

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ON ORTHODOXY**

CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOXY
HOLY CROSS, Boston, USA



16 – 17 November 2012

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SPEECHES - REPORTS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.), the President of the I.A.O. General Assembly, Member of the Russian State Duma Mr. Sergei Popov and the I.A.O. Secretary General, Member of the Hellenic Parliament Mr. Anastasios Nerantzis, are pleased to present to the readers the publication at hand. It contains the speeches presented during the conference held at the Holy Cross School of Theology in Boston, 16 – 17 November 2012 with subject: «Civil Society and Orthodoxy».

The conference was held within the framework of an I.A.O. International Secretariat delegation's visit to the U.S.A. aiming to introduce to the political world of the U.S. the I.A.O.'s existence, as well as its worldwide activity on global cooperation and peace.

The reports contain a rich reflection regarding a topic of concern to a vast number of citizens, Orthodox in faith.

Moreover, it enriches a reflection developed over the past years and relates to the social image of religions.

The present publication represents the I.A.O.'s active contribution to this dialogue.

The President of the General Assembly



Sergei Popov
Member of the Russian
State Duma

The Secretary General



Anastasios Nerantzis
Member of the Hellenic Parliament
Former Minister

WELCOME ADDRESS

Rev. Fr. NICHOLAS C. TRIANTAFILOU
President of the Hellenic College
and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Esteemed Representatives of the Parliamentary Delegations,
Welcome to our campus!

On behalf of the community of Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, I extend to all a warm welcome along with my personal appreciation for the challenging and very important topic of your Conference on Orthodoxy and Civil Society.

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology since its establishment in 1937 serves the life, mission and witness of the Greek Orthodox Church most especially here in the USA. Its purpose is to educate and train priests and laity who aspire to participate in God's mission for the life of the world. Holy Cross is an unqualified space of creative and bold theological thinking. It aspires to contribute substantially to the Church's prophetic witness to the world.

The Conference on Orthodoxy and Civil Society that the Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy jointly organized with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology is consistent with the mission and the dialogical ethos of the Church. In the context of the current celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Holy Cross' establishment, this conference provides an opportunity to reaffirm in the strongest possible way the essential dialogic spirit of the Orthodox tradition. The deliberative and interdisciplinary nature of the conference invites hierarchs, theologians, politicians and political theorists as well as pastoral practitioners to an ongoing conversation that enriches their understanding of the complex world that we live in. In the midst of economic crises and other oppressive social realities that generate xenophobia, violence, injustice, poverty and racism, there is a need to strengthen the voice of Orthodoxy that cultivates human solidarity,

compassion, love, peace and justice. There is need to resist the demonic temptations - clothed sometimes in religious language - that reduces religious faith to an instrument of violence against others who have a different philosophy, patterns of life, culture and self- interests.

The Orthodox Churches are called to contribute towards the development of a deliberative culture of peace and justice that goes beyond the impersonal forces of the market and the commoditization of human life. Human life cannot flourish apart from a culture that emphasizes human solidarity, compassion and care for all people, especially the most vulnerable ones.

We are thankful to the Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy that brings in conversation Orthodox politicians, hierarchs, theologians, political analysts and others in an effort to identify the political implications of Orthodoxy. I hope that this conversation will develop not only political insights but also the means by which the Orthodox people can actively participate in the Civil Society through joint deliberations and efforts.



GREETING ADDRESS

Rev. Prof. Dr. THOMAS FITZGERALD
Dean Protospresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Your Eminence,
Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of the faculty and students, I warmly welcome you to Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology is celebrating its 75th Anniversary of service to the Church and the society. Founded in 1937, by Archbishop Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Holy Cross is now the oldest and largest Orthodox theological school in the Americas.

Holy Cross continues the rich educational and ecumenical tradition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The students and faculty of Holy Cross are devoted to the study and promotion of Orthodox theology in a manner which honors God and which is of service to others. This takes place within a community which is rooted in a common commitment to Christ, which is nurtured by prayer, shared Christian values and a deep appreciation of rich inheritance of the Orthodox faith.

Here is a brief overview of our School:

Holy Cross is financial supported by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and generous benefactors from throughout this counter. Like all religious institutions, we receive no direct financial support from the government.

We have three graduate degree programs. The Master of Divinity, the Masters of Theological Studies, and the Master of Theology.

We provide theological education for students who look forward to serving as priests, and other students that one day may serve as theologians, religious educators, counsel-

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ors, musicians, missionaries and chaplains.

We have 121 students in the graduate School of Theology.

Most of these students come from throughout the United States.

We also have a number of students from other Orthodox jurisdictions and from other countries. These include: Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon, Uganda, Egypt, Australia, Bulgaria and India.

We have 31 married students, many with children

We have over 1200 graduates of Holy Cross.

Our graduates are serving church and society in over twenty countries.

We have 11 fulltime teaching faculty members, 7 adjunct members

Many Faculty members participate in retreats, various theological dialogues and ecumenical conferences here and in other countries.

Many are recognized authors.

Holy Cross is a member of the Boston Theological Institute which is a unique consortium of ten theological schools in this region.

Holy Cross is a center of international orthodox theological conferences, ecumenical dialogues and interfaith discussions.

Holy Cross affirms the interrelationship of faith, learning, and service in the name of Christ. The School is engaged in a singular ministry of providing theological education and formation for future clergy and lay leaders.

This ministry is essential to the well-being and development of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese as well as to the witness of Orthodox Christianity in our own society and in other parts of the world. As a unique center of Orthodox theological education and formation, Holy Cross has a profound influence both within the Orthodox Church in this country and far beyond it.

The influence of Holy Cross reached far beyond the boundaries of our campus.

I had honor of speaking at the Interparliamentary Conference on Athens in 2005. It is now my honor to welcome you to our College and Theological School.



CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Mr. ANASTASIOS NERANTZIS

Member of the Hellenic Parliament

Secretary General of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy

Your Holiness,
Representatives of every Authority
and civil Power of this City, this State and this Country.
Dear professors,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to express the great honor to all of us, together with the emotion that our presence here causes us, at the very center of science, research, education, as well as of Orthodoxy to such a distant and unknown to us, the Europeans, continent.

From the very beginning, the issue of our active legitimation emerges:

Who are we? What is the purpose of us coming here?

What do we bring? For what reason such a noise?

We are Orthodox, but we start explaining ourselves unorthodoxically:

What we are not:

We are not a religious (even less, a para-religious organization). We are not a sect. We do not proselytize. We are not theologians. Clearly, we are neither clergy, nor missionaries. We are politicians, from various different political parties, from various factions and movements, from different countries. And indeed, not politicians in its generalized meaning (that is we are people who are working with some form of politics) but parliamentarians, namely, we are members of the Parliaments in our countries.

Other than the fact that we are members of national Parliaments, a connecting link among us is that we all follow the Christian Orthodox religion.

Therefore, we are an organization, named the «Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy», composed of members of Parliaments, who are Orthodox Christians from 26 (up to now) countries of the globe (Europe, Africa, Australia, America) and headquartered in Athens.

The key pillars of this Interparliamentary Assembly are two: Greece and Russia, countries with a long and fruitful Orthodox Christian tradition.

Our objectives are noble, altruistic and crystal clear: we wish to highlight the role of the Orthodox Christian faith, the principles and the central core of its teachings.

We seek to bring out the principles of peace, unity, reconciliation, approach, understanding, tolerance, respect for the personality and the diversity of the other human beings, brotherhood and altruism and with those as tools we work for a better world, for the qualitative improvement of the heritage we leave to those who come. We are neither naive, nor romantic, or unreasonable. We are down-to-earth and fighters. We pursue to overcome any extreme nationalistic, religious and confessional rivalries, the protection of the Orthodox Christian belief, but also we seek to care for the Christians themselves, protect them from persecutions, expulsions and exclusions. We struggle for the defense of human rights and the people's religious freedom.

To achieve our purpose we have made dozens of representations, which tend to be along these lines: resolutions, proclamations, meetings, contacts, visits, conferences, proclamations, publications, collaborations with international organizations, are some of the means we have used, up to now.

Perhaps if somebody would superficially consider all these points that I've just commented, he/she would say that all this activity of ours and our intended goals are remarkable, on the one hand, from a religious, social and moral standpoint, but on the other hand, they alienate us a lot from our capacity and legalization as politicians.

Such a thought is not only wrong, but is also unwitting.

We must not forget that politics is not just associated with ethics, but it is its logical continuation, its natural termination. That is politics is a human's moral "energy". That clearly sounds strange, nowadays, when politics is pursued in an atmosphere and in a manner of greed and vanity, with a frequent misappropriation of ideas and a dense forfeiting of interests, in many sectors. But all the above are the pathologies, the mask of real politics. Although in principle, listening about the relationship between politics and ethics, we are surprised, essentially, this is natural, since politics is basically an educational intention and activity. The politician educates people and his community, his fellow citizens. For that reason the Ancient Greeks were calling the legislators (for example, Lykourgos, Solon) divine.

Furthermore, it is worth to underline that nowadays politics is increasingly discredited, it is demonized for anything shameful, is incriminated for every type of injustice on the four corners of the earth, while the politicians are miserably ridiculed.

However at the bottom-line politics can be nothing else than a science of the Good

- but of what Good? Certainly, it is the science of the Good of the whole society, the common Good, the Good of both, states and individuals.

After all, wasn't Plato the one, who rightly believed, that **«the most beautiful thing that someone can do, in this world, is that of politics, the art , that is, to bring the ideal in the limelight, to incarnate the eternity in present time»?**

Just the wording of such an opinion causes laughter, including to those people who are not mistrustful. And that 's because, is the manner that, nowadays, the politicians are making policies, corresponding to the above? Certainly, not. But isn't that equally true for everything, nowadays? To the Christians we can say: **“You are Christians, you should behave as such, but you are neither philanthropists, nor merciful.** To the painters we can say **«produce the art of beauty, but please, have a look at your paintings, they are of bad taste, incomprehensible, without aesthetics».** We can incessantly put to everyone this question, that of the incarnation of the ideal to the real. And we'll conclude that they are not faithful to their ideals.

One of the basic roles of a politician is that he must be deeply human, trying to improve the life of his people, getting closer to them. It is now very common that the, poor, the outcasts, the vagabonds multiply quickly, in all the corners of the earth. This generalized, unfair inequality is unbearable. It will not be long before that day, in which those people, who today have nothing, will struggle, in every way, to take the place of those, who have everything. If we do not manage and achieve an equitable re-distribution of goods, then the social cauldron will explode and then all those people who we now call poor, vagabonds and tramps, will overran us, they will try to kill us, to steal our properties and to take our place in this world. The role of a true politician is to prevent these events. Then and only then, politics will really prove to be the science of the general Good and the politicians will emerge at the forefront of society.

