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## **I- Religious Plurality, Danger or Possibility?**

### **1- Religions of Abraham.**

A- Sweden is a new Andalusia for a new religious dialogue after Madrid, Oslo, Stockholm and may be Copenhagen later-on. Cultures come before politics. The purpose is life not death, peace not war, pluralism not unilateralism. Nature, beauty and quietitude are good enough for emigration in a spacious land similar to a soul.

B- Dependence on reason as a free thinker is better than depending on scriptures, ambiguous, selective and disputable. Analysis of living experiences added to reason is better than historical events subject to authenticity and several readings.

C- Pluralism is the source, the origin and the foundation of religions. The target is one, God, the ways to Him are different. The substance is one, the ways are different: Law (Judaism), Love (Christianism) or Justice (Islam) the free choice between Law and Love. Abrahamic religion revealed itself in three successive stages. Eastern religions may be also revealed religions. Buddha, Confucius, Leutze may be prophets. There is no nation to whom God did not send a prophet.

D- Natural religion is the origin of all religions, religion of reason and reality, religion without dogma or rituals, religion of natural goodness, of primitive innocence.

### **2- Reasons of unilateralism.**

Unilateralism has many reasons such as:

A- Literalism in interpreting scriptures.

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\*) ) Stockholm, 1-2 April 2009.

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- B- Conservatism, a narrow minded spirit to the point of solipsism.
  - C- Ignorance of the spirit of religion, its essence and multiple manifestations in history.
  - D- Egoism, considering religion for one's self not for others, as if he is the only believer.
  - E- Interest, identifying religion to one's own interest against other interests.
  - F- Arrogance, one of major human weaknesses which implies self-affirmation and the negation of others.
  - G- Persecution, once the self feels persecuted, it rejects the other as a symbol of persecution and take a negative attitude to the world.
  - H- Inferiority complex, converted to superiority complex, rejecting the other and feeling equal to him.
  - I- Fanaticism closing one's borders as absolute right and rejecting any interaction with others as absolute wrong.
  - J- Power is the only mean to deal with others through domination.

### **3- Treatment.**

Since pluralism is the natural attitude and unilateralism is a deviation from nature. Unilateralism can be treated and cured by the following devices:

A- The complete equality between human beings and nations in principle, if not in reality. Human knowledge requires the right to differ, the recognition of the other, the cultural participation and conviviality. God is for all, *Yahwe*, not *Elohim*, *Allah* not *Ilah*. Theory of Essence, Attributes, Acts and Names of God is an expression of the same human ideal in all theologies. All human beings have the same ideal judged according to the same norm, "A common word" *Kalima Sawa'*, that God is One and the same for all and no one makes himself dictator on the other, since all human beings are equal.

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B- No one has the monopoly of truth, but only looking for it. Truth is a human perspective, interchanged through dialogue for a more integral view. This comes through love and humility, love of the other and humility to him as Christ sat down at the feet of disciple washing them to give them a lesson of modesty.

C- In each religious tradition, there are two trends: Conservatism and Liberalism, traditionalism and modernism, Orthodoxy and Reformism. In Judaism, there is conservatism, Orthodoxy, Zionism from one side and liberalism, reformism and rational Judaism from the other side. In Christianity there are conservatism old and new and Reformism. In Islam there are fundamentalism and liberalism.

#### **4- Consequences.**

After getting ride of unilateralism to give more chance for pluralism the following consequences emerge:

A- Ending wars and disputes between different conflicting views. Religion is for life not for death. Blood is a symbol of life not of death. Killing is a crime even in death penalty, even eye for eye, teeth for teeth. What matters is the spirit of justice not physical punishment.

B- Mutual enrichment between different perspectives, mutual learning and mutual cultural creativity. Pluralism is more enjoyable than unilateralism, dialogue than monologue, "Our creative diversity".

C- Plurality is never a danger but always full of possibilities. It may be a danger if it is conflicting pluralism, disputing diversity, skepticism, relativism, agnosticism and finally nihilism, because it does not have the other pole, unity. Diversity in unity and unity in diversity.

## **II- Let us meet in Faith beyond the confessions**

### **The two commandments of love**

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### **1- Subjective faith.**

A- Faith is a belief irrespective of its content. It is a subject without object, a simple *Credo*. The object faith is a simple tension between anthropomorphism and transcendence, a value-system as Max Scheler described.

B- There is nothing called atheism, unbelief or conversion because faith has nothing to do with its content. Changing content does not change faith. There is hypocrisy, doing something and pretending something else. There is dead faith, inactive or weak against strong faith implying its actions.

