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Religion in the Context of modern Culture and Politics: Problems and Prospects

The article deals with the phenomenon of religious and spiritual life in the context of the contradictory process of globalization and the growing ideological and cultural influence of the “production” of the media on the consciousness and spirituality of mankind, including religious and cultural heritage. An attempt is made to carry out a philosophical and methodological analysis of the modern world in new discourses and narratives of the culture of perception of religiosity: it is concluded that today it is difficult for states to find axiological landmarks outside the religious heritage. The problems and factors of preserving traditional religions in conditions of total tolerance are outlined. The author concludes that the influence of the religious factor as a factor of faith in the spiritual dimension of humanity is growing. The author is confident in the need to preserve traditional values and the importance of spiritual life. The article made a reasonable statement that our life today is maximally politicized; we are immersed in politics and political problems. It is concluded that in relations between the state and religious organizations today there are more problems than positive practices.

Keywords: religion, axiology, religious associations, humanism, traditional religions, political science, secularization, artificial intelligence, theology, worldview.

Introduction

Faith in God and existence of religion is important for mankind. Every person has his own view of the existence of God and the place and significance of religion in his life. Because today, our lives are more politicized than ever before, in the sense that we are immersed in political life and political problems, even (and especially) through culture and mass media. Answering the question about the existence of God, a person actually decides for himself the question of his worldview.

Therefore we prefer to recall the wise and simple in its genius through the centuries the thought of the ancient Greek poet Xenophanes, that “if cattle and horses and lions had hands or could paint with their hands and create works such as men do, horses like horses and cattle like cattle also would depict the gods’ shapes and make their bodies of such a sort as the form they themselves have” [1]. Nowadays, Xenophanes idea about the reason for the creation of gods due to ignorance, or little knowledge, is especially relevant, since people seek salvation in superstitions, belief in supernatural forces (including the worldwide conspiracy of oligarchs and world politicians, etc.), gods that are created again, in their own way.

The issue of the future of man and mankind has been updated today through the prism of the relationship between the nature of man and the nature of artificial intelligence, in the discourse of the problems of ethics and understanding of what in religion is called “created in the image and likeness” in relation to man. That is, in the modern world of the 21st century, one cannot speak of a single process of secularization or, on the contrary, of desecularization, for all mankind. It seems necessary to talk about a particular state, the peoples living in it, their religions, and the processes that are taking place in a particular state.

When discussing the problem of theism and atheism, it is appropriate to recall the well-known controversy between the Christian philosopher and theologian Alvin Platinga and the atheist Daniel Dennett. Alvin Platinga believes that faith in God is an innate feeling of God, knowledge about him, and knowledge is only a mental state when a person is convinced of the truth of something [2]. A student and follower of Platinga, the theologian Edmund Gettier (“Gettier law”) formulated the problem and the answer to it: “If information is reliable, but someone believes in it for unreasonable reasons, can this be considered knowledge? The opinion of a person is true and confirmed, but at the same time, in the strict sense, it is not knowledge. For example, when a person judges time by a stopped clock. The moment a person looked at the clock, it accidentally showed the correct time. According to these hours, a person formed his opinion about time. Is this opinion knowledge or not?” [3]. Thus, in the 21st century this controversy reflects the confrontation not between science and religion, but between theism and atheism. Science and religion today go in parallel, like two rivers in different places. For example, the exploration of space and the conduct of the services, rituals, etc. are present in the 21st century; one does not interfere with or oppose the other.

Experimental

To analyze the complex, ambiguous, and multidimensional worldview in the modern world in relation to resolving the problem of the existence of God and religion, the author considered an extensive amount of information from the history of philosophy, literature, cinema art and applied a systematic approach to examine various socio-philosophical concepts and scientific judgments related to the issues of interreligious, intercultural interaction, and related contradictions of politicization. The philosophical and religious reflections carried out in the work made it possible to identify the main problems of interaction between religious organizations and the state, which can be reduced to the general problem of the growing politicization of religion, which is fraught in the future with a possible change in the religious image of countries. Based on the analysis, an attempt was made to make an axiological forecast in terms of new threats and challenges.

