

About the goals of atheism

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Atheism is often perceived as the absence of god and other otherworldly forces in the system of human values. Indeed, atheists differ little from religious people, except for the absence in their lives, in fact, of a religious component. They do not believe in sacred covenants, do not subordinate their lives to traditions, do not practice rituals, preferring to live by their own truth, that can be completely different for different atheists. At the same time, there is no generality of views of atheists — at least, few of them are engaged in the development of the concept of life without god and unification around this goal. In most cases, atheism reduces personal choice and does not go into the social plane.

Thus, an atheist may be a rich and influential person who controls other people's destinies, as well as a recluse who tries to limit his interaction with people, or a fiery revolutionary who wants to cleanse society of injustice. It is impossible to outline any single «atheistic worldview» apart from refusing to honor the «higher forces». The nature of atheists can be completely different — the unbeliever can manifest both humanism and tolerance, as well as the extraordinary fanaticism and cruel characteristic of adherents of the most cruel religious trends.

If in modern society the problem of religion was not so acute, you wouldn't be reading this text now, and atheism could be further considered a personal choice, on a par with any faith. Unfortunately, freedom of conscience is not a right that works unconditionally in any society, despite even the declared secular character of most states. Millions of people around the world suffer from discrimination — on the basis of nationality, gender, language, and sexuality. It is generally accepted that discrimination is more severe, the stronger the position of a particular religion and the more it is connivanced. Indeed, fundamentalist, theocratic and conservative-clerical regimes have the greatest degree of discrimination — both in the recent past and today.

Everyone knows about the atrocities recently committed by the «Islamic state» in the territories under its control: the dropping of homosexuals from the roofs, the shooting of women dressed not according to the dress code, ethnic cleansing against the Kurds, confessional purges against all non-Sunnis etc. But there is nothing new at all — such crimes existed long before the IS and continue to take place in states that are not considered barbaric at all.

For example, in the US-friendly Saudi Arabia living under Sharia law, homosexuals, face the death penalty. In Iran which is unfriendly to US, but friendly to Russia, Muslims and non-Muslims are judged differently for the same crimes, and for the renunciation of Islam or one of the officially permitted denominations, death is threatened. But not only Muslim countries

can boast of such atrocities. In the European ultra-Catholic Ireland, women who attempted to terminate pregnancy are imprisoned for life, and divorces were only legalized very recently — in the nineties. However, in the «progressive» Great Britain only in 2010, it was acknowledged that the shooting of Catholic demonstrators in Northern Ireland, which occurred in 1972 during protests against discrimination on the basis of confession, had no legitimate grounds.

Not everything is so good in officially secular and even atheistic states. In the «advanced» US, Muslims and Americans of Arab origin, regardless of their religion, suffer from abuse from a fanatical public from time to time. Contrary to popular beliefs, American atheists also have a hard time — for public recognition in disbelief threatens to break the relationship with loved ones and problems at work. In «communist» China, Tibetan Buddhists are discriminated against by the state, as well as by various indigenous ethnic groups. By contrast, in «free» capitalist Japan, both Japanese engaged in «religious impure» types of labor and non-Japanese — indigenous Ainu, (as well as Chinese or Koreans) — are discriminated against, even if they were born on Japanese islands and do not know any languages other than Japanese. Religious intolerance intertwines with national, racial and caste.

It is not always the commitment of a particular faith or the renunciation of any guarantees that have respect for other people's rights. Some believers discriminate against other believers, unbelievers — believers, believers — unbelievers and unbelievers — unbelievers. In the one part of the world, Sunni Muslims discriminate against Shiite Muslims, in another Christian Protestant discriminate against Christian Catholics, in a third, Hindus discriminate against Muslims and so on, and so on, and so on. Almost in every country with a religious majority, a religious or atheistic minority suffers infringement of rights, and more recently, the atheistic USSR discriminated in various forms against the entire religious population and the clergy.

You can draw a simple conclusion, that the matter is not even in religion. Contrary to the popular belief that the goals and means of the «Islamic state» fully correspond to the commandments of the Koran, most Muslims oppose this project, and in Iraq and Syria — with weapons in their hands. At the same time, Muslims from developed Western countries with access to education and careers are largely indifferent to the Sharia, and some even prefer a reformist trend that denies the need for zealous rituals and self-restraint. «The religion of the peace,» as Islamophobes say ironically, is cruel only where Muslims are imprisoned in the ghetto or have strong patriarchal traditions that go deeper than questions of faith — such as the subordinate position of women, the permissiveness of older men, clan feuds and so on.