C- Faith is self-commitment and a sacrifice, giving more than taking, offering more than asking. Faith is reconciliation with one's self, with human passions before being reconciled with others.

D- Faith is against opportunism and utilitarianism, in action and against doubt, agnosticism and nihilism in thought. It means sincerity and truthfulness in behavior and certainty and conviction in theory.

### **2- Faith against fanaticism.**

A- Faith is not fanaticism leading to rejection, condemnation and opposition. It is not self-affirmation and other's negation.

B- Faith is not irrational or against reason as Origin said *Credo ad absurdum*. Why should man feels conflict between his reason and his belief?

C- Abraham was looking for a proof that God exists. He found a quantitative one from the star to the moon to the sun. He did believe, but he needed a proof to make his belief well founded.

D- Faith is not contrary to reality, to human experience. Abraham proved to his people by experience that idols are not God when he broke the idols, big and small and asked his people to ask the biggest one who did it. Christ also went through temptation. History was a field of verification of the will of God to the Jews.

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E- Islam is a religion based on Reason and Reality, on rational evidence and human experience. Revelation is equal to Reason, equal to nature. Miracles, violations of natural laws, existed in the past as proofs but no more in Islam, and in the future. The only miracle is defiance of human creativity to compose a discourse like the Quran, *Ijaz*.

### **3- Love of Neighbor.**

A- The two commandments are loving God and loving one's neighbor as loving one's self. God loves man as far as man loves his brother. Gabriel is recommending good treatment to one's neighbor as if he was one of the members of the family having right to inherit, and absolute priority in transactions.

B- Love requires loving one's enemies, being tolerant, forgivable and reconciliatory. This behavior transforms the enemy to a friend. Love is a power in the soul having more effect than physical power.

C- Love is not only between man and God, man and man but also between man and nature, against destruction and pollution. Greenery is more divine than desertification. The work of man in nature is to green it till the last moment in his life, using water for irrigation, agriculture for feeding the hungry people.

### **4- Conditional love.**

A- Love is not absolute neither to a special people nor to a special person or even to all humanity. Love is not one way, but double way. As far as man loves God, God loves him. Love is a reciprocal act not a unilateral one, absolute continuous and irreversible.

B- Love is conditioned by the good deed. Unconditional love is in the name of a special covenant between God and a special people. God gives everything and the people offers nothing in return, neither belief, nor good action, nor obedience, nor piety. It is also a material covenant giving the people land, holy city and victory, irrespective of

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disobedience, killing the prophets and violation of the law.

C- In Islam, loving God goes through loving man. The vertical is conditioned by the horizontal. Mystical love is like the Jewish and Christian absolute love to the people and to Christ. Direct love to God without going through man is a sign of weakness and escapism, a formal love without content, a gratuity love without paying the price.

D- Love is love to poors, orphans, miserable prisoners, sick people, the marginalized, wretched of the earth. It is an active, productive and useful love.

### **5- New Theologies.**

A- Religion now needs new theologies since theology changes from time to time. Each time has its theology. Dogmatic theology expressed mediaeval theology. New theologies are more expressing the crisis of modern times.

B- There are now theologies of human rights, against the violation of human rights everywhere, of social justice against the disparity of national income between rich and poor, of equality against racial discrimination, of freedom against individual and collective oppression.

C- Liberation theology is a kind of new theologies taking birth in the Third World during the struggle of liberation movements against occupation, colonialism and imperialism from outside, and oppression, poverty and underdevelopment from inside.

D- New theologies can bridge the gap between fundamentalists and secularists, bringing back the hesitants to religion and the conservatists to the social predicament.

## **III- Religions a way to Peace**

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## **1- Peace on Earth.**

A- Religion, a way to peace is the main title of this conference. Plurality, faith and love were only introductions. That applies not only to Abrahamic religions but also to all religions, in Asia and Africa.

B- The whole issue depends on what does religion mean? In each religious tradition there are two trends depending on the ambiguous scriptures and human attitudes: Conservatist and liberal, universalistic and particularistic, literal and metaphoric. Two similar conservatist, particularistic and literal trends in two traditions may dispute but never two similar liberal, universalistic or metaphoric.

C- Frankness and openness is a preparatory way to peace. Down to earth will help in knowing the obstacles of peace between the three Abrahamic communities. Because the question may arise, if this ideal type of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is there, why then this conflict or misunderstanding exist on the ground?

## **2- Reasons of violence.**

A- Violence in Muslim World is external to religion *per-se*, originating in socio-political circumstances, internal and external. Once these circumstances change violence disappears.

B- Internal cause is oppression and absence of democracy. State's violence generates individual violence. Oppressive violence causes liberating violence. Primary violence is the origin of secondary violence. Violence may be an act causing violence as a reaction. Most all Islamic movements in the Arab World are illegal. They practice violence to be in the front page in the mass-media.