Therefore by participating in this endeavor we do accomplish both things: on one hand, our Christian duty and on the other hand, our political status and while all our actions are kept intact and hearty.

So now that you know everything about us, please accept our warmest, heartfelt, thanks and our joy for the meeting.

We appreciate your hospitality!



“CHURCH AND STATE IN THE USA: A MODEL OF RELATIONSHIPS”

His Eminence

ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA

Esteemed Representatives of the Parliamentary Delegations,

It is my honor and my joy to welcome you to this very timely conference of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy. I welcome you to the Cradle of American Liberty, the city of Boston. And I welcome you to the campus of Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology, which constitutes an outstanding expression of our religious liberty in America, and a strong witness of the presence of Orthodoxy in the United States.

You have come as representatives of the beloved homelands of Orthodox Christianity in Europe and Asia, and as delegates from the Orthodox diaspora in Africa, Australia and South America. As I stand before you and behold this assembly, a splendid expression of Orthodox unity in ethnic diversity, I call to mind the words of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Colossians. He commends the Christian virtues: kindness, humility, patience, and forgiveness. And then he adds (Col. 3;14), *“But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”* May the love we share as Orthodox Christians—love for Christ, love for the Mother of God, love for the saints, and love for our Orthodox Church—may this love be truly that unique and spiritual bond of perfection among you in all your noble labors.

You begin today a consideration of the theme “Civil Society and Orthodoxy”, which could be a variation or a part of the theme “Church and State” in the contemporary world. This is an immense subject for study, and it can be illuminated by the centuries and millennia of experience of the Orthodox homelands, with their long and rich histories. By comparison, the history of civil society and religion in America is relatively

brief. Even so, there are several important aspects to observe related to the American experience that can be illuminating for nations around the world.

We have said already that this Interparliamentary Assembly is absolutely timely. You arrive in the immediate aftermath of our national elections on November 6, just two weeks ago. This election itself was a tremendous expression of religious liberty and tolerance. It has been known that demographically the largest bloc of American voters is white and Protestant; however, none of the presidential or vice-presidential candidates for the major parties was a white Protestant! Perhaps even more remarkable is that this fact drew almost no attention during the campaign. While there will always be sectarian strife and religion-related conflicts, even wars, among humankind, here in America it remains largely a conflict of words only, and in recent decades, quite muted words as well.

It is worth reflecting, therefore, and having a closer look on the truly interesting model of Church-State relationships that is found here in the United States: first, by considering the origins and history of this model, and then by observing how this model plays out in the contemporary world. Such a closer look, I hope, it will offer positive insights into the topic of the present meeting “Civil Society and Orthodoxy”.

I. History and Rationale of the Church-State Relationship in America

When you traveled in recent days to attend this assembly, most of you undoubtedly flew across the Atlantic, a trip of several hours. When the Pilgrims arrived in America at Plymouth Rock in 1620, their passage by ship took more than two months, nearly seventy days across rough seas, and a very threatening ocean. Only an exceedingly strong motive could impel families with children to leave behind homes and kinsfolk to travel to the New World. For the Pilgrims, and for many of the colonists who followed them, the motivation was neither profit nor discovery. They sought rather the freedom to worship God in peace, according to the dictates of their own conscience.

The desire for religious freedom brought the Puritans to Massachusetts, the Baptists to Rhode Island, the Catholics to Maryland, the Quakers to Pennsylvania, and in every place Anglicans as well as “dissenters” from the Church of England. Colonial America was settled by people who took theology seriously. They would rather risk their lives on the unknown American frontier after a dangerous trip rather than compromise their conscience back in the security of their homeland. Not finding religious tolerance in the Old World, they were determined not to allow such a phenomenon to happen to others in the New World. But over time the American colonies adopted a broad commitment to the idea that no man should be prevented from freely exercising his own beliefs or, conversely, compelled to support a faith contrary to his own.

Freedom of conscience was the crux of the matter. The claims of competing religions could not be evaluated by reason alone; ultimately such things come down to

personal experiences of the uniqueness of our relationship with God. Obviously, all reasonable people agree that the human soul is damaged whenever it is forced to participate in something contrary to conscience. James Madison, perhaps the most brilliant of all America's founding fathers, once said that "Conscience is the most sacred of all property."¹ This idea is not far from our own Orthodox spiritual understanding.

In Madison's "Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," he gives the key argument for the American policy of freedom from compulsion in all religious matters, especially compulsion coming from the State. In four sentences he lays out the case; his logic is convincing:

"If", he says, "all men are by nature equally free and independent," then all men are to be considered as entering into Society on equal conditions; as relinquishing no more, and therefore retaining no less, one than another, of their natural rights. Above all are they to be considered as retaining an "equal title to the free exercise of Religion according to the dictates of Conscience." Whilst we assert for ourselves a freedom to embrace, to profess and to observe the Religion which we believe to be of divine origin, we cannot deny an equal freedom to those whose minds have not yet yielded to the evidence which has convinced us. If this freedom be abused, it is an offence against God, not against man.

Freedom of conscience is the fundamental freedom. For this reason the Bill of Rights, that was added to the Constitution, was given as its First Amendment not the freedom of speech but freedom of religion, and even as necessary, freedom from religion.

II. The Dynamics of Church and State Separation in America

There are many religious leaders who wrongly see the American system of liberties, and particularly religious liberty, as license to immorality and faithlessness. It is ironic, then, to learn that the World Values Survey of 2005 to 2007 showed that the rates of weekly attendance at religious services is higher in the United States than most of the countries on earth². From the nation's founding, Americans have been and remained a highly religious people. Freedom and tolerance based on a strict separation of Church and State have not eroded faith, but enhanced it.

¹ Essay on Property, *The National Gazette*, March 29, 1792.

²In Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*; New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010, page 9.

This high degree of religiosity might become a source of tremendous friction, even conflict, in a diverse society committed to the principle of Church-State separation. Yet incidents of violence due to religion have been rare in America's history. Even now, the battles are joined in the courtroom rather than in the squares and streets of our cities.

Since the time of this nation's independence, Americans have struggled with their two-fold intention to keep religion free from government control and to keep government free from religious coercion. The wall of separation between Church and State has grown steadily over the years as our society has recognized the need to accommodate the conscience of every religious group. Not many years ago most every town square had at Christmastime a scene of the stable in Bethlehem, complete with life-size figurines of the Holy Family, the shepherds and Magi, and even the ox and donkey. Today these manger scenes are rare, since it is now understood that public funds and public property cannot be used to advance one religion's sacred history, even if it is a history accepted by the majority of citizens. Nonetheless, there will be found this December in nearly every city and town in the land a Christmas tree, decorated with lights and perhaps some ornaments expressing the diversity of our communities. Even at the White House in Washington there is a national Christmas tree, as well as a national menorah, but both are accepted as symbols of the spiritual heritage of Americans, not as statements of faith.

American money is stamped with the expression "In God We Trust," but not a single one of these dollars may be given by the government to any religious agency in advancement of its creed. However, faith-based schools and organizations may receive public funding for those activities which contribute social services that benefit all citizens without respect to religion.

In our public schools, the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag is recited daily, a pledge which speaks of "one nation under God." Nonetheless, this God may not be invoked in prayer in our public schools. But prayers in the form of invocations and benedictions are very frequent in many public events.

Our federal government endorses no creed, yet the inauguration of the President includes overtly religious acts: a worship service at the National Cathedral, invocations and benedictions by ordained clergy, patriotic songs with religious themes, and the administration of an oath with a hand on the Bible. Our Congress opens its sessions with prayer, and there is a long tradition of chaplains for both houses of Congress, serving the spiritual needs of our representatives and senators of all faith traditions. Congress also recognizes Christmas and Western Easter as federal holidays and takes breaks on these days. Despite legal challenges over the years to these practices, American courts consistently uphold these long-standing customs as being consistent with the intentions of the Constitution. The American arrangement of Church and State can be stated simply thus: we practice a strict separation while publicly encouraging strong religiosity. The basic idea is that the separation between Church and State is not a hostile but a friendly separation protecting in essence the freedom of religion.

III. Conclusion

The founding fathers of the American republic held a special respect for the French thinker Montesquieu. Never far from their thoughts on government were his remarks in his book *The Spirit of the Laws*. Montesquieu writes that each kind of government must cultivate a certain kind of citizen. A tyranny or a dictatorship needs to inculcate the cultivation of fear. But a democracy, Montesquieu says, depends on the cultivation of *virtue* in its citizens. In order for the people to govern themselves, they must acquire a principled sense of self-limitation, of self-discipline. Without this, citizens will receive their liberty as license for self-gratification, leading to the breakdown of order and society.

In America it is held nearly as axiomatic that religion provides the necessary training in virtue necessary for democracy. Religion serves as the first school of spirituality for the vast majority of mankind. The idea of a Creator God, who made all people in His own image, is the basic principle of human equality and worth. The idea of the soul, and the concern for good conscience, emanate from the belief in spirit that is shared by every religious tradition. Without these core beliefs, many Americans would say, democracy is impossible. One American President, George H.W. Bush, once even went so far as to say that atheism and patriotism are incompatible.

The virtues of fairness, forgiveness, diligence, and hope depend on religious concepts. Above all, *love* is the *bond of perfection* that holds a republic together: love for one's fellow man, love for the common good, love for values and ideals higher than any material gain. Americans believe that virtue is necessary for democracy to succeed; that religion is necessary for virtue to be cultivated; and that freedom of conscience is necessary for religion to be genuine. Therefore, America remains a country strong in religiosity and yet strict in the separation of Church and State.

I hope that the world's Orthodox political leaders of this auspicious Assembly will have the opportunity to compare the American model of Church and State separation with the pertinent models existing in Europe and elsewhere. Such a comparison might be fruitful in solving some problems related to the complicated relationships between Church and State in our contemporary world. You, the world's Orthodox political leaders, belonging to a two thousand years rich relevant tradition, are in the advantageous position to bring, with the help of God, to the discussion significant ideas and insights. I can assure you that several American political leaders expect from us this kind of a truly noble and creative contribution.



DEMOCRACY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOXY

ANDREW S. NATSIOS

Executive Professor

George H.W. Bush School of Government and Public Service

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here today and to speak at this conference. I actually was not aware of the existence of this organization until the invitation for this conference arrived. It's a wonderful idea and I am very pleased that it exists; we should encourage its expansion to other countries. Because of the unfolding of historical forces, the economic political crisis in Europe, and the uprising in the Arab world we face greater instability than at any time since the late 1940's. Our civilization is at risk and that's the subject of my comments today, perhaps IAO can work towards strengthening relationships among political leaders in Orthodox countries during this time of crisis. There are church historians and theologians here, so I am not going to attempt to speak about something I am not an expert in.

