Religion and Globalization: Crossroads and Opportunities

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RELIGION AND GLOBALIZATION: CROSSROADS AND OPPORTUNITIES

By Alexander Chumakov with Mikhail Sergeev

Conversation of the First Vice-President of the Russian Philosophical Society, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor of Moscow State University, Alexander Chumakov, with the editor of the special series "Contemporary Russian Philosophy" at Brill, the Netherlands, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor Mikhail Sergeev

Alexander Chumakov (born 1950, vil. Severnoe, Astrakhan region, Russia), Doctor of Philosophy, Professor Emeritus of the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation; First Vice President of the Russian Philosophical Society and editor-in-chief of the journals "The Age of Globalization" and "Bulletin of the Russian Philosophical Society." A. Chumakov authored more than 600 scholarly works, monographs, textbooks, some of which were translated into foreign languages. He is co-editor and author of a series of fundamental works – the Russian and English editions of the Dictionary (2006, 2014), Directory (2012; 2016), and Encyclopedia (2003) of Global Studies that was recognized as the Book of the Year 2003 at the annual contest of Russian publishers in the nomination category “Encyclopedist.” Prof. Chumakov’s field of scholarly interests is the philosophical and socio-cultural aspects of globalization and its consequences; problems of scientific and technological progress and social ecology. He developed an original approach to the theory of globalization, devoting three interrelated monographs (trilogy) to this topic. A. Chumakov is an active participant in the international and all-Russian congresses, forums, conferences on philosophy and global problems. He is one of the main organizers of seven Russian philosophical congresses and a participant in the last six World Philosophical Congresses, where he delivered presentations, chaired sections and round tables on global issues.

Mikhail Sergeev (born 1960, Moscow, Russia) – Ph.D. in philosophy of religion (1997, Temple University, Philadelphia, USA); historian of religion, philosopher, writer. Taught at several universities and colleges in Pennsylvania and New Jersey; now teaches history of religions, philosophy and contemporary art at the University of Arts in Philadelphia. He is also chair of the department of religion, philosophy and theology at Wilmette Institute, http://wilmetteinstitute.org/. Published and presented work in the United States, Canada, Europe (Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Greece) and Russia. He is the author of numerous articles in comparative religion and philosophy published in Russian and American journals, as well as the author and editor of nine

**Mikhail Sergeev** (hereafter M.S.): Dear Alexander, in 2017 at Brill, the Netherlands, has come out the English version of the book that you prepared in co-authorship with I.V. Ilyin and I.I. Mazur, *Global Studies Directory*,¹ in which you collected a massive amount of information on this important topic. This is another of your many books on globalization and global problems facing humanity. Please tell us, what is your approach in researching this field?

**Alexander Chumakov** (hereafter A.Ch.): This is not just one of the books, I should say; it is rather the first of its kind, the original reference book. It belongs to a special genre of literature that is directly related to various branches of knowledge, to the level of their development, and the amount of information collected in the field. In other words, we are talking about dictionaries, encyclopedias and reference books, which summarize the results of a certain stage of scientific development, systematize the accumulated knowledge, and present the latest achievements in a field of study. Those publications also contain a lot of other useful information so that both professional community and general audience could see the front edge of science and properly navigate topical issues. It is important to note that such reference editions appear only when the necessary conditions for their preparation are ripen and there is an objective need for this kind of literature. So, for example, in due time Aristotle has carried out a unique work of classifying and putting in order the scientific knowledge of antiquity; French encyclopedists have done practically the same, but already in modern times.

With regard to our particular edition, it has become one of the results of years of work by a large international creative team – specialists in various fields of theoretical and applied knowledge, who, from the perspective of their professional interests, explore different aspects of the global world, globalization, and its possible consequences. The totality of this kind of interdisciplinary knowledge, systematized and appropriately designed according to the integrative canons of modern science, is called Global Studies (globalistics in Russian), which, as a separate scholarly field was finally formed by the beginning of the 21st century.

