Secularization
as a Social-Philosophical Problem

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In its initial form, as the diffusion of Western European culture and civilization, the inter-penetration and collision of previously impenetrable and incomparable worlds, globalization is intensifying questions of life and death, of the uniqueness and universality of religion and religiosity. Every possible future scenario unavoidably includes the religious factor of global socio-cultural processes in the scope of its intense gaze. Considering the extreme importance of religion for humanity (and even for post-humanity), the inner transformations of religiosity and their interrelationship with social life acquire special significance for philosophers and sociologists of religion. The poles and vectors that ensure the tension and dynamic of those processes are supplied by secularism and religion.

The problem of secularization was first recognized within the context of Christian theology (Bultmann)[1] but today it is categorized as a socio-philosophical factor in the investigations of domestic and foreign specialists, both scholars of religion[2] and theologians.[3] The methodology for

[1] Rudolf Bultmann, *Izbrannoe: Vera i ponimanie* [Selected works: Faith and understanding], Vol.1-2. (Moscow: РОССПЭН, 2004), 752.
[2] Paul Kurtz, *Iskushenie potustoronnim* [The transcendental temptation] (Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt, 1999), 601. E. Iu. Solov'ev, "Sekuliar-izatsiia-istoritsizm-marksizm: Tema chelovekobozhiia i religii progressa v filosofskoi publitsistike S. N. Bulgakov" [Secularization-historicism-Marxism: The theme of human/divine and the religion of progress in the philosophical journalism of S. N. Bulgakov), *Voprosy filosofii* No. 4 (2001): 31-40.
[3] N. Gundiaev, "Sviatootecheskoe bogoslovie i sekuliarnyi mir" [Theology and the secular world], *Pravoslavnoe bogoslovie na poroge tret'ego tysiacheletiia* [Orthodox theology on the threshold of the third millennium] (Moscow: Sinodal'naia bogoslovskaiia komissiia, 2000), 252-258. Luigi Giussani, *Religioznoe chuvstvo* [Religious feeling] (Moscow: Khristians-kaia Rossiia), 193. John Paul II, "O kul'ture" [On culture], *Ioann Pavel II: Mysli o zemnom* [John Paul II: Thoughts of earth] (Moscow: Novosti, 1992), 424. A. Timakov and M. Zhurinskaia, "O soznanii sekuliarnom i

studying the problem was developed by the classic authors of the sociology of religion (Durkheim)[4] and religious philosophy (Eliade).[5] In a new and interesting twist, at the divide between modern and post-modern, the fate of the holy-profane in post-modern discourse is being examined.[6]

It is obvious that comprehensive study of the problem is only possible by means of an interdisciplinary approach, removing the subject from the limiting and fragmenting borders of academic specializations and placing it on a meta-theoretic level of analysis. That is the goal of this article.

Secularization is a phenomenon of theological thought that has been transferred to the fields of other disciplines. Let us recall that from the beginning secularization was understood as the limitation of spiritual power, the transfer of land and property owned by the church to society. In other words, the status of things that were once considered holy had changed. Historically the secularization of social institutions was apparently linked to the Reformation, the division of the Catholic world (and in this sense of a united Europe), and also with the strengthening of anti-clerical and rationalistic tendencies (Renaissance freedom of thought, enlightened atheism, scientific- and techno-centrism, the "disenchantment of the world").

The word "secular" (from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning "generation," "human century") in the theological lexicon came to signify "belonging to this century," or "worldly." In the immanent-transcendent and holy-profane dichotomies, the first part took precedence in the dominantly secular consciousness.

It is well known that the fundamental problem of secularization was discussed in Protestant theology. Schleiermacher attempted to rethink Christian belief according to the categories of "secular" rationalism and humanism. However, the first major secularization project was proposed by Rudolf Bultmann. Biographers give evidence that this remarkable German theologian and talented preacher was inspired to create his program by the realities of totalitarianism and war, when he became convinced of the ineffectiveness of the traditional sermon and began to look for new approaches, for example, for soldiers being sent to the front.