The alignment of the event series in the article in changing the religious situation from a worldview perspective allowed us to show, on the one hand, the expansion of human knowledge, on the other hand, the emergence of new anthropological concepts, that is, new explanations of the nature and future of humanity, which increasingly consider and allow for human modifications that act as deconstructions of the essence of man and humanity. This approach allowed the author to express an opinion on the causes of contradictions in the interaction of religious organizations and the state.

Comparative method made it possible to compare the opinions of philosophers, thinkers, various scientists, modern authors of literary and film bestsellers (as a reflection of the ideological paradigms of mass consciousness) in the issues of interfaith dialogue, to carry out a conceptual understanding of the problem of the relevance of religion and religious worldview and to put forward a proposal on the need for purposeful formation of a scientific and ideological position to avoid “blurring the boundaries” of religion, on the one hand, philosophy and science, on the other hand, that is, non-politicization of the spiritual sphere of society.

Results and Discussion

Today, humanity has a different, contradictory understanding of man and his future. Because the knowledge of mankind is indisputably expanding and new anthropological concepts are emerging. New anthropological concepts are new explanations of the nature and future of mankind that increasingly consider and allow for human modifications, what can be called a deconstruction of the very essence of man and humanity. As examples of such a worldview, the author of this article provides the phenomenon of “Brains in a vat” by the American philosopher Hilary Putnam, which expresses our modern skepticism regarding a person’s confidence in the reality of his existence, or the philosophical and logical paradox “Ship of Theseus”, which can also be extrapolated to the essence and existence of religion in the modern world because it raises such questions as “How is existence without death possible and can a restored (recreated) existence be considered existence?” “And is it possible to consider that to be whole and original, which is created from parts?”. Today, medicine gives people new organs, instead of those given from birth naturally (from God). Humanity has replaced God through IVF (in vitro fertilization) procedures and cloning. In fact, it became God and carries out the act of creation. Another example is an idea suggested by Elon Musk and other billionaires to create a device for merging a virtual and living person through interfaces; also, new digital technologies are being created, and parts of the whole are increasingly replacing the original. The concept of “Knight of Faith” by Kierkegaard is good example of a human being who has an absolute believe in God in the face of an absurd world. From my perspective, a knight is associated with unconditional nobility and the same unconditional devotion, without reasoning about expediency. Also, it can be an image of sacrifice because the knight is disinterested in his devotion and his faith. His faith is absolute. According to Kierkegaard, faith must always be absolute, and he means not only and not so much religious faith. Simply in the face of the growing absurdity in the world in which we are forced to live, we must find some anchors, some supports for ourselves to survive and not get lost, to keep that very spark of faith within us. Besides, I agree with the point of view of Kierkegaard that a knight is always alone and he cannot hide behind someone’s back. Therefore, he, that is, all of us, experience constant fear and find ourselves and experience a thrill of joy from our existence only when we overcome fear. It seems to me that all these ideas are connected, and they are opposed both to classical humanism, universal human values, and to traditional religions that affirm the absolute ideal of the human. In addition to it, Thomas Hobbes’ most interesting and still relevant image of “Leviathan”, the theme of religion and its influence on political processes, the life of the state, as well as the reverse influence of the state, can be traced clearly till the present. Today, it is difficult for states to find axiological landmarks without religious and cultural heritage. Therefore, the unprecedented surge of interest in

religion in modern society is understandable. It preserves the traditions and community of society. However, here it must be taken into account that in relations between the state and religious associations, in relation to religion and society, there are more problems in the growth of human transformation in traditional and non-traditional religious movements than positive practices.

