

## PREFACE

Europe, especially in the early Middle Ages, was shaped by the ancient authentic values of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is interesting that even though all these religions in their essence are close to each other, they originate from a common ancient foundation in Judaism and they all preach peace as an ideal, the multi-confessional regions have always been among the most conflicting regions in the world.

Above all, it is a result of the essence of religion. Especially the great monotheistic religions derived from the so-called Abrahamic tradition are very intolerant. They have firm and unchangeable points of view of the world, a strict code of ethics, and they draw a clear distinction between those who are and those who are not true believers. Their dogmas and rules given by God are eternal truth. They cannot be subject to negotiations, compromises, and variances. When such a group meets another similar group, they inevitably call each other heretics and apostates. They are not in a position to recognize their share in knowing the truth. Why? Because it would cast some doubt on their dogmas. Such contacts must end up with alienation and conflict. These religions are at the same time very collectivistic. They claim that believers create a special and morally superior community. Relations with them easily become a sign of political or national loyalty. The biggest danger lies in connecting the nation and religion. Moreover, if Abrahamic religions become factors in politics, because of their uncompromising points of view they lead to constant conflict with the religious others.

The pseudo-democratic processes in Europe are a means of ruling the majority, where in the leaders of those processes succeed in manipulating the unthinking masses using Christian scripture. Through the religious worldview, the masses mobilized in the European society's, in which Christian and Islamic values become simple commodities in neo-liberal capitalism. Does denying the right of others to be different from you means you are moving into the space of open and concealed violence? This problem arises when a so-called overlap between right-winged political forces and their ideologies is established. The problem is that original Christianity and Islam were falsified and used by the political right in the European states. They define society as an organic national, ethnic, and racial whole, which is primarily oriented towards national and patriarchal values. In the case of Europe, the division of people between "religious us" and "religious them"; Europeans and Non-Europeans; believers and atheists, breeds violence which is founded on a totalitarian understanding of faith. The idea that God is one, and the belief in Him differently placed in different religions, can lead some individuals, religious and political organizations to the false notion that we are "us" because we are not "them" and the only way to remain "us" is to exterminate "them". Because of this, religious exclusivism leads to a violent ideology and religious extremism.

If we wish to define religious exclusivity according to the example of Christianity, we can do it in this way. Christianity is a religion which, excludes when it calls for its believers to

dedicate all of their lives towards God, and not to the polytheistic gods. On the other hand, Christianity does not exclude when it urges its followers that if they cannot accept the God of their neighbours, then they should accept their neighbours. If they cannot accept their faith, they can accept that they are faithful. However, religious institutions frequently endeavour to exclude other believers from Earth and Heaven because they are different from them. They have distorted history for this purpose. Their ideas are clear: we have an exclusive historical right to a certain religion, which is unavailable to you.

From then on, this has been the rule, not the exception. Because of this, religious exclusivity, without undermining other forms of exclusivity, has generated the biggest problems in the world. Faced with this, religious leaders have tried to overcome this state, which at worst can lead to bloody conflict. In one interview, Pope Francis said:

“A secular state, unlike other states where religion is imposed on everyone, can allow any believer a chance to believe in his God. All people are equal as God’s sons and daughters, and creators of their own dignity. Everyone has to have the freedom to practice his or her religion, within the religion belongs to”.

When we are talking about religious pluralism, I would like to refer to the differences between the religious varieties. They testify to the existence of many different religions. Religious pluralism, meaning a relatively peaceful coexistence and cooperation of different religions. It is not aimed at creating a single world religion as a syncretism of different religions. Nor it is a simple existence of one next to the others (following the principle “separate but equal”), which was a way of finding an excuse and “covering” the racial segregation in the United States until the ‘50s of the last century. Nowadays, in European countries, religious freedom is interpreted as the simple existence of one next to the others, without mutual dialogue and meetings. Meeting here would be mostly a violent meeting.

The best soil for introducing religious and ethnic tolerance, as well as the idea of ecumenism and neo-ecumenism, is civil society. It is a supra-national society where the primary criterion is citizenship. Such kind of society generalizes basic human values. The generalization of values and norms goes to the creation of universal human rights and values. With this, inherited ethnic rights and linked habits, moral and legal norms fall. Universal values and norms, accompanied by human rights and freedoms, are wider than the values of the particular ethnic community. However, the system of values and norms should and has to rise to a universal level. As there is a separation of the state from the church, it is possible to separate citizenship from the national feature.

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