We are going through a world-wide economic crisis. Parliamentarians from Greece know this better than any of us from personal experience. Spain is now entering the same crisis as Ireland has and Portugal; France and Italy could well be next. The European Union is under severe stress: it's the greatest crisis that the EU has been through since its creation. These kinds of crisis, wherever they are, often lead to political extremism. And there is a second set of crisis and that's in the North Africa and the Middle East; we are watching this unfold in Syria now. Some commentators use the term 'Arab Spring' to describe events in the region. That's not a good description of what's happening. Before the turmoil in the Arab world is over this may turn into the 'Arab Winter'.

For 23 years I have dealt with the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan as a humanitarian aid officer, a diplomat, and now as a writer. My short history of modern Sudan was published earlier this year. The leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan—Hassan al-Turabi—I have known for more than twenty years. He is a brilliant and dangerous man. Turabi's

niece married Osama Bin Laden, he invited Bin Laden to live in Sudan. Turabi was the Minister of Justice under President Numyeri who introduced legislation to replace the secular legal code in Sudan with Sharia Law, which include in it hadood, the cross amputation of a hand and foot for certain crimes, and crucifixion for capital crimes.

In 1989 when I served as Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in USAID in the administration of George W. Bush, the first cable I read reported that Southern (African-Christian) soldiers who had been captured by the Northern (Muslim-Arab) army during the North-South civil war were being executed by crucifixion. The hadood punishment was regularly carried out in Khartoum at the National Stadium. Hundreds of churches were burned down. Clergy were executed. Women were taken out of professional jobs and sent back to the home, and not allowed to be in the workplace. This not a lecture about Sudan, but the Muslim brotherhood has now taken over in Egypt and Tunisia and it could well take over in Libya, Syria and Yemen. Now the Muslim Brotherhood is a very complex movement. It's entirely possible that they will involve into more tolerant form of Islam, perhaps like the Turkish State as opposed to the Iranian State. We don't know where the Brotherhood is headed, but we do know one country that's been governed for 23 years by the Muslim brotherhood and that's Sudan.

The President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes against his own people, is one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan. The US Committee for Refugees estimates that 1.5 million people have been killed in the war with the civil war in the South, since Bashir took over; and another 300,000 died in Darfur during the rebellion beginning in 2003. It is not a pretty picture. The Muslim Brotherhood has a troubling history of extremism, disrespect for human life, and for human rights. It has a history of committing mass atrocities against its opponents. We should all be deeply concerned about our fellow Orthodox Christians, the Copts, in the Oriental Church, because of the direction of President Morsi is taking Egypt. The Copts are at risk.

There are million and a half Christians, many of them Orthodox, in Syria. They are seriously at risk caught between the two sides in the Civil War. No matter who wins they are at risk. We are about to see a crisis begin momentarily between Hamas, which governs Gaza, and Israel. It appears that many of the weapons that left Libya when Gaddafi's regime collapsed are now spread out across North Africa including weapons of mass destruction: chemical weapons, yellowcake (a precursor to fissionable material to make nuclear weapons), shoulder-held anti-aircraft weapons. Some analyst believe those weapons have made their way to Gaza. And Israel is very nervous now as to what this means for their security. So I think we face an additional crisis. I don't have to discuss what's happening in Iran.

There has been a chaotic transfer of power in China. There is a resurgent Chinese neo-communist movement that is extremely nationalist, jingoist, extremist that wish-

es to return to the communist past. The new technocrats who are market-oriented and do not appear to be expansionary at this point. This ruling party has been able to suppress these neo-communists—so far. But they are throughout the military and the secret police in China. And my Chinese friends are very concerned that they are rising in power. I believe within the next three years North Korea will collapse as a state. We could see conflict on the Korean Peninsula. We are beginning a period in my view of sustained long-term instability and violence in the international order, which will mean wars between states and within states. We are entering a period where there will be a rise of political extremism of the far left and the far right. I am not talking about center-right/center-left, traditional parties. I am talking about the most extreme elements and anti-democratic forces that seem to undermine democratic institutions. Not just in the West but in all across the globe. We are seeing this in Latin America now. I think democracy is at risk, democratic institutions are at risk and human rights are at risk. The post-World War II period which saw the rise of democracy and free markets and emphasis upon human rights at least among allies of the West; this accelerated after the collapse of the Soviet empire. My comments may concern some of you but my own observation is that these threats to democracy are moving forward. The question is how can this interparliamentary body and the Orthodox Church work toward mitigating or limiting the affects of this violent upheaval we are beginning to see.

Now it's interesting that we are seeing a resurgent of the Orthodox Church in Greece. Some Greek governments in the past have been hostile to the Church and limited the Church or tried to undermine it. What's happening now in Greece is that people are under so much economic distress they are turning to the Church from a humanitarian stand point. The Church is managing feeding kitchens in Athens which is their historic role. We know St. Basil the Great began the great charitable tradition in the East. He established a chain of homes, when he was bishop in the fourth century, for unwed mothers so that they would not have abortions, for children who did not have parents, for orphans. He established hospitals, homes for the elderly who had no one to care for them, and homes for orphaned children. The Orthodox Church actually began the western charitable tradition even before the Western Church did. And I am proud that I served some years ago on the Board of Directors of International Orthodox Christian Charities with my friend Father Triandafilou, the President of Hellenic College. We now have FOCUS which is a Pan-Orthodox domestic charitable network in United States. Given the economic distress that Orthodox countries are under, I think one of our priorities must be to strengthen the charitable function of the Church and revive in a robust fashion the theology and the traditions that were in terms of charity that St.Basil the Great gave us seventeen centuries ago.

In the 21st Century another area of witness for the Orthodox Church should be in support of democracy and human rights. We do not have clear doctrines in the Orthodox Church on democracy and human rights. The Roman Catholics have the Magisterium which is the teaching authority of the Church in the Vatican. The Roman Catholic Church had an ambivalent theological view of democracy until Pope John Paul II issued his Encyclical Letter called *Centesimus Annus* which firmly endorsed democracy, democratic institutions, and processes as an inherent part of Catholic teaching. However, having clear statements on major issues of public policy that have profound moral implications is a wise role for the Orthodox Church. How that should happen I leave to the Hierarchy, his Eminence, and the Orthodox Bishops to decide how to do this.

The Protestants—and I was Protestant for many years as some of you know—have tended to make statements on every single public issue even though many have limited moral implications. This has damaged the teaching authority of the Church. All issues that affect the sanctity of life have theological implications. A million people are still in slavery, literal slavery, in the world today. Saint Gregory of Nyssa condemned slavery in the 4th century. St. John made prophetic statements on the proper use of wealth and on social justice, which is what got him into trouble with the Emperor and Empress. So we have a shining example in our own Church speaking out in a very public way in the 4th century by the greatest saint of the Eastern Church.

The Orthodox Church has not made a definitive statement on democracy and human rights perhaps because some of Orthodox Churches were dominant in countries with autocratic or even totalitarian traditions. Given the historic time we now are in, I think we should make a definitive statement in some depth, with careful theological reasoning to support the notion of democratic governance and protection of human rights. It is a fundamental theological principle of Orthodox Christianity that all people have been made in God's image. If you violate people's humanity you are in fact attacking God because we are made in his image. I've been to twelve civil wars over the last 23 years. I witnessed the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide where I entered a church where 800 women and children had been hacked to death and their bodies were still in the church. 900,000 Tutsi's were murdered in a three-month period in 1994 when the world watched and did nothing. We still have terrible atrocities being committed around the world and the international community gives speeches and resolutions of the U.N. But they don't act. This is not the place to discuss what to do that, but these atrocities are an egregious violation of human dignity and human rights. The Church should speak out on these issues.

So beyond the issue of democracy and human rights and the issue of the expansion of the charitable mission of the Orthodox Church, the third issue that I would like to raise today is the issue of the religious freedom, which is related to the question of human rights. Now it's possible that Muslim Brotherhood theologians will moderate and find

some way of writing the new Egyptian constitution to protect the rights of the Copts and other minority groups, but I have great doubts if that is going to happen. My friends who are Copts are panicked over what is happening. And there is a great stream of Copts leaving Egypt for the United States and other countries which protect religious freedom. So the question is how the Orthodox Church can expand the already very powerful witness. His holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch is a leading public advocate on the question of religious liberty and of tolerance. I think we need to continue to support his leadership on this issue: it is essential that the Orthodox Church be in front of this, but we can't just do it in Orthodox countries, we need to do it in the Middle East, we need to do it across the world. Churches should be making unified statements on the question of religious liberty to support the Ecumenical Patriarch in his efforts in this respect. I would invite the Russian Church and the Ukrainian Church, the Bulgarian Church and the Romanian Church because our brothers and sisters in Egypt and Syria are at risk we need all of the Orthodox Churches to speak out in a unified way.

Unless we do this I think they will be at risk. I don't know whether we are facing what we did in the 1930s before the Second World War and the Holocaust took place and all the horrendous upheaval that took place in that period between 1940 and 1950. There is a fear among some historians and theorists of international relations who are friends of mine of what will take place in the next decade. If we do not affirm the historic teaching of the Church and unify the Orthodox Churches in clear statements on these issues we may look back one day and say why we were silent. Why we did not speak out when we had the chance. When democratic institutions were at risk and under attack we remained silent. When human rights were under attack we said nothing. We do not want to be in a position 20 or 30 years from now looking back and saying why we were silent. Now I'm not saying we are entirely silent; we ought to be organizing ourselves in a much more aggressive way among all of the Orthodox traditions to make public statements on these issues. We are the dominant church in many countries, so I appeal to this group because there are politicians who can take the lead. And the more voices speak out with clear statements the more likely we will have success.

I've gone a little bit beyond a limited civil society role for the Church, but I think the Churches' role of prophetic witness is the most powerful part of civil society. When I was Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development I always tried to meet with the religious leaders regardless of their traditions. In September of 2001, just before the attack on the United States, I was visiting the Republic of Macedonia and asked to meet with the Macedonian-Albanian Imam, the Archbishop of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian-Jewish community leader, and the Macedonian Methodist Church (the Prime Minister at the time, Boris Trakovski, was an ordained Methodist pastor) because violence was spreading in the country between the Muslim and Orthodox community. The American Ambassador told me he was concerned what

would happen at the meeting which he was organizing for me because the leaders had never met before in a meeting, which I found astonishing. We did meet for two hours where I simply asked questions and at the end requested the four leaders to draft a statement urging the political issues between religious and ethnic groups in the country be resolved peacefully through political dialogue without violence. In the United States, our religious leaders meet regularly, which I was naïve enough to believe, happened around the world regularly. The US system of religious tolerance and even cooperation which we share with other developed democratic countries is an aberration, not the norm in the rest of the world. One of the reasons we don't have violence here I think is because our leaders of our religious traditions do meet. And I began doing this wherever I would travel and it was fascinating to watch the dynamics. I'm not sure that the American system is transferable to the rest of the world with respect to the religious tolerance, but certainly getting the leaders of different traditions in different countries to talk to each other is a first step in the process of reconciliation and the building of a tolerant society.