It was then that the need for the "inventory of ideas," for bringing order to the fragmented knowledge on global issues, accumulated by that time in various fields of science and practical activity, did appear. As a result, in 2003, in both Russian and English, Global Studies Encyclopedia was published, the authors of which were 445 Russian and foreign scholars from 28 countries. However, the task of "inventorying" the categorical apparatus of Global Studies was still unresolved. In other words, there was a need for putting in order and giving the verified formulations to the basic concepts and terms of the new interdisciplinary knowledge. This problem was resolved in the process of working on an international interdisciplinary Encyclopedic Dictionary of Global Studies, which was published in Russian in 2006. Preparation of its English version demanded more time and involved already 647 authors – famous scholars and scientists, philosophers, public and political figures from 58

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countries. The creative collaboration of a large team resulted in the publication of their joint work in 2014 in one of the authoritative publishing houses in the world.⁴

Finally, there remained one more unresolved problem in the field of Global Studies: knowledge about personalities that made the most significant contribution to global research and understanding of processes and problems on a planetary scale was not systematized and brought into convenient and effective form. It was necessary to identify the most important among the many structures and organizations that appeared on the wave of global research. Last but not least, there was an accumulation of huge amount of specialized literature that appeared by this time and a significant number of periodicals, which required us to identify by means of an expert evaluation which ones were most directly corresponding to globalism.

That is exactly what the Encyclopedic Reference Book "Global Studies," which was published in Russian in 2012 (the 2nd edition came out in 2016),⁵ was dedicated to. It is natural that after those publications, an English edition of this work was produced, and also the Global Studies Directory that you referred to in your question.⁶ Thus, the release of this Directory became the final step in a series of encyclopedic publications, which marked the conclusion in the formation and establishment of a new interdisciplinary field of scientific knowledge – Global Studies.


I would also like to add that in 2018 my concluding monograph in the trilogy of books, over which I worked for more than 15 years and which were devoted to the general theory of globalization, was published in my native country. 

A.Ch.: Dear Mikhail, since we are talking about global studies and globalization, let me turn to you as a specialist in religious issues in the global world. After all, it is on these topics that you wrote your articles for our Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Global Studies. I would also like to mention that you are a member of the International Editorial Board of the journal Age of Globalization, which is published in Russia. In this regard, how would you briefly formulate your conceptual approach to religion and describe its role and significance at the present stage of historical development?

M.S.: In the 19th and 20th centuries, Western scholars proposed several scientific hypotheses designed to explain the origin and nature of religion. Fundamental studies of thinkers like Max Weber (1864 – 1920), Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917), Karl Marx (1818 – 1883), Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), Mircea Eliade (1907 – 1986), and others are still being studied today at colleges and universities in the United States. Many of these theories were of a reductionist nature, namely, they reduced religion to other forms of social activity. One of the founders of sociology, Emil Durkheim, for example, saw the origins of religion in the social function of man, inclined to deify the collective ethos. Karl Marx correlated the development of religion with economic activity. Sigmund Freud drew parallels between religion and the function of human psyche, more

specifically, neurotic consciousness. Many scholars believed that with further development of social sciences, religion will completely wither away, as it is devoid of its own content.

To us, living in the 21st century, such forecasts seem extremely naive. Religion not only survived but, contrary to scholarly predictions, is rapidly developing. The number of new religious movements and groups all over the world rose to tens, and even hundreds. Moreover, from a scholarly point of view, it is not so important which of them are "true" and which are "false." The vital necessity of religion and religious beliefs is easily confirmed by empirical observations and is explained by the existential situation, which all humans share. We know that we are mortal, but we do not have the slightest idea of what awaits us beyond the grave. Religion represents a powerful tool against this radical uncertainty that is pursuing us in life. Even more so, an irreplaceable tool because neither science nor art, nor any other area of human activity is in a position to offer solution to problems that go beyond the limits of our everyday experiences.