His secular program of "demythologization" is clearly and in concisely outlined in the essay "The New Testament and Mythology," which was the transcription of a speech given 21 April 1941 for clergy of the underground Confessing Church in Frankfurt. In essence, this was Bultmann's answer to the questions: what does the Christian message mean for the contemporary world; how should

tserkovnom" [On the consciousness of the secular and ecclesiastical], *Al'fa i Omega* No. 3 (2003): 216-246.

[4] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 507.

[5] Mircea Eliade, *Ocherki sravnitel'nogo religiovedeniia* [Essays on comparative religion] (Moscow: Ladomir, 1999), 488.

[6] Zh. Batai, *Teoriia religii* [Theory of religion] (Minsk: Sovremennyi literator, 2000), 352. A. S. Vatoropin and K. M. Ol'khovnikov, "Perspektivy sekuliarizma i religii v epokhu postmoderna" [Perspectives of secularism and religion in the postmodern era], *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* [Social sciences and the contemporary world] No. 2 (2002): 136-145.

the gospel be understood in the new political, social, and cultural conditions of a totalitarian society?

Let us recall the fundamental aspects of his program. The New Testament picture of the world is mythical. History does not follow its own continuous and natural course, but moves according to the direction of supernatural forces. This eon is under the power of Satan, sin, and death (understood as "the powers"), and is hastening to a quick end that must culminate in a catastrophe of cosmic proportion. Very soon there will be the suffering of the last days, the coming of the heavenly Judge, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and its sentence: salvation or destruction.

All of this is mythical speech. Since it is mythical, it is not valid for modern humanity, because the mythical view of the world has already been relegated to the past. Today, as a result, Christian proclamation faces a question: should a person being called to faith be forced to acknowledge a mythical view of a bygone world? If this is not possible, another question arises: does the New Testament contain truths that are not dependent on a mythical view of the world? In this instance, the task of the theologian would be the demythologization of Christian thought.

What remains after the reduction of myth, after obsolete mythology is removed from the lexicon? All of the component symbols of faith remain, but are radically reinterpreted. Thus, Christ turns out to be a real historical person, and the Word of God ceases to be the mysterious speech of an oracle, but rather the sober proclama-

tion of the person and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth in their significance for the story of salvation. This proclamation can be understood as an episode in the history of thought; in relation to its idea content it can be understood as a possible world view. Those who proclaim, the apostles, are people understood in their historical humanity; the church is a sociological, historical phenomenon; its history is considered from the point of view of the history of thought. At the same time, all of these are eschatological phenomena, eschatological events. All of them represent extreme incongruities and obstacles, surmountable only by obedient faith, not by the path of philosophical dialogue. All these phenomena are subject to historical-critical, sociological, and psychological examination, and at the same time turn out to be eschatological phenomena for faith. It is precisely their inability to be proven that defends Christian proclamation from the reproof of being mythological. The transcendence of God is not transformed, as in a myth, into immanence. On the contrary, the paradox of the historical presence of the transcendent God is confirmed: "And the Word became flesh."

Bultmann's program of demythologization reflects a sharp turn in the development of Western theology, becoming a new kind of investigative paradigm for the post-war generation of theologians. One of the most interesting and puzzling Christian intellectuals who thought according to the categories of secular theology was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In his *Letters from Prison* he made the most general, but amazingly substantial, outline of the

new interpretation of Christianity, where he speaks of the "coming of age of humanity," "earthly Christianity," and "non-religious faith."

During the post-war years, discussions among theologians became noticeably more pointed. This was a result of the difficulties of theology ("theology after Auschwitz") and new social challenges ("the question of guilt" of the church in the war and the Holocaust). Much energy was applied to adapting theology to a secular world view ("the theology of the death of God") and to project opportunities for constructing a post-religious society on the path of democracy and the market economy (*The Secular City,* Harvey Cox) or communism (the "Christian communism" of "Red Cardinal" Hewlett Johnson). It seemed that "to be honest to God" (Robinson) meant an end to metaphysics.

