

**Invitation of Papers for the
Tenth International Course on**

*Religion and Civil Society:
Conflicts of Religious Identity and
Integration Processes in a Globalized World*

**In Yalta, Livadia, Crimea, Ukraine,
November 16-20, 2011**

By Course Directors:

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Dear Friend:

We are writing this letter to you, in order to invite you wholeheartedly to our tenth international course on *Religion and Civil Society: Conflicts of Religious Identity and Integration Processes in a Globalized World* to take place in Yalta, Livadia, Crimea, Ukraine, November 16-20, 2011. It is a sister course to our international Dubrovnik course on the *Future of Religion*. Our new theme in Yalta is certainly of highest actuality in the present world-historical transition from Modernity to Post-Modernity: particularly during the global financial catastrophe of 2008-2011..The following few thoughts and ideas may help us to stimulate and give guidance to our discourse, and may inspire our papers.

The Religious and the Secular

The very core of the comparative, dialectical religiology is the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular, or between the sacred and the profane. According to the Rabbis, the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular, had been unknown to the Torah, or even to the Tanakh, or to any other ancient sacred writings of the three Abrahamic religions, or of the other still living world-religions.. Everything we do, so the Rabbis thought, had the potential of being holy, and according to the Torah and the Talmud those people who thought that there was no God, and that the world of nature and of man - family, society, state, history and culture - was entirely secular and profane, were considered to be foolish, false, corrupt, vile, evil, unwise, tainted, ignorant, stupid, unclean, impure, lawless, immoral, wicked, evildoers. They were seen as apostates, who were struck by fear without reason. They were disgraced, and rejected by God and the community of the believers, as their bones were scattered and they were forgotten. Shortly, the secular or the profane dimension had no autonomy whatsoever. As today secular people anticipate the end of religion, so religious people have always expected the end of secularity.

Holiness

In the Rabbis' perspective, to be holy was to be different; to be set apart from the ordinary secular life of the people. The ordinary was often used as the opposite of holy. In Rabbinic discourse, to be holy was to rise and to partake in some measure of the special qualities of God, the source of all holiness. Holiness was the highest of human behaviour: human beings at their most God-like. Martin Buber wrote that unlike today's modern approach, Judaism did not divide life into the holy and the profane, but rather into the holy and the not-yet-holy. Similarly Finkelstone wrote that Judaism is a way of life, that endeavours to transform virtually every human action into a means of communion with God. The Talmud enunciated the important principle of achieving holiness within the realm of the permitted. Jews were supposed to go beyond obeying the letter of the law, and refraining from what was forbidden, by finding ways of sanctifying every moment in their lives. People could be as

holy as they allowed themselves to be. Ramban warned against the person, who managed to lead an unworthy life without technically breaking any of the Torah's rules. Such a person was called a scoundrel within the bounds of the Torah. In the Rabbi's view, the capacity for holiness was not restricted to spiritually gifted people. Anyone may attain holiness. God did not demand the impossible. There was no one, who was entirely religiously unmusical, as Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas confessed to be. Still most recently the 82 years old Habermas stated that he had become old, but not pious. The critical theorist of religion observes, that traditional societies are not only opposed to the profanization of the sacred, but rather try to overcome and reconcile the difference between the religious and the secular through the progressive sanctification of the profane, or through de-secularisation. The relationship between the sacred and the profane is extremely dialectical.

Community

In the view of the Rabbis, holiness was most easily achieved in the context of a religious community. It was difficult for a person to live a life of holiness without others. Noah was not able to do it. Even Abraham lapsed into unworthy behaviour, when he was surrounded by people who were not striving for holiness as he was. When a community dedicated itself to the pursuit of holiness, its members supported and reinforced each other. Historically, when Jewish – or Christian, or Islamic, or Buddhist, or Hindu, etc. – communities have been at their best, the whole became greater than the sum of its parts Ordinary people achieved an extraordinary measure of sanctity in their daily lives. The divine commandment You shall be holy has been understood by some Rabbis not as a command, but as a promise. Hatam Sofer promised: Live by these rules (the Mosaic Decalogue) and your life will become special in the process. Your fundamental need for significance, for the assurance that your life has meaning, will be met thereby. For Heschel, Judaism was an attempt to prove, that in order to be a man you have to be more than a man; that in order to be a people, you have to be more than a people. Israel had been made to be a holy, not a secular people.