Thank you for inviting me to address this group at this conference.



DEMOCRACY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOXY

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Good morning to everyone. Good morning, Your Eminence and distinguished members of the delegation. Thank you for the invitation to be here today and to share some reflections on the connections between civil society, democracy, and religion, especially as these relate to Orthodoxy. As it turns out, what I have planned to say actually amplifies what my fellow panelist, Dr. Natsios, has just discussed, and also, resonates with some of the points that His Eminence made in his opening address last evening. I'm going to present three points regarding the theme of today's colloquium.

I understand that my role here is to offer up some reflections intended to facilitate a thoughtful, constructive discussion about how Orthodox actors in various institutional contexts can engage in and contribute to civil society and democracy. So, rather than an academic paper, I'll present some reflections, or thought-points, for our general consideration.

My first point is quite straightforward and, while, self-evident, is worthy of emphasis, because it helps us to focus on the relationship and reflexivity between civil society and democracy. Simply put, there is an indisputable, strong correlation, a positive correlation, between civil society, on the one hand, and democracy, on the other. We could sum up this positive correlation by saying that "as civil society goes, so goes democracy, and vice versa."

There is a host of empirical data demonstrating the importance of a dynamic, competitive, autonomous civil society, based on principals of tolerance and respect for pluralism, for the sustainability of a robust, healthy democracy. I don't mean a formalistic

democracy, or the trappings of democracy expressed in ritualistic voting and showcase laws; I mean democracy that has substance and quality, where there is actually a measurable connection between popular will expressed in free elections and rule of law. This kind of democracy implies uncompromising protection of the equality and freedom of all citizens before the state, and unwavering protection of the equality of individual rights of each and every citizen. This is democracy built on what the renowned political scientist Alfred Stepan has called “the twin tolerations.”

Again, this sort of claim, about the positive correlation and reflexivity between civil society and democracy may seem self-evident. Indeed, it may be perfectly sensible in conceptual and intuitive terms to all of us in this room. It certainly makes sense to those of us, like Dr. Natsios and myself, and to the members of this IAO Delegation, who have been in the field, whether in the context of state diplomacy, elected office, or non-governmental efforts. And, I believe that this connection between civil society and democracy is one that the Orthodox Church understands as well, although the Church may not utilize the same vocabulary to express the same, unabiding commitments to universal rights of freedom and equality for all human beings. I will come back to this point in a bit.

The real challenges come, of course, in operationalizing the correlation, in figuring out how to deepen and broaden civil society, concomitant with our focus on how to develop the norms and institutions of democracy. How do we measure improvements in civil society on the ground? How can we measure the qualitative enhancement of democratic norms, institutions, and processes? We can discuss this as a group, but it is worth noting that there is a rich set of materials dealing with the nexus between democracy and civil society, including country-specific data, cross-national comparisons, and analyses of geographic, economic, and religious variables, as well. I would urge you to consult work by Freedom House, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the US Agency for International Development, amongst others. Particularly when it comes to thinking about the diversity of spaces in civil society where religion can make a difference, these studies and reports can be especially helpful, because they allow religious actors, like the Orthodox Church, to learn the vocabulary and activities of international policymakers who may well become partners in shared initiatives to deepen civil society and enhance democracy. For elected officials such as those of you who make up the IAO Delegation, these resources can help put into broader context much of what you may encounter on the ground in your own countries and regions.

As a footnote to this first comment, let me also remind us that we need to be clear when we use the terms democracy and civil society. It may well be that we share a loose consensus on the meaning and measures of democracy, but I would wager that there is less clarity in how we understand and evaluate civil society. So, let me be clear about

how I'm using the term civil society, particularly insofar as this relates to our thinking about religion as force for building a civil society that operates on principles of equality and tolerance and, therefore, that contributes to sustainable democratization.

I use civil society to mean, quite simply, everything that is not the State. This means, then, that civil society includes the economy, politics, religious activities, the space and activities of culture, public health issues and initiatives, and activities affecting and related to the environment. In other words, civil society encompasses a spectrum of sectors and activities that are separate from, that do not form part of, and ideally, that are not controlled by, the State. We need to understand civil society as an autonomous sphere of myriad activities which constitute a response to, a critical voice vis-à-vis, the State. And the diversity, the vibrancy, the competitiveness, the liveliness, of this non-State sphere, as well as the spectrum of non-State actors which constitute and inhabit it, is directly related to health of any democracy: civil society is both expression of and contributor to democracy.

Where does religion fit in this schematic? That's what we're here to consider, I believe, with particular focus on Orthodox Christianity. How can religion, in general, and Orthodoxy, more specifically, participate in civil society in a manner that contributes to the public good? What are the ways that, by virtue of its participation in civil society, religion/Orthodoxy can strengthen the foundational norms and vital institutions of democracy? How can Orthodox Christianity contribute, through its theology and its praxis, to a conception of democracy that is universal in scope? I'll elaborate a bit more on these questions as I move, now, to my second and third points.

This brings me to my second point, which will amplify one of the core messages in Archbishop Demetrios' address to us last evening. The Archbishop's review of the centrality of religious freedom to the founding of the United States was a timely reminder of the foundational importance of religious freedom for the positive correlation between civil society and democracy. In fact, the founders of the United States understood religious freedom to be the cornerstone of the American democratic experiment, and the First Amendment, with its Free Exercise Clause and Establishment Clause, makes religious freedom an inalienable right for all citizens of the United States of America.

In this sense, the United States is a compelling example of a broader, empirical reality: namely, that religious freedom is a metric for evaluating and tracking the strength of the correlation between democracy and civil society. Simply put, there is overwhelming evidence showing that states which impose limitations on or violate religious freedom tend to have weak civil societies and the formalistic trappings of democracy, at best. And the worst? Conversely, states which violate, curb, or breach their citizens' rights of religious freedom invariably have weak civil societies and regimes that we would not consider democratic—in fact, that we would consider to be authoritarian and totalitarian.

When we refer to religious freedom, we are making reference to freedom of religion, conscience, or belief. The specifics of religious freedom as a universal human right are detailed in such documents as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and countries that sign international human rights instruments are acknowledging, at least, on paper, that freedom of religion, conscience, or belief is an inalienable human right. These rights—of belief and practice—also include the right to share one’s belief, the right to change one’s belief, and equally important, the right to have no belief or to disbelieve. So, religious freedom is complicated; but the complex, inter-related set of rights associated with religious freedom are demonstrably important to a healthy civil society and a robust democracy.

It’s worth pointing out that there are many different arrangements around the world whereby we can see the application of religious freedom in ways that enhance the positive correlation of democracy and civil society. Or to put it differently, constitutional protections, religion (church)-state relationships, legal protections, for expressing a country’s commitment to religious freedom, look different in different places—so, everything doesn’t have to look like the United States and the First Amendment. We can look at places like Denmark, we can look at places like Sweden, both of which have very high degrees of religious freedom and which allow for the participation of religion in civil society; they are also countries which have robust democratic regimes. Yet, if we compare those case, along with the US, we see great diversity in the application of religious freedom rights, but striking commonality in the fact that religion plays a role in the discourses and activities of civil society, thereby contributing to the kind of pluralism and tolerance that makes for a strong democracy. Dr. Natsios spoke eloquently about will and capacity of religions to act as a kind of public critic and to speak with a voice that holds states accountable and hold one another accountable in civil society. I would add that, were we see this sort of behavior and action by religious groups—whether by official representatives of institutional religion, or simply, by citizens and/or elected officials who are acting from their religious conscience—we also see advances in religious freedom and improvements in democracy.

Of course, at the opposite end of the spectrum, we have cases where there are very low degrees of religious freedom, and in those cases, we also find weak civil society and authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Here again, it’s worth thinking in comparative terms, in order to recognize that, beyond the obvious violators of religious freedom, there are more subtle, yet equally egregious, forms of violation. For example, few would quibble with the claim that religious fundamentalist regimes operate with a totalizing ideology and, therefore, oppose a competitive and dynamic civil society, and are likewise, incompatible with democratic principles, laws, and behaviors. Cases such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Sudan fall into this category. Yet we also see cases where there are no religious forms of authoritarianism—indeed, where regimes identify themselves as

secular—but where religious freedom (freedom of religion, belief, and conscience) is limited and controlled by the State; and so, religious activity in civil society is penalized through arbitrary actions of the State, albeit by using laws on the books. This kind of impunity is the hallmark of secular authoritarian regimes, like China and Turkey under decades of Kemalist governments. What becomes clear in both of these cases, countries whose constitutions identify the State as secular, is that religious freedom measures are very poor; and likewise, civil society is not autonomous from the State (as evidenced by arbitrary State interventions in and controls over civil society) and democracy is either highly circumscribed or under-developed (it would be difficult to characterize China as a political democracy, notwithstanding the economic liberalization there, and Turkey's democracy is, at best, a guided democracy).

By way of wrapping up this second point, I want to remind us that religious freedom—or, freedom of conscience, belief, and religion—involves far more than the right to worship and practice and, indeed, is inseparable from what Orthodox Christians might define as an ontological quality, namely, freedom of conscience and belief. The cases where we see high levels and expansive protections of religious freedom, and conversely, the cases where those are absent, also present an interesting study in contrasts when it comes to religious freedom as a right that involves conscience and belief, and is not simply reduced to practice and worship.

Turning to my third and final point, let me offer some reflections on the specifics of Orthodox Christianity when it comes to thinking about, and most importantly, engaging in civil society and promoting democracy. I begin with the matter of perspective, as I think it's fair to say that we each bring our own specific, highly personal, interpretation, or perspective, undoubtedly based on our experiences, to the ways in which we think about Orthodoxy, civil society, and democracy.

In my case, my perspective (or, perspectives, more accurately) draws on my identity as an American citizen, an Orthodox Christian, a woman and family member, as well as on my professional experiences as an academic, scholar, teacher, and retired US diplomat having served for eight years on the US Commission on international religious freedom. Each of you brings your own perspective—for example, as members of the I.A.O Delegation, you are here by virtue of your identities as Orthodox Christians and elected political representatives in your respective countries—to how you understand the relevance of Orthodoxy to building vibrant civil societies and strong democracies. In my case, so many of the points made by Dr. Natsios resonated deeply with me.

