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Christian Attitudes regarding Religious Alternatives¹

By

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Jewish, Athanasian und Arian Christianity of the Roman Empire

In the time of *Early Christianity*, there were a lot of different trends within the religious movement of the Jewish and Hellenistic Christians. We know from the New Testament of two main factions fighting one another. The first group led by James, the brother of Jesus, argued that only those people would get salvation who accept and practice the Jewish Law; whereas the other group under the leadership of Paul of Tarsus believed that everybody trusting in God's grace could enjoy full salvation. Although the two positions were very controversial, the apostles reached a peace agreement: Paul of Tarsus and his disciples should preach the gospel to the non-Jews and the other apostles should do the same to the followers of the Jewish law. However, the peace between the early Christians did not last very long.

When the Christian religions spread all over the Roman Empire, most of the Christians did not accept even Christian religious alternatives. Each Christian group called itself only orthodox will say the only right believers; Christians following another interpretation were condemned (*anathema*) as heretics and people leaving Christianity as apostates.

According to the respective orthodox group, the other ones taught their followers false Christian doctrines in this way confusing the believers and leading them straight to hell. No wonder, the hierarchies stigmatized the heretics as extremely dangerous and did not allow their own followers even to look at them.

Every faction denounced those people as schismatics who did not follow its hierarchy but shared common doctrines and rituals. Therefore, they were less dangerous than the heretics were.

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The Christians called people apostates who completely and publicly had given up the Christian religion. The believers did not consider them as so dangerous because the Christian people knew that they had become non-Christians.

However, all Christian alternative doctrines were condemned and as far as possible, the right believers should avoid any contact with alternative religious people.

Even during the cruel time of persecution by the non-Christian Roman Empire, the Christian communities and schools continued doctrinally defaming, ritually excommunicating and socially pushing away one another.

When the Roman emperor *Constantine I* (272/285-337 AD) stopped the persecution of Christians in 313 AD and offered religious freedom not only to all religious communities including particularly the Catholic faction but also to everybody will say to each single individual. The liberty to practice one's own religion was granted – for a short time only!

Immediately after the liberation, the fight between the two main groups of the Catholic Church started once more: the fight of the Athanasian and Arian Christians.

The most influential spiritual leader of the first faction was the bishop of Alexandria (Egypt) *Athanasios* (298-373 AD). According to him Jesus Christ was 'God-the-Son' and as such of one essence with 'God-the-Father'. Therefore, the traditional title of a Jewish king 'Son of God' by which the Jewish Christians called Jesus (Mk 1), got a complete different, a Hellenic meaning. In view of the Hellenic Christians, the overwhelming power ruling the world is Death, *Thanatos*; therefore, a God only is able to conquer *Thanatos* and has the power to preserve immortality, *a-thanasia*, to the human beings.² The Hellenic Christians theologically concluded: If Jesus is the saviour, he must have been in some way God himself. They experienced Jesus, the Jewish 'Messiah' and 'Son of God', the king of Israel, as God-the-Son. However, the Hellenic Christians continued to use the old but now incorrect title 'Son of God' that has created and creates theological confusion particularly in the Christian-Muslim dialogue.

The Libyan or Berber *Areios* (256-336 AD), priest and colleague of Athanasios in the Catholic Church of Alexandria, contradicted that understanding of Jesus Christ. According to him Jesus Christ is not essentially God but only God's first creature, his begotten will say created son: "God chose Him who was of a mutable nature, on account of the carefulness of His manners and His practice, which in no way turned to that which is evil." Areios concluded that a human being could be promoted to the rank of a son of God by his own behaviour.

Athanasios' judgement about the Arian Christians and all other religion was unambiguous: "All heresies have come up by deviation from the truth and delusion ... One of these heresies, the youngest one, the Arianism, hypocritically tries to cover itself with words of the Holy Scripture in order to lead under the guise of Christianity into a wrong understanding of Christ."

