

ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСКАЯ ЖИЗНЬ КАК ОТРАЖЕНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ (К 60-ЛЕТИЮ М. Ю. СЕРГЕЕВА)

В конце апреля этого года выдающемуся философу, религиоведу, поэту и публицисту Михаилу Юрьевичу Сергееву исполнилось 60 лет. Научная деятельность его широка и разнообразна. Он является доктором философии, профессором Университета искусств (Филадельфия, США), заведующим кафедрой религии, философии и теологии Уилмет института при Национальной духовной ассамблее бахаи США, основателем и



главным редактором журнала «Studies in Bahá'í Philosophy», членом редакционных советов журналов «Вестник Киевского национального университета культуры и искусств», «Философия и жизнь» (Ташкент, Узбекистан), «Credo New», «Философская мысль» (РАН), «Философия и культура» (РАН), «Век глобализации», «Философский полилог», долгое время был главным редактором книжной серии «Contemporary Russian Philosophy» (Leiden: Brill, Нидерланды).

60 лет – много это или мало? Старость это или зрелость? Такие вопросы человек задает себе, когда приближается к этой дате. Одни после 60-ти уже просто доживают жизнь, другие только входят в ее вкус, продолжают подниматься в гору и испытывают радость подъема вверх, радость видения мира с высоты птичьего полета, да и сами они уже не ходят по земле, а парят в своих идеях, замыслах, творчестве, возвышаясь над сиюминутной злободневностью, понимая с высоты своего парения происходящее на земле гораздо глубже и адекватнее, чем те люди, которые живут, погрузившись в земные тяготы, все более придавливающие их к долу. К таким «парящим в безвременье людям» принадлежит, на мой взгляд, Михаил Юрьевич Сергеев.

Часто люди у последней черты жизни говорят: «Жизнь незаметно пролетела...». Михаил Сергеев так бы никогда не сказал. Почему? Да потому, что он уже прожил не одну жизнь, а множество, и каждая – очень насыщенная, а следовательно, субъективное время ее очень велико. Более того, он продолжает строить планы, мечтать и, по существу, стоит на пороге еще одной жизни, качественно отличающейся, как и все его жизни, от предыдущих, а может, и не одной. В нем раскрываются все новые и новые таланты, способности, а следовательно, рождаются новые замыслы, проекты, новое видение старых явлений жизни, новое видение бытия. Но не будем забегать вперед, попробуем увидеть многосерийный

фильм жизни М. Сергеева; и хотя содержание каждой серии очень отличается от всех других, главный герой и его интенции остаются теми же – это интенции к Истине, Добру, Красоте, Любви, Свободе, Творчеству, Гармонии.

Родился М. Сергеев в России в Москве в 1960 году, тогда это был СССР, в котором существовала особая программа формирования личности. На интеллектуальном уровне – рост науки и образования, их высокая социальная значимость. На духовном уровне – воинствующий атеизм и запрет верующим занимать социально значимые должности. Кроме того, неявный антисемитизм, то есть официально: все люди – братья, но в реальности евреи не могли поступать в престижные университеты, на определенные специальности и занимать престижные должности. Конечно, были исключения: талантливые и гениальные евреи все же получали и прекрасное образование, и нобелевские премии, и известность во всем мире. Именно в такой атмосфере формировалась личность М. Сергеева.

Родители М. Ю. Сергеева – высокоинтеллигентные люди – дали ему прекрасное образование: он закончил престижную французскую школу в Москве с золотой медалью, затем захотел поступить в Институт международных отношений на факультет международной журналистики. И тут столкнулся с «подпольным» антисемитизмом: его, как сына еврейки (у Сергеева отец русский, а мать еврейка), сразу вычеркнули из списка поступающих, но он все же, несмотря на это (это отдельная история), поступил в МГИМО и закончил его, изучив, помимо специальности «Международная журналистика со специализацией по Латинской Америке», девять иностранных языков, причем шесть уже после МГИМО (французский – в спецшколе, испанский и английский – в МГИМО, латынь и древнегреческий – в МГУ на кафедре древних языков, немецкий – на курсах иностранных языков, иврит – в частной школе, итальянский и португальский – самостоятельно). К тому же, М. Сергеев прекрасно играл на гитаре, пел и сочинял стихи.

При этом, как все советские пионеры и комсомольцы, он рос атеистом. То есть во взрослое общество вошел талантливый, эрудированный, идеологически «правильный», высокопрофессиональный специалист, и, по логике вещей, для него должны были быть распахнуты двери престижных организаций и предстоял быстрый карьерный рост. Но не тут-то было! После окончания института М. Сергеев не мог найти работу, два года был безработным и был официально зарегистрирован на бирже труда.

После он работал редактором международного отдела еженедельника «Собеседник», редактором в Гостелерадиофонде, завлитом в московском театре-студии «Арлекин», однако чувство нереализованности себя как личности не покидало и тяготило его. И изучение иностранных языков, по сути, было для него «интеллектуальным алкоголем», которым он пытался «залить» душевную неудовлетворенность своей работой.

В 1990 г. Михаил Сергеев был в командировке в США от театра-студии «Арлекин», и там у него произошла судьбоносная встреча с заведующим кафедрой религиоведения Темпльского университета, профес-

сором Джоном Рейнсом, который после длительной беседы, продолжавшейся около двух часов, пораженный его знаниями, особенно иностранных языков, предложил Михаилу Юрьевичу поступить в магистратуру, а затем – аспирантуру Темльского университета по специальности «Философия религии». М. Сергеев принял это предложение с воодушевлением, ибо душа его тяготела к преподаванию и науке, но в СССР «подпольный антисемитизм» не позволял ему самореализоваться в этом направлении. Он пытался поступать в аспирантуру – хотел писать диссертацию по Серебряному веку, но его даже близко не подпустили к вступительной компании в аспирантуру. Он решил не только ехать на учебу в США, но и эмигрировать из СССР, где, увы, не мог творчески реализовать себя. Так закончилась первая жизнь М. Сергеева.

В 1990 г. он с семьей уехал в Соединенные Штаты на учебу, в 1993 г. получил степень магистра, в 1997 г. защитил докторскую диссертацию по теме «Религиозно-философская концепция Софии: ее генеалогия и эволюция в русской мысли XIX и XX столетия», и ему была присуждена ученая степень доктора философии по специальности «Философия религии» в Темпльском университете в Филадельфии. Впоследствии диссертация была опубликована в виде монографии «Sophiology in Russian Orthodoxy: Solov'ev, Bulgakov, Losskii, Berdiaev», которую один из крупнейших экспертов по православному богословию в современной Америке, профессор Пол Вальер назвал «лучшим введением в русскую софиологию на английском языке».