Above all, what I would say to those who problematize about the role of Orthodox Christianity in civil society and democracy is quite simple: there is no doubt that the theology of the Orthodox Church calls for engagement, not for withdrawal and complacency or, worse, for indifference and insularity. In fact, the transformational theology of Orthodoxy, which teaches that humankind is in the world but not of the world,

implies a responsibility for each and every person to engage, to participate, and to try to make change, in a manner that is consistent with and that fulfils the principles of freedom and equality that are intrinsic to our humanity. I leave it for the theologians at this colloquium and, especially, then, for those of you on the upcoming panel, to lay out the theological rationale and parameters for what I would call an Orthodox theology of global engagement. However, despite the fact that I am a political scientist and public policymaker, and not a theologian, I have no doubt about the full compatibility, complementarity, and synergy between, on the one hand, Orthodox Christian ideas about the ontological condition of freedom that defines each and every person, as well as the belief that each and every person is created in the image of God, and on the other hand, the foundational norms of freedom and equality which are a *sine qua non* for a healthy and sustainable democracy that goes beyond procedural formalisms and for a vibrant civil society that functions according to the logic of pluralism.

My conviction in the compatibility of these theological principles and political and civic ideas leads inexorably and logically to my commitment to and service on behalf of religious freedom as a universal right—to believe in any faith, or not to believe in a faith, to share one's religious and non-religious beliefs, and to change those beliefs—that is intrinsic to all human beings. In this regard, the Orthodox Church, and all those who constitute the Orthodox Church around the world, can help to strengthen democratic ideas and institutions, as well as to enliven civil society, by becoming theologically literate and, therefore, by recognizing the individual, personal responsibility to live a life of activism, in whatever manner that may entail, in support of universal human rights.

Of course, this requires that Orthodox leaders, whether leaders in churches, in civil society organizations, or in politics and public service, think about the spaces and mechanisms for having the greatest positive impact. In other words, are there certain types of activities in which Orthodox actors may bring a comparative advantage in delivery of services, in shaping discourse and message, towards the goals of democratization and deepening of civil society? There are some models that are instructive in answering this question—the exemplary work of the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) is a case in point, as are the global environmental dialogue initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. These are only two examples, and it is an encouraging sign that there are myriad other initiatives and activities in diverse geographic settings, whereby we can begin to evaluate the contributions of Orthodox Christianity to strengthening human rights and, thereby, to improving the positive correlation between democracy and civil society.

I look forward to the remaining presentations and to the discussion, in order to fill out today's exploration of Orthodoxy's approach to and engagement with democracy and civil society.

DEMOCRACY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOXY

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Your Excellencies and Reverends!

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues!

Today we are discussing the issue of “Civil Society and Orthodoxy”. It is a complicated topic for discussion, which originally seems to contain insoluble contradictions. Indeed, the very **discourse of the problem under consideration refers to the two antipodes: to the civil society as a product of modernity, and to the Orthodoxy as a complex and patriarchal system of traditional values and beliefs.** And yet, as paradigm Orthodoxy originally has its own dialectical integrity that allows Orthodoxy not only to survive in the modern world, but even successfully compete in society with other doctrines and religious cult teachings.

It’s important not just to mark this phenomenon of “the revival of Orthodoxy” in the post-communist societies of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, but also to capture the interest of Orthodoxy as to a curious phenomenon in the life of a very large group of people from the countries of the Old and New World, in Africa and Asia. Orthodoxy today is active, is a living religion and it is important to understand the nature and resources of this phenomenon in the current challenging era of global change in the life of all mankind.

There is no doubt that today Orthodoxy is experiencing a great interest both on the part of long-standing and deep-structured societies, as well as on the part of the societies in turmoil, of the new democracies with all their problems and shortcomings. But how did this phenomenon arise? After all, some thirty years ago it seemed that the XX century, under the pressure of socialist ideas, will sink into history as the time of the final breaking up with archaism of the late rudimental feudalism and deteriorated classical capitalism in the Marxist model with all of its generic and acquired sores and injuries.

At the end of the twentieth century, all humanity was faced with an amazing phenomenon, that of the so-called “religious revival”, first in the Soviet Union during its sunset period, and later in other countries of the former communist bloc, which stayed there for quite a long time and is valid even to this day. **At the core of the “religious revival” in post-communist societies of Europe lies the great interest of people to Orthodoxy.** The peoples of this region are historically accustomed to such a religious and spiritual experience, as well as to its traditional and cultural component.

Simultaneously, in the same period, another new trend begins to develop - the global factor of “Islamic Revival”, which has also significantly affected the countries of the post-communist world, but this topic is not the subject of our report, due to the crucial, fundamental difference of this phenomenon, from the “Orthodox Renaissance”.

There is one more parallel process, that is equally evident and on which we are also not going to dwell upon for the same reason, as it is not the topic of this conference. However, we will make a passing mention of it. We are talking about the phenomenon of “neo-paganism”, which contains all the features of “post-secular consciousness”, that is very similar to the other **phenomenon of the current modernity, yet unstudied by the colleague philosophers, or rather of a “post-modernity”, which I would call “religious atheism”, that is involving every time more and more new followers.**

Neopaganism, as well as the so-called “religious atheism” are both unmistakable products of modernity, or rather postmodernity and, therefore, of civil society, that is developing now in the model of “post-secular” world. Those New Age trends are trying to totally dominate within the so-called globalization, as the most important liberal project, where by definition, there seems to be no place and no opportunity for large-scale implementation of the religious, ethical, cultural and spiritual projects resting on the basis of tradition in its larger context. Such a liberal project is initially intended to destroy tradition and diminish it to the insignificant, peripheral or enclave limits. The values and beliefs of traditional cultures and religions are alien and even hostile to modernity.

In this context, it’s curious to know what forces have put forward their free-standing project in the form of “Orthodox revival” in the post-communist countries, plunged into the process of profound democratic reforms? We can even narrow down extremely the question: **How positive is the process of the Orthodox revival for the purpose of promoting of the ideas of civil society as a global program of democratization and adoption of liberal values and beliefs?** How much this religious revival corresponds to the natural development of global history of all the times?

After all, the very meaning of the word “revival” implies a certain restoration and even ordinary repetition, epigonism. Then, in this regard, the question is whether the retrograde motion or restoration, being a reverse of the historical course, corresponds to those deep and fundamental interests of humanity as a whole and of each specific nation in particular on the path of progressive development? **Since any repetition is**

secondary and devoid of the original creative impulse, therefore, it carries a good deal of the reactionary charge that is aimed not to the creation of a new, but to upholding the old, which by itself is counterproductive.

None of the major philosophers in Russia gave up discovering an answer to the question: Is this “religious revival” really so good for the society, is it efficient enough by itself? Isn't it just a revolt of religious and political epigones?

In the former USSR countries and in the post-communist world in general, it is commonly believed that “religious revival”, especially in its Orthodox version, is an absolute good, because it is aimed at spiritual recovery of society. Unfortunately, more or less accurate results of this 20-year period of “recovery” are not known yet. Perhaps this process for obtaining positive results will require a longer time.

However, there was a priori a certain ideology that the Orthodox revival, even in the contradictory framework of promotion of civil society and democratic values is nothing but an absolute good. The Orthodox revival is being provided with all possible assistance from the part of various state institutions in such countries as, let 's say Russia, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Serbia, FYROM, etc. But how big is the resource of this “religious revival”? What if this process is also expected to get through its reversion, in accordance to the well-known laws of social development? And if so, when can we expect this retrograde motion? How society should be prepared for its emergence?

Speaking on the reasons for the appearance of the “Orthodox revival” it should be pointed out that in the final quarter of the last century, some brilliant intellectuals have thought about the problems of possible reversibility, or the so-called “back down” or in Greek “palinode or recantation of history.” For example, the French thinker Zh. Bodriyyar claimed that **“in the 80's of the XXth century the history turned back.”** Interesting conclusions on this subject are contained in the report “1989 in the Russian and world history”, prepared by the Gorbachev Foundation, which also stated that it was **the year of 1989 that became the moment of hanging up, stop and turn of the history, when the powerful world players did not want or were unable to give the necessary impetus to the course of the world history in order to make it move forward within the progressive model.** Influential world forces, after having stopped the process of perestroika in the USSR, transferred that process into the reverse mode, directing movement from socialism, to the bourgeois-capitalist model, to the free market, uncontrolled competition and social tension.

In fact, the post-communist countries, being subjected to the liberal impulse that seemed to tighten grip over the very course of history, have moved in the late twentieth century to the path of democratic reforms, the free market, human rights, freeing themselves from stagnation and archaism. However, it should be mentioned that many philosophers and sociologists at that time predicted a high probability of retrograde movement of these nations. But towards where, in what direction? Nearly all experts were convinced that, if

the retrograde motion is possible, then it may be given only in the direction of the recent past – to the former communist model, to the communist revenge.

However, something unexpected happened: the reversed pullback was so powerful that the mass public consciousness rolled back over the historic milestone of 1917, to an even greater archaism, to nostalgia for the monarchy in the Orthodox paradigm. **Orthodoxy turned out to be a kind of compensator, a suppressor of public protest.** “Orthodox revival” was found in this case, in one common flow with the other processes: not only with the effectiveness (potencies) of the “civil society”, but also with such exotic projections, as the demand of a certain part of society to “neo-paganism” that in various “batches” was promoted and is being promoted now like by some liberal “gurus” of the modern world in different forms.

In this overall and quite diversified flow of public aspirations in the post-communist world the “religious revival” can face a danger of falling into the so-called mental trap. **People find themselves in the grip of a reversion due to the constant search of psychological protection from imminent reality with its danger of irreversible changes that are taking place.** Honorary professor of the Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto (Canada) A. Kukla believes that people in a state of reversion are trying to achieve those targets that have been already missed. So, additionally, people want to return to the previous values and beliefs that have already been eroded under the influence of time and other factors. Professor A. Kukla considers that people in a state of reversion think that obstacles on their way towards achieving the goal are not left irreversibly in the past, but as if they are still ahead on their way. And this is a mental trap that throws out the expectations of the people, their potencies, warmed by the energy of hope, into the black hole of failed reality.

Therefore, it is important to understand whether the “religious revival” is really a complex of productive values and beliefs for the present and future time, or whether they are just phantoms of the past, which are burdened with some previous guilt of some particular people or of a whole generation?

The process of reconsideration of the anti-religious policy in the USSR, with its extreme forms of violence, destruction of churches and monasteries, and the prosecution of clergy and believers in the Soviet Union – isn't it a phenomenon of awareness of some collective guilt of the current generation towards their ancestors and towards the history? **And the process of “religious revival” – isn't it some form of mass repentance of today's politicians and of a whole generation for the mistakes and crimes committed in the past?** At least, the recent statement of Russian President Vladimir Putin about the debt still unpaid of the Russian state to the Orthodox Church seems to suggest exactly this idea. The same motive of the mass repentance of the people for the persecution of the Church also stands out in the numerous considerations on the subject of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

But this situation is quite precarious, in accordance with the opinion of sociologist and philosopher R. Darendorf, who based on the example of studying the phenomenon of collective German guilt for the Nazi past; he came to the conclusion that such **repentance is fast becoming a metaphor**. And in this transit, when repentance is moving to be converted to the metaphor, there are many stopping points, where this burden of collective responsibility is becoming more and more blurred and is being filled with the rust of cynicism and indifference, and the form substitutes the content.