In this context, the inclusion of a number of religious holidays and congratulation address by the heads of state in the media on religious holidays on behalf of state bodies is noteworthy phenomena. Despite the fact that church is separated from state within the framework of the current constitutions of the post-Soviet states, they position themselves as secular states. We are witnessing the use of religious expertise in political confrontation. Total tolerance as a phenomenon of the 21st century, in my opinion, has caused the creation and active functioning of entire religious TV channels which, like Netflix, are streaming, broadcast around the clock, e.g., channel of “Talim TV” (until February 26, 2021 – TV channel “The Asyl Arna”) in Kazakhstan and channel of “The Spas” in Russia. These are also such modern approaches to the problem of “digitalization” of religion; this is “pressure” by authorities, and not only in the television space, but also in online communities.

As for the opposite trend, namely the problem of secularization, then I think that cinema, as a phenomenon of mass culture of the “post-secular world” of the 20–21st centuries, is associated with new approaches to the use of classical religious images: the American film “Dogma”, an animated trilogy “Kung Fu Panda” (especially the first part), Japanese video games, and a special video game “Metro: Exodus”, where a new original religious system is generally constructed. With regard to secularization, although somewhat idiosyncratic, it seems that modern American society uses religion as psychotherapy. After all, it was American preachers who introduced the practice of gathering huge television audiences into social life, performing like artists or politicians in huge concert halls, combining quotes and ideas from the Bible with cases from their own lives and the lives of their loved ones — such mass telelessons of group psychotherapy, with elements of a sermon, hypnosis, theater and confession with open absolution and now popular in social networks “Wishes come true Marathon”.

There are a few examples on the given problem in the artistic culture of the 21st century. In the course of teaching Religious Studies, I discovered that most students are interested in Yelena Chudinova’s sensational and infamous dystopia “The Mosque of Notre Dame: 2048”. An ambiguous feeling arises after reading this odious dystopia. This resonant dystopia of the first years of the new 21st century is also a vivid example of the politicization of religion, its role and significance in modern society. It considers the nature of tolerance and tolerance should be mutual. Everyone should have the freedom of choice, namely to believe or not to believe in God, to have the right not to think like everyone else or to be like everyone else (“escape from freedom” by Erich Fromm). In the 21st century, it seems that everything has become subject to tolerance, and this sometimes reaches the point of absurdity, and not only in matters of religious faith. Coming-outs with or without reason have become a “common place”, sex change also, the absurdity grows like an avalanche, especially when one reads that there are already several dozen genders and non-binary personalities. It seems that tolerance has become a new global trend; the values of “total tolerance” dominate the entire media space. In this atmosphere, which Y. Chudinova wrote about at the beginning of this century, the 21st century has generally become a century of constantly sounding public repentances, both of individuals and entire countries (Germany, Sweden, USA, etc.). The question is that did the world become a better place after that?! Chudinova writes not about the destruction of people who profess a different religion, but about the need to remember their values, interests, families, future (leaving her political views and attitude towards Islam outside the brackets). The problem of tolerance, when it is understood as giving up one’s values in the name of a new neighbor, has a terrible result: death, both for playing music and for selling books, etc. This book makes a frightening impression, but it also makes one think about the future in which religion can be put at the forefront, as a priority and lead not to total tolerance, but to total religious slavery to one religion, one world view, one way of life.

Another dystopian work is a film “Equilibrium” (USA, 2004), which takes place after the Third World War that is another total mutual extermination of people, when humanity suddenly finds the cause of all misfortunes and suffering, and this, strangely and absurdly, human ability to feel, to be emotional. Since a cause, destructive for all of us has been found, it is necessary to find a way to get rid of it, for which a drug is invented and successfully used that deprives a person of emotions, “prozium”. At the same time, everything that can evoke emotions and that humanity has accumulated over thousands of years of spiritual growth and development, namely all works of art, music, books, and so on, is destroyed. Thus, traditional religions are in the same series of prohibitions and refusals because religion is built and exists owing to feelings. However, it

is impossible to deprive people of all the emotional experience, affection, so the forbidden religions have been replaced by a new one: the eternal paradox of humanity. By overthrowing one system, create another with the same “removal effect” about which Hegel spoke three hundred years ago. Following line from the film describes it well: “The only thing more powerful than the system, is the man that will overthrow it”.