В своей диссертации М. Ю. Сергеев впервые в общем виде сформулировал теорию религиозных циклов, которую в дальнейшем развивал в статьях и книгах. «В основе моей гипотезы, – рассказывает Сергеев, – лежит представление о религии как об организме – органической системе, фундамент которой составляют священные писания и их истолкования в форме священного предания. В зависимости от различного соотношения Писания и Предания, религиозная система проходит через ряд стадий, или фаз, своего развития: первоначальную, ортодоксальную, классическую, реформистскую и критическую»¹.

После защиты докторской диссертации М. Сергеев начал преподавать в филадельфийском Университете искусств, пройдя последовательно должности от лектора до адъюнкт-профессора. Студенты не только его уважают, но и обожают. Они записываются к нему за три-четыре месяца, а иногда им приходится ждать несколько лет, чтобы попасть на курсы М. Ю. Сергеева, потому что места все заняты. За годы своего преподавания М. Ю. Сергеев прочел около 20 разных курсов, среди которых «Мировые религии», «Авраамические религии», «Введение в Библию», «Русская религиозная мысль», «Введение в модернизм: XIX век», «Введение в модернизм: XX век», в том числе и авторские курсы «Святая война», «Религия, искусство и апокалипсис», «Жизнь после смерти». И это не удивительно, ибо М. Ю. Сергеев – яркая, колоритная личность, в которой органически сочетается высокий профессионализм и интеллект,

¹ Сергеев М.Ю., Шелковая Н.В. Религия и духовность. Опыт философского размышления // Философские науки. 2017. № 12. С. 77.

артистические способности, творческое изложение материала, нестандартные методики преподавания и высокая культура. Кроме того, что очень важно, он любит свою работу и студентов. И они, конечно, это чувствуют.

Вместе с тем, М. Ю. Сергеев – крупный ученый, неординарно мыслящий и многогранный в своих интересах, как любой талантливый человек. Об этом свидетельствуют сами названия его книг: «The Project of the Enlightenment: Essays on Religion, Philosophy and Art» (сборник статей на рус. и англ. яз.) (2004), «И сотворил Бог смех» (2005), «Sophiology in Russian Orthodoxy: Solov'ev, Bulgakov, Losskii, Berdiaev» (2006), «Апокапипсис: Заметки философа» (2009), «Поэзия русских философов двадцатого века: Антология» (авторы-составители М. Ю. Сергеев, Л. Н. Столович) (2011), в которую вошла большая подборка стихотворений самого М. Ю. Сергеева, «Smile From Heaven: An Anthology of Religious Humor» (2012), «Theory of Religious Cycles: Tradition, Modernity and the Bahá'í Faith» (2015).

Следует обратить внимание на тот факт, что советскому атеисту судьба уготовила специализироваться в области религии, что не только не вызвало протеста в душе М. Ю. Сергеева, но и нашло положительный отклик. По приезду в США в связи с большими трудностями разнообразного характера, связанными с первым временем проживания в другой стране, Михаил Юрьевич сначала потянулся к религии рода – иудаизму, но его свободолюбивую и в то же время толерантную натуру оттолкнула строгая догматика иудаизма. Он начал искать духовную отдушину. Примкнул временно к протестантизму, широко распространенному в США, но и там он не нашел того, чего искала его душа.

И тут он встретился с уникальной религией бахаи, которая, в отличие от всех других религий, не считала себя единственно истинной, не отвергала другие религии как ложные, а «сняла» их учения в своем учении о единстве всего человечества. Космополитизм этой религии отвечал свободолюбивой натуре М. Сергеева, и он стал последователем этой религии. Причем он не только принял веру бахаи в свою душу, но и стал ее теоретиком, посвятив ей свою монографию «Theory of Religious Cycles: Tradition, Modernity and the Bahá'í Faith» и в 2012 г. основав первый в мире научный журнал о вере бахаи «Studies in Bahá'í Philosophy». М. Ю. Сергеев принимает активное участие в лекциях о философии бахаи, а в 2017 г. стал заведующим кафедрой религии, философии и теологии Уилмет института при Национальной духовной ассамблее бахаи США. Сейчас он по скайпу читает лекции по философии веры бахаи студентам этого института со всего мира, рассматривая философию как путь к духовному просветлению. Так, М. С. Сергеев в интервью с А. С. Ниловым отметил: «Я не считаю, как пишете Вы, что “Трансцендентное Означаемое налагает запрет на философское вопрошание”. Напротив, оно его стимулирует»¹.

¹ Теория религиозных циклов (беседа А. С. Нилова с М. Ю. Сергеевым в рамках проекта «Современная русская философия») // Философские науки. 2017. № 1. С. 128.

В 2017 г. главный редактор книжной серии «Современная русская философия», выходящей в голландском издательстве «Brill», профессор Университета Северной Каролины Уильям Гей ушел на пенсию и передал свой пост М. Сергееву, так как ему очень понравилась его монография о религиозных циклах. Так началась еще одна жизнь М. Ю. Сергеева. На посту главреда организаторские способности и творческие замыслы Михаила Юрьевича развернулись во всю ширь в прямом смысле слова: он создал и реализовал поистине эпохальный проект, подготовив к изданию на английском языке антологию современной русской философии «Russian Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century: An Anthology», в которую вошли работы лучших философов современной России (в том числе и живущих за ее пределами). Это первая антология современной русской философской мысли в англоязычном философском мире.

Параллельно М. Ю. Сергеев создал и реализовал другой эпохальный проект: издал в США на русском языке антологию философских тестов современных русскоязычных авторов из 8 стран мира (Германии, Израиля, Италия, Китая, США, Украины, Швейцарии, Швеции) – «Русское зарубежье: Антология современной философской мысли» (M-Graphics, Boston, MA, 2018).

В 2020 г. М. Ю. Сергеев передал свой пост главреда книжной серии «Современная русская философия» Алиссе ДеБласио (Дикинсон колледж, США), чтобы полностью посвятить себя научной работе. И не только научной. Как я уже отмечала, Михаил Сергеев – разносторонне талантливая личность: пишет стихи, играет на гитаре, поет, ему принадлежит замечательная повесть «Своей свободой дорожи...», представляющая историю московского музыкально-драматического театра «Арлекин», пишет книгу о театре, в котором работал, – «Московский театр “Арлекин”»: создание, история, спектакли».

При этом он – нежно и трогательно любящий муж, отец и сын, верный и преданный друг, очень искренний и порядочный человек, очень добрый, отзывчивый, с тонкой душой.

От всей души поздравляем Михаила Юрьевича с юбилеем и желаем ему еще много-много новых, интересных, творческих жизней, реализации замыслов и проектов, рождения гениальных идей и просто человеческого счастья и любви. И, конечно, многая лета в добром здравии.

