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## **ANTHROPOLOGICAL TOPICS IN THE INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE A Christian-Orthodox Perspective<sup>1</sup>**

1. Look upon man in the great religions – 2. Historical preliminaries of the statements on human rights – 3. Scriptural Bases of Human Rights – 4. Human rights in inter-religious meetings. Brief history and Orthodox contribution – 5. Conclusions

Interreligious dialogue is a constant on the agendas of the meetings of the organizations around the world, either religious or secular structures. Although in the past there were situations where its role and importance were contested bringing as arguments doctrinal or other reasons, interreligious dialogue is possible because, in essence, any dialogue involves people, so it is a human act. Man is fulfilled through dialogue, knowing better both himself and those around him.

In interreligious dialogue, the need and importance of discussions on human rights are related to the fact that people live in a multi-religious world in which representatives of different spiritual traditions live together in the same territories. Anthropological issues are often addressed to solve current issues, having in center the importance of establishing peace on earth and respecting globally the equality between people. Hence, they seek practical and concrete solutions to solve social, economic and even political matters that are troubling the today world more than ever. Finally, questions about the man and the rights he has are of great interest nowadays, regardless of religious tradition to which he belongs.

### **1. Look upon man in the great religions**

Man, regardless of historical, social, political, economic or religious context in which he lived, has always been interested and always tried to find answers about

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himself, who is and what is the place and role in the universe in which he lives. Regardless of the religion he had, man tried to explain his purpose on earth and the relationship he has with the Divine. In this respect, an important role in the answers he sought, was played by his genesis so that cosmology was a constant in the researches of man. Thus, the ancient people placed great emphasis on living the cosmological myth that occupied an essential place in their lives.

In the Chinese religion, man is under the power of the yin and yang concepts representing the creative forces of the Universe, while in Confucianism the human being has value in the broader context of social life, people being equal in all respects.

In Hinduism, man is the meeting point of the gods in the universe, this idea being present in the main Hindu religious and philosophical systems. There is a clear distinction and contradiction between soul and body, Hinduism even speaking of an inside and an outside body. For Hindu faithful, soul is presented either as brahman or as atman, namely the essence of the world, brahman is identical with the soul. Man is a unity of all elements of the universe, the soul is immortal, unlike the body which has as main characteristic decomposition. The ultimate goal remains the integration of the soul in the absolute, process which involves several stages that differ according to the different Hindu philosophical systems.

Buddhism places particular emphasis on the conception on man, emphasizing that suffering is the main characteristic of the human being. For Buddhists, the body is the establishment of evil and a prison for the soul, the liberation from the body being the aim that man pursues. And in terms of the soul, Buddhism also emphasizes suffering as an essential feature, thus separating Buddhist doctrine of the Hindu, because the soul is not the one that reincarnates, but karma, any Buddhist faithful purposes the release from the law of reincarnations.

In Islam man is a creature of Allah, thus an absolute subject both he and the world around him. The Koran speaks about the existence of body and soul created by Allah, the man representing the most important creation of the Deity of whom all other creatures depend.

In Judaism, man occupies an essential place in the universe as a unique being, created by God after His image. He was created good at first, but his disobedience resulted in the removal of the Creator and the expulsion from Paradise. Both body and soul (*ruah*) were created by Yahweh, the first from the dust, the second by direct blowing. Finally, in Hebrew thought, man is a unified being where the soul and body form a whole human being. Man is, on the one hand, in relation to God, and on the other hand, in relation to the universe in the middle of which was placed ever since his creation.

Christianity takes the ideas about creation of man from the Old Testament, emphasizing the differences between the image and likeness to God, the image is the

similarity in potency and likeness is the image in actuality. Christianity harnesses positively the conception about body as shown in the Old Testament, man being a microcosmos that connects the elements of the cosmos into a unified whole. At the end of time, the bodies of the dead will rise and unite with the souls thus man recreates as it was at the beginning. So man is the center of the cosmos, all depending on him and regathering into him at the end of the ages, while remaining what they are. Man is the crown of creation and the center to which all converge in the universe, being placed by God as the meeting point of the material world, through his body, with the spiritual world through his soul. Son of God, the divine Logos, becomes man incarnating Himself for us and for our salvation. He dies of love for the people and resurrects for us, restoring our dignity that we lost through the fall. Since then, man has everything he needs to achieve the purpose for which he was created, life regaining the initial importance. He can tend to the purpose for which he was created: to become a child of God by grace.

