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¹ Anatoly G. Kosichenko, ² Elena E. Burova,
³ Yury O. Buluktaev, ⁴ Darya R. Shaidulina

^{1,2,3,4} The Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the
Committee of Science of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the
Republic of Kazakhstan (RK MSHE CS IPPSRS)

^{1,2,3,4} 29 Kurmangazy str., Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan

¹ anatkosichenko@mail.ru; ² bee1958@bk.ru; ³ buluktaev49@mail.ru;

⁴ tonythefizz@hotmail.com

Religious Values in the Modern World

Abstract. Religious values are the most important element of religion, linking faith in God and a believer's religious practice. Being "passed" through a believer's self-consciousness and activity, religious values, in their totality, form a religious worldview. Unlike dogmas of faith, religious values are able to develop their content in historical process, which makes them a dynamic aspect of religion. Religious values are associated with such processes as religious identity acquisition and growth of secularization level. These values enter into relationships of various levels and depths with secular and liberal values. Secular values, despite the conceptually different foundations on which activity and worldview of a person are based, rather than religious ones, have a common moral space with the latter. These are: humanism, freedom, creativity, decent relations between people, etc. Liberal values, although they often have their origins in religious values, eventually come into a conflict and even a confrontation with religious values. Since liberal values dominate in the modern world, the more they extend, the more they displace the values of religion from social life and consciousness of our contemporaries. This process largely explains secularization as one of the most significant processes of our time. However, history convincingly demonstrates that religion remains a noticeable phenomenon of personal and social existence, which, in our opinion, is connected with ontological ineradicability of man's spiritual essence. Hence, freedom and creativity, as forms of human spiritual activity, actualize the content of religious values, recreate them again and again. However, it should be recognized that, despite their significant role in a person's spiritual life, religious values are poorly demanded in the modern world, which is focused on other value systems built on the ideas of falsely understood pluralism and practice of ever-increasing level of material consumption.

Key words: religious values, human, modern world, freedom, spirituality, society, identity, secularism

¹ Косиченко А.Г., ² Бурова Е.Е., ³ Булуктаев Ю.О.,
⁴ Шайдулина Д.Р.

^{1,2,3,4} Институт философии, политологии и религиоведения Комитета науки Министрства науки и высшего образования Республики Казахстан
^{1,2,3,4} 050010, Казахстан, г. Алматы, ул. Курмангазы, 29

¹ anatkosichenko@mail.ru; ² bee1958@bk.ru; ³ buluktaev49@mail.ru;

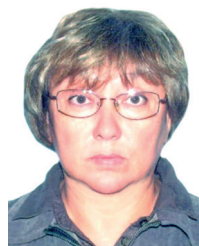
⁴ tonythefizz@hotmail.com

Религиозные ценности в современном мире

Аннотация. Религиозные ценности являются важнейшим элементом религии, связывающим веру в бога и религиозную практику верующего. Будучи «пропущенными» через самосознание и деятельность верующего человека, религиозные ценности, в своей совокупности, формируют религиозное мировоззрение. В отличие от догматов веры, религиозные ценности способны развиваться в историческом процессе, что делает их динамической частью религиозной жизни. Религиозные ценности сопряжены с такими процессами, как обретение религиозной идентичности и возрастание уровня секуляризации. Эти ценности выступают в отношении разного уровня и глубины со светскими и либеральными ценностями. Светские ценности, несмотря на основания принципиально иные, чем религиозные, имеют общее нравственное пространство с последними. Это:



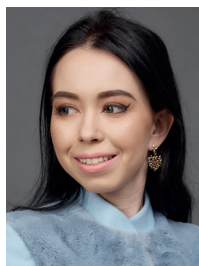
Anatoly G.
Kosichenko



Elena E. Burova



Yury O. Buluktaev



Darya R. Shaidulina

гуманизм, свобода, творчество, достойные отношения между людьми и другие. Либеральные же ценности, хотя и берут нередко истоки в ценностях религиозных, со временем вступают в противоречие и даже противостояние с ними. Так как либеральные ценности доминируют в современном мире, они чем далее, тем в большей мере вытесняют религиозные ценности из общественного сознания. Именно этим во многом объясняется секуляризация – один из самых значимых процессов современности. Однако история убедительно демонстрирует, что религия остаётся уникальным феноменом личностного и общественного бытия, что связано, на наш взгляд, с онтологической неустраимостью духовной сущности человека. Потому свобода и творчество, как формы духовной деятельности человека, актуализируют содержание религиозных ценностей, вновь и вновь воссоздают их. Но следует признать, что, несмотря на значимую роль в духовной жизни человека, религиозные ценности слабо востребованы в современном мире, ориентированном на иные ценностные системы, построенные на идеях ложно понятого плюрализма и практике всё возрастающего уровня материального потребления.