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SPIRITUALITY IN THE GLOBAL AGE: THEORY OF RELIGIOUS CYCLES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS*

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В XIX и XX вв. феномен религии объясняли, как правило, редуцируя религиозный опыт к другим сферам общественной деятельности – социальной, экономической или психологической. Сейчас тезис о «смерти Бога» кажется ошибочным, а влияние религии не только возросло, но и, к сожалению, привело к росту религиозного экстремизма. Каковы же предпосылки для мирной эволюции религиозных институтов? Являются ли религиозные организации всего лишь властными структурами, которые связаны с насилием? Значит ли это, что для искоренения войн на земле необходимо избавиться от религиозных практик? Эти и другие вопросы о роли религии в обществе становятся особенно актуальными в наше время, для которого характерна стремительная глобализация. В статье роль и место религиозных систем в глобальном мире рассматривается через призму авторской теории религиозных циклов, согласно которой в ходе эволюции каждая историческая религия проходит через конкретные и почти идентичные фазы становления и развития: формирующую, ортодоксальную, классическую, реформистскую, критическую и пост-критическую, а также претерпевает два типа кризисов – структурный и системный. С этой точки зрения анализируются иудаизм, буддизм, христианство и ислам. В статье прослеживается сходство в развитии этих конфессий и предлагается иной взгляд на современный религиозный ландшафт, делается предположение о росте новых религиозных движений с глобалистскими учениями и институтами.

Ключевые слова: эволюция религии, религиозный цикл, иудаизм, буддизм, христианство, ислам, сравнительные исследования.

In modern times there have been numerous attempts by scholars to theorize about religion. Most of those theories reduced religion to other spheres of social activity – social, economic, or psychological. Now, in the 21st century, those radical predictions about the “death of God” seem shortsighted. After a temporary retreat religion came back with increased influence, power, and, unfortunately, violence. What are the preconditions for a peaceful evolution of religious institutions? Are religious systems simply power structures that inevitably involve violence and abuse, and to eradicate the war should we also get rid of religion? Those and many other related issues concerning religion’s role in society become especially important in our time of the increasing globalization. This paper looks at religion in the global age through the prism of the theory of religious cycles that is outlined by the author. According to his approach, in the course of its evolution, every historical religion goes through specific and almost identical stages of growth. Based on a distinct correlation between sacred scriptures and traditions, the author distinguishes six such phases – formative, orthodox, classical, reformist, critical, and post-critical. Also, in the course of its expansion religious system undergoes two types of crises – structural and systemic. The author applies his theory of religious cycles to the analysis of such world spiritual traditions as Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. The study reveals astounding similarities in the evolution of those faiths, offers a different perspective on modernity and predicts the rise of new religious movements with globalist teachings and institutions.

Keywords: evolution of religion, religious cycle, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, comparative studies.

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Introduction

In modern times there have been numerous attempts by scholars to theorize about religion. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Western thought produced major theories on the subject, which are still debated in American universities as classical illustrations of scholarly work in the field. Most of those theories reduced religion to other spheres of social activity – social, economic, or psychological. In the twentieth century, with the rise of the Soviet Union – the first and only atheistic empire in human history – believers were even more so confidently told that religion is simply an old-age superstition and is about to disappear with the continuous progress of modern science.

Now, in the twenty-first century, those radical predictions about the death of God seem premature, shortsighted, and “slightly exaggerated,” to say the least. Not only religion did not die out but it resurfaced instead with increased robustness and power. Religion is the only social institution that provides us with a glimpse of hope and a sense of certainty about life after death and immortality. And it is not surprising that people stick to faith with all their hearts to exhaust the existential anxiety of their life journey.

What seems to be wrong with religion though is centuries-old violence that was – and still is – perpetrated in its name. Islamic jihad and, of course, medieval Inquisition and Crusades are the first things that come to our mind when we think of religion today. Can religious systems evolve? Can they guide us to and establish egalitarian peace rather than hierarchical authority? Or, as the New Atheists contend, religious systems are simply power structures that involve violence and abuse, and to eradicate war we should also get rid of religion?

Those and many other related questions about the role of religion in society become especially important in our time when all problems of humanity are increasingly globalized and thus magnified. In this paper, the wide-reaching evolution of religion is analyzed through the prism of a theory of religious cycles that aims to discover similar patterns in the historical development of religious systems.

Model of Religious Cycle

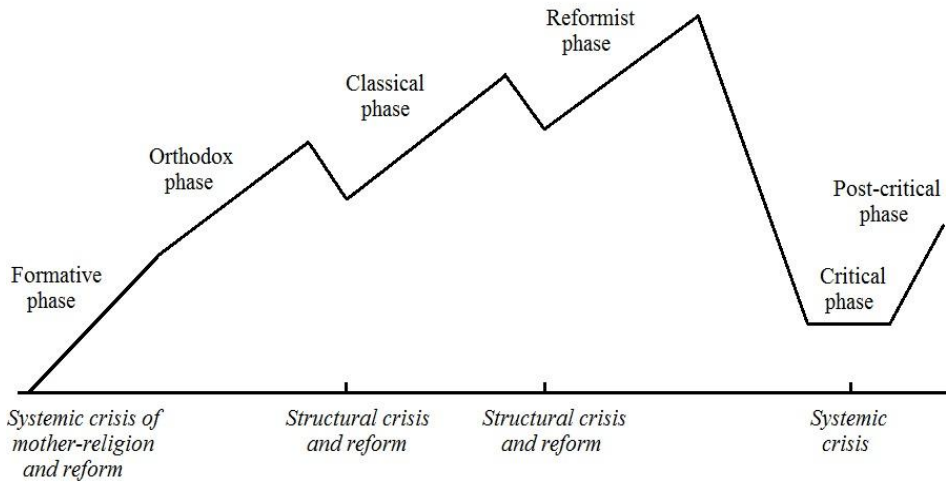
To approach religion from a global standpoint I proposed a theory of religious cycle that provides methodological tools to compare religious systems phenomenologically. According to my theory, a religious system represents a semantic structure that creates a net of meanings whose origin is not available to ordinary human beings. To preserve its original teachings and to transmit it to the following generations, religions develop sacred scriptures and sacred tradition whose main purpose is to interpret the primary texts. No matter how explicit or detailed, the scriptures are never exhaustive and call for interpretation because of the peculiar nature of the religious experience that is rooted in the transcendent.

In the course of its evolution, and independently of its doctrines and practices, a religious system goes through six stages or phases – early or forma-

tive, orthodox, classical, reformist, critical, and post-critical. The early or formative phase of the religious system contributes to the formation of its scriptural canon and the establishment of its sacred tradition. The orthodox phase cements the traditional foundations of religion by fighting heretical movements and their alternative scriptural interpretations. The classical phase reformulates sacred tradition by adding new interpretations to the canon. Reformists purify tradition from the accumulated interpretations to get back to the core of sacred teachings and restore the original faith.