## 2. Historical preliminaries of the statements on human rights

The beginnings of modern discussions proposing embodied solutions in documents signed by the participants in the various meetings that have discussed the issue of human rights are found in the eighteenth century. This century, called "The Century of Lights" had a strong secular individual and bourgeois tinge and what can be easily seen in the statements that have been preserved and are of actuality in our times. Though, these characteristics led to their rejection by representatives of many religious traditions<sup>2</sup>, especially since, in the meetings in which were issued documents, were not represented all the world religions, although the proposed solutions are desired to be available for all people, regardless of religious tradition to which they belong. Statements about the position of the Orthodox Church towards the human rights as formulated today in the main official documents can be easily extended to the other religious traditions:

Orthodox thought is not always in full agreement with everything that has been characterized from time to time as "human right" On the basic core concepts — freedom, equality, and human dignity — there is of course immediate agreement and absolute affirmation. Most of the ideas expressed about human rights are accepted by Orthodox thinking as corollaries of its own views on humanity. There are a good number of issues, however, on which Orthodox thought prefers not to take a stand, allowing them to remain open questions, within the realm of purely human speculation<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> DAVID LITTLE, *Human Rights and Responsibilities in a Pluralistic World*, in: *The Orthodox Churches in the Pluralistic World. An Ecumenical Conversation*, Edited by Emmanuel Clapsis, WCC Publications, Geneva, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 2004, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> ARCHBISHOP ANASTASIOS (YANNOULATOS), *Facing the World. Orthodox Christian on Global Concerns*, Translation by Pavlos Gottfried, WCC Publications, Geneva, Switzerland, 2003, p. 51.

Among the international documents that speak of universal human rights, an important place is occupied by *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Parallel to and in close contact with it, by being former, are the *American Declaration of Independence* 1776 and *The Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen* according to the French National Assembly in 1789. All these statements govern the relations between people in terms of their community life, especially after the separation achieved between the social and religious life.

There is also another clear difference in the way declarations and religion seek to achieve their respective aims, as well as in the profundity of those aims. Declarations seek to impose their views through legal and political forms of coercion, whereas the Christian message addresses itself to people's way of thinking and to their conscience, using persuasion and faith. Declarations basically stress outward compliance, while the gospel insists on inner acceptance, on spiritual rebirth, and on transformation. Any attempt to consider human rights from an Orthodox point of view must therefore maintain a clear sense of the differences between these two perspectives<sup>4</sup>

These statements, although they had different philosophical bases, are similar in the essence of the formulation of human rights. Thus in England, a bill was formulated defending human rights in 1689 based on class differences. Between 1776 and 1789 America has established human rights in its Constitution with the substrate fight for freedom against the bourgeoisie. As it happened in France in 1789, where French rights were based solely on rationalist philosophy.

"Human" rights were juxtaposed to the "divine" rights of monarch, the traditional recipients of the church's patronage. This was a major reason why Roman Catholic and Orthodox teaching as well as most Protestant theology on the European continent rejected the notion of human rights, preferring instead to emphasize human duties<sup>5</sup>

Rights of the working class were formulated against bourgeois rights, promoted by MARX and ENGELS and applied mainly in Russia after the Revolution of 1917. The twentieth century is characterized by the struggle against colonialism and promoting rights of communities more than human rights<sup>6</sup>, with an emphasis on promoting peace on earth. Finally, the issue of human rights has become one of international interest. United Nations enacted *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on 10 December 1948, providing a strong link between the desire of world peace and defense of the natural rights of man. Human connection and equality was, thereby, emphasized, all people, regardless of religion to which they belonged, having the same rights. Having the starting point in the middle of the last century, the organizations promoting human rights have increased both locally, nationally and

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> ERICH WEINGÄRTNER, *Human Rights*, in: *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Edited by Nicholas Lossky, José Míguez Bonino, John Pobee, Tom F. Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright, Pauline Webb, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002, p. 548.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 549.

globally. Human rights as formulated are intended to be recognized as universal, having certain common characteristics: they are inviolable, they claim freedom, proclaim equality and involve the participation of people in decision-making together<sup>7</sup>

From this brief analysis it is noted that human rights have been formulated and continue to be interpreted in relation to the different times of oppression in certain geographic areas, where specific rights have been ignored and violated. Currently, declarations on human rights are reinterpreted in new contexts in which we live, while opening and closing new perspectives.

