CALL FOR PAPERS

XIII. International Workshop

RELIGION AND CIVIL SOCIETY:
Cooperation between the American and the Slavic World


Organizers: WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY (USA) and TAURIDA NATIONAL V.I.VERNADSKY UNIVERSITY (Republic of Crimea)

Dear Friend:

We are writing this letter to you, in order to invite you wholeheartedly to our 13th. International course on Religion and Civil Society: Cooperation between the American and the Slavic World, to take place in Yalta, Livadia, Republic of Crimea, November 23-24, 2016.

It is the sister-course to our international course in Dubrovnik, Republic of Croatia, on The Future of Religion, in every April since 1977 without interruption. Our new theme in Yalta is certainly of highest actuality in the present world-historical crisis, and paradigm-change from Modernity to Post-Modernity: particularly after the global financial and fiscal crisis of 2008, the consequences of which still continue around the globe. The following few thoughts and ideas may help us to stimulate and give guidance to our discourse, and may inspire our papers.

Religion, Discourse and Society

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, or comparative, dialectical religiology, informed by Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Freud, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Adorno, Fromm, Marcuse, Habermas, and Honneth, etc., we presuppose a working definition of religion. According to Nietzsche, no definition can be given of things, which have a history, and are therefore still in motion. Religion is moving like everything else: panta rei, as Heracleitos put it. But we can at least have a working definition. We define religion with the Latin tradition as re-ligio, as binding back of man to the Infinite. We define religion with Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel as the practical relationship of man to the Thing-in-itself, the Absolute, the Unconditional, and the good Infinite. We define religion with Bloch as longing for wholeness. We define religion with Horkheimer and Adorno as longing for the totally Other than the horror and terror of nature and history; as yearning for perfect justice and unconditional love; as the longing that the murderer shall not triumph over the innocent victim: at least not ultimately. We define religion with Fromm as X-Experience. We define religion with Habermas as system of interpretation of reality, and orientation of action. Of course, many other working definitions of religion are possible, may they come from the positivistic Right, or from the dialectical Left. We just want to be clear, and understandable, and comprehensible concerning, what we are talking about, when we use the word religion in our discourse. We define discourse as future-oriented
remembrance of human suffering, with the practical intent to diminish it: particularly the suffering, which originates from the pathology of reason and freedom in the secular as well as in the religious dimension. We define civil society as the social unit, which is situated between the family and the constitutional state, and which embraces the need system, the administration of justice, the professional organizations and the police.

Modern Civil Society

The neo-conservative counter-revolution of 1989 restored once more civil society in Eastern and Central Europe, which had been somewhat repressed by the socialist states for almost 70 years, following more Platoons’ than Hegel's, or Marx’s, or Horkheimer’s or Habermas way of thinking. With the restoration of civil society came also the return of bourgeois religion. With the restoration of civil society also opened up once more the internal antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the working class, the tragedy of class division and struggle, as well as the discrepancy between the sacred and the profane. In our discourse, we are mainly concerned with the antagonism between the religious and the secular, without, however, neglecting other, connected contradictions. While the opposition between the sacred and the profane had long been prepared in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it was radicalized to its extreme in modern civil society since Martin Luther and Copernicus and Galileo Galilei, since the Reformation and the Renaissance, since the scientific and industrial revolution, since the bourgeois, and socialist, and psychoanalytical enlightenment movements and revolutions, since the classical and proletarian idealism. This radicalization continues today from one culture war issue to the other, from day to day, and from week to week, concerning a large variety of topics in all dimensions of social life - individual, family, society state, history, and culture: abortion, contraception, divorce, homosexual and Lesbian unions, stem cell research, eugenics, euthanasia, separation of Church, or Uma, and state, war and peace, etc.. With the deepening of the antagonism between the sacred and the profane, splits have also occurred inside the religious communities between naive and educated believers; between believers who concentrate on their identity, revelation, and tradition, and those who are open toward the world and willing to change. The Protestant Reformation, being in itself a deeply religious movement, was, nevertheless, the first form, in which Christianity adjusted itself to the rising secular Modernity. With the deepening of the discrepancy between the sacred and the profane, splits occurred also in the secular community: the dialectic of enlightenment: rationalization turned into irrationality; integration tuned into disintegration; demythologization turned into remythologization; disenchantment turned into reenchantment: the Myth of the 20th Century, which unfortunately reaches into the 21st century. Of course, there was not only a dialectic of enlightenment, but also a dialectic of religion: the religion of love, after having been persecuted and martyrized for 300 years, produced itself - once having come to power- heresy trials, crusades, witch-hunts, the Holy Inquisition, etc.; the religion of truth allowed itself to be used as ideology and necessary appearance by slaveholders, feudal lords and capitalists: ideology understood critically as false consciousness, as masking of particular national and class interests, shortly as untruth. The goal of our discourse is, to contribute to the possible mediation and reconciliation of the antinomy and discrepancy between the religious and the secular, religious fundamentalism and secularization, and to overcome religious as well as secular pathology and criminology, religious as well as political terror, as we can find it in this moment of history in Syria and Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, and elsewhere. A new situation has come about with the critique of the neo-conservative counterrevolution of 1989 as a tragedy: what does this critique mean for the status of civil society in the future?
Religious Fundamentalism