Each phase in the evolution of religion offers its answer to the misbalance of sacred scriptures and sacred traditions that result in the structural crisis of religion. Structural crises, which challenge sacred tradition, are usually resolved by the appearance of new branches or divisions within the existing religions. In contrast to structural crises that question tradition, the systemic crisis of religion shakes up the foundation of the system itself, namely its sacred scriptures. The systemic crisis marks a fundamental challenge to religious authority that can be overcome only by the introduction of new religious systems with their own scriptural texts. During this critical phase, mother-religions usually produce their offshoots in the form of new religious movements.

Chart 1 – Model of religious cycle



After the critical phase, religious systems do not deteriorate but renew and reconfirm their foundations. The birth of a new religious movement from its mother-faith sparks competition between the two, which is vital and healthy for both traditions. As a result, age-long religions flourish alongside their younger counterparts by reorganizing their sacred tradition and restoring the authority of primary scriptures. In the following section of the paper, this model of religious cycles will be applied to the evolution of Judaism whose

historical development may serve as an archetype for the cycles of major world religions of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Cycle of Judaism

Judaism is one of the oldest religious traditions in the world. Its historical records are preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures; however, many of those writings remain legendary from the point of view of modern archeology and historiography. The scriptures of Judaism, called the Tanakh, consist of three parts – the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. The most important part is the Torah, or Pentateuch, which contains mythological sagas about the creation of the world, the fall of Adam and Eve, the Hebrew patriarchs, and the life and teachings of Moses. According to Biblical scholarship, its priestly editor(s) compiled the Torah from multiple sources around the fourth century BCE [3, p. 95].

According to tradition, Jews trace their ancestral lineage to the patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah, their son Isaac and grandson Jacob who, after having wrestled with God, changed his name to Israel and became the progenitor of the new nation. Although Abraham is considered the first Hebrew who made the covenant with God, the central figure of Judaism as a religion is Moses who delivered the sacred Law to the nation of Israel. According to Biblical scholars, Abraham may have lived around the eighteenth century BCE while Moses prophesied nearly six hundred years later – somewhere in the thirteenth century BCE.

The Bible emphasizes the special status of Moses who “beholds the likeness of the Lord” and the extraordinary character of his communication with the deity [5, num. 12.6–8]. For the Hebrews, the journey out of the wilderness into the land of prosperity and happiness symbolized salvation. From that moment on, the Biblical religion developed along the lines of the model of religious cycles outlined in the previous section. Having begun with Moses, the religious cycle of Judaism would later culminate with Jesus and the birth of Christianity during the systemic crisis of the Jewish faith, which will undergo its further post-critical transformations. In the meantime, the covenant with Moses was recorded in the scriptures and became the heart of Biblical Judaism. And, eventually, the Torah, which revolves around the Law of Moses, acquired the highest status within the Jewish scriptural canon.

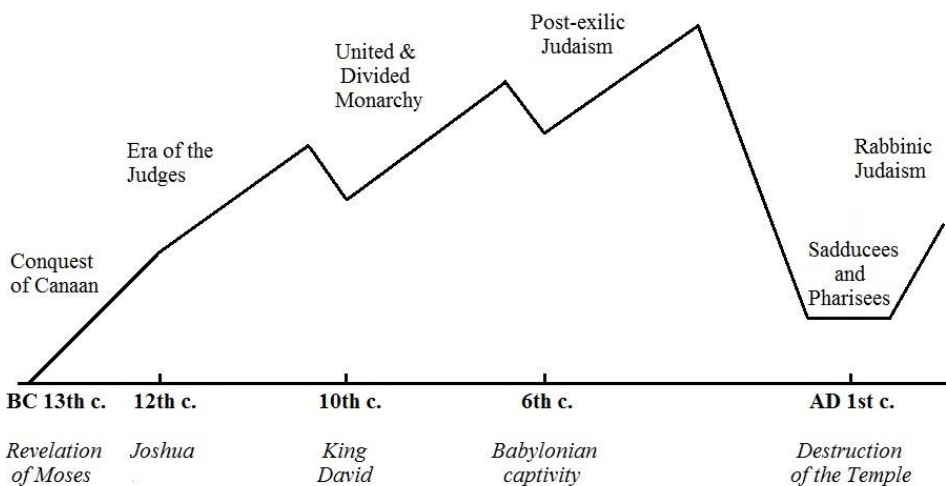
After the death of Moses, his appointed successor, Joshua, led the Israelites to the Promised Land in a series of military campaigns that resulted in the settlement and land distribution among the twelve tribes. In the Bible, these events are described in the Book of Joshua that immediately follows the Pentateuch in the Hebrew Scriptures. In terms of my theory, they refer to the formative phase of ancient Judaism. By the end of this phase, the tribes were united under the law of the covenant, the issues of scriptural authority and proper worship were settled, and the confederation of tribal states was organized. The time had come for the next, orthodox, phase of religion that in Biblical Judaism was represented by the period of the charismatic and popular leaders known as the Judges.

Biblical scholars estimate that the era of the Judges spanned approximately from 1200 to 1020 BCE, lasting about two centuries. During this period the tribal Judges delivered their people from oppression by advancing God's justice, proclaiming divine judgment on Israel and its neighbors, and calling their people to righteousness and the worship of one God. In political terms, it was a tribal theocracy, in which the Judges exercised both religious and political authority.

The age of the Judges, in its turn, ended with the establishment of the monarchy and centralized worship. This transition from the tribal theocracy to an absolute monarchy or, in our terms, from the orthodox to the classical phase of Judaism, is important because it shows that the shift itself, as it is often the case with other religions as well, involves significant social and political changes, which could be ambivalent in their consequences.

According to Biblical scholarship, the events that led to the foundation of the United Monarchy and the building of the Temple in Jerusalem had occurred in the tenth century BCE. So, it took approximately three centuries for Judaism – from the revelation of Moses in the thirteenth century to the construction of the Temple in the tenth century – to complete an important transition to the classical phase, which marks a new balance between its sacred scriptures and sacred tradition. In the case of Biblical Judaism, the sacred tradition refers to the legitimate application of the Law of Moses, which, strictly speaking, is possible only with the existence of the Temple and priesthood since the law requires various types of sacrifices to be performed by the priests. Hence, the erection of the Temple and the establishment of proper religious specialists and procedures signal the beginning of the classical phase of ancient Judaism.

Chart 2 – Religious cycle of Judaism



After the death of King Solomon, the Hebrew monarchy split into two parts – the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Notwithstanding the difference, both kingdoms suffered the same fate. In 721 BCE, the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire. In 607 BCE, the successors to the Assyrian power, the Babylonians, conquered the southern kingdom of Judah and in 586/7 BCE they destroyed the Jerusalem Temple.

Since that time the Jews lived under the shadow of other politically dominant nations. New empires rose to replace the military might of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The Persian rulers were especially favorable to the Jews. In 538 BCE, after Cyrus the Great, King of Persia (550–530 BCE), permitted the Jews to return to their homeland, the first wave of immigrants led by Sheshbazzar came back from exile and began rebuilding the Temple. During the reign of another Persian king, Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE), Ezra and Nehemiah led the last two groups of the Jews to their homeland and reestablished the Mosaic Law and standards of worship.