During the first decades after Constantine I, there was always a change between Arian and Athanasian emperors. Although the law of individual and collective religious liberty was officially still in force, the un-bloody persecution of the Christians who did not enjoy imperial protection and favour was the order of the day. Although religiously persecuted a short time ago nevertheless the ruling Christians did not tolerate any religious alternatives now.

In 381, the bishops of the Athanasian faction came together in Constantinople and condemned many Christian groups including their major enemy, the Arians. The Athanasian emperor *Theodosius I* (347-395 AD) had passed a law one year ago, that everybody in his realm had to follow the religion of Athanasios of Alexandria. He prohibited the Olympic Games and other non-Christian religious institutions and practices.

In this way the Athanasian faction of the Catholic Church became not only the religion of the Roman society and state but also the only permitted one. The Athanasian Catholic govern-

² Later the sacraments as materialisations of the Holy Spirit became the remedy of immortality, the *pharmakon athanasias*, and therefore the Holy Spirit was dogmatized as God-the-Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian Godhead was dogmatically complete and gave the Hellenistic people security in eternal salvation.

ment declared all other religions of Christians as well as non-Christians as illegal. People who did not belong to the Athanasian Catholic Church were declared members of criminal associations. Criminalisation became the basic principle of the behaviour of the politically successful Athanasian Catholics concerning other religions. According to them religious peace was only possible by annihilating religious alternatives.

No wonder that the victorious Athanasian Christians removed the statue of the old Roman Goddess *Victoria* (Victory) from the hall of the Roman Senate, confiscated the properties of her temple, and divested the priests and priestesses of all privileges.

The fight against the alternative Christian and non-Christian religions was not a spiritual fight only. The Athanasian clergy used the new Christian imperial government as its secular weapon - to destroy the other religious communities. The politically victorious Athanasian clergy started organised persecution of people of other beliefs; a persecution which lasted until the 20th c. in Europe.

Arian Germanic Christianity

However, the Arian bishop *Wulfila* (310-383 AD), born as son of a Gothic father and a Capadocian mother, started a renaissance of the Arian religion. In 341, he was appointed to the office of a mission bishop by other Arian bishops to preach the Arian Christian religion to the Gothic tribes who were not under the control of the Athanasian imperial government.

Wulfila taught: God is only one and the father of all creatures. He is the God of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not God as the Father; he is only the God of the human beings and the creator of the whole world.

The basic intention of Wulfila's confession is very clear: If Jesus Christ is the creator of the world and God of the human beings then Death or Devil do not have substantial power over the world. In contradiction to the Thanatos ridden Hellenistic Roman culture - reflecting the decline of its morbid society - the worldview of the Libyan Areios and the Goth Wulfila was more optimistic. Their religion anticipated or reflected the new world of the politically and militarily ascending Germanic tribes conquering the socially rotten Christian Roman Empire particularly in the West.

In the manner of his theological enemy Athanasios, the Arian bishop Wulfila condemned the Athanasians and the other Christians like Manicheans, Marcionists, Montanists, etc. with the following unambiguous words: "All heretics were not Christians, but Antichrists, not pious, but impious; not teachers but seducers; not religious, but irreligious; not worshippers of God but without God."

The Arian missionaries brought the message of Areios and Wulfila not only to the Ostrogoths and Visigoths but also to other Germanic tribes like the Vandals, Burgundians, Sueves and Lombards.

Now the Catholic state religion faced a disaster for some centuries. It lost its religious monopoly. On the other side, it could have been worse for the Catholic hierarchy. When the Arian Germanic tribes came to power in the West Roman Empire they did not persecute the alternative religion of the Catholic masses much. Although subjugated the Catholics could hardly understand and accept to live in a society with two officially allowed religions and in their eyes heretic rulers.