In general, Orthodox thought considers the current discussion on human rights to be extremely important, but ultimately sees it as the prelude to a discussion of humanity's much more intrinsic "rights". After all the searching and all the effort to arrive at a definition of human rights, the underlying questions still remain: "Where do human rights begin, where do they end, and what is their ultimate purpose?" Declarations remain confined to descriptive legal definitions of human rights; as the same time, however, they reflect hope and express a moral judgment<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Scriptural Bases of Human Rights

In the interreligious discussions that have as theme the human rights, it is important not only to stress their compliance regardless of religious tradition to which people belong, but also the responsibilities involved for the people by these rights, because they are not rights of certain persons, but of all. In Christianity, Jesus Christ, our Savior teaches that "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12. 31).

God is the Creator of all men: "When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them "Humankind" when they were created" (Genesis 5. 1). The same thing is said in the New Testament: "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (Matthew 19. 4).

In the Lord Jesus Christ we are recreated by God the Father: "For in him we live and move and have our begin, as even some of own poets have said, For we too are his offspring" (Acts 17. 28). Thus, through Him we are all reinstated in the quality of image of God: "And have clothed yourselves with the new self. Which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator" (Colossians 3. 10).

It can thus be seen that all the people on earth have the same rights, regardless of race, language or education, because they have divine origin. Human freedom

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>8</sup> ARCHBISHOP ANASTASIOS (YANNOULATOS), *Facing the World. Orthodox Christian on Global Concerns*, p. 57.

comes from God who is Holy Trinity, a communion of Persons. God is the Father of all: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6. 9). The incarnate Son of God teaches us this: "And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father — the one in heaven" (Matthew 23. 9). Finally,

The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live (Acts 17. 24-26).

Thus, God is the Father of everybody "One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4. 6).

In the discussions that have as theme the human rights, important is the purpose of existence on earth, and that God's love embraces all men, because He sent His Son into the world for all of us "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1. 14).

The greatest gift of man from God is freedom "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"; „So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8. 32, 36), because "the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3. 17). Christianity is the religion that emphasizes the equality among men deriving from God's immeasurable love for us: "In the renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is at hand in all" (Colossians 3. 11).

#### **4. Human rights in interreligious meetings.**

##### **Brief history and Orthodox contribution**

The meeting known by the name of World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 represented, along with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, one of the first steps in promoting globally interreligious dialogue in the modern era. In Chicago, for the first time in history, representatives of religious traditions of Asia were invited and traveled to the West. SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (1863–1902), disciple of RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA (1836–1886), aroused the interest of all those present by his speech in which he talked about religious tolerance and the fact that spirituality is the essence of man as it emerges from Hindu philosophy contained in the Vedanta school. The beginning of his speech, "Sisters and brothers of America" remains memorable, given the period in which it was delivered and that it promoted globally for the first time concepts such as equality between people, religious

freedom and understanding between people who belong to different religions around the world<sup>9</sup>

After this promising start, the Jerusalem International Conference in 1928 (*The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems*) represented a milestone in the interreligious dialogue which established that "Christians join hands with other «believers» against the threat of secularism (symbolized by the Russian revolution)"<sup>10</sup> The Jerusalem Conference handled especially the relationship between Christians and the Hebrew people, which was the first called to enter the Kingdom of God. The counsel of the conference for the representatives of non-Christian religions was that they study the scriptures together to discover the true message of God and to work together to find the best solutions for coexistence in the world while the people belonging to different religions should live together in the same territories. The fact that Christianity is not a Western religion, but Christ belongs as well to thee populations in Africa and Asia, as well as those in Europe and America must also be taken into account. At the end of the Report it was stressed that

the Gospel of the Love of God comes home with power to the human heart, it speaks to each man, not as Moslem or as Buddhist, or as an adherent of any system, but just as man. And while we rightly study other religions in order to approach men wisely, yet at the last we speak as men to men, inviting them to share with us the pardon and the life that we have found in Christ<sup>11</sup>

In 1948 took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the first meeting organized by the World Council of Churches. The Assembly, which was named *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, was held between August 22 and September 4. 351 delegates belonging to 147 member churches attended. From the Orthodox Churches participated only the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Church of Cyprus and the Greek Church. This Assembly adopted the constitution of the World Council of Churches, statement that was completed, defined and passed under the title: *The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches* by the Central Committee in Toronto in 1950. The meeting in Amsterdam in 1948 established a statement regarding the defense of human rights worldwide. After the General Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 a program was set up to combat racism, developed mainly on the conclusions of the General Assembly of the CMB in Nairobi in 1975. Also, the emphasis was put on educating people about human rights in interreligious discussions both at local and at national and universal level.