Identity and Openness

The antagonism between the religious and the secular has grown and deepened in modern civil society from its very start. The secular dimension developed on its own and has tried to concretely supersede the religious dimension particularly in terms of the natural and the social sciences and of the resulting enlightenment movements and revolutions : the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment.. Today , in 2011, the abyss between the sacred and the profane continually deepens in the form of the global culture wars, which are often won by the secular side against all religious protests up to the catastrophe of September 11 ten years ago.: divorce; gay marriages ; open gays in the armed forces; death penalty; stemcell research; abortion; unlimited capitalist greed; eugenics; euthanasia; etc. As the antagonism between the religious and the secular deepens, the religious communities split in themselves between those believers, who emphasize the religious identity and integration, and those faithful, people who want to be open to secular Modernity and Post-Modernity. There are orthodox Rabbis, who stress Jewish identity and there are conservative and reformed Rabbis who want to be more or less open to the modern world. In the Roman Catholic paradigm of Christianity, there is on one side Pope Benedict XVI, who emphasizes identity, tradition and integration, and there is on the other side Hans Küng and Joannes Baptist Metz and Gustavo Gutierrez and the liberation theologians., who want to promote reforms and innovations in the Church . in response to the challenge of the bourgeois and the socialist enlightenment movements and revolutions. Sometimes the emphasis on identity, integration, and tradition takes on a fundamentalist form.. Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon. The fundamentalist is a person, who has been hit by the global modern enlightenment movements, and is afraid to lose his religious foundation and hold in life. Instead of moving critically through the global modern enlightenment to a second naiveté (Ricoeur), he flees back to the religion of the fathers and to literalism , which they never engaged in, and to the first naiveté. which may land him or her in utter cultural regression , or in hypocrisy. He or she may lose contact with modern scientific, ethical , legal, political progress , or he or she may curse modernity, while at the same time enjoying its advantages.. Iran is a traditional theocracy, which at the same time enjoys a modern French constitution and the most modern science - quantum physics. The Vatican is a traditional theocracy, which at the same time does not prevent its officials from flying in the most modern airplanes and from using the most modern means of communication: television and the internet. As the different world religions are

equally hit by the globalizing antagonistic civil society and modernity and post modernity, they can learn from each other and they can help each other to resolve the dialectic between the religious and the secular, as well as in the sacred and in the profane, and between identity and openness, or between tradition and innovation. There will be no peace among nations without peace among the religions, and there will be no peace among the religions without discourse among them, and there will be no discourse among the religions without mutual knowledge and recognition among each other. For dialectical religiology, today there is in post-secular society an alternative available for all those traditional believers, who have problems with the traditional religions, and who do not want to fall for sex, car and career: a post-theistic, anti-authoritarian, and undogmatic humanistic, communicative religiosity or spirituality of the X-experience or of the longing for the totally Other than the horror and terror of nature and history, which determinately negates - i.e. criticizes, but also preserves, elevates, and tries to fulfil traditional positive religions, particularly the ethical theism of the three Abrahamic religions, and thus to bridge the still growing antagonism between the sacred and the profane.

Our discourse shall include the following topics:

- Role of religion in globalized cultural space;
- Religious identity and geopolitical world-view as factors of formation of multipolar world;
- Crisis of multiculturalism policy in Europe;
- Ethno-confessional identity and integration processes in the global financial crisis;
- Relations between Islam and Christianity in the context of regional, national and international security;
- Religious and ethnic identity as an object of manipulation technologies;
- Clash of Civilizations: myth or reality?
- Tolerance and hatred: philosophical, ethical and psychological aspects;
- Religion and social capital: parameters of the interaction;
- Social networks as a factor in the structuring of civil society;
- State-church relations and social service in civil society;
- Media as a resource for geopolitical competition;
- Religion and sustainable development: ethno-ecological measuring of daily life;
- Linguistic aspects of intercultural communication;
- Religion and education: in search of harmony and dialogue.

The list of issues is open for continuation.

A Round table “The Politicization of Islam and Revolutions in the Countries of North Africa: Triumph of Democratic Values or Geopolitical Competition?” will be held within the framework of the Workshop

I hope that helps! I hope to see you in Yalta. in November!

Best wishes,

Yours truly,

Rudolf J. Siebert

Additional Information

Chairs:

Dr. Rudolf Siebert,

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http://www.crimea.edu/tnu/person_page/senyushkina/index.htm

Organizers: Western Michigan University (USA) and TAURIDA NATIONAL V.I.Vernadsky UNIVERSITY (Ukraine), NETWORK OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND INTERETHNIC TRUST (Ukraine).

[.http://www.crimea.edu/tnu/person_page/senyushkina/index.htm](http://www.crimea.edu/tnu/person_page/senyushkina/index.htm)

Participants' presentations will be published after the workshop.

Registration fee: 70 EUR to be paid after arrival.

Languages: English, Russian, Ukrainian

Accommodation: Hotel "Bristol", Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine.

From 72 USD to 276 USD per room per night. Prices include: accommodation with breakfast, portorage of luggage, VAT, 10 Roosevelt St., Yalta, Crimea 98600, Ukraine. Reservation: +38-0654 271606, fax +38 0654 271609

E-mail: reserve@hotel-bristol.com.ua http: // www.hotel-bristol.com.ua

Guided tours to the Palace-Park Complex of the South Crimean Coast (Livadia Palace of the last Russian Tzar Nicolay II in Yalta, Voroncov Palace in Alupka, Russian Tzar Alexander III Palace in Massandra), and also to famous Nikitskiy Botanic Garden and to the world-wide famous for its perfect vines Massandra Vine Production will be offered to the Workshop participants.

To participate in the Workshop, please send your application **no later than 15 October, 2011 on the following address:** nce@mail.ru, tsenyushkina@yandex.ru

More information about Workshop is on the web-site: <http://nce.sevhost.net>

Application form

Name of the Participant

Topic of the Presentation

Scientific degree/Student involvement

Affiliation

Position

Contact phone number (please, indicate the area code):

office: _____ alternative:

E-

mail: _____

-

Fax:

Postal address for sending printed Workshop Materials:

Signature (if sent by regular mail) _____

Date of filling the application _____