However, in the 1970s and 1980s, a powerful anti-secular movement for a return to conservative theology appeared (Jacques Ellul, Francis Schaeffer). In the opinion of neo-conservative theologians, secular consciousness, having ceased to believe in the transcendent God, idolized the human being, society, and nature. In this sense, the secularization of society is a call to action for Christianity: it is forbidden to make an idol of society and give it absolute importance.

In Protestant theology secularization received the most contradictory interpretations, but somehow or another it coincided with the reforming currents of Christian history. In Orthodox theology, however, secularism is regarded exclusively as a world view that threatens Christianity. The Russian philosopher N. G. Fyodorov proposed to explain the meaning of the word "secularization" by replacing it with the word "profanation." If *fanum* signified a holy place, a church, and *profane* meant something outside of or in front of the church (that is, unconsecrated), then *profanation* means to insult the sacred, to engage in activity that opposes the sacred. His observation is interesting, that profanity is produced by the profane, that is, by those who have not achieved genuine understanding, although they may present themselves, or be presented by others, as professors.[7] Fyodorov takes a protective stance and states directly that civilization itself, as the transformation of sons into citizens, is already a profanation. Furthermore, the valuation of land, which contains the remains of ancestors, as saleable goods is a still greater profanation than the earned wages that transform the sons of men into hirelings.

The champion of antiquity reminds us that in the ancient world the sense of home, of motherland, of love for one's native land as the repository of the remains of one's ancestors, was very much alive. The ancient world consciously lived on the graves of its ancestors. The first cemeteries (the Acropolis, the Capitol) were the center and holy place of the city-states. The rights of citizenship, even in free-thinking Athens, were determined not by the amount of land one owned, but by the graves preserved on that land.

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[7] N. F. Fiodorov, *O sekuliarizatsii kak profanatsii* [On secularization as profanation] in *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected works], vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1995), 66-67.

Fyodorov agrees that secularization is a Western phenomenon that, it would seem, found a less receptive audience in the Russian people and Russian daily life. However, even in Russia secularization is moving rapidly. The disarmament of the Kremlin, its transformation into a promenade, into a boulevard, signifies the transformation from the spiritual to the secular, just as it does from the military to the civilian. It is the change from a life that was subject to the strict rules of the church and severe military discipline, and from unity in a single common goal, to a freedom without goals and to disunity.[8]

In striking fashion, many ideas of the contemporary hierarchy and theologians of the Orthodox Church, who postulate that the tradition expressed by the "holy fathers" is always defined as faithfulness to the past, sound similar to the philosophical teachings of Fyodorov ("supra-naturalism").[9] If the same kind of faithfulness is realized in the practice of church life (in the sacred space of the church), then the idea of secularization is to take the human being out of the church, isolate it and oppose it, create an autonomous human culture in which humanism would replace the concept of God. Secularized culture turns churches into museums and icons into exhibits.

Here, society and church stand in opposition to each other as spheres of the profane and the sacred; sometimes they even refuse social, cultural, and political life a positive self-evaluation. This relates to all aspects of the free creativity of the human being. Specifically, Orthodoxy is seen as the single environment where art is discussed as a subject of faith, even though there is no Orthodox definition of the concept of "art."

Ideas such as "politics," "human rights," "science," and others aspire to transform contemporary society and bring it closer to a certain de-Christianized ideal of heaven on earth. Politics naturally replaces theology in a society that refuses to link its fate with Divine Providence, that seeks utilitarian advantage and not truth. This was not the case in the past. Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa attested that in early Byzantine society, where people were searching for God, vendors in the markets argued about religious ideas, such as the Triune God.[10]

If Fyodorov spoke of the holy and the profane, then contemporary Orthodox theologians prefer to operate with the pairings of rationalistic and mythological, secular and church. Here, the rationalistic is understood as the simplest and clearest, even primitive, consciousness: everything that exists is available for sampling, touching, experiencing; everything is clear and understood; everything can be explained. However, the world does not fit into the procrustean bed of rational schemes; and then one must cut off the excess, simplify or, on the contrary, fill in what is missing with new myths.

