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MODERNITY AND INTER- RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE. DIFFICULTIES POSED BY THE IDEOLOGICAL TRANSLATION OF RELIGIOUS CATEGORIES

INTRODUCTION

If there is one area that reveals the roots of the contemporary state, it is the way it has handled the religious question. The legal and philosophical bases on which the secular space has been configured have made it a human factum, autonomous and even reactive to the divine (J. Milbank, 2004). This historical reality can give us a key to reflect on why that State has been showing some stagnation to effectively manage matters related to religious beliefs.

In this sense, the first hypothesis I propose is that the contemporary Western-style state, having marginalized religious identity from the public sphere, has also overlooked many of its positive elements. Above all, its ability to give coherence

to the social body and contribute to the common good, beyond the territory or the class. In the case of Islamic civilization, where religious issues outweigh the practice of worship and the political-religious spheres have remained interconnected, the modern translation of concepts such as religion (Dīn) or State (dawla) has sharpened disagreements and distortions. perceptual.

As a result of this difficulty, the second hypothesis I propose is that the divorce of Western states with respect to religion is one of the root causes of the blockade due to disagreement between the West and Islam. The theological roots of the contemporary State, the consolidation of public space as the antithesis of religion and the effects of pluralism in the so-called “post-national” State allow us to understand why secular reason is currently going through a serious crisis of legitimacy. , which prevents it from defending lasting peace processes and spheres of encounter with the Islamic world.

Finally, we will address how these challenges fuel the need to generate a Christian awareness of Islam. Too often, we find “Christian” views far removed from the spirit of interreligious dialogue. These positions support (often unconsciously) a prejudiced and pathological vision of the “other”. In a key of hope, Pope Francis has intensified the East-West meeting. A fraternal cultural and human context, which needs to return to the religious sense as the vault key in the conformation of the societies of the future. Defying the prophets of fear, he has appealed to religious beliefs as the most valuable contributor to understanding between peoples.

FIRST REDUCTIONISM. THE STATE AND THE POLITICAL TRANSLATION OF NATURAL LAW

In the modern West, the consolidation of the national State as a source of legal-political legitimacy were done at the cost of denying space to any projection of the religious fact. This process of secularization appears as the distinctive feature of modern civilization, which “can only cause the “death of God” (Charles Taylor, 2015). From this dimension, it is not surprising that there is a certain inability to translate elements of religious traditions.

Raised as the favourite son of Modernity, the State has undoubtedly assumed an “alternative soteriology” to that of religious faith for multiple currents of contemporaneity (William T. Cavanaugh, 2007). A definition as accurate as it is convenient for this New Regime, defined by the triumph of the liberal revolutions and the crystallization of political nations:

La democracia y el capitalismo favorecieron unilateralmente la versión contractual de la nación. En el contexto de la modernidad, la nación tiende a convertirse en la comunidad de individuos que reconoce la legitimidad de las reglas de juego (...) Reglas que deben permitir (a cada comunidad) llegar a ser lo más diversa y diferente posible” (Jean Baechler, 1997).

High as the actor par excellence of secular ideology, it should be noted that its effectiveness comes from a long process of legitimacy transfer (Eric Hobsbawm, 2012). The foundations of the modern State were legitimized through the theory of divine right, which functioned as a political buttress for the stratified and absolutist system. However, the enlightened principles of equality, citizenship and national sovereignty, understood as infinite and unrestricted, solidified the civil and secular space as a separate domain from the religious one. Citizens and believers would no longer be analogous categories. The people, representing the nation, had to gradually rid themselves of any mystical or sacred overtones. As a result, the secular gradually appropriated the public space, dissociating itself from the sacred and its different social manifestations. The consolidation of the State as the only recognizable source of legal-political legitimacy brought with it the denial of any political projection to the pre-existing systems. From a phenomenological point of view, the nation would be identified as a useful, essential and pre-political historical reality that had to be overcome (A. Pérez Agote, 1993).

After the traumatic experience of totalitarianism, the Western world was submerged in what John Paul II described as a “great eruption of evil” (2005). The wounds of Nazism and the Stalinist legacy represented the moral collapse of modernity and all the values it had raised. In the medium term, this experience had inoculated deep wounds in the collective consciences and the use of freedom. Consequently, it would be incorporated as an informative principle of democratic systems. Its individual and collective exercise was legally articulated around the concepts of neutrality and secularism of the State, axes on which freedom of conscience would gravitate.