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<sup>9</sup> ROBERT S. ELLWOOD, *World's Parliament of Religions*, in: LINDSAY JONES (Editor in chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. XIV, Macmillan Reference USA, Thomson Gale, New York, 2005<sup>2</sup>, p. 9804.

<sup>10</sup> *Introduction at Dialogue with People of Other Faith: Towards Better Understanding of Our Neighbours*, in: *The Ecumenical Movement. An Anthology of Key and Voices*, Edited by Michael Kinnamon, Brian E. Cope, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002, p. 393.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 395.

In February of 1978, representatives of Christianity and Buddhism met in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to discuss religious experience in human relations with nature (*Man in Nature: Guest or Engineer?*). Another meeting was held in Cameroun in Yaounde, in September 1978, which was attended by Christians, representatives of traditional cultures of Asia, Africa, Pacific and the Americas. The theme of the meeting was *Religious Dimensions in Humanities' Relation to Nature*. During these meetings were addressed issues dealing how people belonging to different religious traditions and ideologies must interact for mutual understanding, peacemaking on earth and solving problems posed by society, mainly those related to world ecological crisis<sup>12</sup>.

In the conference held in Bangkok (December 3<sup>rd</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup> 1979) with the theme *Human Rights in Religious and Cultural Traditions* were analyzed the ways in which the theme that treats human rights as formulated in modern society finds its solution in certain religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam Shinto. It was also discussed how they can be best reached to limit all forms of intolerance and religious oppression, taking into account the errors of the past and the actual challenges.

At the sixth General Assembly of the CMB in Vancouver in 1983 (*Jesus Christ — the Life of the World*) was emphasized the urgent need for

common action and cooperation between Christian and persons of other faiths especially in areas of human dignity, justice and peace, economic reconstruction, and eradication of hunger and disease. Areas identified for further attention included dialogue with people from traditional religions, highlighted by the presence of a large number of Canadian Aboriginal peoples at the assembly, interfaith prayer and worship, the phenomenon of New Religious Movements, and issues of gospel and culture<sup>13</sup>

The document entitled *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* emphasized the idea that God is the Creator of the universe and that the Holy Spirit works in all creation, in different forms.

As in the last two General Assemblies in Vancouver and Canberra, at Harare, in 1998 (*Turn to God — Rejoice in Hope*) were invited 50 representatives of various religions in the world.

The importance of continuing the work of interfaith dialogue was repeatedly affirmed. The assembly amended the WCC constitution which for the first time explicitly identified relations with communities of people of other faiths as one of the functions of the fellowship of churches within the Council<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> ANS J. VAN DER BENT, *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1983, p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> ISRAEL SELVANAYAGAM, *Interfaith Dialogue*, in: *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol. III, 1968–2000, Edited by John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Georges Tsetsis, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2004, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.



Echoes of these discussions could be seen in 1993 when we celebrated the centenary of *World Parliament of Religions*. The discussion was about the importance of ecumenism in developing a global ethic to assist in the implementation of human rights in various communities around the globe and thus facilitate good relations between people belonging to different religions<sup>15</sup>

In this context, a reassessment was made of the activity that was focused on interreligious dialogue. Since the beginning, in 1971, when the Program of interreligious dialogue was founded in the CMB were voices that affirmed, on the one hand, the need for dialogue, and on the other hand, the difficulties to be faced by those engaged in the dialogue. The difficulties were related to the increased violence in the world, the violation of human rights, political tensions and religious intolerance which was manifested in the territories where there were people from many religions. In 2003, Catolicos Aram I, showing the report of moderator, emphasized the need for interreligious dialogue as a priority within the World Council of Churches<sup>16</sup> Between Harare and Porto Alegre several interfaith meetings were held that highlighted once again the need for dialogue and the importance that is given to it by both Christians and representatives of other religions.