C- Unilateralism is at the very root of violence, inherited from the past, the right view is one and the rest is wrong makes the dialogue impossible.

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D- Violence can be caused by external factors such as invasion by foreign powers, colonialism, imperialism and Zionism. A necessary and legitimate self-defense emerges as a liberation movement. The *jihad* is a defense struggle against foreign domination not an offensive one.

### **3- Arab-Jewish relations.**

A- A peaceful model existed in Spain during the Islamic era. It is called the golden age in history of Judaism by opposition to pogroms and holocaust in European history. Maimonides and Averroes, both were teaching in the synagogue and the mosque of Cordoba. A Jewish-Christian-Islamic converging culture did originate agreeing on an anonymous text expressing the world-view of the three cultures, that of *fons vitae* of Avicenna (Ibn Gabirol).

B- After the creation of the state of Israel and the expulsion of the Palestinians war began between the two communities till now. Palestinian resistance originated as a legal self-defense of the Palestinian people. Since Zionism has a religious justification Hamas has also a religious justification.

C- The way to peace is conviviality, living together as they did in Spain without this notion of nineteenth century Nation-State based on borders, homogeneous people and language. In this era of globalization, the world became one. The European Union is a model for an Arab-Jewish union where Jews can live everywhere in the Arab World, in Baghdad, Cairo, Kairouan and Fes not in a Jewish Ghetto called Israel. Both communities share the same culture, the same history and the same language. Both suffered from the expulsion from Spain after the fall of Grenada.

### **4- Muslim-Christian Dialogue.**

A- It became very common in the last four decades since Vatican II council. History of western Christianity is full of disputes more than common history of Christianity and Islam. The quarrel between

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Eastern and Western churches, the wars between Catholics and Protestants and the mutual massacres such as Saint Barthelme came to an end after the separation between Church and State and the beginning of secular age. The inquisition ended against Jews, Muslims and Christians alike.

B- Islamic expansion outside of Arabian peninsula eastwards and westwards was a natural historical expansion of a third new force to overcome the decay in Roman Empire in the west and Persian Empire in the East. Islam was hailed in Egypt and Arabs were received as liberators from Roman occupation. Islam later expanded to South-East Asia and to Africa peacefully through trade and intermarriage.

C- Now, Islam is expanding again in Europe peacefully in spite of terrorist accusation as a solution of western spiritual crisis at the end of modern times: Materialism, skepticism, agnosticism, relativism and nihilism. Islam gave to this vacuum a new ideal type and value-system. Europe is not limited to geography but extended to history. Europe is a part of Islam since the translation of Greek culture into Arabic at the end of the Patristic period and of modern western culture since Eighteenth century. Islam also is in Europe since the translation of Arabic philosophy and science in early scholasticism which was the origin of western modern age in the pre-Cartesian period. Islam now is present in Europe through Muslim emigration and European conversions to Islam. Islam is becoming the second religion in Europe.

D- Europe is not only the northern shore of the Mediterranean but also of the south. The southern shore of the Mediterranean is closer to Europe than Nordic States. Why should not European Union extends itself to both shores? Barcelona declaration and the Mediterranean are not enough to initiate Islamic-Christian dialogue on the ground.

E- Muslims in Europe since several generations became Europeans like European emigrants to USA became American, and to Australia became Australians and to New-Zeland became New-Zelandians.

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Muslims should not be living in Ghettos as minority groups, but assimilated discovering the origin of the culture they are living in as Goethe did in his *Ostliche-Westliche Diwan*.

**5- Conclusion: A peaceful world is possible.**

This possibility becomes reality provided:

A- Disconnecting religion from politics and using religion for political purposes, as well as disconnecting religion from confessional violence. Gandhi was killed by a fanatic Hindu, Rabin was assassinated by an ultra Wright Jew, Sadat was killed by a Muslim fundamentalist.

B- Linking religion, to reason, progress, freedom, equality, social justice. These new values originated in Europe against religion while in Islam and new theologies came from it.

C- Converting religion from Theocentrism to Apocentrism, from dogmas and rituals to human and social sciences, from ruler's personal interest to peoples common interests, from upper class interpretation to lower class one. What comes from God comes from man, what comes from Heavens comes from earth, what comes from the text comes from reality. The causes of war on earth has to end in order that peace can be established on it.

D- Peace begins in the soul, ending all internal disputes leading to frustrations and compensations. Afterwards peace comes in society, between sexes, classes and group interests. Finally peace comes with nature against pollution, desertification, waste and mass-destruction.