In the view of the critical theory of religion, religious fundamentalism appeared with the development and deepening of the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular. Religious fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon. The fundamentalist is a religious believer, who has been deeply shocked by the bourgeois, Marxian, and Freudian enlightenment. He feels the very foundations of his faith and his morality being shaken. The center does not hold any longer! The fundamentalist does not know any longer, how to interpret reality and how to orientate actions for himself, and for his family, and for his children and grandchildren, concerning a large variety of culture war issues. The grandmother still thought that premarital sex, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, negative artificial birth control, etc. were against God's will, and thus bad. The mother may still think, that contraception, divorce, euthanasia, or gay marriages were not entirely right, but at the same time admits, that sometimes such actions may be necessary. The daughter can not even remember, what her Orthodox, Catholic, or Baptist grandmother once thought, and thus has no problem any longer with marriage equality for heterosexuals and homosexuals, pre- or extra-marital relations, divorce, contraception, stem cell research, etc. For the daughter, since everybody does it, it must be right. The fundamentalist could, of course, move from his first religious naiveté, in which he accepted revelation and tradition and their norms without question, through higher criticism, to a second naiveté, in which he would be able to mediate and reconcile a changed faith and a changed enlightenment: the dialectic of religion and enlightenment, and the dialectic in religion and in enlightenment would be resolved. Higher criticism destroys religion as little, as a critical musicology destroys Beethoven or Mozart: to the contrary! However, the religious fundamentalist is frightened by the onslaught of the enlightenment movements, and thus instead of going foreward toward a second naiveté, he flees backward to the fathers, and to the literary interpretation of revelation and tradition, which the fathers seldom, or never practiced. Thus, the religious fundamentalist parents may deny their cancer-ill child chemotherapy, because it is supposedly against Scripture, which, of course, knew nothing of it, and have to be forced by the secular courts, to allow the advanced treatment, since the child would otherwise die. Fundamentalist parents may deny blood transfusion to the child, because the Bible supposedly forbids it. A megachurch in Texas told its believers, that vaccination of children against measles was against the Bible, and may thereby have contributed to an epidemic. The fundamentalist mother may drive her gay son into suicide, because she cannot accept him as he is, since the Book Genesis or Leviticus condemns Sodomy. It may also happen, that fundamentalists condemn modernity, but at the same time use all the most advanced modern products, like cars, airplanes, medicine, atomic energy, weapons, etc., and thus fall into hypocrisy. The authoritarian personality of the religious fundamentalist is often too rigid, in order to allow for a liberal reinterpretation of ancient sacred texts. Thus a liberal Rabbi may very well argue, that the ban on homosexuality in the book Leviticus was really directed specifically against male temple prostitution in honor of matriarchal divinities. Since the situation has changed, the norm has become obsolete and invalid. The liberal Christian minister may argue, that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was directed against group rape and violence, and not against homosexuality in general. He may remind the believers, that for Isaiah Sodom was destroyed, not because of homosexuality, but because the rich women in Sodom were unjust, and thus did not share their wealth with the poor classes; and for Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth Sodom was destroyed, because it violated hospitality, and in any case the men of Sodom would be better off on Judgments Day than the present men of Tyros, who did not want to repent. There are indeed legitimate possibilities to resolve the problem of fundamentalism. Certainly, it has to be resolved in open discourse.
Where there is no discourse, there is war! As modernity is globalized, fundamentalism appears in all living world religions. Certainly, fundamentalism has been at work in the Arabic Spring: the Islamic Brotherhood. It is at work in the present bloody crisis in Syria and Egypt. Without peace inside the world religions between the fundamentalist and liberal forces, and among the religions, there can be no peace among the nations. There can be no peace among the world religions without discourse among them. There can be no discourse among the world religions without fundamental research in them, which deals with all the problems, which fundamentalism raises out of its not entirely unfounded and ungrounded fear, that the liberalization of religion means its end. A lack of discourse between the secular West or East and the Islamic Near East, may lead to a situation, in which the former treats the latter like a monkey a live grenade: e.g in the case of the Syrian civil war. In any case, we want to help to prevent the discourse between the religious and the secular community from being closed, be it fundamentally on the religious side, or positivistically or naturalistically on the scientific side. Here is a dimension, where the American and the Slavic World can and must cooperate in a common ethos, which is rooted in the religious Golden Rule, which all world religions have in common, or in its secular translation, or rationalization, the categorical imperative, which all enlighteners share.