Ключевые слова: религиозные ценности, человек, современный мир, свобода, духовность, общество, идентичность, секуляризм

Introduction

The article examines the issues of the essence of religious values and their role in the modern world. The modern world is becoming little religious (if not completely non-religious), which is associated with a person's orientation to other values and ways of life. However, human remains a spiritual being, and, despite displacement of religion to periphery of public and state life, religious values are present in public consciousness in the form of traditional values and the highest layers of culture.

Theologians assert that religious values are inseparable from self-consciousness of a person and society, and the largest politicians of our time consign these values to oblivion, focusing on completely different ideas and principles when making fateful decisions of our time. The study conducted in the article allows us to conclude that although religious values do not play today a role that they played in the early centuries of Christianity or in the Middle Ages, they still influence modernity, most often in an indirect form. Actualization of religious values content enriches cultural world of a modern man and does not allow him to lose his "human face".

Within the framework of this article, it is not possible to explore content of religious values of several religions. Therefore, we turn only to the values of Christianity, leaving the Islamic values and the values of Judaism out of our analysis. Despite this limitation, we are going to consider the most general aspects of religious values, which gives us reason to consider this analysis relating to religion as a whole.

Methodology

Research methodology is based on theological, cultural and philosophical approaches to understanding the essence of religious values. The experience of interpreting of these values through Paul Tillich's theology of culture, dialectical theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Nikolai Berdyaev's religious philosophy is combined with the teachings of the Church Fathers and the current ideas of Orthodox theologians of our time in the article. The issues of religious values' role in the modern world, their connection with such phenomena as secularism and religious identity are studied in a phenomenological way.

The Discussions on the Content of Religious Values

The discussions about the essence of values are dominated by considering values as integrative certainties, not reducible to any of their components. The point of view according to which values can be rationally constructed and replicated is subjected to special criticism. Hans Joas, who devoted a special monographic work to study of values, emphasized that "...values cannot be created in a rational way and distributed through the mechanism of indoctrination" [Joas, 2013, 14].

Joas gives a fairly accurate, in our opinion, definition of values: "The concept of "value" occupies a place that in philosophical tradition was occupied by the concept of "good" (das Gute). However, if with regard to the good in this tradition, possibility of discovering and revealing it through rational study of the universe or by virtue of divine revelation was recognized, i.e., the status of being was recognized for the good, moreover, its being was even higher than the rest of existence, then the concept of value would bear an indelible imprint of conjugation with the subject of evaluation" [Joas, 2013, 37].

Hans Joas emphasized here the most important aspect of the essence of values – “conjugation with the subject of evaluation” of values. Indeed, if there is no subject of evaluation, how can one assert that something is of value. A value must be accepted as a value, and only a subject (person or society) can do this. Over time, assessment may change: what is recognized as a value today may be reassessed tomorrow. Therefore, subject is constantly involved in the processes of evaluation and reassessment of particular value significance. Undoubtedly, value composition contains its objective content, which is subject to evaluation. However, a person or society (as a subject) changes its attitude to this objective content, which ensures historicism of values.

Historicism of values is also emphasized by Paul Tillich when he talks about religious content of medieval architecture forms “... which, in the context of our era, were just meaningless decorations, therefore having neither aesthetic value nor religious expressiveness ...” [Tillich, 1995, 270].

Spiritual values attract special attention of researchers, which is quite understandable, since spiritual values are at the top of value hierarchy. The main types of these values are:

“1. the values of “beauty” and “ugliness” and the whole realm of aesthetic values; 2. the values of “justice” and “unjustice”, things that are still “values” and which are completely different from “right” and “wrong”, i.e. proportionate to a certain law; they form the last phenomenological foundation of objective legal order idea, which qua idea is independent of the idea of law and the idea of state, as well as of the idea of a life community that substantiates it (and even more so of any positive legislation); 3. the values of “pure knowledge of the truth”, which philosophy strives to realize (as opposed to positive “science”, which is also guided by the goal of dominating phenomena)” [Scheler, 1994, 326].