From secularism to the multi-denominational state, Western states have legislated “the religious” to the point of turning it into a marginal “instrument” of political action. Since the second half of the 20th century, all democratic legal systems have incorporated the principles of equality, non-discrimination and freedom (of thought, conscience and religion). After the recovery undertaken by the Council of Europe in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Rome, 1950), the international order was supplemented in 1966 with two legally binding texts. The first, the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights, of a liberal nature; the second, the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, of socialist inspiration. In this way, religious freedom was encapsulated in a legally binding ethical-philosophical corpus, whose regulatory body would be the State.

Faced with this criterion of utility (*bonum utile*), the question of freedom in the modern world had been very present in the Magisterial documents of the Catholic Church: *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), *Mater e Magistra* (1961), *Pacem in Terris* (1963), *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991) would define it from a moral criterion (*bonum honestum*) as a gift and responsibility for the realization of good. On the dialogue with the States, the declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* and the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* included deeply courageous and renovating proposals. First, stay away from confessionalism as the best possible option. Second, to demand the necessary legal protection of the right to religious freedom.

At the end of the 1980s, the European continent had undergone qualitative changes around the confluence of values and institutions of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, liberal democracy and the market economy. Regarding the religious question, the models adopted by each State presented significant differences. Faced with the French secular system, countries such as Germany, Austria, Luxembourg or Belgium had developed multi-denominational systems that positively valued the social utility of religion. In other cases, countries such as Italy, Portugal, Holland, Ireland or Spain opted for the so-called “secularism” models. It was a preliminary step towards total secularization, from which public institutions gained ample scope to shore up a secular ethic that would function as the only legitimate one. The neutrality of the public space with respect to ideological, cultural and religious pluralism was based on values and principles ascribed to modernity, understood as the last phase of secularization (Charles Taylor, 2015).

In this scenario, the postulates of legal positivism are disseminated disconnected from natural law, “the only valid bulwark against the arbitrariness of power” (Benedict XVI, 2007). Ethics and philosophy of law sacralizing the public sphere, granting divine legitimacy to the contractual principle (John Milbank, 2004). That is, this type of secular ethics or civil religion would be based on the transfer to the State of the legitimacy that the sacred provided in its origins. Over time, these essential elements would undergo a convenient “national translation” (Miroslav Hroch, 1994; Gerd Baumann, 2001). In other words: modernity found its fundamental space in the sacralization of the public, eliminating or distorting any reference to the religious-private as a positive contribution to contemporaneity:

El liberalismo político (que defiende en la figura especial de un republicanismo kantiano) se entiende como una justificación no religiosa y posmetafísica de los principios normativos del Estado constitucional democrático. Esta teoría se sitúa en la tradición de un derecho racional que ha renunciado a las enseñanzas del derecho natural clásico y religioso fuertemente ancladas en superposiciones cosmológicas o relativas a la historia de la salvación (Jürgen Habermas, 2006)

SECOND REDUCTIONISM. RELIGION, IDEOLOGY AND THE EFFECTS OF MODERNITY

Returning to the argument described above, the political “translation” of pre-political elements has also considerably affected a pathological view of Islam from the modern West (William T. Cavanaugh, 2010). If there is one aspect that makes it particularly resistant to rational secular culture, it is the pre-politic cohesion of the religious and civil spheres. I will note here some considerations on this matter, bearing in mind that the Islamic cultural sphere does not have uniformity either and has undergone changes and tensions, from fanaticism to the most tolerant rationality.

From a media point of view, the relationship between Islam and Modernity has established itself as an unsolvable dialectic. Frequently, the final position is reduced to an ethical and moral judgment of contemporary Western democracies of a civilization contrary to liberties, weighed down by the yoke of irrational and violent religion. Of course, the media times, although they do not allow a deep debate, they do have the potential to solidify the images and prejudices that feed the collective imagination as much as they close the paths of dialogue. At the bottom of this question lies an Enlightened judgment of liberty. Explicitly, to the inability of the Islamic Arab world to erect an autonomous moral conscience in the face of a religious authority, which is above individuals (Joseph Ratzinger, 2005). This Kantian diagnosis establishes the line that distinguishes contemporary democracies from societies that have not implemented political structures or programs “emancipated” from the divine right.