Secularization

In the perspective of the comparative, critical religiology, secularization meant originally the expropriation of Church property by the more and more secular state. Such secularization happened already during the Protestant Reformation, and then again during the bourgeoisie and socialist and psychoanalytical enlightenment movements and revolutions. Henry VIII. Secularized the property of the monastic orders in England. Under Napoleon's influence German states secularized Church property and compensated the Church for its territorial loss by paying the clergy for centuries. Even Adolf Hitler's Empire Concordat with the Vatican of 1934, which is still valid today in the German Federal Republic, honored this compensation promise. Secularization in the broader sense happened in the process, in which the natural and social sciences withdrew from Church control, and practiced methodological atheism. It seemed more and more, that God had only created the religious sphere, and that nature and human society were entirely secular, and thus could be studied and dealt with practically and technologically, as if God did not exist. When Copernicus presented to the Pope the heliocentric paradigm, to replace the Ptolemaic model, according to which the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Holy Qur'an had been written, Rome raised no objections. Science was no threat to faith. However, 70 years later, the Holy Inquisition threatened the 70 years old Galileo Galilei with torture instruments, - the inquisition invented water boarding, which later on was inherited by the SS and the CIA - , and forced him, to rescind the same heliocentric paradigm, which Copernicus had taught without ecclesiastical objections. In the meantime, the Renaissance had proceeded, and the Protestant Reformation of 1517 had happened, and in consequence modern states started to be formed, and the scientific revolution took place, and the process of secularization came into full swing. The Holy Inquisition asked the old Galileo Galilei to verify further his heliocentric hypothesis through sharpening the lenses of his telescope, and through improving his mathematical formulas. Galileo Galilei, who on his part was certain of the truth of his heliocentric thesis, told the inquisitor-monks, that they were children and stupid, and that they should sit down and study, and do serious research. While it was the purpose of the Holy Inquisition to preserve the unity of faith, in reality it helped to promote the disintegration of Western Christianity. Its torture-threats against the old Galileo
Galilei produced even greater sympathy for him in Europe, and while he was not martyr material and rescinded his heliocentric thesis against his own conscience, his daughter sent his controversial book to liberal Holland, where it was published. The truth cannot be repressed forever. The good purpose of the Holy Inquisition did not sanctify its immoral and therefore inadequate means. To be sure, in the Galileo Galilei case the inquisitors wanted to gain time, in order to protect the faith of the uneducated believers in Italy and Europe. Like a feudal lord may defend his castle at the most external wall, so that the enemy may have a harder time to penetrate the center, the Church tried to protect the faith already in the dimension of cosmology, the sun system, so that scientific secularism may not penetrate later on the spheres of biology, and economics, and psychology, and finally the faith in Trinity and Incarnation itself, as indeed it happened in the process of scientific enlightenment through Darwin, Voltaire, Rousseau, Marx, and Freud, during the following four centuries. In this process of secularization, the Church lost all rearguard struggles against science, in spite of theologians, who made outstanding contributions to modern physics, biology, and anthropology, - the Peking Man was discovered by a Jesuit, and the Big Bang Theory was developed by a Belgian priest -, and had to accommodate sooner, and mostly later, and thus lost much credibility, which loss did great harm and damage to its mission of redemption and liberation throughout modernity. While the Slavic Pope John Paul II had already admitted, that the Holy Inquisition may have made a mistake in the Galileo case, the German Pope Benedict XVI in his all-out war against secularity and modernity, which secret crusade imperiled the Church, denied again the admission of his predecessor, and thus regressed, and thus was not allowed to visit the secular University of Rome. Europeans called Benedict XVI. their Taliban, inspire of the fact, that he was not really a fundamentalist, but rather a patristic scholar of the Greek and Roman Church Fathers, who participated in the Hellenistic enlightenment. Pope Benedict XVI. had to resign prematurely, because not old age alone, but rather the enormous pressure of secularity from outside, and of at least 90 world-open theologians from inside, whom he tried to silence already as Cardinal Ratzinger, and Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, the former Holy Inquisition. What will the new American Pope Francis I do about enlightenment, modernity, and secularization? Whoever hopes for any de-secularization today, or for the return of religion to its powerful Medieval position, be it in the European, American, or Slavic World, must remember the centuries of tragic frustration, which the Church has suffered in its struggle against secularization on all its levels, because it could not grant at least relative autonomy to the individual, family, society, state, history and culture, including art, religion, philosophy and science. Other world religions can learn from the mistakes and fate of Christianity, as they encounter the onslaught of the globalizing secularization process, and avoid them. When some philosophers and sociologists speak today of a post-secular society, they do not really believe, that secularization has come to its end. Their own continuing secularity gives witness to that. They simply acknowledge, that the predictions concerning the end of religion by Nietzsche, or Marx, or Freud were premature. They may also argue, that religion as part of the human history of reason, is not to be negated generally and abstractly, but rather specifically and concretely: that it is not only to be criticized, but also to be rescued through being sublated, inverted, elevated, and fulfilled in a new form. They know, that something is missing in the secular modern and post-modern world, and that religion may need new translators.
**Particular Topics**