“Religious revival” in Russia, if it will also be positioned as a product of collective guilt and the mass repentance for the wrongs and insults caused to the Orthodox Church, could also slip into the destructive field.

Russian historian Professor Ludmila Ternovaya considers that in order to prevent the reversion of the mass consciousness from turning into a mental trap, it must implement the mechanism of transformation of the passive consciousness into an active one, but even in this case a positive result is only possible if there is no destructive program in this scenario.

Such destructive program can be represented by some parallel information environment, which operates in the same field with the traditional system of transferring experience, values and beliefs that are based on the Orthodox spiritual and cultural heritage. Nowadays, having Internet as an alternative global environment **deprives the Orthodox tradition of, perhaps, its greatest function: as an integrated value system and conceptual system, with the key role of transferring experience of the previous generations, to the new ones.**

We should not forget that in Russia, as in the other countries of the Eastern Christian spiritual tradition, orthodoxy, being a generating force and the conductor of traditional values and beliefs, plays an important role in the establishment of identity. Without an integrated system of accumulation and transfer of traditional values and beliefs, which Orthodoxy must surely possess, it is impossible to form and defend the national identity.

Orthodoxy in the modern civil society also plays an important role of opposition to any threat in the form of a virtual identity. A few virtual states recently appeared, called *Virtlandiya*, *Dominion Melhisideka*, *Christiania*, *Oraniya* and others attracting more and more followers, immersed in a virtual world, where there is no need for manifesting active citizenship, defending human rights, protecting the environment, for implementing a fair social policy, protecting their own identity, maintaining their faith and culture. In this threatening situation, the society similarly clings to the Orthodox doctrine wishing to see in it the powerful position that can protect people against the impending challenges of the global transformation of a whole way of life of the society.

The clergy, being the most important institution of Orthodoxy, is now struggling to cope with these challenges and threats. A close alliance between the government and the Church represented by its hierarchy causes an increasing distrust in a civil society today.

The state ceases to appear in the public consciousness as the most important guarantor of the nation's identity. Orthodoxy needs, nowadays, more than ever before, some form of a new resource, whose social role is currently played by such a phenomenon as the Orthodox community. **Civil society is inconceivable without public initiative.**

The energy of a new phenomenon in Orthodoxy – the Orthodox community as an important segment of civil society, which combines all these social strata: political, cultural, scientific and business – would be very promising and productive to be developed in the new field of acceptable values, devoid of the influence of fundamentalism. **Orthodox fundamentalism is drawing its resources from the past and works objectively and subjectively on the process of reversion in the public consciousness,** intentionally or not intentionally playing up to separatism in its various forms. Religious fundamentalism provokes political separatism, making the seemingly unbelievable turn of a contemporary post-secular society, to the archaism of the feudal type of society, blowing the integration potencies of the existing trend.

Images of the past is a breeding ground for political separatism, which romanticizes devolution, that is, the process of disconnection of enclaves or parts of the national-state organism into separate territories.

Religious fundamentalism is fraught with enormous energy. In this context, the American economist L. Turou quite correctly points out that: “The rise of religious fundamentalism is the eruption of a social volcano. People, who felt insecure and uncertain facing a new economic era, retreat into religious fundamentalism. Old ways of human behavior do not work anymore. New ways of behavior threaten the cherished old values... These are the periods of widespread uncertainty... No one even knows what the new definition of success is, as well as nobody can define **what is moral and what is immoral**”.

We can see that this scenario comes to life all over the world; the most significant is the case in the model of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab East. Here, of course, in addition to the social and economic reasons, there are also forces of xenophobia and ignorance involved, which bring the power of protest to the most barbarous bursts of blind rage. At the same time, the Judeo-Christian-liberal world is forced to show some degree of humility before the fury of ignorance, in fact, indulging it by doing so. The “Innocence of Muslims” a film, which became a powerful battering-ram of Islamic fundamentalists, that helped them to break a major loophole in the liberal tolerance, was not given any seriously critical and objective assessment, and how wrong it was: according to a number of well-known Islamic scholars, such as, for example, the popular Coptic priest Zachariah Boutros from Egypt, all the stories shown in this film (with the exception of only one story) are Koranic. **But the uncritical and passive compromise reaction to the film from Western countries, as well as from part of Russia, only fueled the ambitions of the Islamic fundamentalists** that not only didn't defuse the situation in world relations, but on the contrary, they complicated it even more.

Orthodox fundamentalism has a different nature, but being awakened its strength can also become an emergency of enormous proportions. The critical periods in the life of society, of the nation and of the state are characterized by an appeal to the history to enable a mobilizing factor. This is not the same thing as, for example, an appeal to tradition in its highest sense, to the values and beliefs of the civilizational paradigm, let's say, of the Russian world. Here, Orthodoxy **can have a positive assistance to the so-called enlightened patriotism.**

But Orthodox fundamentalism can become (and this happens sometimes) an engine of the movement "ahead into the past." Quite often it is promoted by some political strategists and analytical forecasting agencies that prepare all kinds of programs and intellectual products for different political forces trying to straddle the potential of so-called "Orthodox electorate"; on the other hand, the power structures are sometimes not averse to rely on the authority of the Orthodoxy at carrying out a series of unpopular, social, political and international projects.

Really, the forecast of social development always contain some element of the past, and sometimes, due to a non-critical study of such an element, the recipes of the future are offered. **This leads to the uncritical idealization of the past and a twisted projection of the future.** This is considerably facilitated by the process of restitution of church property, currently launched in a number of countries of the Orthodox tradition. In that way, the outlines and projects of the present and the future are based on the idealization of tsarism. For example, a return to the archaism is also encouraged. **Moreover, on this basis, the utopian model of consciousness is being introduced, it is proposed as a reconstruction of the model of the "failed future",** while a counterproductive reconsideration of the past is being imposed, as if it can be repeated and corrected. All this, strengthens even more the virtualization of the public consciousness, diverting it away from reality with its urgent problems and actual tasks.

Thereby, Orthodoxy plays a complex dialectical role in the civil society: both in a real political, social context, as well as in a mystical, cultural, spiritual and even virtual context, with all its unpredictability. It is important to note and record the fact that civil society considers the Orthodox community with one of its pioneer organizations, in the face of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy and the International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations, which were created nearly twenty years ago. Their activity over this period represents a historically adequate empirical material for the first positive evaluation of this unique phenomenon. **The process of self-organization of this very interesting segment of civil society may open promising perspectives for giving way to the positive, present social state and to the productive future, instead of the phantoms of the past.**

Thank you for your kind attention.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH: A FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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I. Introduction: Human Rights in or and the Orthodox Church?

A literal reading of the title of my presentation – whether deliberately selected or not – might tempt one to recognize that the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and the idea of Human Rights has been dominated by adversity and ambivalence. Yet, the relationship of adversity was not necessarily triggered by Human Rights, as an ideal of human relationships (and model for organizational behavior), but by an apparently selective use of Human Rights advocacy by the Anglo-Saxon world to advance its interests worldwide. Therefore, one may feel justified in pondering whether we should say “Human Rights in the Orthodox Church” or “Human Rights and the Orthodox Church.” Perhaps, we should say both, should we adopt a more holistic approach to this inter-structural mechanism.

Therefore, my approach to this topic will be entirely functional in nature, with minimal historical references.

In general, the relationship between Human Rights and the Orthodox Church has been dominated by ambivalence in the sense that under specific geopolitical settings, their interaction was both adversarial and symbiotic, pending on the institutional interests of the Church and State. For example, if during the past two decades, various Orthodox Churches from the former communist block have manifested adversity toward Human Rights, this was exclusively an expression of political disagreements with the West. Regrettably, in the 1980s and early 1990s, Human Rights advocacy

turned more so into a political tool of the West, being designed to advance Vatican's missionary interests, as well as the missionary interests of various Protestant churches from the United States in countries that were traditionally Orthodox. Consequently, accusations of human rights violations between East and West became mutual, as they were served in-kind by each party, according to each party's political interests. (Today, for example, the annual country Report on Human Rights in China issued by the U.S. State Department is reciprocated by China's Report on U.S. Human Rights.)

The adversity between Human Rights and the Orthodox Church emerged under unwarranted socio-economical conditions.

With the collapse of the atheistic rule, national Orthodox Churches from the former communist block found themselves rather unprepared to appease the demands for social work, mainly due to a lack of resources and personnel with appropriate training. Furthermore, the social and economical crisis that followed perestroika had increased people's vulnerability toward West's charity, which often came side by side with evangelical mission. If under the communist regimes western religious missions were almost impossible, posing therefore no real threat to the local Orthodox Churches, with the collapse of the communist regimes, evangelical missions had intensified and the religious competition had dramatically increased to the disadvantage of the historical rights of the Orthodox Churches.

In Russia, for example, with the drafting of the *All-Union Law* in the 1990s, the Russian Orthodox bishops claimed historical rights for the Russian Orthodox Church, by recognizing the Human Rights concept as the basis of the drafting process. Yet, with the increase of proselytism and religious competition during mid- and late-1990s, in the eyes of the Western world the Human Rights advocacy of the Russian Orthodox Church has been dramatically deflated, particularly as the Russian hierarchs felt necessary to oppose proselytism by redefining the internal mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in synchronicity with the Russian State.

In Romania, following the collapse of Ceausescu's regime, the preexisting Church-State status quo of subordination and cohabitation had not only diversified, but it was skewed in the interest of the Church, in the sense that the Romanian Orthodox Church secured its autonomy, defined its interests, consolidated its resources, and expanded its network of relationships. In practical terms, such consolidation of power was visible in the transfer of resources from the State to the Church (fiscal and real estate), in Church-State cooperation in placing religious symbols in public spaces, in religious assistance in state-run institutions, and in the drafting of religious education curricula for public schools. The Romanian Orthodox Church had been extremely successful in securing its influence in society by expanding its web of financial relations with the national and local government authorities, by imposing its own religious education curricula into

state schools, by consolidating its wealth, and by influencing the delaying the drafting of the law on religious minorities³.

As far as Human Rights are concerned, although in ideological competition with the Romanian Orthodox Church, in Romania, most of religious minorities have capitalized on the political and social influence of the Orthodox Church as to promote their own agendas. Thus, the Greek Catholic Church merged its influence with the Orthodox Church on state's direct financing of religious minorities (culte), and on the revision of philosophy and biology curricula in public education. Furthermore, in 1995, the Greek Catholic, and the Old Calendar churches, together with representatives from the Jewish, Muslim, Adventist, and Pentecostal communities joined the Romanian Orthodox Church before the Constitutional Court to uphold Article 200 of the *Penal Code*, which incriminated homosexuality⁴. Human Rights concerns were voiced out against the Romanian Orthodox Church due to its influence over the new legislation issued by the state over "captive audiences" (hospitalized individuals, military draftees, detainees, public school students) – which included the 1997 Protocol between Patriarchate and Ministry of Justice (on religious assistance within the Romanian penitentiary system), Law 195 of November 6, 2000 (on military chaplaincy), etc.

