

Religion and values in modern society

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Religion is one of the richest sources of morality, ethical principles and social consciousness. As the form of social morality, religion changes and influences modern society, changes individuals, interferes with other religions.

As religion is a wide spread worldview and behavior of the certain community, defined by faith, different spheres of social existence depend on it. Throughout most of human history, religion has played a crucial role in the construction of social reality and the man was the most effective and widely used means of the social control in society. In the social structure of society traditionally religion is one of the most important social institutions, including the system of social norms, roles, beliefs and procedures (rituals, ceremonies), formal and informal codes of conduct, and organizational forms. Different religions perceive the war and peace dilemma in the common way: violence is inappropriate, until the subject of the controversy is the religion itself. All profits, sacred books and traditions are strict about the morality of the war: a person should fight for his faith war it is the " war for peace" (Gopin, 26). Walter Wink, Christianpacifist theologian, claims that according to the Christian knowledge about Jesus Christ, a man should turn another cheek, ceasing the idea of peace and fighting with violence.

Nevertheless, Christian tradition supported wars as acceptable means for the main aim - spreading of Christian faith (Smock, 43). Islamic religion emphasizes the importance of independence and unity within territorial, cultural and religion aspects. As the part of this preservation, muslims have permission to protect religion in common way. Nevertheless, main monotheistic religions (Islam, Judaism, Christianity) are connected within

their structure, origin, that is why perception of other religions is proclaimed in holy scriptures – Bible, Koran and Torah. For example, Christianity admits the divinity Jewish Tanakh, Islam accepts Jewish prophets Moses, Abraham, David (Gopin, 45).

That is why historical connection between religions influences interrelation between these religions. Durkheim (14) claims that “ if religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion”. Analyzing this point of view Barakat (123) emphasizes “ Religious forces, then, are social forces. Far from being external and above society, religion is in its image; it reflects all its aspects”. One of the main principles in Judaism in its perception of the war and violence is a principle of personal example and total involvement.

The main idea in this sphere is the desire to understand and respect other communities and religions. Modern society based formation of social consciousness and tolerance on common issues. Sympathy in interaction with other religion representatives is a pledge for coexistence of different religions in religiously pluralistic world. Religious pluralism refers to different parts of social, political and cultural peculiarities of the certain society. This concept deals with interaction, coexistence and interference between different religions within the same social or cultural space (Banchoff, 4).

Religious pluralism influences media: all religious holidays, peculiarities and taboos should be mentioned. Media as the mainstream source of information should be fair, respectful and tolerant. Theologian Barakat (44) examined Arabic values, traditions and religiosity and claimed that “ Governmental

control over the mass media and culture is accompanied by the banning of publications produced in other Arab countries". He also emphasized the way Arabic society protects religious secrecy by forming mass media taboos on political, religious, and sexual topics and terms or even criticisms of other rulers and governments that are friendly (Barakat, 44). upp (65) perceives liberal media as the suppressor of Christian tradition wide spreading. Showing Christianity as greedy and unspiritual religion, media spreads non-Christian extremism, popular nowadays.

Unfortunately, this kind of religion minorities' popularization is rather caused by commercial benefit of media sources. Violence for a higher cause is the natural phenomenon for fanatical religious minorities (Banchoff, 4). The representatives of religion minorities consider spreading of other religions as oppression, and inserting of alien values as the aggression. For example, Islam perceive ceasing of materialistic values as unnatural influence, that is why, politics study this question, analyzing different way of universal perception of spiritual values, acceptable for all religions on the level of mass media spreading. Globalization caused the mutation of religious identities, limiting and fitting them for technocratic society (Banchoff, 79). In modern society, scientific breakthrough influences religion, changing dogmas and rules.

For example, Christian religion admitted existence of planets and atoms, whereas common scientific concepts were punished few centuries ago. However, globalization influences religion in different spheres, making it technocratic and questioning its spirituality. Modern society considers religion as the factor that is important enough to examine, however, it <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-values-in-modern-society/>

should be suppressed as the problem of international and intercultural misunderstanding (Banchoff, 87). Ethical principle of tolerance explains the importance of learning and understanding religious differences, perceiving them as the part of human identity (Banchoff, 91). Universal ethical values are under threat in modern materialistic society, as a result religions are oriented on preservation of morality in society.