In my approach to the study of religion, I accept these realities as originally given, and do not try, like the scholars of the past, to identify the origins of religious beliefs, their essence and roots, or to prove their truth or falsity, reducing religious experience to other forms of human activity. My method is purely descriptive, or, to put it in philosophical terms, phenomenological. My main idea, inspired in part by the works of a Russian thinker Konstantin Leontiev (1831 – 1891), is that I regard religion as an organism – an organic system developing qualitatively. The basis of this system is represented by sacred scriptures and sacred tradition. Sacred scriptures of any religion possess the ultimate authority for the community of the faithful. Sacred tradition, in its turn, provides legitimate interpretation of the holy writings, which may explain, supplement or analyze those scriptures in detail, but should never, at least in theory contradict them.
In the course of its evolution, religious systems pass through six phases of development – the formative, orthodox, classical, reformist, critical and post-critical. The initial stage that usually lasts for about four centuries, establishes the canon of sacred writings of a given religion. The orthodox phase – in Christianity this function is performed by Orthodoxy – lays the foundation of the sacred tradition. The subsequent classical and reformist phases – in the Christian religion they are represented by Catholicism and Protestantism – develop, enrich or, in the case of the critical phase, purify the stagnant tradition.

In the course of its development, religion is undergoing two types of crises – structural and systemic. The structural crisis is marked by the doubts in and criticism of the sacred tradition, which leads, as a rule, to the appearance of new branches within the already existing religious traditions, with its own, alternative interpretations of the scriptures. Systemic crises, in their turn, lead to the questioning of the holy writings themselves and are, therefore, resolved only with the emergence of new religious movements that offer their adherents newly created sacred texts as well. In my opinion, the age of modernity, which started from the European Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, also marked the beginning of such a systemic crisis for Christianity, or in terms of my theory – a critical phase of its development. In the next two centuries, the ideology of the secular Enlightenment deeply influenced other non-European cultures and religions, and as a result, humanity found itself in a situation of total crisis – and often complete collapse, like in the Soviet Union – of religious consciousness as such.

Here we come to my main idea, which has a direct bearing on the religious dimension of globalization. The word "religion" comes from the Latin verb "religare," which means to

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8 A detailed description of my theory of religious cycles can be found in my monograph Theory of Religious Cycles: Tradition, Modernity and the Bahá’í Faith, (Brill, 2015), where I provide a comparative analysis of these six phases of religious evolution as applied to Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.
"reunite." Hence, the main function of religion is to unite people – first on a tribal scale (in ancient polytheistic religions), then on national (in Judaism and Hinduism), and then on international levels (in world religions of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam). Now for the evolving human culture there is an urgent need for the globalist religion, which would manage to unite the whole of humanity, giving it a more progressive foundation for further development. This need is even more pressing since existing religious systems are, according to my theory, in a systemic crisis that will be resolved only with the advent of new religious movements.

M.S.: Religion or cult represents, in my opinion, the very basis of human culture, which, in turn, may give rise to various civilizational forms in human social life. For example, Christian culture spawned the civilizations of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and modernity. In your monograph Metaphysics of Globalization you also analyze global processes from the standpoint of the cultural-civilizational model. Tell us, please, more in detail about your approach?

A.CH.: Let me begin by saying that I agree with you that "existing religious systems are in a systemic crisis," but I doubt that this crisis could be "resolved only with the emergence of new religious movements." As you correctly noted, "religion or cult is the basis of culture." And in fact, at the heart of every culture, along with language and traditions, there is always religion. One can use an even broader term – beliefs. But then we must recognize that all human beings and their communities are special, different from other cultural formations that produce, separate, and make them unique and inimitable. Here, I believe, are the natural roots of that cultural diversity and religious pluralism with which we are dealing in reality. In other words,

cultural diversity is predetermined by the nature of social relations, and thus the appearance of any new religious movement, no matter its scale and ambitions, will never eliminate cultural diversity, as well as various kinds of beliefs, including those that are mutually exclusive. Hence, no religious movement can ever count on a fully global expansion, especially on the replacement of a multitude of mutually exclusive religious views and ideas.

This is what I meant when, in the book that you mentioned, I analyzed the processes of globalization in the context of cultural and civilizational relations, in which any contemporary society and humanity as a whole can live. It is important to emphasize that, cultural diversity in general is the principle of separation and differentiation among people, but when it comes to the culture of relationships, and since Modern times we call it civility, culture (in this capacity) acts as a unifying factor in society. Speaking about civility and civilization, I mean, above all, the recognition and respect for human rights, tolerance, separation of powers, the rule of law and the equality of all before the law. At the same time, the higher the level of civility of the interacting parties and the more of common experience they share, the more effective and fruitful will be mutual understanding and cooperation.

