God and man. It was his supreme act of opposition to sin; not even the fear or the pangs of death could make him yield anything of what God had given him to hold. It was the supreme act, also, of obedience to God, to which he was moved by love to God and loyalty to his Kingdom. Moreover, as we shall see, his power to assimilate others to his God-consciousness and to gather a new humanity, was influenced by his death, and the / creation of such an effective nucleus is essential to any real reconciliation. This conception is free from the artificial and immoral elements inherent in all forensic and governmental interpretations of the atonement. It begins with the solidarity between God and Christ and proceeds to the solidarity between God and mankind¹⁴. It deals with social and religious realities. It connects the idea of reconciliation and the idea of the Kingdom of God. It does not dispense with the moral effort of men and the moral renewal of social life but absolutely demands both. It furnishes a mystic basis for the social revolution. It would be a theological conception which the social gospel could utilize and enforce.¹⁵

As the US and Brazilian Methodists before, Rauschenbusch argued that one key question for the testimony of the Church is its option for one or another theory of atonement. His personal emphasis around the term “solidarity”¹⁶ was an important ingredient for those who understood then reconciliation also in its horizontal or Ephesian terms. So it was not “by accident”, that the new Church created in 1930 a Brazilian version of the Social Creed, which then differed from its American version¹⁷, given an extra consideration to the situation of rural workers and the female vote — constitutionally guaranteed in Brazil in 1932.¹⁸ Whereas the soteriological accent on reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship was maintained, the public implication of a theology of God’s friendship to humankind became additionally important. The inclusion of the Social Creed in the Brazilian Manual for Church Members in 1921¹⁹ shows how the Brazilian church then understood the Social Creed as an orientation for Christian citizenship as a whole, and not only as an orientation for the Church’s officials.

When the MEC, S, approved the autonomy of the Brazilian Mission in 1930, the social gospel discourse was also present in the bishop’s key address:

Bishop James Cannon Junior made a discourse about the “The Church and the Social Gospel”. He exposed the fundamental principles of all Church activities and explained carefully the difference between a direct

¹⁴ I kept the original form.

¹⁵ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A theology*, p. 260.

¹⁶ Rauschenbusch used the term in several senses. “We are linked in a solidarity of evil and guilt with all who have done the same before us, and all who will do the same after us. In so far then as we, by our conscious actions or our passive consent, have repeated the sins which killed Jesus, we have made ourselves guilty of his death”. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A theology*, p. 258.

¹⁷ First introduced in Brazil in 1918. See Igreja Methodista Episcopal, Sul, *Credo Social*. Doutrinas e Disciplinas da Igreja Methodista Episcopal, Sul, 1918. Edição brasileira (São Paulo: Casa Publicadora Methodista, 1919) 404- 405 [§808].

¹⁸ All Brazilian versions see in: Helmut Renders (Org.), *Sal da terra e luz do mundo: 100 anos do Credo Social Metodista* (São Bernardo do Campo: Editeo, 2009).

¹⁹ Paul Eugene Buyers, *Manual para os membros da Igreja Methodista* (São Paulo: Imprensa Metodista, 1921) 110-112.

Gospel appeal to every individual soul and the necessary relationship of each individual to society. The principle of human brotherhood [...] should finally transform the whole human society. This principle should be applied in all industrial, international and social relations. [...] The Bishop stated that it is in fact very important and significant that the Methodist Church of Brazil showed in its first public meeting [...], emphatically its attitude in descer to the social Gospel of Jesus, putting this new Church in the front line with the best of Methodism since the days of Wesley.²⁰

The affirmation, “The principle of human brotherhood [...] should finally transform the whole human society” can be understood in very different terms. Soteriologically spoken, it is rooted in the understanding of reconciliation as overcoming enmity by friendship. There is a wide discussion about the Social Gospel as an expression of liberal theology, what caused it a double rejection, first by conservative up to fundamentalist theologians since the early twentieth century, and from the thirties onwards especially by North American new orthodox Theologians. The address reveals also, that there had still some work to be done to convince parts of the Brazilian Methodism of the public extension of its theology of reconciliation creating a narrative between an in those days still quite new Social Gospel and “[...] the best of Methodism since the days of Wesley”. Nevertheless, the confirmation was made and, as we have already mentioned, the only theological and constitutional relevant text produced at this conference in 1930, beside the declaration of autonomy, was a new Brazilian Social Creed.