In this sense, the adoption of the “political nation” did not find in the Islamic Arab sphere the necessary conditions to supplant the “essential nation” (community of believers). As described by W. T. Cavanaugh (2007), this displacement occurred in the West in parallel with the emergence of the religious concept in the late 15th century. In the first place, when “it is internalized and separated from its particular ecclesial context”, reducing itself to an intimate dimension, to a “universal human

impulse common to all”. Islam was born and strengthened thanks to the constant feedback between the essential nation and the political nation. This has meant that the civil and religious sphere, public or private, has remained structured around religious identity. An element that, unlike political identity, does not admit double loyalties on the part of individuals.

The institution of the Caliphate, rooted in the Islamic Tradition, represented a way of understanding God’s relationship with men and the world. Its function was to guarantee the unity of leadership of the Muslim community and it evolved historically from the 7th century through the conquest and miscegenation. Despite the different territorial evolutions, the Islamic Arab sphere was structured on the basis of a worldview based on three axes: *din*, *dawla*, *dunyā*. Generally translated by religion, state, and world, Islamic belief can first be described as “integral doctrine” (John Rawls, 1996). A totality that is capable of generating a symbolic system with its own space-time references.

Derived from this argument, the first objection to modern analyzes is that the univocal identification between *Din* and religion introduces ideological categories that distort its original root. At least three reasons can be found: inappropriate use of the Arabic language, ignorance of the cultural codes linked to this tradition and finally the different approaches associated with the term “religion”. Good in a spiritualist, individual and decontextualized sense; good in a more sense. political, instrumental and collective direction.

It is especially important to underline that the way we normally know Islam is influenced by these approaches. The forging of the myth of the State at the cost of the creation of religion in the medieval West (Cavanaugh, 2007), allows us to understand the way in which modernity has also built its image on Islam. Jean Baechler, a disciple of Raymond Aron, described the reality of the Sahel-Muslim cultural space in the antipodes of the “greatness” of the French State:

Una combinación de incoherencia política, de regímenes con tendencias absolutas, de supervivencias tribales activas fuera de los centros urbanos, de ausencia prácticamente total de individualismo, de heterogeneidad cultural y de otros factores que serían imposible señalar, tornan difícil, si no imposible, la edificación de las naciones contractuales (Jean Baechler, 1997)

Despite this diagnosis, we will finally add that the influence of secular thought in the Islamic Arab world was consolidated during the 19th century. The sources of contemporary reformist thought represent one of the greatest efforts to

translate the legal-political foundations of the Islamic religious tradition. Since Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the effects of enlightened liberalism were translated into a theoretical corpus that offered a plausible view of Islam. That is, they linked it to what they called “universal rationalism.” As a result, Islamic reformism, valued by intellectuals of both tendencies, rather than an anti-colonial movement, became a transmission belt of modern values in societies alien to its political-legal principles:

Apareció así en el mundo musulmán (...) una vanguardia, una élite (...) que optó por abrirse a Occidente de forma consciente, por la apertura a la razón universal y por la adopción de valores liberales, que parecían estar en el origen del poder y del progreso (...) Estos intelectuales utilizaban las mismas categorías racionales, la misma terminología, a misma relación con las ciencias y con el rigor deductivo y basaban su autoridad en el racionalismo aplicado, lejos de las manifestaciones de la fe y del respecto a una sacralidad globalizante (Tariq Ramadan, 2000)

This approach brings us to the second reductionism that identifies the term *dawla* with the state. Originally, it alluded to the dynasty to which the leadership of the Muslim community would fall after the death of the Prophet. In this sense, the way temporal affairs were organized in the nascent religion kept spiritual and political functions unified. Both rest on the Qur’an as a common thread and a measure of its authority. A power (*ḥukm*) that can be defined as an “egalitarian theocracy” (Adel-Th. Khoury, 2000), where “religion is partout” (Danièle Herveieu-Léger, 1999),

This conception of power was in keeping with the medieval high forms of the 7th-8th century. In Latin Christendom, the Romano-Germanic aristocracies solidified their territorial influence on the basis of a community of faith. The Spanish-Visigoth kings, like the Byzantine *basileus*, directed religious life, supported by the support of ecclesiastical leaders. This form of organization could be assimilated more to a *regnum* than to any concept of the State (Ladero Quesada, 1989). It would take at least eight centuries to be able to speak of the primitive forms of the modern State organization. And, at least, three more for the contemporary State to have been consolidated. Therefore, this comparison comes more from modern ideological judgment than from historical reality.