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[8] Idid, p. 67.

[9] Gundiaev, N. "Sviatootecheskoe bogoslovie i sekuliarnyi mir" [Theology and the secular world], *Pravoslavnoe bogoslovie na poroge tret'ego tysi-* *acheletiia* [Orthodox theology on the threshold of the third millennium] (Moscow: Sinodal'naia bogoslovskaiia komissiia, 2000), p. 253.

[10] Ibid, p. 254.

Many are accustomed to evaluating mythological consciousness as old, undeveloped, and insufficient. Without question, mythological consciousness is a characteristic of ancient peoples, but that does not mean that myths are lies. The more complete a person's world view, the more myth exists in his consciousness. And, to the contrary, the demythologization of consciousness leads to a fragmented world view. [11]

Orthodox theologians acknowledge that secular consciousness can be deeply religious and that God can be the peak of such consciousness (a typical Protestant consciousness). For these Christians, God is primarily in the soul, while man, as the measure of all things, is the unconditional center of this understanding of life, especially as there is no church there. [12] Just as the industrial development of Western Europe and America in the New Era took place under the flag of Protestantism, so the dominant ideology in this world became a non-church consciousness. Protestants, supposedly rejecting sacrament altogether, gather for the breaking of bread, forgetting that it is not merely an act of remembrance, but that the actual consumption of the Body and Blood of Christ in communion unites one with Christ. In the Anglican Church several church leaders have seriously refused to believe in the fact of the resurrection of Christ. Recently they installed an individual with a non-traditional sexual orientation as a bishop. Authors also mention the excommunicated Gleb Yakunin, who,

during a lecture on the reduction of religiosity in the Orthodox Church to students of the Russian State Theological University, suggested that there were too many icons and there is no reason to pray standing. From this comes the conclusion that the entire civilized world is un-churched. Church-consciousness that calls for weekly church attendance, regular participation in the sacraments, and corporate prayer, is wearying for a person in a consumer society. It is precisely in the church, and only there, that goodness dwells, and this goodness is of a principally higher sort than that found in the secular world. Its norm is holiness.

The comparison of the way Protestant and Orthodox structures perceive success in society is interesting. According to the opinion of Orthodox authors, Protestants have the following message: God loves the righteous and helps them ("If your business is going well, that means God is helping you"). For Orthodox consciousness, the following approximates their message: if all is going well for you, perhaps you have fallen so far that God has given up on you and ceased interfering in your life?[13]

For contemporary Catholic theology there is a characteristically more complicated, multivariate vision of Christian life in society (as expressed in integrated theological systems and developed social studies). The current shift of the church to secular society was completed after the Second Vatican Council. However, notable success in the development of dialogue

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[11] A. Timakov and M. Zhurinskaia, "O soznanii sekuliarnom i tserkovnom" [On the consciousness of the secular and ecclesiastical], *Al'fa i Omega* No. 3 (2003), p. 228.

[12] Ibid, p. 231.

[13] Ibid, p. 245.

with the de-Christianized world was achieved during the pontificate of John Paul II. Already in his first speech, the newly elected Pope called not only for the opening of souls to the Christian message, but also for the opening of state borders, economic and political systems, broad spheres of culture and civilization. "Do not be afraid!"—these words held the hope that the church would preserve its position in an epoch of total secularization.