Returning to your question, we can say that every human being, every community of people, be it a certain group, state or public association, including global humanity, represents a unique cultural-civilizational system. Those systems interact with each other, producing opposition and conflict, as was already mentioned above, due to the discrepancy of cultures, and reaching agreement and mutual understanding on civilizational grounds.

Thus, having entered the epoch of multifaceted globalization, when practically all spheres of social life, including religion, have been embraced by global processes, modern
humanity can no longer ignore the fact that it is literally woven like a patchwork quilt from a multitude of diverse cultural and civilizational systems. Yes, you rightly note, that there is an urgent need for the formation of both common human culture and a "globalist religion, which would be able to unite all of humanity." But I think that no religion will be able to offer to the world community, which is represented by an endless set of cultural and civilizational systems, something acceptable for all. In other words, now that we are doomed to live in a global world in the conditions of universal interdependence and constant collision of various interests, the most acceptable means for achieving our goals is to constantly search for mutually acceptable solutions and compromises. This, in my opinion, should become what you have defined as "more progressive basis for the development" of humankind. Then, regarding religion, it is more urgent not to search for a universal "global" religion, but to form a planetary consciousness (global vision) that implicitly includes religious pluralism and tolerance, with a clear separation of religious and secular spheres of public life.

A.Ch.: As a participant in our dialogue, you, Mikhail, have an advantage of being a representative of the Russian cultural and civilizational system who has been living for a long time and teaching history of religions and philosophy at the university level in the United States. In this regard, how do you assess contemporary religious processes in Russia and America? Is there anything in common here that could become part of universal human culture? And what, in your opinion, is specific and unique only for those two cultures and civilizations?

M.S.: To answer your question, I will briefly return to our cultural and civilizational discussion. If I understand you correctly, Alexander, your position is briefly summarized as follows – since
the diversity of human cultures is ineradicable, it cannot be a reliable foundation for the unification of humankind. You believe that it is not culture but civilizational norms of interaction among peoples and nations, developed over thousands of years, may serve as a solid basis for the global worldview. In my opinion, this approach has its undoubted advantages, but is also not free from serious shortcomings.

First, let me note that in your works you write about "cultural and civilizational systems," emphasizing the inseparability of these components within the human community. Here our views completely coincide. The inner values of culture that form cultural orientations of a person or group of people find their outward expression in certain civilizational norms, which those individuals or community of people, will adhere to. But take into consideration that in this case it is precisely culture that provides the foundation to unite people while civilizations, on the contrary, divide them.

Let us take, as you suggest, Russia and the United States. Most of the inhabitants of these two countries profess the same religion – Christianity. We will not delve into the discussion about the differences between Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism – this will only lead us away from the topic of our conversation. It is important that both Russians and Americans worship the same God, they share the symbol of faith, they are brought up on the same Biblical writings and adhere to the same code of morality that was proclaimed by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

What is it then that separates those fraternal by culture, nations? What divides them is exactly those different civilizational forms in which their Christian beliefs found expression in both countries. After all, Christianity, as I have already mentioned, throughout its history produced various, and sometimes opposite, types of civilizations – Roman Imperial, medieval,
those of the Renaissance and modernity. Russia inherited from Byzantium the imperial model, which it cannot get rid of. America, however, borrowed from the colonists a European tradition of the Enlightenment. And so, here we come to the clash of civilizations, to which no peaceful solution is in sight even to this day, not to mention the achievement of "harmony and understanding on civilizational grounds."

Judging by your statements about "civility," by which you understand "the recognition and observance of human rights, tolerance, separation of powers, the rule of law and equality of all before the law," you prefer the civilizational norms of the Enlightenment and believe that they can serve as the most effective basis for the global unification of people. Here our views coincide again, because I also believe that modern Western civilization is the best that humanity has created for millennia of its development. But look how hard this type of civilization takes root in those cultures that are not ripe for its absorption. Let’s turn back to Russia, which for several centuries is struggling to find its way – sometimes imitating and at other times strongly rejecting western lifestyle. But Russia, as I have already said, by its culture is an integral part of Europe, and, hence, the West. What can we say about religious and cultural communities that are radically different! Suffice it to recall the Muslim countries and China, which, incidentally, represents the most ancient – and very successful – tradition of imperial authoritarian rule.