Sedimenting reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship and its public dimension in the Social Creed from 1971

In Brazil a more open rejection of this theological, ecclesiastical and social project occurred within the Protestant Churches, especially Baptist and Presbyterian Churches, partially the Methodist Church, openly with the beginning of the dictatorship in 1964. Rauschenbusch’s understanding of atonement as divine solidarity, which leads to the solidarity of the church for humankind, had anticipated up to a certain point what Dietrich Bonhoeffer had formulated in the thirties: “The Church is the Church only when it exists for others”²¹. After the war, in the early sixties, the works of Bonhoeffer were read in Brazil, although he and Karl Barth were known before.²² His theology of discipleship was

²⁰ Igreja Metodista do Brasil, *Actas da Comissão Constituinte*. (São Paulo, 28 de Agosto a 2 de Setembro de 1930) 40. James Cannon Junior was actually a very conservative Bishop and one of the main leaders of the prohibitionist movement. Involved in a scandal soon after this event, he retired.

²¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung / Entwurf für eine Arbeit* (DBW8) (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015) 560f.

²² Brazilian Methodist knew early what was happening in Germany. “Carlos Barth, acknowledged as the greatest theologian of today, will abandon, under environmental pressure, his chair at the University of Bonn” (Karl Barth (See *Expositor Cristão* 28/06/1933, p. 16). “The Church of Christ bereaved / (On the subject of Protestantism in Germany) / The latest news of the Protestant work in Germany is the as bleak as possible. [...] Dr. Baez Camargo (...) says that the danger that threatening the German Evangelical Church is even more terrible than communism. Communism attacks and chases openly. [...] meanwhile, with Hitlerism, it does not happen like that. [...] Hitler is watching the church and giving it what it wants. (...) Most, if not most of the German church, accepted the movement of paganization called ‘German Christianity’. / But, ‘7,000 have not bent their knees before Baal.’ Karl Barth, the famous theologian at the University of Bonn, wrote a booklet entitled ‘Theologische Existenz Heute’ (Theological Existence of today) in which he declares himself against this movement of Nazification of the Gospel. [...] Barth says that the only thing he has to say about this ‘German Christianity’ who rejects the Jews is - NO. / [...] In

also rooted in the specific understanding of reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by God's friendship in Christ:

How then does love conquer? By asking not how the enemy treats her but only how Jesus treated her. The love for our enemies takes us along the way of the cross and into fellowship with the Crucified. The more we are driven along this road, the more certain is the victory of love over the enemy's hatred. For then, it is not the disciple's own love, but the love of Jesus Christ alone, who for the sake of his enemies went to the cross and prayed for them as he hung there. In the face of the cross, the disciples realized that they too were his enemies and that he had overcome them by his love. It is this that, which opens the disciple's eyes, and enables him to see his enemy as a brother. He knows that he owes his very life to one, who thought he was his enemy, treated him as a brother and accepted him, who made him his neighbour and drew him into fellowship with himself. The disciple can now perceive that even his enemy is the object of God's love and that he stands like himself beneath the cross of Christ. God asked us nothing about our virtues or our vices, for in his sight even our virtue was ungodliness. God's love sought out his enemies who needed it, and whom he deemed worthy of it. God loves his enemies—that is the glory of his love, as every follower of Jesus knows; through Jesus, he has become a partaker in this love.²³

I quoted only one of the central parts, but the text contains much more references.²⁴ Bonhoeffer not only reaffirmed what was already a tradition in Brazilian Methodism, but

addition to the pressure the Nazi system imposes on the churches by paganizing them, we cannot forget the other two fundamental ideas that prevail in modern Germany racial prejudice and the resurrection of the militaristic spirit. [...] We believe that the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Brazil should take steps to send a message to the leaders of the Spiritual Resistance, expressing our sympathy and longing for success in their efforts. It should also set a day for all evangelicals pray in the morning, fasting, in favor of the Christian Church in Germany" (MAGALHÃES, *Expositor Cristão*, 06/20/1934, pp. 5-6). See Helmut Renders, "Compromisso pastoral, clareza teológica e cidadania: a Declaração Teológica de Barmen como resultado de uma interação entre Igreja e academia teológica". In: *Caminhando*, vol. 14, n. 2, p. 109-128 (jul. / dez. 2009). Online at: <https://www.metodista.br/revistas/revistas-ims/index.php/CA/article/view/1113/1139>. Consulted on March, 12, 2018.

²³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The cost of discipleship* (Revised and unabridged edition containing material not previously translated. Translated from the German NACHFOLGE first published 1937 by Chr. Kaiser Verlag München by R. H. Fuller, with some revision by Irmgard Booth. 20th Edition, New York, 1979) 166-167.

²⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The cost of discipleship*, 45, 46, 85, 158, 164: "We are fighting today for costly grace. The mercy and love of God are at work even in the midst of his enemies. It is the same Jesus Christ, who of his grace calls us to follow him, and whose grace saves the murderer who mocks him on the cross in his last hour. And if we answer the call to discipleship, where will it lead us? What decisions and partings will it demand? To answer this question we shall have to go to him, for only he knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows the journey's end. But we do know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy. [...] Who is my neighbor? Does this question admit of any answer? Is it my kinsman, my compatriot, my brother Christian, or my enemy? [...] Evil becomes a spent force when we put up no resistance. By refusing to pay back the enemy in his own coin, and by preferring to suffer without resistance, the Christian exhibits the sinfulness of contumely and insult. Violence stands condemned by its failure to evoke counter-violence. [...] In the New Testament our enemies are those who harbour hostility against us, not those against whom we cherish hostility, for Jesus refuses to reckon with such a possibility. The Christian must treat his enemy as a brother, and requite his hostility with love. Christian love draws no distinction between one enemy and another, except that the more bitter our enemy's hatred, the greater his need of love. Be his enmity political or religious, he has nothing to expect from a follower of Jesus but unqualified love."

he radicalized it, what served the Church especially after 1964. My point is up to here that the social responsibility among Brazilian Social Gospellers is not so much an expression of liberal theology, but part of their soteriology and understanding of reconciliation. The capacity of parts of the Methodist Church to articulate resistance and finally, to resist against dictatorship becomes again visible by its special emphasis on reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship in its Social Creed from 1971.²⁵ It was created during the worst time of Brazilian military regime and sustained more clearly than ever its vision of the public calling of the Church with a theology of reconciliation within the enmity-friendship framework. This time, the opening is clearly Pauline,²⁶ combining Corinthians with Ephesians:

The Social-Political and Economic Order

[4] We believe that the one God was in Christ, **reconciling the world to himself** and creating a new order of things in history by for giving the sins of men and entrusting us **with the ministry of reconciliation**. [...]

5. The Methodist Church in the present situation of the country and the world considers clear perception of the following realities to be particularly important for its social responsibility:

- a) God created the nations to form a universal family. **His reconciling love in Jesus Christ overcomes barriers** between brothers and **destroys every form of discrimination of human beings**. The church is called to lead all to welcome and affirm one another as persons in all their relationships: in the family, in the neighbourhood, work, education, leisure, religion, and the exercise of political rights.
- b) **The reconciliation of the world in Jesus Christ is the source of justice, peace, and freedom among nations**; all the structures and authorities of society are called to participate in this new order. **The church is the community that exemplifies these new relations of forgiveness, justice, and freedom**, commanding them to governments and nations as a way towards a responsible policy of cooperation and peace.
- c) **Reconciliation between nations becomes particularly urgent at a time when countries are developing nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons**, diverting vast resources from constructive purposes and putting mankind²⁷ at risk.

²⁵ Helmut Renders, “75 anos do Credo Social brasileiro: uma investigação da interação entre igreja e esfera pública” (In: *Simpósio* 11 [1], ano XL 49, 2009): 43-65. Online at: http://www.academia.edu/3190528/RENDERS_Helmut_75_anos_do_Credo_Social_brasileiro_uma_investigacao_da_interacao_entre_igreja_e_esfera_publica_.In_Simposio_vol_11_1_ano_XL_n_49_nov_2009_p_43-65 Consulted on February, 10, 2018.

²⁶ Probably, because one of his major contributors, Ely Eser Barreto César, was a trained New Testament Scholar firmly rooted in the discussion of Pauline Theology in a liberation perspective. See Ely Eser Barreto César. *A fé como ação na história: hermenêutica do novo testamento no contexto da América Latina* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1988).

²⁷ The Creed from 1971 does not yet use inclusive language (= “humankind”).