The pope presented a critique of liberal ("secular") theology that calls on contemporaries to learn to stand on their own feet without "metaphysical props." In a message to the ecstatic supporters of Western liberal democracy ("civil religion") he noted that social equality is genuine only when it is based on the rights of the individual. These rights will be truly acknowledged only if the transcendent nature of the individual—created in the image and likeness of God, called to be his son and a brother to all people, intended to have eternal life—is acknowledged. The rejection of this transcendence makes a person simply an instrument of supremacy, whose fate is dependent on the egoism and ambitions of others, or on the omnipotence of a totalitarian state.[14] Contemporary non-religious philosophers also note the dangerous ideological predominance of secularization, relativism, and totalitarianism.[15]

Catholic theological and philosophical thought is re-conquering from the secular world an intimate, existential, and internal-spiritual space where humanity is being realized—an exit beyond its borders to eternal life. As the well-known Catholic thinker Luigi Giussani writes, only two kinds of people preserve completely the full scale of human existence: the anarchist and the genuinely religious person. The nature of the human being is his relationship with the eternal: the anarchist confirms his own existence in the face of eternity, while the genuinely religious person accepts eternity as the point of his existence.[16]

Therefore, the polemics with secularism move in several directions: "integral humanism" preserves the categories of transcendent and eternal as essential for the human being; social doctrine, returning the church to the world of social-cultural reality ("the church should animate culture" Maritain, Dawson); attempts to find a religious-philosophical synthesis ("the battle for reason"). Overcoming secularism is possible through reason and faith (Giussanni: "We must have a passion for reason.") when faith is understood as the ecstatic condition of reason, a portal to its borders and beyond ("It is important not to constrict the sphere of reason"); open "dialogue about faith and lack of faith" (Cardinal Martini and Umberto Ecco); over-

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[14] John Paul II, "O kul'ture" [On culture], *Ioann Pavel II: Mysli o zemnom* [John Paul II: Thoughts of earth] (Moscow: Novosti, 1992), p. 226-227.

[15] E. Iu. Solov'ev, "Sekuliarizatsiia-istoritsizm-marksizm: Tema chelovekobozhiia i religii progressa v filosofskoi publtsistike S. N. Bulgakov" [Secularization-historicism-Marxism: The theme of human/divine and the religion of progress in the philosophical journalism of S. N. Bulgakov), *Voprosy filosofii* No. 4 (2001): 31-40.

[16] Luigi Giussani, *Religioznoe chuvstvo* [Religious feeling] (Moscow: Khristianskaia Rossiia), 13.

coming the mutual alienation of the church and society, recognition of a common fate (rethinking "the mission of the church in the world").

Social-philosophical thought about the problem of secularization, having outgrown the framework of exclusively theological arguments, is becoming a relevant task for contemporary philosophy. Although postmodernism also challenges religious totality, religion is not completely withdrawn from the social stage. An ungodly way of life, accepted within mass culture, does not create a an opportunity without alternative for secularism and religion in post-modernity. On the contrary, a faltering deconstruction of traditional dispositions and belief systems, magnifying their significance, is taking place. Therefore, it is early to speak of post-religiosity and post-Christianity. Instead, it is possible to agree with those researchers who see in secularism and religion mutually connected formulas for the survival of the metaphysical person.[17] New myth creation (post-mythology), as a symptom of this, would seem to be the final secularity of the individual, "the horizontal, pluralistic spirituality of post-modernism—myth-seeking without boundaries," where everything is exhausted by the fragmentation of the myth; and it is not so important whether or not God has died, because of the endless dying of pieces of the myth (where the differences between myth, science, and religion are erased).[18]

In this way, belief in the supernatural not only survives, or is preserved, but also multiplies, engulfing the entire social landscape, penetrating into the fabric, "the skin," "the blood" of the world. Even orthodox atheists like Paul Kurtz recognize faith in the supernatural as eternal; the temptation to transcendence "in several forms" that corresponds with human nature and can satisfy psychobiological needs. From this understanding of the nature of religion follows a newly formulated goal of secular projects: to find moral and psychological alternatives to "transcendental temptation," when a person professes his own will and creativity ("My will be done!") and not dependence on religion ("Thy will be done!"). Kurtz agrees that the challenge is not easy and that the question: can a person be a person without the transcendent? remains unanswered.[19]