After the Vandals had subjugated southern Spain, which landscape takes their name Andalusia, they conquered the Roman provinces of Northern Africa. Inter alia, they successfully attacked the town Hippo Regius, the see of the famous bishop *Aurelius Augustinus* (354-430 AD). However the bishop died, while the Arian Vandals were besieging the city. After the conquest of Hippo Regius (431 AD) the Vandal king *Geiserich* (389-477 AD) made the city the capital of his Arian kingdom.

Although facing the decline of his beloved Catholic Roman Empire, which happened 476 AD, Augustine, the greatest Christian theologian and philosopher of his time, nevertheless put the

case for the most aggressive intolerant doctrine: all the Christians - whatever Christian community they might belong to - are legal members of the Roman Catholic Church. The legal ground is their baptism. By that ritual, a human being automatically becomes a legal and responsible member of the Roman Catholic Church. Even if a heretic or schismatic priest correctly baptized someone, nevertheless he or she became a full member of the Roman Catholic Church. All baptized people – even if they refuse – are under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic clergy. The clergy has the right to use the so-called secular arm, the secular authorities, to force the alternative Christians even against their will, back to the true, the Roman Catholic Church.

Fighting against the other great Christian Church in Northern Africa, the Donatists, Augustine did not hesitate to demand from the Roman governor *Boniface* to persecute the so-called heretics. Augustine wrote against the Manicheans, the Jews and all the other non-Catholic religions.

However, Augustine went on and demanded from the authorities, that the Catholics have to force even the so-called heathens, the non-Christians, to enter the Catholic Church: *cogite intrare!*

The bishop of Hippo was not only a scholar; he was a bishop, too. As a bishop, he felt himself responsible for the salvation of all people. As one who had to take care of all human beings, he did not want them going to hell. His very aggressive intolerance rooted in his obsession to save everybody from eternal condemnation. Everybody who did not get baptism and the other sacraments of the Catholic Church had to suffer hell without any mercy.

However, the Arian Christians, the Vandals, ruled their country for so long so that the Catholics of Northern Africa could not realise the program of forced conversion for one hundred years.

As the Arian rulers were not so much interested in conversion of the subjugated Catholic people - only one Vandal king tried to destroy the North African Catholic Church - the Catholic hierarchy got and took the chance to become the leader and speaker of the Catholic masses particularly in the cities. Through this tolerance, the Arians dug their own grave.

Later on, in the 5th century, the powerful non-Christian Germanic tribe of the *Francs* accepted the Catholic religion and with the help of the Catholic hierarchies successfully started fighting the Arian Germanic kingdoms in today France, Italy and Northern Spain. The Arian rulers lost their kingdoms or converted to the Catholic Church for surviving only.

Catholicism became the only official religion in the West once more, and with the secular rulers' support, it started a mission to convert all the non-Christian tribes and the alternative Christians. The idea, that there is only one Church and one religion, will say religious intolerance, triumphed for centuries.

Christian Middle Ages

During the *Middle Ages* the Roman Catholic Church had to face several alternative religions. First, the Eastern Catholic Church, later on called the Orthodox or Byzantine Church, ruled by the East Roman Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople, ultimately refused to accept the Roman bishop as legal and actual ruler or monarch of the whole Christian Community. Therefore, the bishop of Rome declared the Eastern Church a schismatic one and an enemy of his Church. This open break of the two old Christian state Churches in 1056 created such a fanaticism in the Western Church that the Catholic knights and soldiers of the 4th crusades - instead of conquering Jerusalem –conquered Constantinople in 1204, robbed the whole city and erected a so-called Latin Empire in the rest of the Greek speaking Christian areas. That war helped the Turkish tribes in slowly conquering the East Roman Christian Empire.

Today we see the Roman pope visiting the Ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople. The reason that that patriarch had to depend on the grace of Muslim sultans and of nationalist and social-democratic rulers for centuries had caused the intolerance and the claim to power of the Roman Church.