The book of Christopher Hitchens “God is Not Great” also makes a strong impression. There are many vivid quotes in this book: “If the triangles had gods, these gods would have three sides” (after all, Xenophanes told us about this!) Or: “We will never know how many outwardly pious people secretly did not believe in God”, about constant hypocrisy and following the age-old authority, which in principle is uncritical and accepted on faith, or — “God did not create man in his own image and likeness. It was just the opposite” [4; 3]. Hitchens is absolutely convinced that “we (atheists) are not immune to the lure of wonder and mystery and awe: we have music and art and literature, and find that the serious ethical dilemmas are better handled by Shakespeare and Tolstoy and Schiller and Dostoyevsky and George Eliot than in the mythical morality tales of the holy books. Literature, not scripture, sustains the mind and – since there is no other metaphor – also the soul. We do not believe in heaven or hell, yet no statistic will ever find that without these blandishments and threats we commit more crimes of greed or violence than the faithful. (In fact, if a proper statistical inquiry could ever be made, I am sure the evidence would be the other way.)” [5; 4]. Hitchens book continues to excite people, as do Dan Brown bestsellers media outlets “The Da Vinci Code” and “Angels and Demons”. It seems that the author is too emotional, harsh, irreconcilable, and even aggressive. However, he is a gnostic and his position as an “intellectual genius” of the 21st century is attractive from the world point of view. Men of science agree with Hitchens that God did not create people, but people created God. Any human society is characterized by the idea of some main, supreme being (deity), who knows everything, who has a “plan for at least a thousand years” (e.g., Voland famous dialogue with Berlioz and Bezdomny at the Patriarshiy Ponds Public Garden from “The Master and Margarita” by A. Bulgakov). In the classic “Leviathan” by Thomas Hobbes, the relationship between the state and religion is speculated. According to the logic of Hitchens, humanity has always been accompanied by the “power of two”, namely secular power and spiritual power. If the first is material, tangible, then the second is spiritual, but at the same time seeks to control and shape the inner world of people, members of society. Also, the author considers that fear copes best with the function of control and it performs an important function in religion. It turns out that in Hitchens, God is not only the creator of the world, but also a judge, the one who punishes and rewards both in this earthly life and in the next — the afterlife. Thus, Hitchens reproduces the logic of any religion, saying that this is how it is formed and this is how its “framework” is created, into which the features of culture are only added, its development and complication is going on. The author puts forward and defends the idea of a direct connection between world religions and totalitarian regimes (i.e., fascism and communism).

The problem of the crisis of modern culture is relevant today for various reasons, including the preservation of man, ensuring national and global security. Scientists, public and political figures talk and write a lot about the problems of modern culture and the risks of its politicization [6, 7]. A review of literature and discussions [8, 9] suggests that today there are two approaches to understanding modern culture in the context of this article: firstly, the position of understanding cultural traditions as a condition for strengthening the national unity of a country (for example, China, which has had such an official policy since 2006), and secondly, the continuation of the policy cultural expansion, which characterizes the Anglo-Saxon foreign policy tradition. The analysis of philosophical and cultural literature of the last ten years has shown [10] that the crisis of culture in the XXI century has acquired a systemic character, the crisis continues to develop and the following phenomena can be distinguished [11, 12]: the destruction of the value foundations of world culture; the dominance of consumer lifestyle and worldview; the decline in the level of classical culture and art; the dominance of low-quality mass culture; decrease in the level of general education of society; degradation of the language culture of society; hypertrophied liberalization of relations between people, degradation of family values, etc. Along with this, a review of the scientific literature on the topic of the article proves that today, in the first quarter of the 21st century, there is an awareness that only a person is the main value of any country, the main value of the culture of the world.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the most interesting in determining the position of the world view of the modern world is Hitchens’ idea of creationism: the idea of creationism is the key main idea for religion. Hitchens denies the idea of creation and considers himself an evolutionist. Such a worldview position is the most relevant today because in the modern world it is absurd to deny the conclusions of science. In the modern world, a person