From the composition of spiritual values, researchers single out religious values, which is reasonable, since religion is the quintessence of spirituality.

“Religious morality, driven by a sense of depth, must consider every impulse, with which it has to deal as having a higher source, and relate each motivation to some higher goal. It is not interested in momentary values or their absence, but in the problem of good and evil, and not only in relation to specific tasks, but also to higher hopes. It is preoccupied with resolving the question of the primary “whence” and the final “for the sake of what”. These questions are subject of its concern because religion considers life and being as a unity of meaning” [Niebuhr, 1996, 376–377].

Conceptual content of religious values

Conceptually, values are a multilevel and structurally multicomponent phenomenon. Values are based on objective grounds; they are rooted ontologically – there is a certain basis underlying values. For example, spiritual values are spiritually saturated – their spiritual content is objective. But this objective spiritual content is “revived” in the process of revealing content and its significance by a person or society. Only then value manifests itself in its fullness, and up to that moment it is only a potentiality, only a possibility.

Religious values are expressed through such concepts as: God, faith, hope, love, humility, freedom, mercy, joy, meekness, repentance, goodness, conscience, chastity, obedience, patience, generosity. It should be emphasized that many of the above concepts contain clear aspects of truth and beauty, which juxtapose religious values with the aesthetic ideals of mankind.

Religious values in aggregate are the deepest dimensions of a person’s life, it can be said without exaggeration that spiritual content of a personality is connected with religious values. There are many value systems, all of them are present in human life, but different value systems are significant for a person and for society in different ways. Religious values are the most stable and have an absolute character. They, like other values, are capable of developing and filling with new content that correspond to the needs of time, but their core is constant. Religion is a special sphere. It is the “meeting place” of God and man, to be more precise, religion is a sphere in which restoration of the unity of God and man, that spiritual unity that was lost in the act of the fall, is realized. And God is one of the parties to the process of restoring this unity, realization of His requirements for

man. Thence it follows that if religious values change on the part of a person over time, then the presence of God, with His invariable requirements for a person, makes the core of religious values absolute and unchanged.

Religion calls man to moral, spiritually rich behavior. Religion aims man not at life in the present circumstances, but at spiritualization of these circumstances. Thus, religion speaks of what is due; about what human life should be like. In other words, experience of transcending is required. The concept of due in relation to man, from the standpoint of religion, means the need to get closer to an image that man has to realize in his spiritual development. This is the image of God - because man was created by God "in his own image and likeness". A believing person must develop towards his divine essence, otherwise he does not fulfill the goal of his life, i.e. lives life meaninglessly.

However, religious consciousness of modern man is deformed. He does not recognize the need for development towards the image of God. Due, as a realization of religious values in everyday life, does not stand as a goal even for a believer. And as a result, even a believing person's life flows between pride and despondency. Man does not have any strength to live in accordance with religious values, there is no spiritual responsibility, moreover, there is no sacrifice. Today sacrifice is perceived as a kind of loss, as a loss of social status, while sacrifice is a path of compassion, repentance, gaining lost communion with God. Deformed religious consciousness divides, separates sacrifice and the joy of faith, sacrifice is understood as suffering, but not as approaching God in joy.

Religious values and religious identity

Religious values predetermine the process of religious identity both at personal level and at society level.

"The meaning of relationship between identity formation and value orientations lies precisely in the fact that in case of the collapse of our values it is not easy for us to maintain our identity, just as in case of identity crisis it is difficult for us to maintain our value orientations" [Joas, 2013, 214].

If today religion still means something for societies and states, it is not least due to its role in the processes of religious identity formation in modern societies.

"...Religion has become the main participant in the "identity politics". Religion is becoming a place of ethnic and cultural rivalry, and therefore states are involved in management of religions and thereby they inevitably depart from separation of state and religion, traditional for liberal approach. Paradoxically, state, by undertaking to regulate religion in public space, makes it more significant and visible" [Turner, 2012, 31].