Following the argument of Charles Taylor and the contrast between differentiated and saturated societies, the basic problem is to project the “secular mould” of differentiation onto a saturated social system and make an ahistorical comparison:

Una sociedad está saturada desde el punto de vista religiosos cuando la referencia de Dios o a los espíritus se plantea inevitablemente en todas las facetas de su vida (...) En este sentido el concepto de diferenciación es antónimo al de saturación: la religión se precipita como una esfera más entre otras (...) Lo que necesitamos aquí sea un concepto de diferenciación más afilado, que distinga entre, por una parte, el declive de lo que podríamos llamar saturación y la auténtica marginación de la religión (Charles Taylor, 2015)

Leaving aside the “transmodern” revisionisms that sweeten the Islamic reality (Hans Küng, 2006), the question is to determine whether these pious guidelines on political and social aspects attributed to the *dawla* concept constitute an accurate and timeless model of good Islamic government. As we have described above, the symbiosis between spiritual and temporal leadership was not alien to the context of nascent Islam. The reflection focuses on assessing whether the dogmatic guidelines on public life and the example offered by Muhammad respond or not to an “Islamic” state and of what kind it would be.

Before the 10th century, the term *dawla* came to mean “time, turn, time.” It is from the Abbasid dynasty that the origin of the *dawla* concept to designate the political government has been identified (Félix M. Pareja, 1954). However, this derivation was not born *ex novo*. The first community of Muslims formed around the prophet had faced significant difficulties. However, the *Hegirian* model of 622 AD has been described as a “religious revolution.” Its foundations were born from a voluntary exile and a mutation of values, which implied a re-founding of monotheism.

The political model was configured in two stages. First, in Mecca, where Muhammad had been a comfortable man who believed in his mission. A *naḍīr* who transmitted to his people the faith in a unique God, in the midst of a generalized fetishism. He had no conscience whatsoever of founding a new religion, much less of exercising territorial dominion. He fought amid the indifference and hostility of the existing powers. The period of Medina was that of change. He turned his sympathies toward Jewish and Christian monotheism into hostility, declaring himself the restorer of the first revelation and the continuation of the pure religion of Abraham (*Qur.* 22:78)¹. It is in this period that Muhammad will give rise to a disciplined prophetic current directed towards the creation of a State, whose structuring will never

1 The references to the Koran have been taken from the referenced edition in Spanish by Julio Cortés (2007). This duality between the Mecan and Medinese teachings and activities of Muhammad has its correspondence in the division of the Koranic chapters revealed in each city. While the former focus on dogmatic issues, the latter have a more legalistic and political character.

be completed but which will constitute the uncertain ideal model of its legitimacy (Bernard Lewis, 1995 and Robert Fossier, 1988). On this basis, he presented Islam as a religion proper to the Arabs and differentiated from the Jews and Christians. In this way, in Medina we will already find a Muslim community (*umma*), amalgamated around the common protection and religious, political and military leadership of Muhammad.

To a large extent, the overcoming of the tensions caused by the tribal division was based on the development of the statute of Medina. Not only did he establish equalization mechanisms between individuals, something unheard of in a context of highly tribalized and ethical Bedouin societies. At the same time, its expansion laid the foundations for an empire in which the Arabs would occupy a preferential place. The Roman or Byzantine models had focused on obedience to a legal system, imposed on the dominated territories and not so much on religious homogeneity. However, Islam did not consider faith as another element for the legitimation of power. On the contrary, the political-military profile that the expanding *umma* acquired was based early on the theological-political concept of “just war” (*Qur. 2, 190-244*). Therefore, the *yihād* was born connected to the religious, political and military authority of Muhammad from the Medinese period.

After his death in 632 AC, the characteristics of classical Islam were defined through temporary governments with religious content. Specifically, two relevant categories were coded to delineate the political community: power and the border. The first was consolidated through the institution of the caliphate. The second will be born to define the limits of *dār al-Islām* and in opposition to them: *dār al-ḥarb*. In the area of the late-medieval Mediterranean in which the new religion began to spread, a clan structure, organized around tribal interests, with a Bedouin ethical referent, was decisive. The demanding physical geography of these spaces had made their formal domination by the great ancient empires unpleasant.