Zh. Batai, on the other hand, understands human autonomy as "too human" and fatally dangerous isolation. After all, the really frightening threats are not disagreements and war with God, but God's oblivion and distance ("The gods have departed!"), the final cultivation of the transcendent and immanent, when the disassociation of the transcendental world and the earthly world is completed and the real world is henceforth reduced to a mere object. God's order can no longer be introduced as it used to be attempted, by erecting monuments and conducting religious rites.[20] And here

[17] A. S. Vatoropin and K. M. Ol'khovnikov, "Perspektivy sekuliarizma i religii v epokhu post-moderna" [Perspectives of secularism and religion in the postmodern era], *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* [Social sciences and the contemporary world] No. 2 (2002)p. 145.

[18] Ibid, p. 140.
[19] Paul Kurtz, *Iskushenie potustoronnim* [The transcendental temptation] (Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt, 1999), p. 11.
[20] Zh. Batai, *Teoriia religii* [Theory of religion] (Minsk: Sovremennyi literator, 2000), p. 90.

it is—the contemporary world: "the complete absence of mutual connections between the intimate aura of divinity and the real world order," "a world in which everything finally is reduced to the position of things" (titles of chapters in Zh. Batai's text).

In a world where there are only things—goods to buy and sell, exchange or take—human beings are also reduced to commodities. There is no longer anything metaphysical hindering the manipulation of others in a dominant-subservient relationship. The individual comes to self-rejection, reducing religion to reason (Kant: "religion within the framework of reason") and society (Feuerbach: "the individual created God in his own image"), shutting himself up in a self-identified and egocentric universe ("the scandal in philosophy"), destroying "the spiritual foundations of society" (S. Frank), washing away moral absolutes, becoming a prisoner of relativity.

The role of religion in the constitution and content of society is exceptional. Durkheim defined religion as a linking system of belief and ritual, uniting all of its supporters in one moral community called the church.[21] According to the patriarch of the sociology of religion, it is precisely religion that strengthens social unity and forms social ideals; religion is the symbolic expression of society; therefore, when worshipping any holy object, believers are actually worshipping society, the "real" object of all religious cults. Durkheim constantly underscores the coincidence between religious and civil ceremonies. He focuses attention on the common characteristics of sanctification as a social process.

Today, observing the destructive consequences of the reduction of the religious to the social, we are forced to critically relate to the a priori theses of Durkheim and to listen carefully to the opinion of Eliade, that "religion is unavoidably something social, something verbal, something economic... But it would be fruitless to try to explain religion in terms of one of these fundamental functions".[22]

Here is also concealed the main dangers of secularization for democratic societies that are based on religious values. Secularization deprives liberal democracies of solid institutional foundations (ontological and metaphysical). Contemporary American philosopher Richard Rorty, in the article "Solidarity or Objectivity?" proposes to distinguish two principally different means for the organization of social life and its purpose.[23] The first consists of making an investment in and becoming mutually connected with society; the second case requires an appeal to transcendent reality. Rorty proposes to end appeals to metaphysical authorities ("objectives") and build a common life on the basis of social consensus ("solidarity") without any connection to the transcendent. Here we are reminded of the ironic words of Solovyov, ridiculing Feuerbach: "Humans came from chimpanzees, so it follows that we will love each other!"

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[21] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 507.
[22] Mircea Eliade, *Ocherki sravnitel'nogo religiovedeniia* [Essays on comparative religion] (Moscow: Ladomir, 1999), p. 10.
[23] Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, ed. by J. Rajchman and C. West (New York, 1985), 17-38.