The muslim societies of the Middle East, undermine traditional foundations, bring to nothing discrimination on both confessional and other grounds. One of the most well-known examples of the successful shattering of patriarchal traditions is Syrian Kurdistan, which proclaims a course toward democratic socialism, feminism and declericalization while preserving the freedom of activity of religious communities, and women from the YPG detachments that have become the country's calling card are fighting against the dictatorship of Bashar Assad and terror of «Islamic state» on a par with men.

So, it's not so much the toxic dogmas of religions, as in the relations of power between people, in the context of which these dogmas take on arms. In conditionally democratic, liberal societies with developed social mobility, fanaticism is much less likely than in authoritarian and conservative, where access to politics is limited to rituals of elections or absent at all, and all attempts at unauthorized activities are severely suppressed.

Authoritarianism and conservatism, as ideologies and practices of restrictions and prohibitions, can do without religion at all – its place will be taken by the official doctrine, elevated to the level of dogma. The closest example is the Third Reich, in which religion served the role of racial doctrine, or the USSR, where the state religion was dogmatic, all-encompassing Marxism-Leninism, which was used to explain (or pretended to explain) any phenomenon. As a consequence of the popularity of the Soviet tradition, the rule of the left movements has become well-known: to regard everything that does not fit into the framework of the vulgar patterns of the «class struggle», «imperialism», etc., as «the machinations of capitalism». At this point, any ideology, whose realization leads to the restriction of freedom, is no better than fanatically religious, which explains the humiliation of human dignity with sacred commandments.

In fact that is why, it is worth dividing atheism into, generalized atheism, as unbelief in supernatural forces, and humanistic atheism, as the assertion of man's freedom from god and his «representatives» on Earth. If an atheist affirms the freedom of a person to believe or not believe without fear of being condemned, then he must give up disrespecting the faith as such and concentrate his efforts on fighting against authoritarian and discriminatory relations of power promoted by religion and its secular substitutes. As we see from the examples given above, a cruel religion is only an instrument of power in the hands of tyrants. Toxic religious postulates that encourage restriction of freedom, violence against divergents, dissenters and simply over competitors, come to nothing when believers gain freedom and knowledge, and non-believers – the opportunity to safely declare themselves and their values. For example, today you almost never meet Jews who would perceive the bloodthirsty adventures of the Torah heroes as a guide to action.

The goal of humanistic atheism is a society in which there will be equality, neutrality in terms of doctrines rules for all, regardless of their faith or disbelief. This is feasible under the condition of respect for individual freedom, the authority of science and non-interference of religions in secular affairs – politics, education, medicine, etc. Tolerance of the individual is an indispensable condition for the functioning of a secular society, which evaluates a people for his or her qualities, and not a declared worldview. The struggle for such a society is in the interests of all people, except for ideological authorities that use power.

To do this, it is necessary to «disarm» religion, depriving it of the opportunity to bribe people and speculate on their fears and weaknesses, while not trying to humiliate the dogma, however illogical it may seem to atheists. Faith is a deeply intimate feeling beyond common sense, so persuading believers to go against the church leadership is not a simple task. It is necessary not just to repeat the guarantees of freedom of conscience for every secular society, but also to ensure that secular society does not deny religion, but simply does not give preference to any of them, if possible to prove the contradiction of the interference of religion in public affairs from the point of view of its creed. The same is true for politicians who play the religious card during the pre-election period. The religious inclinations of officials – from the president to the school teacher – must be severely curtailed. At this point, humanistic atheism coincides with secularism – the movement for the differentiation of social and religious, as well as for substantiating the labor, scientific, family and other spheres of human activity with evidence and facts, and not with religious dogmas.

To summarize, apart from popularizing the very concept of life without god, humanistic atheism must take on the task of combating discrimination and the assertion of secularization principles. Not only believers, but also atheists should remember a simple truth: it's not a matter of

religion, it's about how people manage it. The first task of atheism should be the struggle against encroachments on rights and freedoms, the sowing of hostility and hatred in the context of religious activity. It is necessary to publicize such crimes not only when they come from churches, but also when they are directed at them. Neutral to religious beliefs, society is too fragile to leave it under the protection of non-working laws. And militant atheism, which, instead of convincing believers and non-believers to respect each other's rights, only generalizes and spurs mutual hatred, will be the worst method in the struggle for a truly secular society.

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