Muhammad’s successors held the office of caliph (*jalīfa*) as an abbreviation of a more complete title: *jalīfatul rasūl Allāh* (successor to the Envoy of God). This dignity was in the hands of the *Rāšidūn* caliphs (orthodox or well led, 632-661 AC) and the Umayyads (661-750 AC). The maintenance of the caliphal model allowed the continuity of the Tradition, the reinforcement of the ties of internal cohesion and hostility towards its adversaries. Functions so vital to the growth of Islam that they explain why the institution of the caliphate remained a historical extension of the first community, which was nurtured by the *muḥājirūn* (emigrants from Mecca) and the *ansār* (hospital attendants from Medina). It is in this sense that the ostentation of power did not acquire the formula of “inheritance by birth”, but restricted access, as corresponded to the Medinese ideal (Félix M. Casañas, 1954).

What happened after the Abbasid arrival (750-1258 AC) supposed a decisive change in the conception of power. On the one hand, it made it accessible to the vast non-Arab portion of Muslims. On the other, from 754 AC al-Mansur added to the title of caliph the quality of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (prince of the believers). That is to say, he institutionalized divine intervention in favor of the caliph, who will gradually become an autocrat, the shadow of Allah in the world.

The expansion of *dār al-Islam* as a political-religious identity was conceived as a reflection of theological uniqueness (*tawhīd*). Consequently, the definition of non-Islamic alterity would fall on Christianity with Christian and Latin roots. The progression of the ideal *Dīn wa dawla* would be defined by the organized opposition of the others: *kuffār* (infidels) and *ahl al-Kitāb* (people of the Book), who would form *dār al-ḥarb* (house of war). In the West, this configuration of power (territorial and spiritual) was symbolized by the Merovingian victory of Carlos Martel at Poitiers (732 AC). It would be expected until Christmas 800 for his grandson Charlemagne to be crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in St. Peter's Basilica.

Historically, the Mediterranean has been shaping itself as a cultural space in which borders have not only been strictly territorial, but have also underlined cosmologies with a civilizing rank. In his posthumous work *Muhammad and Charlemagne*, Henry Pirenne developed his hypothesis about the decomposition of the economic unity of the medieval Mediterranean around the Muslim and Byzantine empires. Partially contained in the study *Las ciudades de la Edad Media*, his interest was later related to the fruitful debates about the origin and nature of feudalism. Above all because he denied the barbarian invasions the origin of the destruction of the Roman West, to attribute it to the Arab expansion of the eighth century. Aside from the objections that can be made to this argument, what is interesting to underline here is the remarkable success that this approach has had in structurally fixing the antagonism between the Caliphate and the Carolingian Empire (Holy Roman Empire).

Since the 7th century, the evolution of the caliphate model has remained the backbone of multiple historical variations. What is of special interest here is how the formula *Dīn wa dawla* has been reinterpreted by modernity and whether the results of this political "translation" correspond to those of the original tradition. Some authors have described these divergent points of view as a polemic of their own and internal to the Arab-Islamic sphere. As we have said previously, the incidence of colonialism disrupted the parameters that shaped the influence of belief in the organization of their societies. In this sense, the fracture imported by modernity was decisive in accentuating the divergences between fundamentalism and reformism. Coinciding with W. T. Cavanaugh's approach to the founding histories

of the State and its salvific voluntarism (2007, p. 22 ff.), It is convenient to introduce several important nuances about Islam. Especially since the ideological translation of religious beliefs caused deconstructing effects.

Aware of this, the representatives of the *nahḍa* (revival) of contemporary Islam tried to legitimize political Islam by rescuing some principles on the caliphal order of the Khaari school (7th century) and classic works of Muslim thought such as Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) or al-Maqrizi (1365-1441). Authors such Emmanuel Sivan values this rediscovery in terms of identity survival:

La influencia occidental tuvo tiempo de penetrar en la cultura local. Muchos se alarmaron por lo que consideraban el debilitamiento del Islam desde dentro, y desesperaban por llegar a un acuerdo con esa cultura ajena sin perder su antigua identidad (Sivan, 1985)

Despite its influence as a corpus of anti-colonial theory, this reading of Islam has not been shared by the Sunni majority. However, it has strongly conditioned the Western perspective of Islamic thought, identified more with this contemporary renewal than with its medieval roots:

Esta contraideología del movimiento islámico (...) Se enfrentó al lenguaje de la racionalidad y del desarrollo con un lenguaje de piedad. La forma en que se ha desarrollado la doctrina del Islam político se basa en una elección muy selectiva y en una interpretación bastante poco ortodoxa de los textos antiguos (Nazih Ayubi, 1996)