And so, it turns out that the Western type of civilization, imposed from the outside to an alien culture, instead of letting its roots in it, on the contrary, emasculates, and sometimes even kills it. This is the root cause, in my opinion, of such fierce resistance to the West by other- and non-Christian nations and countries that we have seen for several centuries. The unification of humankind on the basis of western civilizational norms means first and foremost a total war, and
in the end – an artificial peace (if it is achievable at all), at the cost of an all-embracing disintegration of moral and cultural values.

In this sense, modern religions striving to form a global worldview have several advantages. First, they develop a person from within, laying the foundation of moral priorities. Secondly, being established already after the Enlightenment, new religious movements adopt many of its tenets, including the separation of church and state and protection of human rights, as part of their creed, giving them the sacred dimension and spiritual depth. Finally, they do not necessarily claim absolute truth, rejecting the preceding religious systems and striving to alter or replace them. Like everything in this world, religions evolve, but unlike civilizational forms, which are usually imposed by force from the outside and, therefore, are short-lived, spiritual reforms are designed for a long-term perspective. They begin with a free choice of believers, and, therefore, bring more reliable results.

M.S.: As for the civilizational norms of the Enlightenment and their spread on a global scale, America, it seems to me, has an advantage here not only over Russia, but also over Europe. National identity in European countries, including Russia, is based on ethnic belonging and, therefore, those countries have enormous difficulties in absorbing new emigrants into their fold. You can get French citizenship in France, but that will not make you a Frenchman. In America, on the contrary, the situation is fundamentally different. USA is the first political state in history, which is based exclusively on the principles of the Enlightenment – three branches of power, the separation of church and state, human rights and freedoms, and so on. American self-identification is not ethnic, but ideological, one might say, philosophical. Emigrating to America and getting its citizenship makes you as American as are all the other inhabitants of this country
– a first generation American. Hence, multiculturalism, over which Russians are laughing, and which does not take root, say, in Germany, was successfully established in the United States, which for the past half-century began to represent the whole of humanity in miniature. As a result, we witness a unique religious diversity and "peaceful coexistence" of various peoples and cultures. As it seems to me, this feature of modern America favorably distinguishes it from other countries and represents a common human heritage. And how do you, Alexander, see this from the vast Russian planes?

A.Ch.: Russian territory is too large for one person to speak from all-Russian perspective. I will express my, subjective point of view, without laying claims on the absolute truth. First, I would like to agree with your estimates regarding the "feature of modern America," which, "distinguishes it from other countries and represents a common human heritage." This is all true, but we see the reasons for this, it seems, in different ways. So, in your answer to my previous question, you say that “culture provides the foundation to unite people while civilizations, on the contrary, divide them.” But I think that in reality it is just the opposite, and that's exactly what has already been said above. Now, obviously, we need to return once again to this issue, since it is of fundamental importance.

So, when I say that culture separates and even divides people, I mean that any culture has in its foundation three immutable principles: language, beliefs and traditions. This, of course, is not all that defines culture in the most general sense of the word, but this is the main thing. Language here is the central core, the backbone of any culture. Remove the language, and there is no culture. Practically the same will happen with the loss of beliefs or traditions. Understanding culture in this perspective, we must say that all those people who speak different
languages have, at least, as many different cultures as well; and they are all separated from each other.