In the West, the mediaeval Church, which called herself *ecclesia romana*, Roman Church, had to face extremely dangerous difficulties caused by new non-Catholic religions. A broad anti-Roman Catholic movement threatened the spiritual, secular and economic power of the Roman hierarchy:

First, the *Church of Jesus Christ*, called *Albigensians* or *Cathars*, teaching the doctrine of strict poverty, of reincarnation of the soul, and practising the guru-system.

Second, the *Poor People of Christ*, or *Valdensians*, teaching the right of the lay people to read the Holy Scripture in the vernacular languages, preaching the gospel to the people without any permission of the bishops. In this way, they broke spiritual monopoly of the Roman hierarchy.

Third, the *Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit*, teaching and practising a radical emancipated life, destroying the repressive Catholic conscience, and like the two other Christian movements attacking the wealth and corruption of the Roman Catholic clergy.

As the Catholic bishops and their vicars could not oppress the alternative Christian communities, the pope and his staff organised the military and ideological war, the crusade, against the so-called heretics.

Firstly, the pope ordered the secular powers to fight the anti-hierarchical nobility who very often were members, helpers, protectors or fellow travellers of the alternative religions. The supporters of the Catholic clergy got indulgence of sins' penalties and the properties of the defeated ones.

Secondly, the papal Curia established the Roman inquisition as a centralised organisation to – as they said – “annihilate the meanness of heresy”. A cruel persecution of all alternative religions started and the conscience and bodies of hundred of thousands of Christian people were tortured and burnt. Their properties were confiscated and taken for the use of the Holy Inquisition.

This horrible war of mass extermination of Christian people was justified by a very logical argument.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD), member of the highest and Germanic nobility, son of the count of Aquinas in Italy, related to emperor Frederick II, priest of the Dominican Order, and greatest theologian of the Catholic Middle Ages, taught in accordance to the Catholic tradition that all baptized people legally belong to the Roman Church and therefore are subdued under the rule of her hierarchy. By baptism the baptized one enters into a contract with the Almighty; he commits himself to obeying God completely with his thoughts, words, behaviour and even feelings; he swears *fides*, which does not mean belief only but total loyalty. God's satraps or governors on earth are the pope and his clergy; therefore, the baptised one has to obey the hierarchy. In contrast to Augustine's doctrine of forcing non-baptised people into the Church, Thomas Aquinas and the whole Catholic Church taught that taking baptism has to be a voluntary act. Nobody should be forced to become a Catholic. However, in the Christian countries child baptism was (and still is) en vogue. Thomas justifies child baptism saying, when a child is being baptised, in its name, its godfather or godmother swears an oath to obey God and his agents. The oath founds a life long contract between God and the baptised person. Becoming a heretic, a schismatic or an apostate, the baptised person commits perjury because there is no possibility to revoke the treatise or to get out of the contract. Therefore, if a baptised person breaks the oath, the Church has the right to punish the oath breaker and to force him to maintain the contract. The Church as *alma mater* forgives the repentant oath breakers two times. However, from the beginning they have to bear special cloth, their properties are confiscated and after a long time of penitence and excommunication, they get the sacraments once more. However, they are under strict control of their vicar and have to do penitence all the time of their life.

However, if someone comes back as a repentant third time, the Church forgives him once more; nevertheless, he has to suffer death penalty. Thomas gives two reasons: Firstly saving

the repentant from relapsing once more and in this way preserving him from hell and secondly saving the believers from his negative seducing example.

If someone breaks the oath as a renitent unbeliever and does not want to come back to the Church, he has to suffer death penalty. Thomas justifies the killing of those people: They are a danger for the believers because they seduce them so that the misled ones will suffer eternal punishment.

There was another reason for the intolerance of the mediaeval Church rooting in the idea of *unitas ecclesiae*, the unity and integrity of the Church. Securing the unity one has to protect it from Christians trying to live their own and self-determined religious life and from non-Christians the Catholics suspected to make converts.