All religions play common role in modern world, ceasing spiritual values. Materialistic values influences social conscious, people appears indifferent to objective virtues, such as dignity, family, culture, heritage and nature, while religions remind their importance. Thoreau analyzed this concept in his work "Walden", in which person becomes alienated from urbanity to find oneself, learning to understand real virtues, natural blessings instead of imaginary aims and ends, discovering personal possibilities. Nowadays aims and goals are often formed by technocratic consuming society. Explaining the way Muslims perceive urbanization, Barakat (89) claims that Muslim religious life exists in terms of a rural-urban dichotomy.

Monotheism in Arab cities monotheism helps to preserve traditions and rituals. However, " Muslims in rural areas emphasize hierarchical relationships and express belief through reliance on sainthood, symbolism, and mystical practices" (Barakat, 89). As a result, Muslims preserves their religious identity in all forms of social being. Foregoing the real aim and values, material obsession primarily implemented as the measures for family wealth became the main reason for existence. Oriental religions emphasize the importance of unity with nature as the process of harmonization, developing virtues such as family values, thrusting aside destructive material

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obsession (Foss, 13) Analyzing spiritual and materialistic values, different philosophic schools perceived religion as the source of social morality formation. However, since the governing role of religion was substituted by individual hierarchy of values, different philosophers, such as Aristotle, Sartre and Nietzsche suggested that each person forms his or her own scale of values.

However, this opinion was close to the Buddhist perception of ethics, which emphasizes the ultimate role of individual morality in objective ethics formation. For example, Marx denies religions in general and Christianity in particular, as oriented on financial speculation and corruption. According to his ideology, religion makes an individual even more dependent on the material well-being. As a result, Marx denies its positive influence on public morality (Tucker, 72). Freud's perception of Christian religion brings certain controversy.

On the one hand, Freud wrote that religion is a universal obsessive neurosis. He also said that religious doctrine, psychologically conceived, is an illusion, the projection of infantile fantasy of soothe people who can not resist the suffering, uncertainty, and death. Barakat claims that regarding totem as the first object of worship, Freud positioned this religion as father substitute. The strength of religion is explained by Freud as one of several ways human beings seek to realize their repressed wishes and pleasures and avoid the pains of life (Barakat, 124). Considering this substitution as psychologically caused, Freud believed that society tries to put responsibility of their own life on outer sources of independent power.

This post-Marxist theory was also developed by existential philosopher Sartre. He claimed that divine conception of human being is the projection of society that tried to avoid responsibility. As religion underlines the unimportance of mortal life in comparison with eternal paradise, society use beliefs as excuses. The interrelation between individuals in society, which plays the main role in their sympathy towards each other find its manifestation in Christian religion. Common perception of God forms sympathetic understanding between people. The idea of the divine creature, which embraces all objective virtues, as the ultimately good energy that exists in each person, influences social interdependence and morality (Freud, 71).

Freud usually regarded as a Jew, who took his Jewish ethnic identity, but rejected all religious things, including Christianity. However, Vitz (58) believes that Freud was a public atheist, but he was certainly not a natural atheist. Freud's perception of Church was a dual against Christianity. Vitz hypothesizes that Freud had a strong, life-long, positive identification. Tocqueville claimed that potential involvement of an individual in the religion tends to form spiritual and ethical values, helping in the formation of personal perception of ethics.

Tocqueville's conception of "habits of the heart" begins with spiritual priorities. Personal values give ethical background and develop personality (Mayer, 252). Tocqueville explains "habits of the heart" as specific category that comprises family life, religious convictions and participation in local politics. Tocqueville understands these spheres of social life as interrelated. He emphasizes influence of Christianity on American democratic society that <https://assignbuster.com/religion-and-values-in-modern-society/>

based its social ethics formation on Christian religion to avoid the materialism, greediness, and other threats of capitalistic worlds.