- d) **The reconciliation of man in Jesus Christ makes clear that enslaving poverty in a world of plenty is a grave violation of God's order**; the identification of Jesus Christ with the needy and the oppressed, and the priority of justice in the Scriptures, proclaim that the cause of the poor in the world is that of his disciples.
- e) The poverty of an enormous part of the human family, a result of economic imbalances, unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenceless, lack of knowledge, is a grave negation of God's justice.
- f) The extreme cultural, social, and economic **inequalities are a denial of justice and put peace in risk**, and urgently require appropriate intervention with effective planning to overcome them.
- g) It is unjust to increase the **wealth of the rich and the power of the strong be increasing the distress of the poor** and oppressed. Programs to increase the national income should provide for an equitable distribution of resources, combat discrimination, overcome economic injustices, and free man from want.²⁸

Read within the framework of reconciliation as a process of overcoming enmity by friendship, these affirmations get the following sense: the reasons for barriers and hostilities are overcome in Christ by his attitude to the world ("His reconciling love in Jesus Christ overcomes barriers...") shown at the cross. This introduces to the world a new logic and reason ("The reconciliation of man in Jesus Christ makes clear...") with the potential to overcome enmities ("The reconciliation of the world in Jesus Christ is the source..."). In case that the human beings embrace the project of reconciliation and start initiatives to overcome enmity by approximation within the horizon to establish friendship, transformations are at hand. Part of this transformation is to challenge sacrificial logics perpetuat-

²⁸ PELIKAN, Jaroslav; HOTCHKISS, Valerie (eds.). "The Methodist Church of Brazil, Social Creed, 1971". In: Ibidem. *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*. Volume III: Part Five: Modern Christianity (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003) 735 (Paragraph 3.I.5a-f). The original text in Portuguese is:

"a) Deus criou os povos para constituírem uma família universal. Seu amor reconciliador em Jesus Cristo vence barreiras entre irmãos e destrói toda forma de discriminação entre os homens. A Igreja é chamada a conduzir todos a se receberem e a se afirmarem uns aos outros como pessoas em todas as suas relações : na família, na vizinhança, no trabalho, na educação, no lazer, na religião e no exercício dos direitos políticos.

b) A reconciliação do mundo em Jesus Cristo é a fonte da justiça, da paz e da liberdade entre as nações; todas as estruturas e poderes da sociedade são chamados a participar dessa nova ordem. A Igreja é a comunidade que exemplifica essas relações novas do perdão, da justiça, e da liberdade, recomendando-as aos governos e nações como caminho para uma política responsável de cooperação e paz.

c) A reconciliação das nações se torna especialmente urgente num tempo em que países desenvolvem armas nucleares, químicas e biológicas, desviando recursos ponderáveis de fins construtivos e pondo em risco a humanidade.

d) A reconciliação do homem em Jesus Cristo torna claro que a pobreza escravizadora em um mundo de abundância é uma grave violação da ordem de Deus; a identificação de Jesus Cristo com o necessitado e com os oprimidos, a prioridade da justiça nas Escrituras, proclamam que a causa dos pobres do mundo é a causa dos seus discípulos." The Portuguese text of the Social Creed from 1970/71 is published in every book of Discipline. Online at: <http://www.metodista.org.br/credo-social-da-igreja-metodista-nossas-bases-biblicas>. Consulted on March, 12, 2018.

ed by “(...) economic imbalances, unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of knowledge (...)” as very real forms of structural social-political and economic enmity established and defended by legal systems.²⁹ In a more recent dogmatic, Gerhard Sauter refers in a similar sense to this aspect as *Aussöhnung* (effective reconciliation between persons or nations) as a result of *Versöhnung* (reconciliação).³⁰ This Creed as Creed of the Church remembers what the Methodist theologian Walter Wink has done in his very particular way fifteen years later.³¹ No doubt that the question of atonement, and even the more classical choices, was also an issue in the Theology of liberation.

As we have seen, the interpretation of the death of Christ as sacrifice is one of many. The New Testament texts themselves do not all allow the interpretation to be absolutized as it has been in the history of the faith within the Latin church. Nevertheless, we ought to say that Christ’s death was a consequence of the atmosphere of ill-will, hatred, and selfishness in which the Jews and all humanity lived and still live today. Jesus did not allow himself to be determined by this situation, but loved us to the end. He took himself the perverted condition; he was in solidarity with us. He did alone so that no one else in the world would die alone; he is with each person so that all might partake of the life that manifested itself in the resurrection: eternal life in communion with God, with other/s, and with the cosmos” (BOFF, 1987, p. 133).

As far as I can see it, Methodist theologians in Brazil addressed this since its first change of the 2nd Article in 1888 and from then on, constantly. In the late seventieth, they appreciated the Catholic mobilization and advances, but they did not enter this dialogue with empty hands, and they were eager to translate their theology to their people.³² Coming back, to the beginning of this chapter, Rauschenbusch’s accent on solidarity and Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the Church be the Church (of Christ) only existing for others found its way into the building of a Brazilian Methodist identity. Its famous expression is a motto coined in 1982: “Methodist Church, a missionary community in service to the people”.³³ However, as we shall see now, it would not be the last word about the issue of how to describe best the relationship between the church and the world.

