

Short address at the conference “Aldri mere 22. Juli.”

By Peter Skov-Jakobsen, bishop of Copenhagen.

There is one nasty thought that the world cannot escape: Evil is part of life. We are working hard all the time to combat evil with all sorts of means from education to combat by arms.

I'm a great believer in the project of enlightenment – I shall never surrender in that fight. I do believe that education helps. I do believe that the learned discourse helps.

I do believe that there is something called common sense and common beliefs.

But however cultured, I also know that evil exists – it occurs in people's lives, in our lives, and it arises in societies, in parties, in churches - all over the place.

I do believe in the project of enlightenment but I also know that in the end it all depends in our capacity to take part in the conversion of the hearts!

As people of faith, as theologians, as believers we always have to ask ourselves how we treat our notion of revelation. Believers have faith and trust in something that was given to humanity by God, and we normally call it the revelation of God. This revelation we see as truth proclaimed in the world for people to grasp with faith in the pursuit of freedom and truth.

We have to be aware that revelation is not perceived in a totalitarian way. I mention this because I think there is a problem, which we don't always realize. In religious communities there is always a danger to confuse the word of God with my own words! You could also claim that the free thinking and the critical thinking, which I will call theology, can be developed into ideology – into Christian ideology when it is in the church.

We often seem to forget that the pursuit of truth claims a lot of questions – as a matter of fact a never ending quest and a lot of answers which do not all go together in harmony.

My assertion is that we as believers always have to engage in a cultured conversation. We have to combine our certain beliefs with openness towards other faiths and other opinions. As a matter of fact, we do also have to grant God the prerogative of being God – it's not my opinions that are God.

As theologians we always have to be aware of the potential of violence and of peace in our traditions. We have both potentials. Religion is often used to legitimize violence against minorities or other religions.

Christian theology should have many ways and possibilities of escaping the violence and the totalitarian way of thinking. First of all there is the icon of the wandering Son of Man who takes up conversation with all sorts in his time being.

But there is also the possibility of the Trinity. The Trinity should be a force against simplicity of mind. We believe in God which means that we confront fundamentalism. Fundamentalism leads to a closed culture with too little experiment and too little loving phantasy (Heinsen).

Moralism is without the notion of the son of God which means that human beings get too selfconcentrated. Moralism has no passion and no wild phantasy.

It's the same with wild passion and sectarianism. Here you will often find too much wild phantasy and too little body and significance. It often develops into sentimentality and gets romantic.

In the Trinity there is endless conversation which means that nobody can claim the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But this does not mean that the world is given over to relativity – it means that the world is given over to thoughtfulness, prayer and studies.

22 July has taught us to be conscious of democracy. It has taught us that there is political evil in the world, but it also taught us to be steadfast in our belief in faith, hope and charity. It taught us that we still have to fight for our open societies. It taught us that we have to be aware of all the pictures of enemies. We have to be careful with our phobias because they will lead us to become distorted human beings. We must try to enforce the wish of free and open dialogue.

Without dialogue we shall submit ourselves to forces of despair and hopelessness.