In modern Kazakhstan, where the authors of this article live and work, about 70% of the population position themselves as believers and the values of religion are treated with respect. It should be noted that, despite secular nature of the state, religion in the Republic of Kazakhstan is a significant phenomenon and its values have an impact on cultural and spiritual formation of Kazakh society. Religious identity of Kazakhstani people develops quite freely, and the people assimilate religious values in an organic way.

"Religious identity, initially, is formed under the influence of inner impulses of a person who begins to acquire faith. These impulses are saturated with concrete spiritual content over time; the person defines himself in relation to religious norms, values, ideals and principles of faith" [Kosichenko, 2020, 494].

Along with this, a limited amount of radicalization of religion and distortion of the content of religious values take place.

Religious values and secularism

Secularism, as a general process of ousting religion from life of societies and states, is dominant in relation to religion. Secularism did not arise today, but has developed to the level of universality to date.

"The movement towards secularity represents, among other things, a transition from a society where belief in God was something taken for granted and not subjected, in fact, to the slightest doubt, to one where belief is considered as one of possible, along with others, choices, and very often such a choice is not the easiest" [Taylor, 2017, 4], writes Charles Taylor, a recognized authority on the problems of secularism.

Paradoxically, it is secularization that keeps religion within the horizon of social existence.

“Religion plays an important role in public space, and in many societies liberal model of secularization, which involves separation of church and state, no longer works. Religion often acts in public sphere as a deep rationale for nationalism, or it can serve as the main bearer of ethnic identity for minorities in a diaspora multicultural society” [Turner, 2012, 45].

Humanity can already extract some conclusions from the dominance of secularism; and one of these conclusions is this: is the progress of mankind beyond religious dimensions so valuable that religion can be sacrificed for the sake of this progress? The answers to this question are different, however the following judgment is valuable for us: “But the general question remains open: should we see in gradual destruction of religion, overcoming it, necessary progress of mankind, leading it along the path of freedom and universal tolerance, or not?” [Habermas, 2006, 90].

Religious values and the modern world

Religious values quite seldom present directly in the modern world. Even more rarely they determine something in it. Religious values do not fit into the prevailing forms of worldview today. These values are considered obsolete today, left in the past. Their meaning is correlated with the early centuries of Christianity and with the Middle Ages, when religion meant a lot for an individual and societies. But today these values seem to be vestigial. This applies not only to religious values – everything related to faith has become unconvincing for man.

“Modern European man has lost the faith with which he tried to replace the Christian faith in the last century. He no longer believes in progress, in humanism, in salvation of science, in salvation of democracy, he is aware of the untruth of capitalist system and has lost faith in the utopia of a perfect social order” [Berdyayev, 2002b, 657–658].

The question is not without interest: why is religion and its values present in the horizon of a modern person’s life in small measure only? It would seem that the answer lies on the surface. Since worldview reflects the dominant forms of human activity and the most massive ways of human communications, these circumstances precisely determine the worldview of our time. And this worldview is extremely far from religion, in particular, from Christian values.

However, the following answer will be more correct and consistent with modern realities. Religion began to mean very little for modernity, not because it is outdated and does not reflect the dominant forms of modern life, but because religion, its values and its ideals have become too high for a modern person who is spiritually weakened and unable comply with religious requirements for the most part. Religion requires constant improvement of human personality, constant spiritual growth, requires a struggle with one’s sinfulness, with base aspirations and passions. And who is capable of this today? Modern man has cultivated self-satisfaction, he is pleased with himself as he is; and no force can oblige him to fight with himself, grow spiritually, overcome his flaws, etc. That is why, in our opinion, religion is leaving and has almost already left historical arena – it causes annoyance in modern man, who considers himself almost perfection, and religion disturbs his self-consciousness, appeals to conscience, demands implementation of God’s providence for man.

Another, very momentous reason for the modern world’s rejection of religious values became the erroneous point of view that religion requires personal submission to God, and therefore a believer loses personal freedom. This view is especially prevalent among artistic intellectuals, who value creative freedom above all else. However even in this case, modern man is very deeply mistaken. Religion does not deprive or prevent man from creating, on the contrary, it, though spiritual disciplining of creator, allows him to create truly significant works of art. But to realize this thought, man need to master himself, and as we noted above, a spiritually weak person of our time is not able to make this effort.

The Gospel of John reveals the essence of freedom at a very deep and not obvious level for our contemporaries. Absence of freedom, as well as its loss, are connected here with the state of sin. “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been

slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:31-34).