Concerning the non-Christian believers Thomas Aquinas argued that Catholics living under non-Christian rule have to separate themselves from the unbelievers – as far as possible. He considered religious apartheid the best way of inter-religious living together. Thomas gave an example: Christian labourers are allowed to work on the fields of a Jewish landowner. Why? They work separated from the Jew most of the time; they are not forced to see him and to talk to him continuously.

Indeed, the non-Christian unbelievers as creatures of God have the right to live. However, they have no right to organise a congregation, to perform public services or to build their own religious houses. Not the congregation but only the individual has the right to live; but his worship he has to do alone in his private house. Converting Christians to another religion was a capital crime, too.

Although the Roman Inquisition, *inquisitio haeretice pravitatis*, which means investigation of the heretical vileness, was very active everywhere in the Catholic world, the hierarchy could not uproot alternative religious movements. After the Lollard movement in England and the Hussite rebellion in Bohemia (today Czech Republic), the Protestant Reformation created a new and lasting culture of modern religion.

Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD), the great German reformer, taught that the real religion lies only in the heart of the human being and not outside in visible temples, rituals and hierarchies. What happens inside the heart is an intimate affair of God and the individual. No human authority - it may be an ecclesiastical or a secular one - has the right to intervene.

Within that authority free zone, two alternative possibilities can be realised for understanding human existence: Justification of one's own existence by Faith or by Work.

Faith - as a technical theological term - means trusting in the message of God's unconditioned and unshaken love to all his creatures. The traditional Christian description of God's free love is the Work of Jesus Christ. The Work of Jesus Christ as God-the-Son means that God himself has done every necessary compensatory work for the salvation of every human being once and forever.

The other possibility of understanding human existence, non-trusting in that message, Martin Luther called justification by human Works. The specific Reformation meaning of that Work religion is as follows: Human beings think they get the ultimate value of their existence through their own thoughts, deeds and feelings. According to this understanding of human existence, the function of human life and death consists in getting ultimate value by satisfying human justice. In this view, salvation depends on the innermost will and energy of the human being.

No authority on earth has the right to ask people if they have Faith in God's free love or if they make God a servant of the Goddess Justice.

We see that Martin Luther's concept of salvation is not under pressure to convert other Christians or non-Christians into a visible organisation. People trusting in God's free love do not need to force other people into the visible Church. Salvation does not depend on a visible in-

stitution. The messenger of God's free love has not to make converts for a worldly organisation; he has only to preach the message – that is enough, the rest is up to the listener. Indeed, there is absolutely no need to take over patterns of Western Christian cultures to trust in God's unconditioned free love. The real church is un-visible. Her members are all people of all religions trusting in God's free love.

Fighting for converts is a worldly affair resulting from the idea that eternal salvation depends on someone's work i.e. becoming member and activist in a church or in another religious community. However, real conversion happens in the inner world of the individual, not in the outside world. Conversion means conversion of one's consciousness into trusting in God's independent grace, not into the membership of a worldly organisation.

Therefore, the Reformation did not need a salvation making hierarchy anymore. The office of a pope, declaring himself a condition for salvation, is according to Martin Luther founded by the devil.

The logics of the Reformation are very clear: Within our innermost realm, we are free to trust in God's grace or not; but concerning the external world we are strictly bound to the God given Law.

The Law is nothing else than the execution of the God given rationality. It is the only principle all the rulers of the world have to follow.

There is no divine revelation: if the ruler does not know what to do, he will not get any special revelation or priestly command; the only thing he can do is to pray to God for enlightening his human rationality.

The organisation of the external human existence is up to universal human rationality only. It is not a question of inner religion. Therefore, tolerance or intolerance concerning external religious cultures depends on the historical necessities for surviving of humanity.

Rationality does not depend on one's own religious affiliation. Therefore, Martin Luther taught that everybody which religion he may belong to has to obey his given authority. The religious affiliation of the rulers does not mean anything in this concern. Nevertheless, to obey them without respect of religion has to be everybody's duty.