Therefore, the nature of adversity between Human Rights and the Orthodox Church has been political in nature, while the inner tenets of the Human Rights ideals never failed to maintain a deep sense of resonance with the spirit of Orthodoxy.

The question is: what is the essence of the relationship between Human Rights and the Orthodox Church?

II. Two Approaches: Intra-Institutional & Inter-Institutional

In order to identify some basic tenets of this ambivalent relationship, it is important to take both an intra-institutional approach (in other words "Human Rights in the Orthodox Church"), as well as inter-institutional approach (such as "Human Rights and the Orthodox Church.")

a) Intra-Institutional Perspectives: "Human Rights in the Orthodox Church"

From an intra-institutional perspective, one can find strong synchronicity between the idea of Human Rights and Orthodox Christianity in its doctrinal, ethical and devotional manifestations. As a Church that theologically claims its uniqueness in terms of promises for spiritual salvation, Orthodoxy has never systematically de-

³ Enache, George. 2005. *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*. București: Nemira. See also Andreescu, Gabriel, Liviu Andreescu. 2009. "Church and State in Post-Communist Romania: Priorities on the Research Agenda" *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 8. 24 (Winter 2009): 19-45: 24-25
⁴Stan Livia, and L. Turcescu. "Religion, Politics and Sexuality in Romania." *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 2 (2005): 291-310: 293-294

fended the concept of Human Rights, as interpreted and promoted by the West, in the post-WWII setting. Perhaps one of the key reasons is that Orthodox Christianity is both unfamiliar and perhaps repulsive toward what is perceived as Western individualism.

The Catholic Church defended Human Rights more at the institutional level and for reasons of international interests, while the individual rights of the believer have profited from ambivalent rhetoric. On the other hand, the Protestant churches, particularly the liberal Calvinists, sought to be recognized as the “early proponents of representative democracy in both church and state,”⁵ seeking also to be recognized as the strongest in creating the basis for and then defending the Human Rights⁶.

In general, Orthodox Christianity shares structural configurations common both to Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Like Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy discards a highly legalistic structure of the Church (as expressed in the Catholic Canon Law), by relying on the concept of *oikonomia*, which advocates God’s grace over law. Unlike Protestantism, however, Eastern Orthodoxy displays a highly elaborated sacramental structure, whereby salvation occurs also through liturgical engagements inside the religious community, not only by faith alone (*sola fide*). Yet, in spite of a strong emphasis placed by Eastern Orthodoxy on the salvific role of the community, the Orthodox conceptualization of individual religious rights has been approached from the perspective of human dignity and freedom, based on a unique anthropology emerging from the theandric doctrine.

Individual versus Community

As Orthodox theology claims that humanity was created in God’s image – *B’Tselem Elohim* (Genesis 1:26-27) – it is this argument alone that generates structural synchronicity between individual rights and Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, the Orthodox concept of salvation within the framework of the community of believers imposes interdependence between community and the individual, in terms of mutual rights and responsibilities. It is because both the community and the individual emerge into an ideal of wholeness that defines the Church as “the Body of Christ.” This sense of wholeness is both ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ or mystical – as a community of saints, hence beyond the ephemeral political configurations.

At an individual level, it is important to point out that the basic anthropology of Orthodox Christianity emphasizes that humanity is created in the image of God, whereby “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28), as God’s image in man goes beyond race, gender, and color. By implication, at a collective level, Orthodox anthropology is ‘monogenist’ as it

⁵ David Little “Religion and Human Rights: A Personal Testament,” p.59

⁶idem., 64-71 idem., 64-71

considers all nations to be direct descendants from the original family of Adam and Eve. Beyond sacred texts, Christian universalism was further developed by the patristic literature regardless of events that might have generated contrary feelings, such as during barbaric invasions.

In a Russian Orthodox context, the religious community is defined as *sobornost'*; a community in which individuality is recognized. As Paul Valliere wrote in the early 1990s, “[o]rthodox thinkers are careful to distinguish *sobornost'* from collectivism or egalitarianism. They see the Church as a community of persons, each with a unique contribution to make to the whole.”⁷ Valliere’s terminological distinction points out the unique semantic distinction that Orthodoxy makes, in the sense that it recognizes a balance between the individual and group, thus safeguarding the role and the identity of the individual from not being confused with *collectivism* (where the rights of the individual are non-existent), or with *egalitarianism* (where all individual values are being leveled out.) This is mainly because, as the Greek Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas explains, “[t]he significance of the person rests in the fact that he represents two things simultaneously which are at first sight in contradiction: particularity and communion. Being communion,” continues Zizioulas, “is fundamentally different from being an individual or a ‘personality’, for a person cannot be imagined in himself, but only within his relationships.”⁸ This explains why, despite of a serious regard for the individual, the classical orthodox theology acknowledges that an individual is not the ultimate goal (*telos*). Most of the Russian Orthodox thinkers such as Khomiakov, Kireevsky, Dostoevsky, Leontiev, Fyodorov and Solzhenitsyn, as Valliere explains, “have held a community based on *sobornost'* and *lichnost'*, wholeness and personhood, to be ethically superior to a community based on the social contract and individual rights. Hand in hand with this view went a ‘tradition of the censure of law’ in Russia, and anti-legal prejudice which inevitably impeded the development of modern concepts of human rights.”⁹

Russian Orthodoxy and the Anti-Legal Prejudice

Perhaps for sociological reasons, prominent Russian Orthodox thinkers not only sheltered, but continued to develop theological ideas that developed anti-legal attitudes toward law and social contract, viewing law as an expression of the fallen human nature and sin.

As Vladimir Soloviov interpreted a passage from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans, where St. Paul says that “...where there is no law neither is there violation (4:15), So-

⁷ Paul Valliere “Russian Orthodoxy and Human Rights” in *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*, edited by Irene Bloom, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne L. Proudfoot: Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, 281.

⁸John Zizioulas *Being as Communion*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York, 1993,105

⁹Paul Valliere “Russian Orthodoxy and Human Rights” in *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*, edited by Irene Bloom, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne L. Proudfoot: Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, 282

loviov states that “sin is born of law,”¹⁰ particularly because the law, apart from its inherently punitive *raison d'être*, rarely (if ever) offers any constructive alternatives. “If I want something,” says Soloviov, “and the law prohibits it, this does not mean that I stop wanting that something. Thus, the law focuses only on the exterior manifestation of my will, namely toward the work of the sin: ‘thy shall not kill,’ ‘thy shall not do wrong,’ etc. The root of sin, meaning the evil inclination which gives birth to evil acts, is not replaced by law, but on the contrary, it is even more provoked and elevated to the level of consciousness.” For Soloviov and his contemporary thinkers, the consciousness of law, proposes a coercive negative attitude toward the created human nature, offering nothing more than boundaries. The consciousness of moral duty, which is awakened through law isolates the human being from the natural life, leaving him helpless and lonely. “Human consciousness,”¹¹ says Soloviov, “punishes the nature, distinguishes between good and evil, but never gives us the power to make the good triumphant and the evil defeated.”¹²

Therefore, one may easily argue that in this tradition of censuring law, it is almost inescapable to view the Human Rights concept as something limiting the innate vulnerability of the individual.

That the anti-legal prejudice was not only of interest to the 19th century Orthodox philosophers was made obvious by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s “controversial” commencement address at Harvard University in 1978, who noted that “[p]eople in the West have acquired considerable skill in using, interpreting and manipulating law. Every conflict is solved according to the letter of the law and this is considered to be the supreme solution. If one is right from a legal point of view, nothing more is required.”

Thus, the apparent upper hand that the UDHR gives to the individual over community seems to be an attractive intrigue for Solzhenitsyn to view the individual almost negatively, while suggesting that the western disproportional advocacy toward individual rights is a liability for the community as a whole. “The defense of individual rights,” writes Solzhenitsyn, “has attained such extremes as to make society as a whole defenseless against particular individuals. It is time in the West to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.”¹⁴

Needless to say, such anti-legal prejudices not only favored a sense of apathy toward laws in general, but came in frontal collision with the Western reverence of law.

¹⁰ Vladimir Soloviov p.14

¹¹Soloviev, p.16

¹²Soloviov, p.16

¹³Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn “A World Split Apart” in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, edited by Kelly Monroe, Zondervan Publishing House, p.96.

¹⁴Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn “A World Split Apart” in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, edited by Kelly Monroe, Zondervan Publishing House, p.97.

Piety and Pietistic Behavior

A key aspect of Orthodox Christianity, which has consistently discouraged sentiments of prophecy, reform and militancy, is the consciousness of piety and of pietistic behavior, which generated reactions of obedience and tolerance toward Human Rights violations.

The cult of saints – both pious saints and martyr saints – which enriches the daily liturgical life of the Orthodox Church represents yet another dimension of Orthodox consciousness which can only impede social uprisings. The ideal image of a Christian was usually that of a hermit who lived in search for sainthood, in seclusion and away from the pollution of social realities. The hermit represented a typical abandonment of the real world for the purpose of making it better spiritually. The cause of every social ill was believed to originate in a spiritual disorder and the way to correct it was not through revolutionary engagement, rather through a refocus on the spiritual correction of the society. This concept of spiritual warfare promoted reactions of endurance (even martyrdom), believed to be the key of salvation.

Whenever oppression increased to a level that it demanded struggle for equality and Human Rights, the battle was usually fought on the spiritual arena, where endurance became the secret of the winning.

b) Inter-Institutional Perspectives: “Human Rights and the Orthodox Church”

From an inter-institutional perspective, some of the complexities of ambivalence between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Orthodox Churches need to be viewed in the context of Church-State relationships. It is important to emphasize that whenever the Orthodox Churches displayed hostility against Human Rights, in appearance, this manifested itself as an ideological confrontation, while, in reality, this adversity was nothing but a proxy competition for political capital. At times, hostility against Human Rights was often the net result of intra-state competition, as well as a platform for East-West ideological confrontation triggered by geo-political interests.

Regardless of the nature of its relationship with the State, in its history, the Orthodox Church has always operated under the rules of the State. Thus, Orthodox Canon Law was permanently filtered by the pastoral practice of *oikonomia*, evolving exclusively as *soft law*, a non-binding commitment toward a noble cause. Furthermore, Orthodox Canon Law had been rather silent on issues of social justice, as everything in this world is ephemeral and one might better seek justice in heaven. Therefore, whenever human rights groups activated within the Orthodox Church, such as during the 1950s and 1960s in the former Soviet Union, their language was based on the dichotomy of *tsartvo diha i tsartvo kesaria* (or the kingdom of the Spirit and the Kingdom of Cesar.)

