

POLITICAL RELATIONS AND RELIGION

Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade, 2011

It was towards the end of his life that Blaise Pascal, the orphaned child prodigy, coined his famous Pascal's Wager which appeals to the human sense of selfishness to prove that atheism profits nothing and a belief in God profits infinitely.

„'God is, or He is not.' But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions“ wrote Pascal in his *Pensées*¹.

If God does not exist, Pascal concluded, one will lose nothing by believing in him, while if he does exist, one will lose everything by not believing.

... and wager we must because „It is not optional“ and every detail of one's life becomes construed, or as Pascal says, „embarked“ to pick heads or tails and construct all of the surroundings - the family, business, government - so that it is conducive to the aims of one's compulsory gambit.

Yet, without salvation the wager is meaningless because it is the salvation that is the infinite gain gamblers in this wager seek.

Professor Miroljub Jevtic's new book, *Political Relations and Religion*², opens with this in mind - that people and societies are compelled to wager, that their gambits are as much personal as notional to the issue of salvation because salvation as a pay-off, as profit for one's disciplined execution of set of values, is a Christian notion, unfamiliar to the vast and diverse set of religious values apart from Christianity.

Jevtic's book, however, is not a polemic about the theological underpinnings of religious motivation, but rather a book that analyzes what religions motivate people to do and how we see that in politics, society and culture.

This approach to religion, termed as Politology of religion by the author³, is „one of the most important, if not the most important of all non-theological sciences that deal with religion“. (Jevtic, page 9).

1 <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees-contents.html>, accessed 15.01.2012.

2 Jevtic, Miroljub (2012). *Political Relations and Religion*. Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade.

3 Miki Bozinovich, Politology of religion, *Politics and religion*, No. 2, Vol.3, 2009, Belgrade.

„Position that religion and politics must not mix is to ignore the reality. Reality has shown that it is much easier to say than do, because religion is an integral view on the world and it is impossible to make a fine cut in the shoulder of a believer after which he will say these are my spiritual needs, and these social and I will not mix the two“, writes Jevtic.

Western secularism then, notes the author, came about not to make these fine slices inside the humans but to take away the dispensation of justice from the religious order and place the judiciary apart. Yet, warns the author, that secularism in the West has displaced this original mission and instead of dispensing justice it is using its legal writ to stomp on the religious parts of human lives even though it is an intricate mix of the human whole.

Multiculturalism, as one of the weapons of the misplaced secularism, shows up to have qualms with the reality and is busy making „idealized projections of relationship between different cultures, which were more and more departing from reality“. (Jevtic page 110)

Take the resurging modern European anti-Semitism, for example. For centuries Jews sought out sanctuary in The Netherlands finding the Dutch milieu at peace to practice traditional Jewish crafts, be it trade, banking or in case of the noble Spinoza, philosophy and contemplation.

„I entered Amsterdam tramway no. 24 from the front. In the back were four youngsters between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, chatting in fluent Dutch. They looked Middle Eastern or North African... After a few minutes, one of them began to sing. The words of one of the songs was this essay's opening sentence, which rhymes in Dutch“ recalls Manfred Gerstenfeld, chairman of the Board of Fellows of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.⁴

„You have to kill Jews, but it is forbidden“ sang these Dutch youngsters.

The profound change in the Dutch society is symptomatic of the general decimation of values all across Europe, and not just for the Jews. Swaths of urban landscape in the UK, France, Sweden... is a “no go area” as much for a Jew as is for a priest.

„What would happen if the multicultural model is declared impossible?“ poses Jevtic and continues: “To deport the immigrants of which many have citizenship, to empty out many jobs. Cause divisions among the domiciled citizenry because many have families with the immigrants. They have son-in-laws, grandchildren, uncles... foreigners“.

The dilemma is no longer a choice between the imaginings in Fukuyama's triumph of liberal democracy, nor Fukuyama's antipode to clash of civilizations as posed by Huntington, but a trilemma between these two and the demographics: multicultural delusion, fear of intolerance and lack of babies that could claim the mantle of secularism.

⁴ <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-22.htm>, accessed 15.01.2012.

For some time now France was leading the way in suppressing the overt expressions of its society by banning burqas, mandating against public prayer gatherings... but none of these measures address the fundamental problem that secularism is unable to assimilate Islam, whose dominating behavioral kernel is not salvation, but wager they must.

Jevtic's book is clear about this failure just as is Angela Merkel when she finally concluded that multicultural attempts have failed in Germany.

Jevtic's book also agrees with Cameron that there is a place for the church in the modern secular society, yet, just like the book, they are all statements of fact and the question before us is which way is forwards because, as Pascal said, wager we must.

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Примљен: 25.1.2012.

Прихваћен: 20.2.2012.

⁵ Editor of www.serbianna.com, accessed 15.01.2012; serbianna@serbianna.com