Here is a vision of the essence of freedom in Christianity. Sin turns a man into a slave, and deliverance from sin is a return to original freedom. Thus, in Christianity, an essential connection arises between freedom in its ontological aspect and freedom in its moral aspect.

One of the ecumenical teachers of the Church, John Chrysostom, emphasized: "Truly, nothing makes a person a slave like a multitude of needs; and nothing makes free so much as contentment with the necessary only <...> Truly, nothing gives a soul so much strength as freedom from worries, and nothing makes it so weak as the burden of worries" [John Chrysostom, 2012, 297].

Moreover, it should be understood that "No human establishment, including the forms and mechanisms of socio-political structure, can on their own potential make people's lives more moral and perfect, eradicate the evil and suffering. It is important to remember that a state and social forces have a real ability and calling to stop evil in its social manifestations, but they cannot defeat its cause - sinfulness. The essential struggle against evil is waged in depths of human spirit and can be successful only on the paths of religious life of a person" [Press service of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2008].

In the modern world, people en masse are not guided by religious values, these values are considered obsolete, not corresponding to the realities of today, God is taken "outside the brackets of modernity". Berdyaev sharply but justifiably summarized: "In a godless civilization, the image of man and freedom of spirit will perish, creativity will exhaust, and barbarization will begin" [Berdyaev, 2002b, 653].

And yet, religious values have an indirect influence on modernity: through traditional culture, through manifested life of believers, through restless questioning about the meaning of life, through a moral personality – a moral person actualizes the values of religion. In addition, there are social aspects of religiosity. They are not quite a religion per se, they do not coincide with the content of religion, especially with its essence. But the moral dimensions existing in society correlate with religion – morality is a secularized facet of religiosity. Semyon Frank, in particular, noted: "...level of public order is functionally dependent on moral level of people who form it" [Frank, 1992, 51].

Man, who lost religious values is deprived of the opportunity to comprehend his life, he lives in a labyrinth of imposed values and false ideals. Such man (and society) is easily amenable to various kinds of manipulation. Globalization makes this process universal for the whole world. There is no personal participation in formation of such values. But values, as it was said, should be "passed" through personality, as Joas wrote about that: "...I clearly pose a specific question to myself, precisely, how values and adherence to them arise, and I give a clear answer to it: values arise in self-formation process and in self-transcendence experience" [Joas, 2013, 9].

The future of religious values

Religious values are present in the modern world in a very low volume. But paradoxically, they have a significant impact on this world; both in positive sense and in negative one. Their positive impact is manifested in the fact that they explicitly or implicitly, visibly or "behind the scenes" affect the attitude of societies and states to the phenomena of our reality, from political decision-making to evaluation of works of art and ethical views. Negative influence of religious values, when they are distorted, manifests itself in radical forms of religious intolerance and extreme behavior of their subjects.

The modern world is far from practical implementation of religious values. And this happens, first of all, because of spiritual degradation of man of our time. The fall of faith, rejection of faith, displacement of religion to the periphery of public consciousness were predicted by the apostles. The apostle Paul wrote:

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people" (2 Tim. 3:1–5).

Modern researchers and theologians see the future of religious values in diametrically opposite ways. Some of them predict a further decline in importance of religion and its values.

“Unfortunately, the atmosphere of secularization in which we live naturally affects Christians. The Church loses its prophetic significance for the consciousness of worldly people. It becomes a secular religious institution among a number of other institutions. The Church ceases to be the center of life transformation of the whole world and becomes an institution for “satisfaction of religious needs” of people who are “distinguished by religiosity” and “inclined to religion”. From the center of people’s lives, the Church is pushed to the periphery” [Archimandrite Georgy, 1995].

Other thinkers, and among them philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who is far from exaltation, draw attention to creative essence of Christianity:

“Christianity has always been, is and will be not only a religion of personal salvation and horror of death, but also a religion of world transformation, deification of creatures, a cosmic and social religion, a religion of selfless love, love for God and man, the promise of the Kingdom of God” [Berdyaev, 2002a, 642].

Modern man has changed the meaning of his being to the point of losing any meaning of it. He spends his life in conditions and circumstances imposed on him, in vanity. A holistic person has become a rarity. We have to admit that man has changed his essence – to be a spiritual being, and therefore man’s attempts to replace or substitute this essence with anything, only expose this substitution. Having renounced his spiritual essence, a person cannot compensate for the spiritual emptiness that has arisen.

