

## **ASPECTS OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE FAITHFUL AND THE ATHEIST**

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At the present stage of world development the main and, perhaps, the only way of solving complicated and acute problems of humankind is dialogue. It is clear that it must be conducted on the basis of recognition of the priority of all human values and pluralism of opinions, viewpoints, and convictions. In that sense the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of the United Nations on November 25, 1981, opens wide possibilities and perspectives for the development of dialogue between different social forces. At the same time, full practical realization of the Declaration theses is possible mainly by way of dialogue, first of all, between the faithful and the atheist.

In some way the level of interrelations between the faithful and the atheist is a kind of "litmus test" according to which one can judge the level of maturity and preparedness of humankind to search for joint resolutions of urgent problems. For a long time only two colors, white and black, have prevailed in these relations. Dialogue allows the showing of the entire range of colors and giving up fixed ideas and stereotypes. Dialogue will, without doubt, enrich both the faithful and the atheist. It will allow them to get to know each other better, to reject preconceptions, and to improve the general climate. Such relations necessitate compromise. Dialogue is supposed to be a qualitatively more complicated dialectical type of relations between the faithful and the atheist than the previous black and white variant according to which everything which came from opposite side is deliberately warped by means of preconceptions or simply rejected.

Presently, when new thinking is making its appearance, that position which is based on confrontation cannot withstand criticism and is beginning to be repudiated.

The appearance of new thinking has made it possible to look differently at one of the most essential questions--the question of the correlation between the practical and theoretical levels of dialogue. First of all it is necessary to stress that cooperation between the faithful and the atheist is a specific phenomenon which does not demand a common outlook and the unity of practical, objectively coincidental or closely related aims. Meanwhile it is unlikely that such cooperation would develop successfully without taking into consideration some definite ideological motives of the partners. Otherwise, both levels of dialogue, the theoretical and the practical, are an integral part of each other, forming a dialectical unity, the violation of which has led and is leading the relationships between the faithful and the atheist into a deadlock, creating a "monologue of the deaf". Without doubt the development of practical cooperation is influenced by the outlook and purposes of the groups of people who take part in this cooperation. That is why theoretical dialogue must not lag behind practical actions. Moreover, it must not be

considered as something subordinate. Theoretical dialogue has an evident, independent value. Though dialogue is realized through practical actions, practice requires new discussions and thus it needs a new round of theoretical dialogue.

An important question arises: is it possible to have dialogue between the faithful and the atheist on questions of worldview or outlook? This question has always been answered negatively in the past. It was considered that such dialogue would never lead to any positive results. Profound changes that are now taking place in the world vividly demonstrate that it would be dogmatism and oversimplification to reduce contacts [between believers and atheists] regarding questions of worldview to confrontation and mutual criticism. Speaking about worldview, one must have in mind that it is impossible to equate it with ideology; its structure is intricate. As is known, in ideology political consciousness is dominant. Though it includes philosophical, juridical, moral, ethical, and other components it does not meanwhile encompass all the problems of philosophy, jurisprudence, ethics, etc. Thus if we understand worldview or outlook in its broader sense, including philosophy, ethics, sociology, psychology, political economy, morality, pedagogy, aesthetics, and other problems, dialogue between the faithful and the atheist on world outlook problems is not only possible but at this stage it is a necessity. Humanism is a platform for world outlook dialogue, as the human being is neither just a "screw" nor a "cosmic ant" nor a means for achieving specific aims. The human being is of absolute value.

The advancement of all human values makes it necessary to work out moral-ethical criteria for guiding humankind. Evidently consent on this question between the faithful and the atheist can be achieved, but motivation for such values as human life, freedom, and others will be different, based on the humane traditions of different teachings. Elaboration of such moral-ethical principles, well grounded by arguments distinctive to these teachings would have both theoretical and practical meaning for the faithful and the atheist.

The practical embodiment of the above mentioned Declaration's theses on elimination of all forms of intolerance based on religion or convictions and as elaborated on the basis of the articles of the Final Document of the Vienna meeting of government representatives of the member states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe can become an important step and one of the preliminary conditions for the future adoption of a universal human moral-ethical code or law which would show humankind the necessity of being guided by moral values and ethical convictions while establishing law and order.