A new dimension: reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship and convivence

In the eighties, the theology of atonement focusing on overcoming human enmity by divine friendship got a new format in Brazilian missiology, considering now the outer

²⁹ What is to me the essence of Ephesians 2, 14-15 when it refers to the work of Christ as “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances”, at least when law is here not understood as restricted to religious laws, but, as a form to structure the Roman Empire.

³⁰ Gerhard Sauter, *Zugänge zur Dogmatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 339.

³¹ See: Walter Wink, *Violence and nonviolence in South Africa* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987) [new edition: *Jesus and nonviolence: A Third Way* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 2003)]; Walter Wink, *When the powers fall: reconciliation in the healing of nations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a new millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

³² See also Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. *Transforming atonement: a political theology of the cross*: Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009, who shows the significance of one’s preferential model of atonement.

³³ “Igreja Metodista, comunidade missionária ao serviço do povo”.

relations of the churches. Created as a Latin American contribution to mission encounters, the concept of *convivência* (convivence in the sense of living together, living side by side or alongside one another) expressed a new approach. *Convivência* described first, the interaction between Brazilian indigenous population and mission endeavors since the late seventies early eighties of the 20th century. Soon, the German Missiologist Theo Sundermeier introduced it to the European debate on ecumenical³⁴, lately, also European³⁵ existence, north-south³⁶ relations, as a part of a xenology³⁷ and a hermeneutic of encounter³⁸. As we have already mentioned, Sundermeier introduced it in German circles to counter Dietrich Bonhoeffer's idea of Christian existence as pro-existence³⁹, which he considered as too one-sided and not sufficient cooperative or dialogical, and I think he made a good point.⁴⁰

I cannot develop the whole discussion here in detail, but I like to point out the strength of the concept comparing it with other metaphors or concepts of the encounter of different people in one nation or between different nations. First, it does not pronounce a unilateral self-negation or self-sacrifice as the concept of the “melting pot” nor does it defend violent exclusion as Apartheid; then, it does not promote an annexation or adaptation without considering the necessity to guarantee specific rights for an incoming group as integration. Last, not least, it does not embrace the potential unrelatedness of a mere multicultural proposal, which can develop towards ghettoization. On the other hand, is *convivência* sensible not only for questions of ethnic and cultural identity but the challenge to create open societies build on the basic consensus and commitment to invest into the common good by providing access to the mutual construction of the political, social, economic and ideological aspects of society.

When I started to discuss the efficiency of the model in a concrete setting in 1994 — I was then responsible together with others for the organization of an Afro-German charge in Hamburg —, I found it helpful to add an aspect and to refer to “Convivence and cooperation”⁴¹. Something similar did the Lutheran Brazilian theologian Rudolf von Sinner when he referred to “Confidence and Convivence”⁴², speaking of another essential ingredient. Convivence needs and challenges faith. Besides this, he grounded his proposal in two

³⁴ Theo Sundermeier, *Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz (Ökumenische Existenz Heute, 1986) 1: 49-100.*

³⁵ Theo Sundermeier, *Konvivenz: Ein Modell für Europa? (International Journal of Orthodox Theology (2012) 3 (4)*

³⁶ Theo Sundermeier, *Sich verändern durch Zusammenleben. Konvivenz zwischen Nord und Süd. (Evangelische Kommentare, 1986) 89:14-16.*

³⁷ Theo Sundermeier, *Den Fremden wahrnehmen: Bausteine für eine Xenologie (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1992).*

³⁸ Theo Sundermeier, *Den Fremden verstehen: eine praktische Hermeneutik (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).*

³⁹ Theo Sundermeier, *Sich verändern durch Zusammenleben. Konvivenz zwischen Nord und Süd. (Evangelische Kommentare, 1986) 89: 14.*

⁴⁰ The British Methodist Church in Great Britain and Ireland used since 1985 “Mission alongside the poor” and the Mission board of the United Methodist in Germany referred in the ninetieth to its mission as “Mission is not a one way” (“Mission ist keine Einbahnstraße”).