The religious renewal initiated by Ezra and Nehemiah and described in the Bible in the books that bear their names signaled the beginning of the reformist stage of Biblical Judaism. This phase lasted until the first century of the Christian era when the Roman army destroyed the Temple again, this time, apparently, for good. The reformist stage signified the return to the sources of the Jewish religion – Moses, the Law, and the Torah – and responded to the structural crisis of faith due to the loss of political independence and the following exile. Postexilic Judaism flourished for about five centuries and produced the third major part of the Jewish scriptures, the Writings or Ketuvim, which took its final shape by the end of the first century CE.

The destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE and the following second exile marked the beginning of the critical phase of Biblical religion. The first exile and restoration represented the structural crisis of Judaism and its successful resolution within the existing religious tradition. The scriptures were finalized; the teachings were reinforced, and the community life and worship restored and renewed. The second exile, however, brought a much more serious challenge to Jewish religious institutions.

The Temple was never rebuilt and the priesthood went out of business. In those dire circumstances, the Law of Moses that required sacrifices to be performed in the specific place, manner, and by a special class of religious leaders, could never be properly re-established. Judaism was facing a systemic crisis of religion, which is usually resolved not by the appearance of new branches or sects within the existing tradition, but by the inception of new religious systems with their independent scriptural texts.

It was in those times that Christianity was born amid its mother-faith of Judaism while Judaism itself had to redefine its scriptural foundations, religious institutions, and ritualistic practices. The critical phase of the Jewish religion lasted for about five centuries and was characterized by the mutual influence between the ancient Jewish faith and the newly created Christian religion. During those times Jewish rabbis canonized Hebrew

Writings and also produced supplementary scriptures whose main purpose was to reinterpret the Jewish law in the new social circumstances.

From the sixth century CE onward the rabbinic version of Judaism was firmly established and the Jewish religion entered its post-critical phase, which lasted without any significant changes for twelve hundred years. During this period, Rabbinic Judaism provided the religious means for unifying a Jewish community that was dispersed throughout foreign lands and lacked its political institutions and sovereignty.

The Cycle of Buddhism

The cycle of evolution that we outlined in monotheistic Judaism could also be found in non-theistic Buddhism that was conceived in a different region amid a systemic crisis of its mother-faith Hinduism. In fact, by tracking the progress of the first world mission we can appreciate the essential importance of meaning and interpretation for the progression of religion. Overall, the formative phase of Buddhism lasted for about four centuries and came to an end with the completion of the Tripitaka scriptural canon and the formation of Theravāda as an orthodox branch of the Buddhist religion.

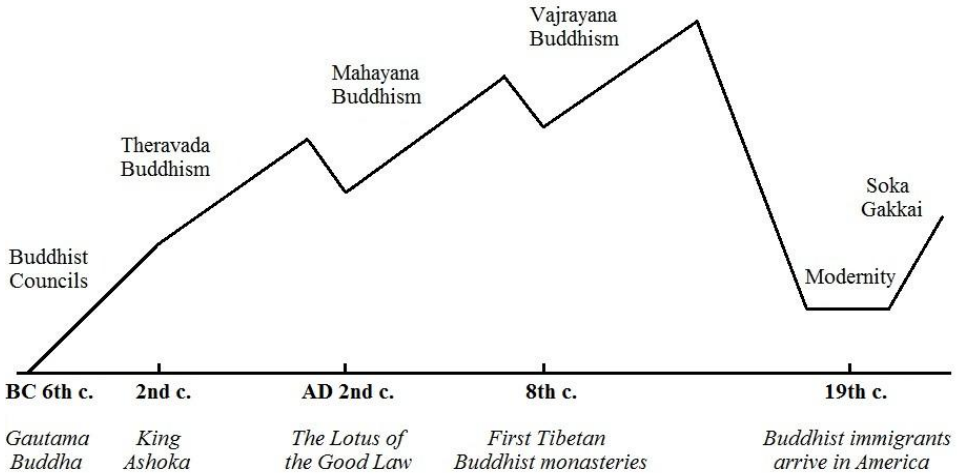
Around the same time in the first century BCE, new Buddhist sūtras that had no counterparts in the established Theravāda canon began to emerge. Those additional texts promoted the doctrines that, in the eyes of their followers, had been taught or approved by the historical Buddha. The composition of those sūtras, which would become the cornerstone of Mahāyāna Buddhism, continued from the first century BCE through the third century CE.

The scriptural differences between Theravāda and Mahāyāna are typical for the divergence between the orthodox and classical phases of religion. Both orthodox Theravāda and classical Mahāyāna believe in the Buddha, his enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths of suffering, causes of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the path that leads to it. Both claim to have preserved the original teachings of the Buddha in their unvarnished purity. But Theravāda Buddhists believe that the scriptural texts of Tripitaka reflect the full version of what the Buddha had entrusted to his followers. They reject any additions or deviation from that canon. In full accordance with the spirit of orthodoxy, the Theravādins freeze the development of scriptures that had been established during the formative age of religion and built their sacred tradition on that foundation by refusing any interpretative innovations.

Mahāyāna Buddhists, on the contrary, accept the Tripitaka canon as authoritative but not as final or complete. Mahāyāna believers hold that the later scriptural texts reveal higher insights into the Buddhist teachings, which are complementary but not opposite to the writings of Theravāda. The name of Mahāyāna means the Greater Vehicle or path toward salvation in contrast to Hīnayāna – the Lesser or Inferior Vehicle – whose main representatives are Theravāda Buddhists. The sacred tradition of Mahāyāna is broader and more inclusive because it relies on an expanded set of scrip-

tures. Also, when it comes to doctrinal issues, the difference in the sacred traditions becomes far-reaching and compelling.

Chart 3 – Religious cycle of Buddhism



In the course of its evolution and maturation, the two main divisions of Theravāda and Mahāyāna eventually grew apart, especially when Buddhism was forced out of its native land. Theravāda planted the seeds of its teachings in the Southeast Asian countries of Sri Lanka, Myanmar (former Burma), Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea (former Cambodia), and Vietnam. Mahāyāna Buddhism was developed in China and later in Japan, the two countries that became the main centers of this form of the Buddhist religion. It was also from the northern part of India that Mahāyāna Buddhism was carried to Tibet where it formed the third major tradition, which is now practiced in Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, and also some parts of India, China, and Russia.

Because of its origin, Tibetan or Vajrāyāna Buddhists consider their branch of the Buddhist faith to be part of Mahāyāna. However, Vajrāyāna can also be seen as a separate division that represents the reformist phase of Buddhism. The following features of Vajrāyāna serve, in my view, as important indications, which may lead to that conclusion.

