



CONTACT: Donald Lehr – The Nolan/Lehr Group / +1.212.967.8200
dlehr@templetonprize.org / www.templetonprize.org

**Audience Q&A with Msgr. Prof. Tomáš Halík (2014 Templeton Prize Laureate)
and Prof. Charles Taylor (2007 Templeton Prize Laureate)**

Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature

San Diego, CA, November 22, 2014

“The Afternoon of Christianity” video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKWHWIn2kTI>

QUESTION: Regarding the “Afternoon of Christianity,” what about the role of other traditions outside of Europe, contemplative traditions, and other religions, such as Islam?

TOMÁŠ HALÍK: This picture of the day I developed in the context of Western Christianity. I can't imagine how it fits also into the history of another religion. In Islam, there are some epochs and interesting changing. Until the 15th century, Islam was flourishing intellectually and perhaps the shift from Baghdad to Constantinople, it was something that changed. It looks like Islam was a little bit afraid of this modernity, (but) in some way, Islam accepted many modern phenomena more easily than Christianity. For example, science. Many Muslims have no problems using modern science, modern technology, and it has no effect on the doctrine. And we all know how modern science affected the great crisis in the European Catholic and Christian theology. This modern science was accepted without problem in the Islamic context but there are some values of Enlightenment that weren't accepted at all. Something happened in the history of Islam around the beginnings of the modern era in the west, but it would be perhaps more of a question for a specialist in Islamic history.

QUESTION: What is the cultural or personal problem that the “afternoon church” should address?

CHARLES TAYLOR: It seems to me it is precisely this specific – there are very many problems or things wrong with the world. But it is precisely this (question) of how we can live together in an

informed church and all the communions that involves when we have these two rather different styles – because there are many people who still are in the old style – and the newer one, in which we're thinking in terms of seekers: how we can recreate real communion between us? Although very understandably, the sight of a number of people becoming seekers can be very disorienting, destabilizing and worrying for people who want to remain. So the real danger is the complete polarization in which people of the new seeking type have no place in the church and are either expelled or repelled and they exist in separate universes. And the very unhealthy thing on the other side is that people develop a spirituality which is largely fueled by negative reaction towards them. In a sense if we want to look into Islam, it has happened in such a degree in Islam, the reaction against any kind of differential form of spirituality, including some of the rich Sufi spiritualities that are traditional in Islam has produced this terrible kind of closed, negative. So how can we avoid that? How can recover some sense that we are all together in the Christian church? This is one of the biggest challenges that we face.

TOMÁŠ HALÍK: In the religious orders in history, for example for the Carmelite order, there are some reformers. And they have a special type of reform, and there are others. They don't need the reform. They are known to both sides and they are living together. So something like this could be possible in the Catholic Church, but I sometimes think that the inner-Catholic ecumenism is more difficult than the interreligious dialogue.

QUESTION: Professor Halík, please describe your connections with underground churches in Prague and in Eastern Europe. How was the intertwined role of Christianity and secularism particularly important in this context?

TOMÁŠ HALÍK: I can answer from my personal experience. I was in the underground church and at the same time I was secretly ordained as a priest in East Germany in the private chapel of the bishop, even my mother didn't know that I was a priest. I was 11 years in the underground and I had a civil profession as a psychotherapist for alcoholics and drug abusers. I am very thankful for this experience, being a priest and to have a secular civil job at the same time, because I learned to understand the questions of people and the language of people and the lifestyle of the people outside of the church structures. So today it's very fruitful, this experience, because the people from the very secularized society have the feeling that I understand their questions and their

language and their problems. So I think this experience of the underground church was very useful in this way to understand the seekers, the secular society, and the people outside the church.

QUESTION: One final question, Dr. Taylor. If the reality of God keeps serving us by the word of love, two questions: first, is it dual in his loving that focuses not just on you but on loving all others; and second, how limitless is love of others, again, how can it evolve not only in our minds but especially in our hearts?

CHARLES TAYLOR: For me, the Christian journey partly involves noting how far one is from having that kind of overflowing love that you see in the Gospel. And the issue is, how can it come about that I can grow more and become really more loving? And in a certain sense that has conditioned the way I look at the faith, the way I see and reach for the power of God, and the way I see my being supported in this by a host of others including people who are no longer living, by what we call the communion of saints. The question there is a really big question that anybody has to ask as a Christian: How do I become capable of having that kind of love, of acting with that kind of love? And exactly not just because I have very powerful will and force myself into it. Because the kind of agape you see in the New Testament is something that comes from the famous Greek verb of feeling compassion that is connected to the word – as everyone knows here in this kind of meeting – to the word for one's entrails. So how to open oneself to that kind of transformation is the number one question.

#