

the global population, i.e., every third inhabitant of the Earth is a Christian. Followers of Islam make around 1126 million (19% of the global population). The Buddhist population is estimated at around 500 million.

Modern interfaith relations are often characterized by conflicts caused by intolerance and xenophobia. The adherents of other religions are perceived as "enemies of the faith," who are subject to isolation, public denunciation, quite often violent treatment, and even physical extermination. Nevertheless, a number of international religious organizations and movements unite people of different religions (the Ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches, the International Association of Religious Freedom-IARF, etc.). They advocate the idea of creating a world community in which believers of different religions could cooperate constructively respecting the opinion of others. They recognize religious freedom as one of the most important elements of freedom of consciousness, which is an integral characteristic of democracy and civil society.

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RELIGION in Primeval Societies and Modern Religious Movements. In primeval societies universal phenomena of spiritual culture are manifested in local, ethnically tinted forms and connected with specific ethnic communities. They help people to realize their unity and, at the same time, differences between them and the representatives of other communities, tribes, nations. Supra-ethnic religions are manifested in their highest form as world religions—Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. They try to overcome local limitations of ethnic religions, their ethnocentricity. These religions go beyond communal or tribal boundaries, becoming the religions of greater tribal aggregations and then nations (for instance, China and Japan prior to penetration of Buddhism), or vast historical and cultural areas (like the Indian subcontinent). This tendency finds its ultimate expression in a religious appeal to all of humanity irrespective of ethnic, geographic, historical, cultural, or racial boundaries. Losing connection to a specific society, religion loses connection to a specific locus, limited territory.

The rise of world religions is characterized by K. Jaspers as the Axial Time. This revolutionary change occurred in the middle of first millennium B.C. on vast expanses of the globe from Ancient Greece to China and marked the transition from primeval locally limited mythological consciousness to universal historical consciousness, when people became aware of their place in history. They also became aware of the tragedy of being, the imminence of catastrophe, and the yearning for salvation. It was during that epoch that the foundations of world religions were laid—religions full of ethical pathos.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the epoch of crisis-

ridden world empires, many traditional societies were absorbed in prophetic and messianic, eschatological and apocalyptic movements. It was as through people sensed the imminent end of history, the entry of the world into a new era, an epoch of hitherto unknown cataclysms. Millions of people took part in these movements from Indians of North America to Papuans of New Guinea, from primeval hunters of Australia to shepherds of Mountain Altai. Indigenous beliefs were curiously interwoven in their ideology with alien elements of world religions, mainly Christianity.

One of the most important features of primeval societies was that social processes were manifested largely through religion; therefore, social protest movements often looked like religious movements. The belief that God shall send to the Earth a national leader, who will rally the people around himself or herself and drive out strangers from their native land, influenced the ideology of early Christianity (apart from the idea of victory over death, resurrection, and the premonition of a forthcoming universal catastrophe). In the same way, present-day religious mass movements emerge amid the conflagration of social and national crisis and conflict between indigenous population and alien conquerors.

Eschatological and prophetic principles are ingrained in the depths of mythological consciousness. But historical consciousness is making its way through mythological consciousness, characterized by the idea of the irreversibility of time. At the same time, a new supra-ethnic consciousness comes to replace ethnic religious consciousness. The new religious consciousness becomes increasingly more universal; it addresses more and more the view that human personality looks for support not in a society, but in an individual.

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RELIGIOUS POLITICIZATION is the use of political means to achieve religious goals that has become a global phenomenon. Contrary to popular opinion, the use of religion to justify some political action is not a sign of religious politicization. For the supporters of a politicized religion, political power is only the means to achieve the real goal, such as, for example, the Islamic state, or the earthly Kingdom of God. Along similar lines, Mark Juergensmeyer makes a distinction between wars justified by religion and religious wars. In the latter case the political battles themselves are seen first of all as religious events (See: Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Sacrifice and Cosmic War: Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*. London, 1992, p. 111).

Politicization is typical for all religions in some stages of their development. Moreover, in the same period, while some of the believers can view a religion politically, others may not (there is "political Islam" and "mere Islam"). Modern Western societies are characterized by "personal-