The inner logics of the Reformation doctrine of human rationality as sole principle of organising human life does not favour any special kind of religious culture and any kind of religious organisation. Martin Luther said once: Let us make if necessary new 10 Commandments! Let us make a new culture for a better living together today and for the next future.

In order to create peace between the German Catholics and Protestants the German authority, the *Reichstag*, the parliament of the German princes and free cities, decided in Augsburg in 1555 AD that both 'confessions' of the 'split religion' should have their right to exist. Each princely state and city should decide by itself which of both of the two religions the inhabitants had to follow. There was no other European country legally tolerating a second religion within its borders.

However, the intolerance against other Christians within any princely state was by no means a religiously founded one: it was a secular decision of the secular Reichstag in order to get inter-religious peace within the German society. Therefore, the secular authorities could and did change that secular system of inter-religious living together – as follows.

From the 18th century onwards, the tolerance concerning external religious cultures increased more and more in the German Roman Empire.

Time of Transition

The Austrian ruler and Roman-German emperor *Joseph II* (1741-1790 AD), the Prussian king *Frederick the Great* (1712-1786 AD) and other German princes slowly and cautiously allowed not only alternative religious life for individuals and building of religious communities in their countries. German princes invited even persecuted French Calvinist Huguenots or the persecuted Lutherans from Salzburg to settle in their respective countries.

After the French Revolution the Catholic hierarchy started under the dictatorial leadership of the pope a very aggressive mission denying all other religions the right to exist. It is not surprising that the Roman pope declared individual and collective religious liberty a monster. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878 AD) condemned the following liberal doctrines:

1. that in the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship (1855 AD);
2. that it has been wisely decided by law, in some Catholic countries, that persons coming to reside therein shall enjoy the public exercise of their own peculiar worship (1852 AD);
3. that it is false that the civil liberty of every form of religion, and the full power, given to all, of overtly and publicly manifesting any opinions whatsoever and thoughts, conduce more easily to corrupt the morals and minds of the people, and to propagate the pest of indifference (1856 AD).

Pope Leo XIII, (1878-1903 AD) repeated these positions in his encyclica *Libertas praestantissimum*, 1888: religious liberty is not liberty but ruin of liberty; such a liberty is damaging to the rulers and the subjects.

In the 19th century the Protestant liberalism accepted and realised religious tolerance; however according to its evolutionary ideology the so-called Protestant personality was the crown of God's creation. It was its historical task to establish the Realm of God on Earth. The realm of God was nothing else than the liberal Protestant society. The logical consequence of that ideology is very clear: colonise the non-Christian world in order to bring up all mankind to the liberal Protestant level of personality and to establish everywhere the liberal Protestant rule to lift up the underdeveloped natives. The liberal Protestantism did not understand other religions as fiend from hell; it saw them as lower stages of true religion. Therefore these other religions had to be raised, will say converted into liberal Protestantism. This was necessary in order to establish the Realm of God on Earth.

The liberal Protestants expected the decline of all non-Christian religions: even Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam had no future. Nevertheless, the liberal Protestantism interpreted these non-Protestant religions as necessary steps to the highest level of religious evolution.

After the First World War had destroyed the fantasies of the liberal Protestant realm of God on Earth the dominant Protestant theology started to change its position concerning other non-Christian religions. The majority of the theologians saw these religions no longer as lower stages of true religion but as completely wrong ways to God. Denying that there is any truth in other religions, a massive Catholic mission started. The new ideology of mission ignored the wisdom of other religions and used the colonialist terror against politically oppressed and economically exploited peoples for religious conversion.

When the *anti-colonialist liberation movements* defeated the colonialism and the non-Christian religions started an unbelievable comeback the arrogant religious mentality of the Western Christian religions was deeply shocked and unable to face the new situation. Hindus and Buddhists went to the West and got an unexpected sympathy. The Muslims coming to Europe and North America did not give up their religion. Quite the reverse happened: they became even stronger Muslims!