Tocqueville explained devoutness of citizens in USA, religiosity of Americans, as the influence of family as the core individual morality formation. However, emphasizing the role of family in American religiosity, one should mention that Christian tradition perceives a woman as a potential carrier of Christian tradition in a family. Stark (48) in his article "Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: the Role of Woman" states that ancient sources and modern scholars unanimously agree that the initial addressing to Christianity occurred more often among women. Woman since pre-historic times played role of domestic goddess in family. Carrying house, children and taking care of members of her family, the spiritual heritage was a part of woman's responsibility. The natural irrationality, intuition, emotionalism, and sentimentalism of women helped them to become worshippers.

The female role in the religion has shown the example of sacrifice as the limitation for the biggest purposes: the sacrifice of time, deeds, comfort, and the life as the whole for a child's sake. Any woman comes through different life examinations that can be understood as sacrifices during different periods of her life: the pain, experienced during the childbirth, time devoted to the child, - all these actions bring pleasure and happiness, natural and sincere in the ends, while the process may be not as pleasant as the satisfaction of the fact that a woman is carrying her own child. The Buddhism understands sacrifice in the common way: a person's own limitation in pleasure brings the happiness on the higher level, that contemporary world temptation. Religion as the form of social consciousness influences all social

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spheres in modern world. However, perception of religion as the source of morality influences different aspects of individual perception, such as faith as the sacrifice.

Different religions understand sacrifice in a different way, noticed even in the analysis of the translation of the word "sacrifice" that is misleadingly understood by media as the process of giving away something valuable (Carter, 3). Nevertheless, the meaning of sacrifice can be understood on both material and non-material level, as the "gift" to the divine, or as the limitation for faith. Considering sacrifice as the satisfaction of God, humanity was far from the understanding of the real purpose of sacrifice. Philosopher and theologian Barakat (213) analyzed perception of labour among ancient Egyptians and came to conclusion that being hard working slaves, they experienced satisfaction of faith. This is another point of view on self-sacrifice that functioned as a psychological aspect of perception of religion and sacrifice during the whole history of humanity.

He notes that "Slavery will never disappear from the world. Each age has its slavery and its slaves. The paradise of the poor will never be on this earth" (Barakat, 213). Sacrifice of worshipping is the projection of labour sacrifice. An individual or society in general that can't obtain happiness in mortal life is ready for self-sacrifice for happiness in paradise.

Analyzing these facts it is possible to come to conclusion that in modern religiously pluralistic society, all religions play role of spiritual source, formation of values and ceasing of virtues, contesting rather with globalization and materialism, than with each other. However, religious

diversity doesn't provoke intercultural violence. Globalization influenced perception of religion, changing interrelation between adherents of different faiths. Tolerance as the main virtue of nowadays religion representatives teaches to respect representatives of other religions. Nowadays media representation of religion is a distorted point of view that influences stereotypes and gives misleading perception. Nature is one of the most important sources of spirituality, as much as environmentalism that studies influence on a man's perception of the technocratic society that put under the threat nature, gaining doubtful materialistic aims, forgetting about objective spiritual values, such as family environment, and feelings.

Different philosophic schools perceived religion, church and faith in a special way. For example, Marx considered religion as the form of business that ruins spiritual values instead of forming them. Freud emphasizes the emptiness of religion, explaining the fear that influences a person's desire to pray. Tocqueville underlined the importance of religiosity for American society, explaining family and Church as the moral basis for American capitalistic society. Explaining the role of family for the formation of personality one should mention the role of woman in Christian tradition and religion in general. Women were carriers of domestic comfort and their children's sake.

That is why religion was a form of woman's sacred mission, while their emotionality and irrationality made them perfect mediators. Moreover, carrying a child and giving birth, a woman experienced the contact with another world, becoming closer to religion. Caring a child is also a serious sacrifice for every woman that gets her closer to her faith. Sacrifice as the

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process of limitation for high reasons is another subject for sacrifice, understood by Oriental Religions that teach for high purposes without making material object main aims. Modern world changed perception of religion in general. Monotheistic religions used to be an ultimate source of truth, whereas now religion plays role of spiritual source, cultural and historical formation of personality, ethnical identity.

Religion helps to find answers for serious questions, shows that people differ a lot but they have a lot in common. Western philosophers wanted to thrust aside religion, nevertheless, religion forms world perception, influence people, helping to find their identity.