In the Roman Catholic Church human rights received a special formulation through the encyclical *Pacem in terris* (1963) and during the Second Vatican Council through the declaration *Guadium et spes* (1965). Second Vatican Council also represented a milestone in the Roman Catholic Church's attitude towards non-Christian world. Thus, in addition to the issues discussed in the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian Churches, was raised the question of relations between Catholics and people belonging to other religions and ideologies. Discussions found results in a document called *Nostra aetate*, approved on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1965, which starts from the assertion of the link that exists between the people of the earth: all share the same human nature. Assertion is based on the revealed truth that all men are created by God in His image, being called to the same Truth which enlightens the human being.

All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (cf. Apoc. 21:23ff)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*, Chicago, Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> *From Harare to Porto Alegre, 1998–2006*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. Second Vatican Council, 1965* in: *The Ecumenical Movement. An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, p. 399.

People all over the face of the earth are asking the same questions, no matter what religion they belong to: what is man? What is his purpose? What is good? What is truth? and so on.

The *Nostra aetate* document deals separately with the various non-Christian religions, about the Muslim religion and the Jewish religion, to finally stress out that all men are brothers. So the document reminds Hinduism among non-Christian religions, in which people, through myths and philosophical work, "explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love"<sup>18</sup>, and Buddhism, in which people are talking about the way that "men can, with confidence and truth, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help"<sup>19</sup> Like these Eastern religions, all religions of the world present to man, with all his silence, different teachings through which he can save himself in this world. To these ideas, the Roman Catholic Church shows a certain openness in the sense that it does not reject what is holy, showing respect for the high ideas of these religions.

The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture<sup>20</sup>

Along with the participation in interfaith meetings that had as the main topic of discussion the human rights, the Orthodox churches were actively involved in bilateral meetings that focused on different topics treating various topical issues that concerned man. Between these meetings, a special place took the discussions with the Jews in which the main topic approached was the problem of anti-Semitism. The issue is very sensitive because there are traces of such an approach on the relationship with Jews even from early Christian centuries and the tragedies of the Holocaust during the Second World War was only a result of a whole series of wars of extermination. However, there must be remembered that the Orthodox Churches have condemned as heresy any racial or anti-Semitic violence. On this line was the encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch MITROFAN III from 1567 condemning the attitude of some Christians to the Jews of Crete, threatening with excommunication those who do not comply with the Hebrew and violate the commandment of love that Lord Jesus Christ gave us. Meanwhile, Ecumenical Patriarch proclaimed some doctrinal principles to underpin the relations between Christians

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem.*

and Hebrew.<sup>21</sup> And in the nineteenth century, Metropolitan ATHANASIOS of Corfu in Greece condemned all those who disturb the peace of the Jews and attack their sacred traditions. In accordance with this conviction the Synod of the Church of Greece issued three encyclicals condemning the practice of burning a Hebrew symbol on Good Friday, the 1891 encyclical stating that this habit has its roots during the Turkish occupation. The custom must be removed from people's lives, emphasizing that in accordance to the Gospel, Christians must be tolerant of Jews, the creation of God and His children. The idea is taken in two encyclicals issued in 1910 and 1918.

Over time, the Orthodox of any nationality tried to implement these exhortations that were not only valid for the Greek people, but for all Orthodox Christian believers. Thus, in many situations during the holocaust of the last century, the representatives of the Orthodox Churches urged and helped to save Jews. In 1960 reiterated the condemnation of those who do not tolerate the Hebrew, as pointed Archbishop of Athens THEOKLETOS which stated that proximity to Hebrew should be based on historical truth which the Apostles after our parents were Hebrew nationality. "We must never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew according to the flesh, and His redeeming blood which He shed on the Cross for our sake was Jewish blood"<sup>22</sup> Based on these ideas, Christians must show greater love for the Hebrew people and respect the rights of all people regardless of nationality.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the testimony of Scripture that refer to natural revelation and man's creation in God's image, we can say that

every human being who is of good will, has good intentions, and keeps the commandments of Christ (genuine love, humility, forgiveness, and unselfish service to others) — even if he or she does not have the privilege of directly knowing the ineffable mystery of Christ — receives, we would venture to say, the Christ-World that is present in his commandment. Since God is love, any expression of love whatsoever is automatically attuned to his will and his commandments<sup>23</sup>

This is not just a particular problem, but related to the whole Christian life and must start from the theological meaning of the word *oikonomia*, which is not reduced to historical events, but we do participate fully in the life and mystery of God.

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<sup>21</sup> GEORGE C. PAPADEMETRIOU, *Essays on Orthodox Christian-Jewish Relations*, Wyndham Hall Press, Bristol, 1990, pp. 55, 86–89.

