



The Engelsberg Seminar 2001



The Future of Religion

Conference dates 15th to 17th of June 2001
Avesta/Engelsberg, Sweden

A CONFERENCE ARRANGED BY
AXEL AND MARGARET AX:SON JOHNSON FOUNDATION

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*Why does religion matter?
Many answers have been put forth including
that it grounds values, creates purpose and gives meaning in
an ontological sense to our existence. Often science turn
religious experience into epiphenomena but unfortunately offers
nothing in return. How can modern society deal
with this deficit of meaning?*

Outline of the Future of Religion

The position of religion in the western world today presents a contradictory picture. On the one hand there are many indications of a far-reaching secularisation having taken place. Traditional religions are in many places losing adherents and common knowledge of tradition is diminishing.

Has the individual, in religion as in other matters, become an individualistic, “cherry-picking” consumer? There are indications that the hectic pace of the information society and its insistence on flexibility probably is transforming the conditions governing religious experience.

Man’s increasing progression, through science and technology, from being created to himself becoming a creator, is probably also impacting on his relation to religion. On the other hand, it is arguable that secularisation is a myth. Perhaps people today believe in other things and in other ways, and possibly this really implies a revitalisation of religious life.

Now, just as previously, there is a great need of meaning and coherence, and the discrediting of the political utopias, which in many ways were substitute religions, has put religion back in focus again. Science is

triumphant but apparently has little to say about the meaning of existence and the nature of good and evil, even though it sometimes takes on an element of religious conviction itself.

The new choices confronting us, for example due to the development of biotechnology, are perhaps making the normative system of religion still more important. There are fears today of western societies being fragmented, partly because they are no longer held together by common convictions and norms, and religion is perhaps necessary as an integrating force.

At the same time religion is obviously contributing towards fragmentation by giving rise to sects and fundamentalist movements. How can religious convictions be united with the pluralism of modern society and its insistence on respect for dissidents? Will the fundamentalist movements, like communism, be vanquished by western liberalism, individualism and consumerism, or will they, on the contrary, acquire added importance? Or will the Gnostic “tradition” instead shape the future, with its scepticism towards doctrinal faith and its emphasis on inward enlightenment?

The Engelsberg Seminar 2001

FRIDAY JUNE 15TH

The Sacred and the Profane

1:00-3:00 P.M.

REGISTRATION,
CHECK-IN,
COFFEE AND SANDWICHES

3:00-3:45 P.M.

Introduction

Viveca Ax:son Johnson, *Chairman,*
Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation
Kurt Almqvist, *President,*
Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation
Michael Maccoby, *The Maccoby Group*

3:45-4:15 P.M.

Lecture

Paul Heelas: *The Sacralization of Life*

4:15-4:45 P.M.

Lecture

Erik Davis: *Techgnosis - The Incarnation of Ideas*

4:45-5:15 P.M.

COFFEE BREAK

5:15-5:45 P.M.

Lecture

José Casanova: *Religion in a Global Age*

5:45-6:15 P.M.

Lecture

Morton Narrowe: *The Sacred and Profane*

6:15-7:00 P.M.

Panel debate

Moderator: **Michael Maccoby**

7:00-7:30 P.M.

DRINK, Music

7:30 P.M.

DINNER

The Engelsberg Seminar 2001

SATURDAY JUNE 16TH

Esotericism, Mysticism & Gnosis

8:30-9:30 A.M.

BREAKFAST

9:30-10:00 A.M.

Lecture

Antoine Faivre: *Western Esoteric Currents of this Turn of the Century. Continuity and New Perspectives*

10:00-10:30 A.M.

Lecture

Gilles Quispel: *Gnosis and the Future of Christianity - A Historical Survey*

10:30-11:00 A.M.

COFFEE BREAK

11:00-11:30 A.M.

Lecture

Elaine Pagels: *The Gnostic Approach to Religion*

11:30-12:15 P.M.