⁴¹ RENDERS, Helmut. *So seid ihr nun nicht mehr Gäste und Fremdlinge, sondern Mitbürger der Heiligen und Gottes Hausgenossen: Erfahrungen und Gestaltung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen zwei Gemeinden ghanaischer und deutscher Prägung auf dem Bezirk Hamburg-Eppendorf der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche in Deutschland. Thesis / Doctor of Ministry. Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, 1998. (especially: p. 32-34).*

⁴² Rudolf von Sinner. *Confiança e convivência: reflexões éticas e ecumênicas (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2007).* Interestingly, refers Sinner only to Sundermeier and not to a Latin-American author.

chapters on a Trinitarian argument.⁴³ This is fine, but I would suggest discussing convivence also within the enmity-friendship framework or in a christological and soteriological perspective. Honestly, I am not sure whether this ever has been done, but I am convinced that to describe its theological legitimacy in soteriological and Christological terms and the theology of the cross would give to it deeper roots able to overcome its potential danger to turn into the mere promotion of “MultiKulti” (Multi- or pluricultural societies) or, even worse, ghettoization. In his intriguing study *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf puts the problem of convivence challenged by wartime and conflicts the following way:

“Too much injustice was done for us to be friends; too much blood was shed to live together,” are the words that echo all too often in regions wrecked with conflict. A clear line will separate “them” from “us”. They will remain “they” and we will remain “we”, and we will never include “them” when we speak of “us”. Such clean identities, living at a safe distances from one another, may be all that is possible or even desirable in some cases at certain junctures of peoples’ mutual history. But a parting of these ways is clearly not yet peace. Much more than just the absence of hostility sustained by the absence of contact, peace is *communion between former enemies*. Beyond offering forgiveness, Christ’s passion aims at restoring such communion – even with the enemies that persistently refused to be reconciled.

At the heart of the cross is Christ’s stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and creating space within himself for the offender to come in. Read as the culmination of the larger narrative of God’s dealing with humanity, the cross says that despite its manifests enmity towards God, humanity belongs to God; God will not be God without humanity.⁴⁴

I would even say “(...) the cross says that despite its manifests enmity [especially, the author] towards (...)” God’s, humanity, “(...) humanity (...)” — now in a double sense — “(...) belongs to God.” Even without the inclusion of my alternative reading, Volf makes here a strong affirmation, which to me translates what the Social Creed of the Methodist Church in Brazil said in 1971: the reconciliation of humanity in Jesus Christ indicates a way even in very hostile settings. Convivence is the attempt or endeavour to challenge enmities of all sorts by a new encounter, which interprets otherness as a gift and not as plague: human diversity is like biodiversity: good, desirable and helpful.

In the Brazilian Methodist Church, this understanding of mission especially among original population sustained the work of the missionary and later bishop Scilla Franco

⁴³ My main theological reason for this is that for me the analogy between the immanent Trinity and the social life of human beings sounds very idealistic, moralistic or kind of overtaxing. A similar idea I found in Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: a theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996) 109: “Both the modern project of emancipation and its post-modern critique suggest that a *nonfinal reconciliation in the midst of the struggle against oppression* is what a responsible theology must be designed to facilitate. Anything else would amount to a seductive theology of a false liberation that would prove most unhelpful for those in whose name it has been promulgated and who need it most.” “Nonfinal” describes a process who is still open, not perfect, but perfecting.

⁴⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: a theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996) 126.

who started his work in Mato Grosso do Sul alongside the Kaiowá and Terena in 1971⁴⁵. The concept of convivence guided this work and entered an official document in 1999:

A ministry as convivence

The Methodist Church, from its pioneers John and Charles Wesley, has been called to learn from the Indians in dialogue and respect, and to serve them in humility and solidarity in the loving spirit of Jesus Christ and affirms their Christian responsibility for their integral well-being, expressed in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Therefore, the Church understands that:

A. “Evangelization, as part of the Mission, is to incarnate divine love in the most diverse forms of human reality, so that Jesus Christ may be confessed as Lord, Savior, Deliverer **and Reconciler**. Evangelization signals and communicates the love of God in human life and in society through worship, proclamation, testimony, and service” (Canons of the Methodist Church, Plan for Life and the Mission of the Church, 87).

B. The pastoral of coexistence presupposes being present with the indigenous community, participating in its daily life, learning, discovering and becoming a partner in the defense of life alongside the people [...]

C. The Gospel is only good news for indigenous peoples as it helps them to strengthen their own cultures to rebuild their rights on the land and to regain the dignity that the sons and daughters of God possess.⁴⁶

It is evident here, that the Church is aware of its own potential of enmity, as it goes into an intercultural encounter in a very privileged position. It represents an established institution which belongs to a very powerful, violent, and at the same time attractive society. Again, the reference to “reconciliation” is present, as an attribute of Jesus Christ. The step towards a project of convivence was quite revolutionary in its time, needed permanent backup⁴⁷ but has been always and continued to be questioned⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Scilla Franco, *Minha prece: coletanea de textos indigenas e missionarios do Bispo Scilla Franco*. (São Bernardo do Campo: EDITEO/Imprensa Metodista, 1992). Sobre ele veja Eber Borges da Costa, *Tapaporã - caminho bom: análise da prática missionária de Scilla Franco entre os índios Kaiowá e Terena no Mato Grosso do Sul - 1972 a 1979*. (Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências da Religião) - Faculdade de Humanidades e Direito, Programa de Pós Ciências da Religião da Universidade Metodista de São Paulo, São Bernardo do Campo, 2011).