may think that there must be some kind of program according to which everything develops. However, since it is possible to have a single program, a plan for the development of everything that exists, then there must be an “author” to this program. Hence, through critiques of religion in 21st century culture, Hitchens concludes that God exists. This is his principled position. Also, the modern world is the actual position of “total tolerance”, which has become a priority in the culture of the 21st century. Thus, in modern culture, there are these two opposite positions. The proposed article, based on a review of the literature on these positions, allows us to draw one more conclusion: in relation to religion, there are risks of its politicization. This means that in the 21st century, both culture and religion are facing a historical challenge, to which all modern humanity will have to look for answers, regardless of the cultural and historical religious tradition.

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О.Т. Аринова

Қазіргі мәдениет пен саясат мәнмәтініндегі дін: мәселелері мен болашағы

Мақалада қайшылықты жаһандану үдерісі және бұқаралық ақпарат құралдары «өндірісінің» адамзаттың санасы мен руханиятына, оның ішінде діни-мәдени мұраға идеологиялық-мәдени ықпалының күшеюі жағдайында діни-рухани өмір құбылысы қарастырылған. Діндерлікты қабылдау мәдениетінің жаңа дискурстары мен баяндауларында қазіргі әлемнің ақиқаттарына философиялық және әдістемелік талдау жүргізу әрекеті жасалды: бүгінгі күні мемлекеттерге діни және діни позициялардан тыс аксиологиялық белгілерді табу қиын деген қорытындыға келді. Сенім факторы ретіндегі діни фактордың адамзаттың рухани өлшеміне әсері артып келеді деген тұжырым жасаған. Автор дәстүрлі құндылықтарды және рухани өмірдің маңыздылығын сақтау қажеттілігіне сенімді және діннің бар екендігіне, діннің әр адам үшін қаншалықты маңызды екендігіне және философиялық дүниетанымдық сұраққа өзінше жауап беруге тырысқан. Құдайдың бар екендігіне, діннің біздің әлемдегі орны мен маңызы туралы сұрақтарға жауап ізделген. Мақалада біздің бүгінгі өміріміздің барынша саясаттанғаны, саясат пен саяси мәселелерге қаныққанымыз орынды тұжырымдалған. Мемлекет пен діни конфессиялар арасындағы қарым-қатынаста, дін мен қоғамға қатысты бүгінгі таңда оң тәжірибеден гөрі проблемалар көп екендігі тұжырымдалған.

Кілт сөздер: дін, аксиология, діни бірлестіктер, гуманизм, дәстүрлі діндер, саясаттану, секуляризация, жасанды интеллект, теология, дүниетаным.

О.Т. Аринова

Религия в контексте современной культуры и политики: проблемы и перспективы

В статье рассмотрен феномен религиозно-духовной жизни в контексте противоречивого процесса глобализации и нарастающего идейно-культурного влияния «продукции» средств массовой информации на сознание и духовность человечества, в том числе и на религиозно-культурное наследие. Предпринята попытка осуществить философско-методологический анализ реалий современного мира в новых дискурсах и нарративах культуры восприятия религиозности: сделан вывод о том, что сегодня государствам сложно найти аксиологические ориентиры вне религиозного и культурного наследия. Обозначены проблемы и факторы сохранения традиционных религий в условиях тотальной толерантности. Автор приходит к выводу, что влияние религиозного фактора как фактора веры на духовное измерение человечества возрастает. В статье сделано обоснованное заявление о том, что наша жизнь сегодня максимально политизирована, мы погружены в политику и политические проблемы. Кроме того, приведен вывод о том, что в отношениях между государством и религиозными организациями сегодня больше проблем, чем положительных практик.

Ключевые слова: религия, аксиология, религиозные объединения, гуманизм, традиционные религии, политология, секуляризация, искусственный интеллект, теология, мировоззрение.

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