Against this background, the predictions of Jacques Attali appear somewhat encouraging, all the more unexpected because they come from one of the brightest and most consistent ideologists of globalism, who predicts a future that is largely far from optimistic. “In Europe,” writes Attali, “Christians will openly oppose capitalism. Believers, Catholic parties, church authorities will antagonize free movement of capital, people, goods and services, market oppression and its institutional expression – the EU. Religious values will acquire a political connotation (etc. – the authors)” [Attali, 2014, 219].

And further: “Evangelical Protestantism will be especially strong, it is popular in the southern states of the USA, in the so-called “Bible Belt”, which unites 70 million Americans, including hundreds of thousands of agitator pastors. Evangelicals already dominate some American university departments, censoring study of sciences and other religions. Opinion of believers will influence politics, decision-making of Congress and the US government apparatus. Today they have a huge influence on the current US president’s policy. In their opinion, the Western world should protect not democratic values, but Christian ones” [Attali, 2014, 218].

Thus, the future of religious values is not predetermined, it largely depends on man: if he realizes his spiritual essence, religious values will develop, if he consigns it to oblivion, religious values will narrow their scope to the limit. But the question remains open.

Results and discussion

The essence of religious values is studied and connection of these values with a believer’s practice of faith confession is shown. This connection is direct - a believer must implement religious values in everyday life. This position is far from clear. It is possible to put forward the opposite thesis that religious values constitute an ideal system of values, and believers’ everyday life is a sphere of their behavior in the real world, which is far from religion. However, with the second approach, we lose the most important characteristic of religious values - their practical orientation. Religious values must be realized, otherwise they are not values.

It is shown that religious values underlie human spirituality. God, faith, hope, love, freedom, mercy, joy, repentance, conscience, chastity, obedience, patience, generosity – these values are at the same time virtues that a believer must cultivate and form in himself. These virtues form the core of a believer’s life. If the virtues are considered too difficult to achieve – and they are undeniably difficult, and modern man is inclined not to follow these virtues, then we come to the complete victory of secularism.

Duty, obligation are an important element of religious life. There are few areas in which application of due concept is justified. Religion is precisely such an area. Religion

has the right to say: believer must, because religion has an ideal of man, to which believer must aspire.

The religious understanding of freedom as freedom from sin is revealed. Although the Apostle Paul expressed this clearly in his Epistles, our contemporaries have lost this vision of the essence of freedom. People who are critical of religion do not agree with the need to fight against sin. They believe that any behavior is justified and there is no sin. Religious values just show the possibility of a sin-free life.

The modern world refuses to embody religious values, considering them obsolete and inconsistent with today's realities. This is not true. Religious values belong to eternity and therefore cannot become obsolete.

Conclusions

1. As a result of the study, it became possible to conclude that although religious values do not have a great significance that they had in the early centuries of Christianity or in the Middle Ages, they still mostly indirectly influence modernity and actualization of religious values enriches modern cultural sphere and does not allow mankind to lose its humanity.

2. Values are a multi-level and structurally multi-component phenomenon, based on objective grounds and rooted ontologically. Their objective spiritual essence rouses up while a person or society reveals its content and significance. This process determines unfolding of values from their potentiality to their fullness.

3. Personal spiritual content is associated with religious values, which are the most stable and have an absolute character. Religious values reflect the deepest dimensions of human life.

4. Religion is not outdated, but religious values and ideals have become too high for modern man. They require constant personal improvement, spiritual growth and struggle with one's sinfulness and base aspirations.

5. Despite the fact that religious values are underrepresented in the modern world, they significantly influence on it both in positive sense and in negative sense. Positive impact is expressed in attitude of societies and states to ethical views, evaluation of works of art, political decision-making. Negative impact is expressed in radical forms of religious intolerance and extreme behavior of their subjects.

6. In modern Kazakhstan, where the authors live and work, about 70% of the population position themselves as believers, religious values are respected and religion and its values have significant influence on culture and spirituality of the society, despite secular nature of the state.

7. The future of religious values mainly depends on man and it is not predetermined. If a person his spiritual essence, religious values will develop, if not they will maximally narrow their area.

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