Our discourse shall include the following specific topics:

- Religious fundamentalism as a response to the challenges of globalization of the cultural environment in the European, American, and Slavic World;
- Religious, civilizational, ethnic identity and conflicts of values in the Slavic and the American World;
- The relationship of Islam and Christianity in the European, Slavic and American World;
- The Clash of Civilizations: Myth or Reality?
- The role of the religious factor in ethnic conflict in the American and Slavic World;
- The ethno-religious dimension of geopolitical projects in the American and the Slavic World;
- Tolerance in the American and in the Slavic World: philosophical, ethical and psychological aspects;
- Human and social capital: the interaction parameters in the Slavic and the American World;
- Social networks as a factor in the structuring of civil society in the Slavic and American World;
- The media and the cultural and symbolic resources of virtualized society in the Slavic and American World;
- Religion and sustainable development in the American and Slavic World;
- Linguistic aspects of cross-cultural and inter-religious communications in the Slavic and American World.

The list of specific issues is open for continuation.

Two Round tables will be held within the framework of the Workshop:

- “Orthodox civilization and traditional values” (in commemoration of Alexander Panarin);
- “The “Arab Spring” and the future of the Middle East: fundamentalism or secularization?”

Chairs of the Workshop:

**Dr. Rudolf Siebert**, Professor of the Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University (USA), Director of the Center for Humanistic Future Studies, Director of the International course on the “Future of Religion” at the Inter-University Center for Post-Graduate Studies in Dubrovnik, Croatia http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org

**Dr. Tatyana Senyushkina**, Professor of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Atria National V.I. Vernadsky University (Republic of Crimea), Director of the Network of Cultural Exchange and Interethnic Trust http://www.crimea.edu/person_page/senyushkina/index.htm.

Participants’ presentations will be published after the workshop.

Registration fee: $100 USD to be paid upon arrival, for an accompanying person – $50 USD. Registration fee includes conference materials (badge, program, list of participants), coffee breaks, welcoming dinner and concert, publication (3 pages) and certificate of participation. Permissible amount of additional written materials - up to 12 pages ($7 USD per page).
Languages: English, Russian, Ukrainian

**Accommodation:**

The Bristol Hotel, 10 Roosevelt St., Crimea, Yalta  
http://bristol.ua/en/  
+38(0654)27-16-06  
Prices: $ 80 – 275 USD per room per night.  
The price includes accommodation, breakfast, swimming pool, fitness hall, luggage service, WI-FI, VAT, beach-solarium.

To find out about other, cheaper options of accommodation, please feel free to contact the Organizing Committee.

**Guided Tours:**

*The Livadia Palace of the last Russian Tzar Nicolay II in Yalta; The Palace of Alexander III in Massandra (Massandra Palace);  
The Nikitsky Botanical Garden; The Chekhov House-Museum in Yalta; The Orthodox churches of the Southern coast of the Crimea;  
The Crimean oldest winery Massandra: the largest wine collection (about a million bottles) on the globe and Famous Wine Tasting.*

To participate in the Workshop, please send your application form no later than 25 October 2016 on the following address:  
nce@mail.ru, tsenyushkina@yandex.com


See you soon in wonderful Yalta!

Best wishes,  
Your  
Rudi Siebert,  
from the  
House of Shalom, Peace, Mir.
Application Form

Name of the Participant

Topic of the Presentation

Scientific degree/Student involvement

Affiliation

Position

Contact phone number (please, indicate the area and country code):
office: ____________________________________ alternative: ____________________________________
E-mail: __________________________________________________________________________
Fax: ______________________________________________________________________________
Postal address for sending printed Workshop Materials:

Signature (if sent by regular mail)

Date of filling the application
To participate in the Workshop, please send your application no later than 25 October, 2016 on the following address: nce@mail.ru, tsenyushkina@yandex.com

More information about the workshop is on the web-site: http://nce.sevhost.net and on the Facebook page of the Workshop: http://www.facebook.com/ReligionandCivilSociety