To begin with, the Vajrāyāna form of Buddhism has a distinct name that juxtaposes it not only with various Mahāyāna denominations like Zen and Pure Land, for example, but also with both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna themselves. Vajrāyāna means the “Diamond Vehicle,” the perfect road to enlightenment in contrast to the “Lesser Vehicle” of meditation in Hīnayāna or the “Greater Vehicle” of compassion in Mahāyāna. Second, Vajrāyāna established its scriptural canon that is different from both the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna branches of Buddhism.

The reform Vajrāyāna promoted did not consist of coming back to the original teaching and replacing the existing sacred tradition with a newly constructed one. Instead, Tibetan Buddhists reached for the authentic spirit of Buddhism by accumulating previous traditions to which they provided some additions of their own. Tibetans received instruction and started their lineages directly from the Indian masters. They translated the scriptures from the original Indian manuscripts. At the same time – following the example of Mahāyāna – Vajrāyāna Buddhists did not reject the later sūtras but incorporated them into their sacred tradition while adding unique elements that did not exist in either Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna.

Consequently, and this is the third characteristic feature that distinguishes Vajrāyāna from other branches of Buddhism, its religious requirements include the observances of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna with the addition of complex esoteric techniques, which are believed to have been encouraged by the Buddha himself as the culmination of the Buddhist path toward enlightenment. Complementing the Hīnayāna meditation and Mahāyāna compassion, Vajrāyāna Buddhist practitioners used the tantric or “deity-yoga” in order “to construct an indestructible ‘diamond-body’ for themselves that will allow them physically to sustain entries into the intense energies of higher levels of consciousness.” They believe that this advanced training will speed up the achievement of enlightenment, which, with its help, could be reached within the span of a single life.

The Cycle of Christianity

The evolution of the Christian faith serves as the perfect illustration of my theory of religious cycles. The history of Christianity is typically divided into three periods: early, medieval, and modern. The early period, which lasted for the first four centuries and was crucial for the development of the Church, represents the formative phase of Christianity. The medieval period, which resulted in the split of the Christian Church into two coexisting branches of Orthodoxy and Catholicism, saw the rise of Christianity’s corresponding orthodox and classical phases. Finally, during the modern period, two new movements were initiated – Protestantism and the Enlightenment – which marked the reformist and critical phases of the Christian religion.

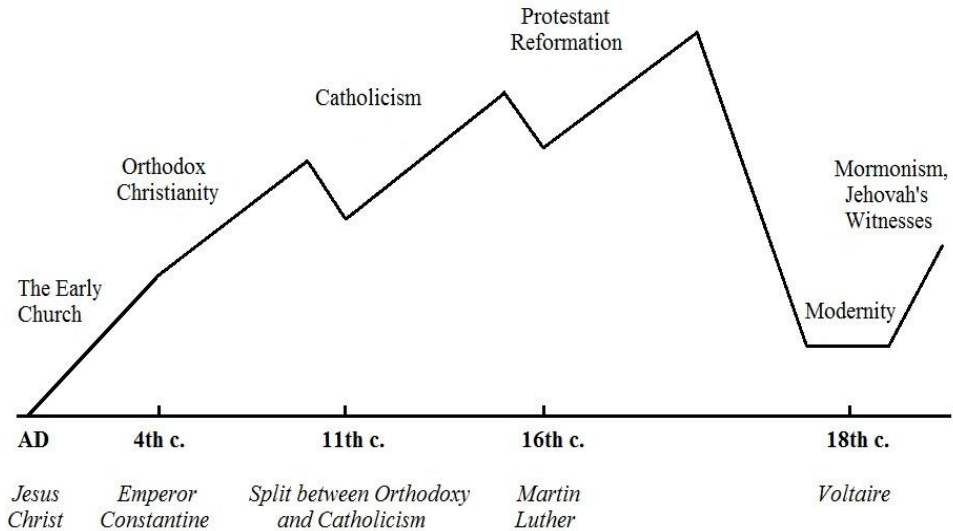
During the first four centuries of its existence, the Christian faith came a long way since its inception in Palestine to become the state religion of the Roman Empire. By the end of the fourth century, it had successfully formed its organizational structure, formulated its creed, canonized its scriptures, routinized its ritualistic practices, and was already embraced by the majority of the population of the Empire [1, p. 53].

After the boundaries of the Old and New Testaments were fixed and the scriptures canonized, Christianity moved to the next phase, which consisted of the formation of sacred tradition. To be sure, the Christian tradition developed right from the beginning of the new era. The prophetic teachings of its founder, the missionary journeys of the apostles, and the establishment of the church communities in the Roman Empire all attest to that. Hence,

the well-known saying that the scriptures are the written tradition and the tradition is the living scripture.

However, the proper development of the sacred tradition is impossible without the written texts whose interpretations become foundational for the growth of tradition. Furthermore, whoever is in charge of the interpretation also controls the sacred tradition. In the early Christian Church, it was the function of general ecumenical councils to produce interpretations that were considered authoritative and binding upon all Christians. As the formal head of the Church, the Emperor convened and presided over those councils, which included representatives from both the Eastern and Western Churches. From the fourth to the eighth centuries, seven councils took place to debate and reach an agreement on various controversial doctrines in Christianity.

Chart 4 – Religious cycle of Christianity



For the Orthodox Christians, the ultimate authority lies in the decisions of those ecumenical councils and for that reason, they froze the sacred tradition and rejected any subsequent change or alteration that came from elsewhere. Since no ecumenical councils could conceivably be convened after Orthodoxy and Catholicism had parted ways in the eleventh century, no modification to the tradition was possible either. As for Catholicism, it developed a sacred tradition of its own, which Catholics only partially shared with the Orthodoxy.

By the time Christianity suffered a split in 1054 CE, both Orthodox and Catholic Churches had already successfully developed their corresponding sacred traditions while remaining very similar to each other in many other respects. And it was the Catholic tradition – which represented the classical

phase of the Christian religion – that the Protestant reformers would later rebel against. When the Protestant Reformation was sweeping Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it signaled the beginning of the third phase of the Christian religion, which may appropriately be called reformist. It was a response to the structural crisis of Christianity and is aimed at resolving this crisis by coming back to its scriptural roots.

Sola scriptura became the motto of the Reformation and Luther himself produced the German translation of the Bible from its original languages. It was the first full translation of scriptures into any European language since the Latin translation of St. Jerome in the fourth century that the Catholic Church had been using for more than a millennium. By rejecting the supremacy of the Popes or the infallibility of ecumenical councils, Martin Luther invested all the authority into those Biblical texts. He questioned the existing Christian interpretations and ended up creating a sacred tradition of his own.