⁴⁶ Original text: “*Uma pastoral de convivência / A Igreja Metodista, desde seus pioneiros João e Carlos Wesley, tem sido chamado a aprender com os índios em diálogo e respeito, e a servi-los em humildade e solidariedade, no espírito de amor de Jesus Cristo e afirma sua responsabilidade cristã pelo bem-estar integral, expressa nas escrituras do Antigo e Novo testamentos. / Portanto a Igreja entende que: / (A) “A evangelização, como parte da Missão, é encarnar o amor divino, nas formas mais diversas da realidade humana, para que Jesus Cristo seja confessado como Senhor, Salvador, Libertador e Reconciliador. A evangelização sinaliza e comunica o amor de Deus na vida humana e na sociedade através da adoração, proclamação, testemunho e serviço” (Cânones da Igreja Metodista, Plano para a vida e a Missão da Igreja, p. 87). (B) A pastoral da convivência pressupõe o estar presente com a comunidade indígena, participando na vida cotidiana, aprendendo, descobrindo e tornando-se parceira com cada povo, na defesa da vida. [...] (C) O Evangelho só constitui boas novas para os povos indígenas à medida que os ajuda a fortalecer as suas próprias culturas a refazer os seus direitos sobre a terra e a recobrar a dignidade que os filhos e as filhas de Deus possuem”*. Colégio Episcopal da Igreja Metodista. *Diretrizes pastorais para a ação missionária indigenista* [Biblioteca vida e missão, documentos, 9] (São Paulo: Cedro, 1999) 16-17.

⁴⁷ Helmut Renders, “Convivência: coragem de uma missão sensível e profética”. (In: Expositor Cristão, São Paulo, v. 1, p. 3 - 3, 15 jan. 2002).

A new horizon: reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship and hospitality

The last term I would like to connect with the enmity-friendship framework is the more recent appreciation of the praxis of hospitality. As far as I can see it at the moment, this discussion is mainly not developed in the two-thirds world, but in the one-third-world, mainly in response to migration. In the Methodist Church in Brazil, it has not arrived at an institutional level. In other places, it is promoted by philosophers⁴⁹ with a wide response among theologians⁵⁰, especially, practical or pastoral ones.⁵¹ Among them, the positions nearer to mine are surely the feminist or postcolonial perspectives.⁵² This is why they remember the radical roots of hospitality, preserved in the Greek word *philoxenia*, the brotherly and sisterly love for the stranger, the strange, the different other. *Philoxenia* is the opposite of *xenophobia* or *homophobia*, and all the other forms of rejection and exclusion. For sure, the stranger is not necessarily an enemy. This becomes clearer when we study the Bible. In biblical Hebrew, the authors use three different words, not only to name but also to describe strangers: זָר (zar) נַכְרִי (*nacri*) and גַּר (*gar*). *Zar* represents the rich political or military enmity; *nacri* is a person who may be a residing sales representative, who is respected but not integrated into the community. *Gar* is the poor stranger who came to Israel, for example, as an immigrant or a refugee. He or She — and he or she only — is considered a stranger worthy of care from the faith community, alongside the widows and the orphans.

In the New Testament, these privileges of a *gar* are extended by God in Christ to all humankind. Whereas in general hospitality refers in Greek to a *xenos*, a stranger, demonstrates at least Ephesian 2.11-19 that both concepts, stranger and enemy, whose enmity has to be overcome, were seen in approximation to one another. The text parallels “The cross has slain the enmity thereby” (Eph 2.16) with “... no more strangers and foreigners, but

⁴⁸ At the beginning of the new millennium, “new” mission concepts arrived. See Helmut Renders, “Entre ‘Tupi ou não Tupi’ ou a (não tão) ingênuas continuação da conquista? Elementos para um referencial teórico de uma teologia amazônica metodista.” In: *Caminhando*, vol. 8, n. 2, 2003, p. 212-222. (jul. / dez. 2003); Helmut Renders, *A Igreja Metodista na Amazônia e a Questão da Amazônia*. In: Clovis Pinto de Castro. (Org.). *Meio Ambiente e Missão: a responsabilidade ecológica das igrejas*. 1ed (São Bernardo do Campo, SP: EDITEO, 2003) 135-154.

⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, Anne Dufourmantelle. *Of_hospitality* (Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁵⁰ Bell Mathews, *Hospitality and the New Testament Church* (An Historical and Exegetical Study. ThD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1964); John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission Overtures to Biblical Theology Series*, eds. Walter Brueggemann and John R. Donahue (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Arthur Sutherland, *I Was A Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006).

⁵¹ Pamela J. Buck; Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001); Christine Pohl, *Hospitality, a practice and a way of life*, 2002. Online at: http://www.mennovision.org/Vol%203%20No%201/Pohl_Hospitality.pdf; Daniel Homan; Lonni Collins Pratt, *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love: Benedict's Way of Love*, 2nd Edition (Paraclete Press, 2005); Amos Young, *Hospitality and the others: Pentecost, Christian practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Jessica Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2012).

⁵² Letty Mandeville Russel. “Postcolonial challenges on the practice of hospitality”. In: Maura Ryan and Brian Linnane (editors). *A just and true love: feminism and the frontiers of theological ethics*. Essays in honor of Margaret A. Farley (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); Letty Mandeville Russel, *Just hospitality: God's Welcome in a world of difference* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

fellow-citizens...” (Eph 2.19).⁵³ The discussion about hospitality belongs to the later texts of the New Testament and the poetical affirmation in Hebrews that *xenoi* can be angels (Hebrew 13.2) is probably one of the most beautiful forms to describe otherness as divine in potential. Not to forget, the first virtue of a bishop, following Titus, is the promotion of *philoxenia* (Titus 1.8). Hospitality, as *philoxenia*, which proposes to overcome different levels of enmity or the traumatic remembrance of vulnerability and displacement as a stranger by friendship, finds its deepest roots in the soteriological dimension of the theology of reconciliation and its aim to overcome enmity by nothing else but friendship. Returning to Brazilian Methodism, which invested in the last twenty years a lot of energy in discipleship programs. I believe it would be revolutionary to combine these affords with the Brazilian focus on reconciliation as overcoming human enmity by divine friendship, or in the Boenhoeferian terms, focus on discipleship as grounding friends and members of the church in the message of reconciliation to practice the overcoming of enmity by friendship.

Final considerations

I hope that I was able at this point to make clear why I consider the ministry of reconciliation a “deep” Revolution in potential, in reference and with appreciation to the theological and ecclesiastical work done in a nowadays independent but still associated Methodist Church. I see a constant will and ability to challenge frontiers, to learn within the cultural and social boundaries, an exploration of possibilities, nurtured by a theology of reconciliation as the *cantus firmus*. I believe this exploration sometimes was revolutionary and that the change of the 2nd article, the statement in 1971 concerning the public witness of the Church and the application of convivence deserve our respect. I am although convinced, that the paradigm of hospitality should be integrated into the discipleship program. This would be a distinct contribution of Brazilian Methodism to the people and, as I am convinced, to the Brazilian society. It has to address enmity and create spaces, which serve as glass houses with the potential to overcome it. The theology of reconciliation is a consistent way to do it and the concepts of hospitality and convivence its inner and outer practice and practical expression. Challenging the boundaries of enmity by offering friendship, may help the churches to grow in its ecumenical and social commitment in times when anxiety seems to overrun them together with the nations where they are serving Christ.

It was in the ninetieth century that Methodists wanted to be known as “friends of all and enemies of none”. This never was meant as an invitation to avoid positions, not to take sides, not to commit oneself, but it should be understood as a soteriological statement: be not the cause of enmity, but if there is enmity, overcome it by nothing else but perseverant⁵⁴ friendship. That is the way God has done it in Jesus Christ, does it in His Church and in the world. This always sounded utopian in the original sense of the word until the word once again transformed the world in time and space.

⁵³ Therefore, Ephesians makes a point which may lead us to attribute to the migrant and stranger not only the right of visitation (*Besuchsrecht*), but of residence (*Gastrecht*), to understand sanctuary churches and cities not as the end but a mean towards the concept that no one is illegal. See Thomas Nail. “Migrant cosmopolitanism”. In: *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 29:2 (April 2015) 187-199.

⁵⁴ Here is not the time and place to develop this idea further, but, “perseverant friendship” I interpret as nonviolent resistance what needs a firm theology of convivence and hospitality. I appreciate very much the work done about this among Mennonite theologians. My personal key reference is the Methodist theologian Walter Wink.