But people of different cultures and individual nations, nevertheless, communicate, interact, cooperate with each other. This happens also in a cultural context, but always on the background of the overall shared experience, which includes a reasonable and accepted by the parties, norms of interaction and principles regulating behavior and communication. And this is also called culture – the culture of relations among people, the culture of understanding, recognition, finally, respect for the position and rights of another. This side, this aspect of culture since modern times began to be called “civility.” Initially, the concept of “civilization” has emerged as an alternative to "savagery" and "barbarism," but over time it has become overloaded by new and different meanings and has not yet been correlated properly to the notion of "culture." That is why, as it has been already mentioned, when assessing large-scale social problems, I propose to use the synthetic category of "cultural-civilizational systems.” At the same time, I would like to note that I do not appraise various cultures in the categories of "good," "bad," "better," or "worse" because I lack necessary criteria to do so. But the notion of "civility" ("civilization"), in comparison with "barbarism," and even more so with "savagery," delineates a higher and more advanced stage of social development. And it is quite fair to say that no matter how imperfect is this stage in human history (and no matter how much it is scolded), it is better, more humane, if you will, than the other two mentioned above.

But then, so long as religion is an inherent part of the culture and is expected to separate people, it is difficult to accept the fact that, as you claim, "Russians and Americans worship the same God." Especially, I cannot share the view that Russians and Americans profess the same "symbol of faith… are brought up on the same Biblical writings and adhere to the same code of
morality..." And not only because Russia is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country with plenty of atheists in it. Not everybody is a Christian in the United States as well. But because both countries represent holistic and self-sufficient social conglomerates and are based on those civilizational foundations, principles that serve as the background of common experience, the culture of relations formed in the cultural polyphony of both Russia and the United States.

In other words, if we are talking, for example, about Yakuts, and Chechens, Tatars, Kalmyks, or, on the other hand, African Americans and immigrants from Europe, China or Mexico who have migrated to the United States, all living in a corresponding, integral and systematically organized cultural space, what we have in mind is only that cultural component, that side of it, which is called as civilizational dimension of culture. And the more coincidences in this civilizational criterion among different peoples, the better will be their mutual understanding and the more constructive will be their relations and interaction. But their languages, traditions and beliefs, i.e. basic cultural foundations, are not conducive in any way to the unity, mutual understanding and rallying of different peoples. Moreover, the more those cultural foundations generate conflicts and contradictions, the fewer instances those people will have in common in terms of their civilizational parameters (civilizational criteria).

As a result, it turns out (and this is clearly seen in practice) that the cultural and civilizational systems of Russia and the United States differ significantly from each other. And not only on the basis of cultural grounds, but, most importantly, on civilizational standards, i.e. when it comes to the principles on which relations among people are built: recognition, interpretation and respect for fundamental human rights; establishment, interpretation and observance of moral and legal norms, including universal ones, and so on. And this is exactly
what determines the level of development of civil society and, consequently, the level of development of democratic institutions and, in general, democracy in a society.

Thus, you are right, Mikhail, when you say that western type of civilization is hard to “get accustomed to by those cultures (I would say, cultural and civilizational systems) that are not ripe for its acceptance.” This is exactly the case, since western type of civilization cannot exist without proper development of civil society and democracy and cannot be transferred by any means to another cultural soil, especially imposed on someone who lives by other principles. That is reason why an attempt to quickly introduce the ideas of liberalism and democracy to post-Soviet Russia, which was unprepared for this, failed miserably. As we see now, the reaction to such a “cavalry attack” by western civilization, did not take long to wait ...

Thus, in contemporary global world we observe not a "clash of civilizations," which you propose following Huntington, but a clash of cultural and civilizational systems, which, let me point out, is far from the same thing. Hence, I cannot agree with your assertion that multiculturalism, which does not take root indeed, and not only in Germany, was allegedly "successfully established in the United States." As my approach suggests, the "peaceful coexistence" of most diverse nations and cultures in the United States is ensured by the fact that the inhabitants of this country are in the same civilizational paradigm of social relations. And a common ground for those people who come from different countries and regions of the world, is not their various cultures, but, if one might say, their "civilizational cut," or shared "civilizational platform.". In other words, it is not about the acceptance or positive perception of other cultures (various kinds of people can be treated differently), but about the recognition of common civilizational norms and principles of conduct and about following them in daily life.
Finally, from here comes my skeptical attitude toward your suggestion that as a basic component of culture, religion can become a general and, even more so, reliable foundation and rallying point for all the peoples of the world. It is and must remain a private matter, the result of a "free choice of believers," and, therefore, must always be separated from the secular life of the people. This is even more relevant now, when it comes to the entire global humanity, representing a "patchwork quilt," weaving from different cultures, each of which is associated with a certain system of beliefs.