The Roman Catholic Church reacted to the new situation in the sixties of the last century and formulated a new i.e. post-colonialist approach to the other religions. The *Second Vatican Council* declared that the non-Christian and non-Catholic religions are not anymore a fiend from hell but shareholders of particles of the divine will say Catholic truth.

The Roman Church started many inter-religious initiatives. The most important one was the well-known statement of pope *John Paul II* that Catholics and Muslims are worshipping the same God; there are differences in regard of the kinds of worship, of theology etc.

The *former state Protestantism* however does not accept the Catholic position. The Protestant Church of Germany officially declared just now that Allah is in no way the God the Protestants worship.

Such a position is a result of an extreme superficial theological analysis of other religions, which roots in the conscious ignorance of alternative verbalisation and symbolisation of the same human experiences.

Together with the ignorance of the renaissance and rising of the other religions and the loss of followers in its own countries a mentality of self-isolating and aggressive defeatism has taken hold of the former state and still privileged Western Protestantism.

However, the *new Protestant charismatic movements* unlike the former state Protestantism have taken a global offensive trying to convert not only non-Christians but also Catholics, Orthodox Christians and even traditional Protestants. They obviously are the most successful religious movements today. In order to stop the new Protestants to convert Catholics and traditional Protestants the Catholic and Protestant hierarchies are propagating a code of avoiding so-called non-ethical conversions. However, the conversion of Hindu, Sikhs, Buddhists and other non-Christian religions are not included.

Modern Religious Individualism

Many Christians were and are always fighting for inter-religious dialogue, cooperation and living together in a peaceful and respecting manner. Nevertheless, the international Christian mass organisations, i.e. traditional churches and particularly modern Christian movements, are more or less convinced that for the sake of eternal salvation the other ones have to enter their visible institution and accept their specific culture.

The modern life style, the unlimited mobility of the persons and goods and the individuals' chances of close communication and access to uncontrolled information forces these religious organisations to compete with one another and therefore to try to get believers off the other religion.

However, if we look at the modern conditions of existence, modern religion cannot be cultivated in such a manner anymore.

Religion means the holistic existential discourse of human beings facing the dialectical dynamics of their existence: they have to define their existence all the time although it is not definable at all. In religion, the human being tries to solve that non-solvable problem.

The basic un-definability of human existence is what we call the Holy. This most powerful holy aspect of human existence shatters in an uncontrollable manner the actual definitions that the human beings are making up, the norms, which they are following, and the cultures that they are constructing. In this way, the Holy forces them to develop new ones all the time. The Holy is the transcendence of our existence will say that we do not have our existence at our disposal at all. This fundament of our existence can be fascinating or horrifying. The Hindu name of the Holy in this concern is Shiva.

The Holy forces us day by day to wrestle with it. However, under modern conditions, under modern definitions, we have to do it as individuals, by ourselves, beyond all collectivist or authoritarian patterns of interpretation.

Therefore, the demand of our time is not only religious tolerance but also taking care of one's own individual religion. It is the individuals who have to wrestle with the Holy will say to build up their individual culture.

Massive political support for the development of individual religious progress is necessary on one side and a strict controlling of religious collectives on the other side.

The authorities have to control religious collectives that put their collective patterns on the individuals and in this way alienate the individual from his own nature, his own capacities and intentions concerning the Holy.

The most important representative of religious individualisation is *Swami Vivekananda* (1863-1902 AD). He criticised the collectivist religions as religiously destructive powers and demanded the development of one's own religious culture. With this individualistic concept, he has become the father of modernist Hinduism which basic idea is the Ishta-religion.

The individualisation of religion is not a product of the individual's free decision; it is the actual definition of religious behaviour produced by history. Individualisation of religion is a historical fate that we cannot escape for the present yet.

Accepting, cultivating and defending religious alternativity against all religious totalitarian collectivism is the only way to wrestle with the Holy today – otherwise the Holy will become completely uncontrollable: the 20th century has shown the horrible consequences of disregarding the modern shape of religion.