Panel debate

Moderator: **Michael Maccoby**

12:15- 2:30 P.M.

LUNCH

1:30- 2:00 P.M. Guided tour

First group: **The Coin Museum**, optional

2:00- 2:30 P.M. Guided tour

Second group: **The Coin Museum**, optional

Fundamentalism

2:45-3:15 P.M.

Lecture

Robert Jay Lifton: *Fundamentalism in a Psychoanalytic Perspective - The Self*

3:15-3:45 P.M.

Lecture

John Farrell: *Religion and Freud - Secular Fundamentalism*

3:45-4:15 P.M.

Lecture

Whitney Bodman: *Islamic Fundamentalism*

4:15-4:45 P.M.

COFFEE BREAK

4:45-5:15 P.M.

Lecture

Massimo Introvigne: *The New Religions in Practise*

5:15-5:45 P.M.

Lecture

Rolf Ekéus: *Future Threats*

5:45-6:30 P.M.

Panel debate

Moderator: **Michael Maccoby**

6:30-7:00 P.M.

DRINK

7:00 P.M.

DINNER

The Engelsberg Seminar 2001

SUNDAY - JUNE 17TH

8:30-9:30 A.M.

The Future of Religion

BREAKFAST

9:30-10:00 A.M.

Lecture

John F. Haught: *Science, Religion and the Question of Cosmic Purpose*

10:00-10:30 A.M.

Lecture

Harvey Cox: *The Future of the Great Religions*

10:30-11:00 A.M.

COFFEE BREAK

11:00-12:00 A.M.

Plenary
Discussion

Moderator: **Michael Maccoby**

12:00-12:15 A.M.

Michael Maccoby: *Closing Words*

12:15-1:30 P.M.

LUNCH

1:30-4:30 P.M.

Guided tour

Visit to **Engelsberg Manor**

4:30-5:10 P.M.

Return to Avesta Manor

5:10-6:00 P.M.

Time to rest

6:00 P.M.

DRINK, Flute music: **Dan Laurin**

6:30 P.M.

DINNER

MONDAY JUNE 18TH

8:00-10:00 A.M.

BREAKFAST
DEPARTURES

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Lecturers and panel members

Doctoral Candidate **Whitney Bodman**, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

Professor **José Casanova**, New School for Social Research, Department of Sociology, New York, USA

Professor **Harvey Cox**, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

Contributing Editor **Erik Davis**, Wired Magazine, San Francisco, USA

Ambassador **Rolf Ekéus**, Stockholm, Sweden

Professor **Antoine Faivre**, Directeur d'Etudes à l'E. P. H. E., Sciences Religieuses, Sorbonne, France

Professor **John Farrell**, Associate Professor of Literature, Chair Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California, USA

Professor **John F. Haught**, Georgetown University, Department of Theology, Washington DC, USA

Professor **Paul Heelas**, Lancaster University, Lancaster, GB

Dr **Massimo Introvigne**, CESNUR, Turin, Italy

Professor **Robert Jay Lifton**, The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, USA

Dr **Michael Maccoby**, The Maccoby Group, Washington, USA

Chief Rabbi Emeritus **Morton Narowe**, Stockholm, Sweden

Professor **Elaine Pagels**, Princeton University, Harrington Spear Paine Professor of Religion, USA

Professor Emeritus **Gilles Quispel**, Utrecht, Holland

Organization

President: **Kurt Almqvist**
Assistant to the President: **Louise Belfrage**
Practical arrangements: **Per Johansson**
Chef: **Viola Söderholm**

Reference-group to "The Future of Religion":

Peter Södergård (Faculty of Theology, Uppsala university)
Anders Haag, journalist (Svenska Dagbladet)
Carl-Reinhold Bråkenhielm, professor (Faculty of Theology, Uppsala university)
Kay Glans, editor and author (Svenska Dagbladet)
Göran Rosenberg, editor and author