A.Ch.: In our discussion about globalization and religion we touched upon many (but surely not all) important aspects of this very timely topic. It is likely that we will return to this conversation in the future. Now, at the conclusion of our dialogue, I would like to ask your opinion about the short and long-term projections of the role and significance of religion in the life of the world community that is finally and irrevocably entered the era of multifaceted globalization.

M.S.: I will follow your example, dear Alexander, and will express my personal and subjective point of view in response to your question. In my opinion, since the 18th century the world is undergoing not the clash of different civilizations or, as you write, cultural and civilizational systems, but the strengthening and spreading throughout the world of the modern civilization of the Enlightenment. The ideological paradigm of the Enlightenment, coupled with economic industrialization and political democratization, sweeps on its way traditional agrarian societies, which, as a rule, were cemented politically by the principle of autocracy in its various forms. The history of modern times is the struggle of the Enlightenment against all other types of societies,
and we must admit that this history is extraordinarily bloody since it was accompanied by endless revolutions and spawned two world wars.

Traditional religions respond in two ways to the challenge of the Enlightenment. They either accept it and adapt to the new social conditions; or they reject it and limit themselves to the literal interpretation of their teaching. In the first case, we are dealing with liberalism, which reinterprets the tradition in the spirit of progressive developments; in the second – with fundamentalism, which is engaged in constant war with modernity. At best, this is an ideological struggle, and at worst – a real and deadly warfare.

Any religion is capable of both reactions as evidenced by historical experience. Protestants were the first who kept up with progress and made an alliance with the secular Enlightenment. Already in the eighteenth century in America, the "all-American" theologian, Jonathan Edwards, formulated the foundations of liberal theology of Protestantism, dividing the spheres of reason and feelings and securing religious function for the latter. In Europe in the nineteenth century German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who is often called the "father of modern liberal theology," did practically the same. And in the beginning of twentieth century in America, Protestant fundamentalism threw a glove to fellow liberals by defending the inviolability and exclusivity of Christian dogma.

In Catholicism, the reaction to the challenge of the Enlightenment was also twofold. At the First Vatican Council in the 19th century, Catholics rejected the ideology of modernity and voted for the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope on matters of faith and morality. But already a century later, at the Second Vatican Council in 1962-65, they have taken a decision to modernize the Catholic faith. The list of banned books was abolished, church services were
translated from Latin into national languages, the declaration on religious freedom was adopted, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue promoted.

In Russia, liberal Orthodoxy was represented by philosophical writings of Vladimir Solovyov and his followers, and a fundamentalist religious-nationalist response to modernity was developed in the works of such Slavophiles as Nikolai Danilevsky and Konstantin Leontiev. Other world religions—Judaism, Buddhism, Islam—also react ambiguously to the Enlightenment project, developing either a modernized or fundamentalist version of their doctrine. These processes will continue, in my opinion, until modern ideology will conquer the whole world and will lead to the creation of a world confederation of states. Since this ideology is based on reason alone and not on faith, the principle of separation of religion and state will also be extended to nearly all countries of the world. Freedom of conscience and religion will become the cornerstone of global world order. In these conditions, new religious movements will grow like mushrooms after the rain.

From the history of religions, we know that new faiths need at least four centuries to grow enough followers and to get on their feet, becoming an influential force in the political, economic and cultural arenas. The Enlightenment project originated from the 17th and 18th centuries, and the new religious trends, respectively, since the 19th century. If religious evolution does not accelerate its pace, it is very likely that in the 22nd century our descendants will finally see the results of the cultural work that was started by the European Enlightenment.

That's where the fun begins. Will the world confederation, built on the principles of the Enlightenment, ensure a lasting peace on the planet? Will new religious movements, offer

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humanity not only rational, but renewed spiritual foundations for planetary existence? These and many other issues that require a decisive solution will face the people who would have passed through the crucible of modern history. And it's not for us to judge what their choice will be. Our descendants will figure out themselves where to stream the ship of history, which has already acquired undeniably-global proportions.