Conservative thinkers are much more critical in relation to the possibilities of liberal democracy per se. German philosopher-conservative Gunter Rormoser, speaking of the crisis of liberalism, sees the future only in the renewal of the metaphysical tradition and the return to conservative values (including the rediscovery of Christianity).[24] For him, the Germans and Russians remain the standard-bearers of tradition, people who are inclined to metaphysical thought. Both peoples have been historically conservative in their devotion to the way of life of old Europe. Both were deeply penetrated by the Christian religion (the Germans under the influence of the Reformation; the Russians by Orthodox tradition). Rormoser notes, interestingly, that the "dead souls" of Gogol could only have been created in Russia. And, with the exception of Russians, only Germans are able to understand them completely (the image of a troika, fleeing from the modernism that levels everything around and transforms everything into capital, while the living become "dead souls"). Russians and Germans, in their attempts to escape the consequences and logic of the contemporary epoch, suffered the experiment of totalitarianism (Communism and National Socialism). Except for the Russians and Germans, there are no other nations on the earth that would test on themselves both of these extremely radical alternatives to the modern epoch with such spiritual self-sacrifice, and with all of the resulting consequences. The Russians and Germans knew not only the symptoms of totalitarian repression, but also the terrible consequences that result from certain conditions of progress in the new epoch.

Democratic rights and freedoms, it seems, developed long before the era of modernism with its mercantilist leitmotiv and exclusively economic interest. The movement to freedom and civil agreement in Europe can be traced from ancient times. However, it became a real part of the social structure in the form of the first Christian communities, churches, and monasteries. It was precisely during that time that the relationship of freedom and solidarity was born, according to contemporary Ukrainian philosopher A. Karas'. Even Orthodox authors (Father Veniamin Novik) talk about the Christian foundations of democracy, not to mention American Protestants, who build their historical continuity from the first Christians and their descendents—the founding fathers (the first pioneers). Margaret Thatcher, sharing the idea of American messianism, states directly that the strong Puritan spirit makes America a leader in democracy and a warrior for the embodiment of Christian ideals in world society.[25]

Thus, secularization is of concern not only to theologians. The crisis has captured the attention of social and political philosophers. If Western theology and advocates of liberal democracy remain optimists and attempt to rethink Christian proclama-

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[24] Gunter Rormoser, *Krizis liberalizma* [The crisis of liberalism] (Moscow: IFRAN, 1996), 289.
[25] Margaret Thatcher, *Iskusstvo upravleniia gosudarstvom: Strategii dlia meniaiushchgosia mira* [The art of governing a country: Strategies for a changing world] (Moscow: Al'pina Publisher, 2003), 503.

tion and find an adequate response to the challenges of a godless world, then Orthodox theologians and representatives of conservative thought are more pessimistic and see the only solution in a return to the ideals of the past. Democracy is founded on Christian principles and under secularization is doomed to self-destruction.

Considerations of the possible consequences of secularization for Western society permit several scenarios to be drawn as conclusions. First, the introduction of secular ideas into social practice could lead to the dissolution of Christianity into religious plurality and the loss of its status as the "center" of European culture and civilization. Obviously, post-metaphysical thought cannot definitively overcome the "temptations of the transcendent" that are finding expression in the new myth creation. Post-religiosity and post-Christianity in this case should be understood not as the "extinction of religion," but as the erosion of religious totality, the fragmentation of a complex world view with its basic norms and values of Christian culture. Second, the religious could be reduced to the social, finding its expression in civil religion (for example, in the USA). Third, the opposition of secularists (religious liberals) and fundamentalists could be accompanied by the escalation of tension, finding expression in a "conflict of civilizations" on religious grounds. Fourth, a conservative revolution as a radical means to halt secularization could lead to a new form of totalitarianism, including the establishment of theocratic regimes.

Advocates see secularization as an objective process of human maturation, the development of consciousness and the perfection of social practices, freeing people from mythological and metaphysical "vestiges." True or not, it is obvious that in conditions of multiple conflicting religions and myths, the relativization of traditional norms and values, the erosion of universal culture, the impossibility of cultural verification, etc., demands from humanity genuine wisdom, peculiar to mature adults who have outgrown their enthusiasm for "games" and are immune to the children's diseases (deadly dangerous!) of nihilism and totalitarianism.