Ellos [los reformistas] demuestran con razones que la política y la religión son dos conceptos distintos y que la teoría musulmana, y no sólo la práctica, ha separado cuidadosamente lo espiritual de lo temporal una vez concluida la práctica profética (Olivier Carré, 1996)

Forcing this principle, the indissolubility of the ties that unite the religious and political spheres has favored the emergence of a certain “deviationist orthodoxy” that would try to impose the precepts of reformism (small tradition) against the majority Islam, custodian of the Great Tradition. An approach that for authors like Bruno Étienne has been the consequence of confronting a belief with modern postulates, in the same way that it happened with Christianity when it was marginalized from the decisions about the public space.

INTERFERENCES OF PLURALISM IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

This time, however, the barbarians do not wait beyond borders; they have already been ruling us for quite some time. And it is our lack of awareness of this that constitutes part of our situation (Alasdair McIntyre, 2007)

There are many examples with which Pope Francis has challenged modern currents on cultural and religious identities. Above all for not supporting the political instrumentalization of religion. Something that would lead, ultimately, to accept as an irrefutable fact that the West and Islam are civilizing blocs without a meeting point. As we have said before, the controversies related to the definition of Islamic identity are associated with modern positions on the Tradition and its political dimension. The “run-ins with the West”, as W. T. Cavanaugh (2010) calls them, stem from this critique of the “peculiar”, “abnormal” and always annoying interference of religion in Islamic governments. A religion, also intolerant, anchored by its own will in the antipodes of modernity and democracy, ruled by an irreducible and violent faith. This “smokescreen” tends to blind any attempt at explanation, be it one way or another.

Indeed, recognizing the potential of the Islamic legacy for reactive readings, its incompatibility with the modern West has made use of fear. Whether informed or not, its paralyzing and damaging effect has been the mat under which the traps of ideology hide: the irrationality of religious beliefs remains impervious to the lights of reason and liberalism. Pillars that would have redeemed him from the contradictions and divisions that afflict him, as happened in the modern West.

The desire to meet and dialogue with Islam often scandalizes a large part of Catholics today. Either aligning with an interpretation of ecclesiocentrism or identifying with a certain theocentrism / religious pluralism in its different currents. Both extremes overlook the fact that beyond modern dialectics, “the mission of founding unity and charity among men and, even more, among peoples” remains today an inalienable principle for the Catholic Church (*Nostra Aetate*, 1). In the first place, because it is the universal salvific will of God “that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Tm2,4). And that “all” includes members of other religions as well. Secondly, because all the forms of religiosity that may exist must be measured from Christ: absolute, unique, universal mediator (“way, truth, life”, Jn 14,6). It is from these principles that Catholics must position ourselves before the fragmentation effects of modernity: the reduced and mistaken understanding of the salvific mystery of Christ and of the Church (*Dominus Iesus*, 4).

In the midst of this diffusion of relativism, the gestures of Pope Francis, urging to build a culture of encounter over geopolitical approaches, challenge govern-

ments to overcome a long history of reciprocal exclusion, through the experience of the other as a collaborator in the construction of the common good. A culture that explicitly appeals to witness and not to proselytism, to ferment and not to the mass, to act as God has worked with us. Aware that dialogue is not a “strategy”, but “an act of fidelity to his Lord and Master” (Francisco, 2019). This message, in perfect harmony with the values of the Gospel and in accordance with the teachings of the Magisterium, has provoked reactions of the opposite sign:

Tutti sanno che l’affermazione dell’islam in Europa avviene tramite Papa Bergoglio -in prima fila per l’immigrazione- che pensa di trasformare la basilica della cristianità e sepolcro del primo Papa Pietro apostolo prediletto di Cristo in una moschea (Carlo Franza, 2019)

Es cierto que los que critican al Papa están poco dispuestos a poner sus discursos en el contexto adecuado. Cuando Bergoglio se expresa sobre el islam es solo para no asimilarlo al extremista. Un mensaje de la máxima autoridad católica que deja las puertas abiertas a los musulmanes moderados, potencialmente un aliado fiable para frenarla locura terrorista que afecta a una parte del mundo musulmán. Una estrategia que empieza a dar resultados (Zouhir Louassini, 2017)

Both passages reflect contrary assessments of Pope Francis’ approach to Islam. The first one pours an effervescent, entrenched, mediatic and critical opinion with the dialogue. The second one highlights its positive effects. Paradoxically, the first text corresponds to statements by Magdi Cristiano Allan, an Egyptian who converted to Christianity. The second, to the Moroccan writer and journalist Zouhir Loussini (2017).