<sup>22</sup> ARCHBISHOP THEOKLETOS OF ATHENS, *Proclamation*, in: GEORGE C. PAPADEMETRIOU, *Essays on Orthodox Christian-Jewish Relations*, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> ARCHBISHOP ANASTASIOS (YANNOULATOS), *Facing the World. Orthodox Christian on Global Concerns*, p. 150.

Finally, *oikonomia* is closely related to the notion of *kenosis* of the Son of God that begins with the Incarnation and, if you look in the Old Testament of God, it starts since the creation of man. But human relationship with God is not just the Hebrew people, but to the entire humanity, God letting confessions in other traditions.

Christ is hidden everywhere is the mystery of his lowliness. Any reading of religions is a reading of Christ. It is Christ alone who is received as light when grace visits a Brahmin, a Buddhist or a Muhammadan reading his own scriptures. Every martyr for the truth, every man persecuted for what he believes to be right, dies in communion with Christ. The mystics of Islamic countries with their witness to suffering love lived the authentic Johannine *agape*. For if the tree is known by its fruits, there is no shadow of doubt that the poor and humble folk who live for and yearn for God in all nations already receive the peace which the Lord gives to all whom He loves (Lk. 2.14)<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the religious freedom, they emphasized the common principles of Orthodoxy and other religions, from the relationship with the Hebrew people freedom of religion is a fundamental right based on revealed truth, according to which all men are created in God's image, it is a divine gift and a fundamental value that must be affirmed, respected and protected; relationship between freedom and religion is characterized by complementarity and cannot speak the antagonistic relationship between the two, the gift of freedom involves responsibility, and the way in which man realizes and expresses responsibility affects their own dignity and determines its relationship with the sacred places in which he lives, to the human beings assuming the moral responsibility to pursue the good and justice in society and combat evil in its various forms of expression, the responsible freedom is the essential prerequisite for the exercise of the cult, and society must recognize this as inviolable freedom of the human person, creating conditions for preserving the religious identity of communities and it is a responsibility of the pluralistic and multicultural society, governments having the duty to recognize the important role of religion in society and to respect the principle of religious freedom in the legislation; the militant secularism, the religious fundamentalism and the relativistic pluralism are real obstacles to preserving religious identity, and recognition of the human person value and it requires respect for all forms of religious or secular convictions, if these not threatens the religious freedom of the person or the society. Finally,

over the last six centuries of Balkan history, faith in the right to equality, dignity, and freedom has been kept alive by the Orthodox Church in the hearts of the oppressed people. Moreover, at critical moments in the lives of these peoples, their religious leaders have stood in the front lines of their struggle to achieve human rights<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> GEORGES KHODR, *Christianity in a Pluralistic World — the Economy of the Holy Spirit*, in: *The Ecumenical Movement. An Anthology of Key and Voices*, p. 403.

<sup>25</sup> ARCHBISHOP ANASTASIOS (YANNOULATOS), *Facing the World. Orthodox Christian on Global Concerns*, p. 67

**Tematy antropologiczne w dialogu międzyreligijnym — perspektywa prawosławna****Streszczenie**

Dialog międzyreligijny ma stałe miejsce w porządku obrad różnych organizacji, zarówno świeckich, jak i religijnych. W dialogu tym konieczność dyskusji na temat praw człowieka związana jest z faktem życia ludzi w multireligijnym świecie, w którym żyją obok siebie przedstawiciele różnych tradycji duchowych. Zagadnienia antropologiczne mają często za zadanie rozwiązywanie bieżących problemów, stawiając w centrum uwagi znaczenie ustanowienia pokoju na świecie i globalne poszanowanie równości międzyludzkiej. W związku z tym poszukuje się praktycznych i konkretnych rozwiązań dotyczących problemów społecznych, ekonomicznych i politycznych, które coraz bardziej niepokoją współczesny świat. Ponadto pytania o człowieka i jego prawa stanowią współczesny obiekt zainteresowania, niezależnie od tradycji religijnych. Wraz z uczestnictwem w spotkaniach międzyreligijnych Kościoły prawosławne aktywnie angażują się w dyskusje bilateralne dotyczące różnych zagadnień antropologicznych. Na przestrzeni lat prawosławni różnych narodowości próbowali wdrożyć wypracowane na nich rozwiązania, które obowiązywałyby nie tylko jakąś konkretną grupę wiernych, ale cały świat prawosławny.