The doubt in the existing sacred traditions marked the structural crisis of Christianity. Like any structural crisis of religion, it was resolved by the formation of a new mode of interpretation within the existing religious system. The eighteenth-century European Enlightenment, which initiated the age of modernity, posed an entirely different challenge. The Enlightenment thinkers questioned the very foundation of the Christian religion – its scriptural texts. The Enlightenment initiated a systemic crisis of Christianity that in the next two centuries affected all major cultural and religious traditions and as a result turned into a global crisis of religious consciousness. While remaining an inalienable part of Christian history, it extended well beyond European or Western civilization, and as such, it should and will be discussed separately.

The Cycle of Islam

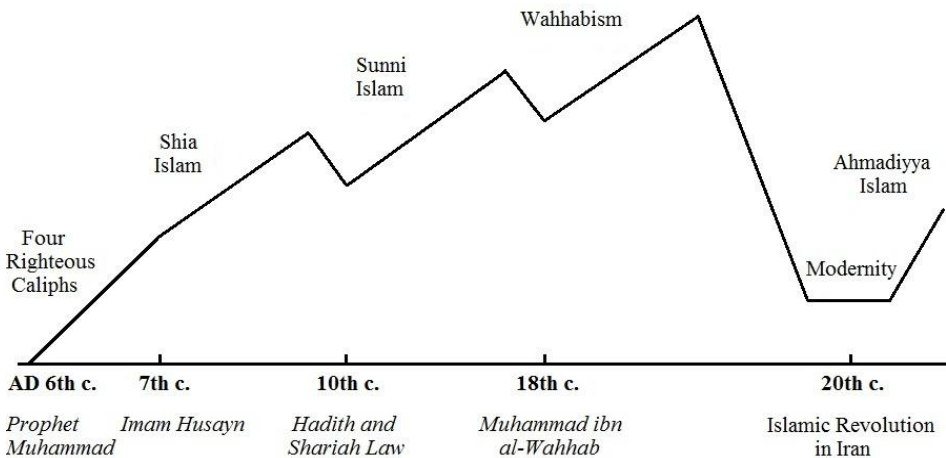
Islam was the third world religion to arrive at the global stage after Buddhism and Christianity. The Prophet Muhammad (570–632 CE) founded Islam in seventh-century Arabia as a monotheistic faith that aimed to renew and spread the message of one universal God – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since its historical beginnings, Islam has split into two major divisions – the Sunni and the Shia. The term “Sunna” means a manner of living or customary practice, which refers to the example of the Prophet. The name “Shia” refers to a separatist party that remained an uncompromising minority in the Muslim faith.

One of the major differences between Islam and the two other world religions of Buddhism and Christianity is that Muhammad, unlike the Buddha or Jesus Christ, was not only the religious but also the political and military leader of the Muslim community. After he migrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, along with a handful of his followers, the Prophet Muhammad engaged in a series of military campaigns that eventually established him as a ruler of most of Arabia. Muhammad’s death in 632 CE created both a religious and a political vacuum within the community.

The political successors to Muhammad's office or heads of the Muslim state were called the caliphs – meaning “successor” or “deputy” of the prophet of God. The first four of those rulers were companions of Muhammad, and they are known in the history of Islam as the Four Righteous Caliphs. It is to that period that both Sunni and Shia Islam, as the two major branches of this religion, trace their beginnings.

The period of the Four Righteous Caliphs gave rise to the Sunni Islam, which in contrast to Shia orthodoxy represents its classical stage, and, as is the case with other world faiths, enjoys the majority of adherents and serves as the model of Muslim spirituality. As John Esposito points out, the rule of the righteous caliphs was “especially significant not only for what they actually did, but also because the period of Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs came to be regarded in Sunni Islam as the normative period” [2, p. 38].

Chart 5 – Religious cycle of Islam



In the course of the following evolution of the Muslim faith, its Sunni and Shia branches each developed its distinct vision of religion, politics, and history. Central to those differences was the notion of the Shia imamate in contrast to the Sunni caliphate. The caliphate allowed for a degree of separation between religion and politics. The caliph exercised political power while religious scholars provided authoritative interpretations of Islamic law.

In the Shia idea of the imamate, this distinction was completely erased in the figure of the Imam who was supposed to be the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad in both the political and religious spheres. The Imam had the authority to rule the people and to produce interpretations of the scriptures. According to Shia views, the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-

law and the fourth Righteous Caliph, Ali, was the first Imam and the line of succession should have remained within the descendants of Ali and his son Husayn.

In addition to its two major Shia and Sunni branches, Islam has also developed a faction, which, historically speaking, is relatively new but may still exemplify a reformist stage of the Muslim faith. I am referring to Wahhābism, a movement that was founded in the eighteenth century by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703–92) and since then has served as a model for other versions of Muslim revivalism.

There is an essential difference between Wahhābism and later nineteenth-century revivalist movements, on the one hand, and Islamic responses to modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the other. As Esposito points out, “premodern revivalist movements were primarily internally motivated, [while] Islamic modernism was a response...to the external political and religiocultural threat of [European] colonialism.” Islamic modernists were mostly preoccupied with the issue of “the compatibility of Islam with modern Western thought and values” [2, p. 124].

The difference between Wahhābī revivalism and later Islamic modernism runs parallel to the difference between the Lutheran Reformation and the following European Enlightenment in Christianity. Wahhābism closely followed the spirit of the Protestant Reformation but applied it by following the theological doctrines and historical practice of the Muslim faith.

The self-proclaimed goal of Wahhābism consisted of stripping Islam of all innovations, which had been accumulating over the centuries in Muslim tradition and which Wahhābī supporters considered as deviations from true faith. The purification of Islam, Wahhābīs argued, was necessary to return to the straight path of faith that was drawn by Muhammad and his early followers. Similarly to Martin Luther, who proposed a return to Christian origins and the Bible, al-Wahhāb promoted a vision of Islam that is renewed by the example of the Prophet and the Sunni. However, since the lives of the founders of Christianity and Islam were so different, the results of the respective reforms in both religions turned out to be opposite to each other as well.

The Project of Modernity

The European Enlightenment in the eighteenth century marks the culmination of early modern efforts to create a new model of society. The Enlightenment developed to the fullest extent what was started during the Renaissance and is now equated with the coming of “modernity” and “modern times.” What are the main characteristic traits of this intellectual and cultural movement?

It is well known that the newfound fascination with nature, which animated the spirit of the Renaissance, led to the discovery of innovative scientific methods and humanistic disciplines. During the Enlightenment, this intellectual impulse resulted in the cultivation of human reason itself. Like their famous ancient predecessors, modern rationalists aimed at “the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy” [4, p. 3]. They

regarded human intellect as autonomous and self-sufficient in its pursuit of truth and the scientific investigation of reality.

The absolutization of the reason that characterizes the spirit of the European Enlightenment runs parallel to skepticism toward organized religion. Unlike the Protestant Reformers who rebelled against the sacred tradition but never questioned the Holy Scriptures, the Enlightenment intellectuals expressed doubt in the scriptural texts, thus shaking the foundations of Christianity itself; hence, the difference between the structural crisis of Christian faith during the Reformation and its systemic crisis that was initiated by the Enlightenment.