The first approach, in a media and geopolitical key, underestimates (consciously) its great capacity to unite wills and build an alternative path to violent terrorism. Lead effective forms of encounter and dialogue in the midst of current international conflicts. And I dare say that perhaps that is its purpose. The second reveals how interreligious dialogue is today more than ever an exceptional instrument. In the words of the Holy Father, because “what is at stake is the face that we want to give ourselves as a society” (Francisco, 2019) Because it is the only one capable of appealing to the highest values of the human being in a concrete way: witness and gratuity. In this sense, I can only endorse the voices that have described the Pope’s trips to Al Azhar and Morocco as the surest way to stop the spiral fueled by radicalism. A network of spurious interests that masterfully manipulates the

discontent and hatred of marginalized and impoverished populations. Currents that take advantage of the democratic advantages of the West, that turn religious identity into the most lethal weapon and put the most sacred loyalty at the service of terror, launching the world into a 'war of religions' (Zouhir Louassini, 2017; Javier Prades, 2017 – Juan Vicente Boo, 2019).

As believers challenged by the “imperialist exclusivism of secular religion” (Javier Martínez), the Church today calls us to the deepest rejection of the interested manipulation of God, wherever it comes from. Give the reason for our faith and be a living face of Christ in the world. And this carries with it a great responsibility, a necessary coherence of which on many occasions we are not aware: Muslims will know from our faith what we are capable of showing with our testimony. From a Christian conscience, how can we not feel challenged?

CONCLUSION

Along these lines, my objective has been to present some reflections that I think have been hindering the open path towards interreligious dialogue. The pontificate of Pope Francis, picking up on the work of his predecessors, is posing important challenges in dialogue with the Islamic world. From this point of view, an approach away from modern exclusivism calls us to recover religious identity as a fundamental element. An explanatory key that allows us to unravel and transcend the political translation of belief and with it the biases that define Islam as a dysfunctional tradition. Much of the information provided on the Islamic Arab world delves into a dialectic irreconcilable with modernity and, by extension, with democracy. More than its reactive and violent potential, what underlies this state of opinion is a liberal judgment of belief. In the first place, because it has emptied its structures of the religious sense that inspires them; secondly because it has turned the act of belief into a decontextualized individual choice. Consequently, all the fundamental elements that structure Islam seem to be exposed as devoid of meaning. Finally, this Lockean approach has turned religious beliefs into a civil right, linked to the informational principles of democratic states. For this reason, generating a Christian vision of Islam is presented today not only as a true “intellectual provocation”, but as a condition for incarnate and hospitable dialogue. Space where diversity can be expressed and is a source of self-recognition. A space capable of rescuing the man from modern scepticism.

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MODERNITY AND INTER- RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE. DIFFICULTIES POSED BY THE IDEOLOGICAL TRANSLATION OF RELIGIOUS CATEGORIES

SUMMARY

The relationship between Islam and Modernity is often explained in antagonistic terms. On the one hand, because Islam is a holistic system, where the political and religious spheres remain connected, resisting a modern definition of “religion”. On the other, because Modernity has been associated with the evolution of the liberal State and democracy, whose bases are deeply relativistic. Along these lines, we propose some arguments about the origin of this disagreement. To do this, we focus on the ideological reductionisms “religion” and “state” applied to the theological categories *Dīn* and *dawla*. The trace of this modern homologation can be traced through the historical connection of the West with the Islamic Arab world. Enlightened approaches and their ideal of progress found their best expression in reformist thinking. Since the 18th century, the solution to the problems derived from colonialism necessarily went through making the dogmatic foundations more flexible, injecting sceptical principles. The birth of this “political Islam” necessarily brought its “national” translation. The processes of construction of these states would feed the liberation movements, spreading for decades the deep wound of political violence and its export to the world. It is from this context that the Catholic Church has appealed to theological foundations as the only possible way to reverse the damage caused by geopolitics. Unfortunately, the states of opinion generated around this work divide, in the first place, Catholics.

Throughout these pages, we will try to provide lines of reflection that add to our responsibility to generate a Christian conscience, open, reasonable and without interference, with respect to Islam.

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