There were three main trends in Enlightenment thought, each reflecting in its own way the systemic crisis of Christianity. A critical view on Christian theological matters, also known as Biblical criticism, arose as one of the immediate and direct implications of modern rationalism. The primacy of reason, which the Enlightenment thinkers asserted and defended, was extended to the domain of revelation. As a result, the distinction between sacred and profane was obliterated from critical research and scholarship, and consequently, the Bible became the subject of rational and historical studies like any other literary work.

The deists, who belonged to the second trend of Enlightenment thought, disposed of the very idea of revelation. The reason for this new and increasingly popular position in the eighteenth-century was twofold. First, scientists tended to think of God as a distant creator who does not interfere directly with worldly affairs. And, second, the scriptures of three major monotheistic religions display the evidence of cultural conditioning and mutual contradictions. That means, revelation itself, if it exists, is subject to change during human history. According to deists, this fact is incompatible with the universality of God's actions and moral laws.

Atheism was the third and most radical trend of Enlightenment thought, which questioned the authority of scripture from its standpoint. Atheist thinkers rejected the very idea of God and for that reason denied the credibility of revelation and the authority of any scriptural text whatsoever, including the Bible. It is no wonder that those thinkers regarded Biblical literature as a purely human invention that masqueraded as the word of God.

Biblical critics, deists, and atheists had distinct reasons for rejecting traditional interpretations of the Bible. What they shared in common was their questioning of the scriptures, which constitutes the essential feature of the systemic crisis of religion, in this case, Christianity. Having initiated the critical stage in the evolution of Christian faith, Enlightenment ideology transformed it in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into a global crisis of religious consciousness. The rise of the Soviet Union as an atheist empire in the twentieth century was one manifestation of those radical Enlightenment tendencies, which negatively affected the three major world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam – that had peacefully coexisted in Russia for centuries. The spread of totalitarian states all over the world in the same century also bore witness to the global dimensions of the contemporary crisis of religion.

Since the dawn of modern times in Renaissance Europe, modernity has never been a homogenous movement, but rather a complex cultural phenomenon that incorporated within its sphere various competing trends and visions, including a strong tradition of self-inquiry and self-criticism. In addition to such a critique from within, non-Western countries, when challenged by the rise of modernity, also evolved a highly critical attitude toward the West.

Russia was the first – but not the only – country that had significant problems in adjusting to the project of modernity. Numerous other cultures soon followed in its footsteps – Latin America and Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The diversity of religious traditions, including Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Confucians that had to deal with the challenge of the Enlightenment, made the application of modernity in those countries even more problematic. In their encounter with modernity, non-Christian religions developed their reformist ideologies that repeat almost verbatim the notorious Russian ideological split between Westernizers and Slavophiles.

The fact is that pre-modern religions, which were formed and developed before the Enlightenment, have a limited number of ways to adjust to its ideology. Since their scriptural canons are fixed and cannot be altered to address new cultural developments, they can either accept or reject the social teachings of modernity. In the first case of religious “renewal,” its leaders distance themselves from the political sphere and concentrate on spiritual issues, including the promotion of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. In the second case of the “revival” of religion, they conflate politics and spirituality, compete for power, and proclaim the superiority of their religion over all others. Various other solutions – more balanced and more complex – are situated somewhere between those two radically different options.

In contrast to pre-modern religions, religious systems that were established after the Enlightenment, have the advantage of addressing modern political and social issues in their scriptural texts, thus erecting a new absolute foundation that supersedes modernity. It is among those religious traditions, in my opinion, that one should look for a possible post-modern religion that will be able to resolve the present crisis of religious consciousness and thus move humanity forward.

Conclusions and Implications

From the perspective of my theory of religious cycles, modernity, and, more specifically, the age of the Enlightenment, can be understood as a systemic crisis of the Christian faith. Enlightenment ideology questioned the validity of Christian scriptures in several different venues, including deism and atheism. Enlightenment thinkers also challenged the traditional foundations of society; they envisioned its reorganization according to more rational principles and, if necessary, by revolutionary means. The emphasis on pure, autonomous, and self-sufficient reason in juxtaposition to the critical view of tradition and revelation became the trademark of the Enlighten-

ment, which exerted its influence over numerous geographic regions, historical cultures, and spiritual traditions.

The negative effects of the Enlightenment as the critical phase of Christianity were felt in the momentous rise of secular culture and radical atheist ideologies such as Marxism, accompanied by the rapid deterioration of traditional morality. The history of the Soviet Union as the twentieth-century atheist empire that aimed to eradicate religion by suppressing the world's spiritual traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, provided the most striking example of the magnitude of the crisis. As a result, our contemporary spiritual condition may be characterized as a total crisis of religious consciousness, which is well attested to in modern art and literature.

The positive effects of the Enlightenment ideology and modernity, in general, resulted in the de-absolutization of political power and the establishment of Enlightenment-type states on the European and American continents. The principle of the limitation of power found various practical manifestations, including the democratic election of public officials, the separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, and the separation between church and state. Those and other socio-political reforms paved the way for the establishment of the rule of law and the advancement of human rights and freedoms in modern societies.

Yet, according to my theory, neither traditional religious nor modern secular ideologies will be able to overcome the global crisis of spirituality in which humanity finds itself in the twenty-first century. Religion is indispensable for social development, and systemic crises of religions could be overcome only by the advancement of new religious movements that erect their scriptural absolutes and establish order amid ever-deepening intellectual and cultural chaos.

The real substance of twentieth-century history, in my view, consisted of the juxtaposition between late modernity – whether in its liberal or totalitarian version – which reflected in very different forms the global crisis of spirituality, and the rise of a new revelation that was supposed to counteract it in the long run. In the Christian scriptures, this time is known as the Apocalypse. In terms of religious cycles, it can be described as the contradistinction between the systemic crisis of an old religion that passes through its critical stage and the rise of a novel spiritual tradition that is in the formative phase of its development.

Historically speaking, the formative phase of religion lasts for about four centuries. The European Enlightenment started the systemic crisis of Christianity in the eighteenth century, and modern religious movements, whose mission was to counteract the upcoming global spiritual crisis, started to appear since the middle of the nineteenth century. So, if history follows its pattern, the end of the apocalyptic era could reasonably be expected around the middle of the twenty-third century.

In the meantime, modern civilization is in its golden age and swiftly developing a planetary version of the Enlightenment project, which eventually would reach and exhaust its global potentials. Modernity offers short-term solutions to the social problems of humanity by focusing on external reforms, while new religious movements envision long-term changes based on

the inner transformation of individual human beings. Yet we have to remember that religion is never a panacea for social ills. It always fulfills its minimum requirement of ensuring the survival of a targeted group of people – in this case, all of humanity. The rest would be up to us who are going to choose for ourselves what type of society we would prefer to survive in.

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