At the same time, the Orthodox Church made strong attempts to influence the State as to protect its own interests. For example, in the aftermath of the collapse of com-

munism, the obvious resentment toward western proselytism fuelled a sense of nationalistic resistance to religious freedom. This has been mainly the case not only in Russia, but also in Central and Eastern Europe, where religion is inextricably related to culture and national heritage. This reactionary position has been known to function merely as a self-defense mechanism, whereby those who were once oppressed by atheism sought to use the power of the State to create laws which would assist the recovery of their religious tradition. In most cases, they did so in the name of religious freedom even if that meant that the laws they supported did not envision equal treatment of other religious groups. Even today, these feelings will not be easily persuaded by the concept that a neutral state, which does nothing either to help or to hinder religious life, is a better alternative, than a state that identifies with and promotes the dominant religious heritage.

III. Conclusion:

In conclusion, a straightforward reading of the text of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* – the reference point of our conversation – exhibits no incongruity with what the Orthodox Church stands for. Ideologically, occasional obstacles emerge from various hermeneutics traceable to a range of inter-subjective dissonances generated by conflicting textual interpretations; the net product of cultural meaning. Pragmatically, the Human Rights conversation is nothing but a proxy field where international political interests, as well as Church and State relationships, are being renegotiated.

Last but not least, intergovernmental initiatives such as the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy are commendable enterprises, particularly during this time of global economic crisis, when the role of religion in the public life seems to be renegotiated as well. As the World Values Survey indicates, in a global sample of 57 countries surveyed between 2005 and 2008, 70% considered themselves believers, 25% unbelievers and 5% convinced atheists. The same survey indicates that in the Orthodox countries (including those of Oriental tradition), 80.6% consider themselves believers, 16.6% unbelievers and 2.7% convinced atheists. Just for the sake of numbers and recognition that humanity grants to the importance of religion, it is mandatory that religion be part of the conversation in addressing contemporary challenges.

Together with the secular states, Orthodox Churches are institutions that can perform successful work in:

- addressing the destructive legacy of nationalism, with the Orthodox consciousness as a leverage mechanism;
- acting as transnational actors, whereby Orthodox Churches would increase international functionalism, making military conflicts even more difficult;
- addressing the question of resource sharing, malnutrition, poverty, and population growth in the context of international forums;

- stimulating new conversations on economics and global finances;
- developing a strong lobbying mechanism within the U.N. structures;
- investing in a charity mechanism such as IOCC that would safeguard the religious and economic interests of the members of the Orthodox Church living in zones of extreme poverty and conflict;
- developing a stronger dialogue with the secular state and with other organized religions, etc.

As Father Dumitru Stăniloae once wrote, “[p]olitics conducted out of faith is the best politics. None can recommend a better and healthier device to a politician who wishes to create a good history for his nation, who wishes to make history and not perform foul politics for selfish gains.”¹⁵



⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Spre statul român creștin” in *Națiune și Creștinism*, Editura Elion, București, 2004, p. 41

FREEDOM, HUMAN RIGHTS – ORTHODOX CHURCH – MODERN WORLD

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With my statement, apart from any other, I'd like to approach a phenomenon, that is observed in the life of Church and which places it in contrast with the society and the political arena.

I am referring to efforts made by some allegedly official or semi-official ecclesiastical centers of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches around the world, to texts or oral statements made by clergy or religious agents, in an endeavor to restrict, to deplete and eventually challenge the importance that they have for the people and the progress of mankind, words such as: liberty, human and social rights, concepts - conquests of the human species upon which the civilization of mankind is based.

Let's see what happens and to what I am referring to and then, let's remember some concepts.

The common detection by all is that we are at the center of a major crisis.

What is certain is that it is an economic crisis. Also one part of it is a cultural crisis, while many religious agents comment that there is a spiritual crisis.

They even regard it as the mother of all crises or, better yet, they consider it as the initiating event and cause to the generalized crisis.

I will say that I do not at all agree with such a view, with this last opinion, unless we are referring to the crisis of the *predecessors*, which evolved into mankind's permanent crisis.

Since I remember myself I always hear the ecclesiastical men say that we are in spiritual crisis and drift.

However, somewhere there and with the continued, general and vague reference to the spiritual causes of the crisis, as if we are proclaiming something pioneering and

revealing, we began to hope that we would rediscover the lost values of communalism, of altruism and solidarity.

Undoubtedly, nowadays humanity faces unique challenges. It has to handle unprecedented situations with largely unknown media and often dangerous to us so far.

The main features of this crisis are certainly financial.

Decisions and initiatives for maximizing profit led us to a dead end, the effects of which, the economically weaker class is primarily collecting.

But all this activity was based on new instruments, new tools, which were based on the outrageous growth of new technologies.

There is no doubt that the ordinary citizen feels confused and defenseless in front of what is happening and is eventually exposed to risks that politics is unable or unwilling to handle.

Let us examine some characteristics of this crisis:

The financial markets are nothing new in the firmament of the global economy.

Over time and under different forms they were trying to meet the requirements of financing productive activities.

From the sector's historical experience, it has been verified that without proper economic-financial systems and financial instruments, we would not have any economic growth, at least in the expected extent.

The large-scale investments, typical of the modern market economy, they would not be possible without the vital intermediary role of the financial markets. However, the appearance at the economic scene of what is called "global capital market", while on one hand it gave the opportunity for productive activities to be assisted with a higher availability of resources, producing beneficial results, on the other hand, it multiplied the risk of financial crises. New tools appeared, new financing schemes based on modern technology, together with the enormous size of funding various "odd" economic activities, they followed a self-referential logic, with no connection at all with the real basis of the economy.

The financial economy, from means became an end by itself, it went against its principles, namely from the primary and essential role in the service of the real economy and ultimately, economic growth.

Now, of course, this modernization - as it was called- process, finally brought the disequilibrium of the financial system and to a few people it was highly profitable.

But where that happens?

It happens only in some zones, some countries of the world. Countries with unstable financial systems, with a fragile and delayed development, are not protected from the negative consequences of financial instability and thus, they find themselves in the eye of the storm.

The huge growth in the value of portfolios managed by financial corporations and the very fast proliferation of new and adulterated financial products, lead us to the need

for finding institutional solutions, which could lead to the stability of the system, but without diminishing its effectiveness and productivity.

Complementary to all the above comes the additional loss of the state's ability to manage and govern the financial dynamics.

The traditional national defensive means appear doomed to a failure, like the concept of the national market, in front of the new competition areas.

Besides any activity in the economic and political level, we see it more and more determined by the prospects, but also by the reliability requirements of those international capital markets.

Many argue that the conservative European and US governments were reluctant to intervene in the described financial process, for purely political reasons related to their conception of the market economy.

Thus they lost their ability to continue to dominate in the game of the markets, ultimately expressing the public interest.

I do not know if this is true.

We all know always and in every case that the politicians defend the powers given to them by the people, even requesting to expand them, rather than give them up.

But then, where exactly is the problem?

I think that after all, the countries do not have the means or ways to tame the galloping arrival and expansion of new technologies, nor even know how to impose rules on their functioning and operations, rules and regulations that would not inhibit free research and the achievements, as a whole, of the human spirit.

Moreover, if you would come to some legislative initiatives, those would be self-negated, precisely due to the speed at which the technological advances run.

Even before being instituted such rules and regulations would be considered outdated.

Besides in the democracies any legislative measures restricting freedom of research are difficult to pass, measures which ultimately fail to keep up with developments.

Therefore I consider that this phenomenon will plague mankind for many years. We should have to live with these problems and protect any vulnerable groups with social character measures, protecting them from such extreme catastrophic economic effects that are sure to reappear.

Within this rumble of events and situations, the question arises as to what direction we can look for the exit from the crisis and the insecurity caused by it and what should be the attitude of the institutions of our society?

To answer such a question, perhaps the first thing we must calculate is not to disturb deeply and in a large scale any achievements of the humanity that unfortunately seem disturbed.

Among these achievements is Democracy, parliamentarianism, freedom of speech and human rights, tolerance and cooperation among different people, volunteering and many more.

If we try to comprehend and understand the crisis as an opportunity to provide us, through the new technologies, possibilities for reversals, then we could find that based upon the new tools we can agree and deepen our democratic institutions, expand our liberties and protect and affirm human rights gains.

Faced with the very big crisis, regarding if the system of parliamentary rules and institutions want to save the game, the system should go into more and more direct participation of citizens in decision-making.

Half measures are not enough to catch and solve the problem, when the entire institutional superstructure seems discredited in the eyes of citizens.

More direct democracy now!

On this request, the new technologies can be a catalyst.

Initiatives having a character of referendum, direct expression of opinions from homes and constantly, on various topics, social networks organizations, can all delegate many powers to the people, to an organized society and prevent the disorientation of the people and its adhesion to schemes doomed to the consciousness of history and society.

Certainly some things are not easy to be made, from one day to another, especially changes for which the society should be primarily convinced for and the society should understand the necessity to proceed.

But in what direction the Church is trying to influence things or attempting to direct things?

Here it should be clear that with the term Church we must clearly refer to institutional expressions of the site, such as texts and speeches from Patriarchs, Church leaders, organized inter-ecclesiastical meetings, decisions of ecclesiastical councils, etc.

We can say here that as those councils we are able to observe, such things are clear, positive and moving in the right direction.

Prominent role in the formation of a true and based on the historical conjuncture ecclesiastical voice has the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which clearly directs the roadmap of all Orthodoxy.

But unfortunately, in close relationship with the local society are the bishops and local priests, but here this demands our attention: any cleric or monk.

All these people feel the need to counsel, to admonish local society wandering the streets and the alleys of the world, assured that they are the only authentic interpreters of God's teachings.

Endless invitations from everywhere, according to the latest fashion, according to which the local community is seeking one enlightened monk to admonish it, where weird, ignorant, uncultured types speak on behalf of the Church and in general, on behalf of the institutional religious expressions, fanaticizing the people, leading them to nonsense and stupidity, having as their principle: "the more conservative, the better".

The fear that they create is the means by which, according to them, it will bring the faithful person closer to the Church and to the word of God.

A Russian cleric recently stated, with his known, bombastic style that: “The Church should hold in society such a position, which gives it the right to speak as a state power, in all areas of social life, fulfilling a prophetic role, not just of the popular consciousness, but the voice of God in politics, in economy, to any social processes, in the private and family lives of the people”.

Let me then turn to the issue of freedom and human rights and how it is treated nowadays by various allegedly ecclesiastical spheres of influence.

The issue is dear to the speaker, especially with what is happening in Greece, since I do try and manage to observe this issue from time to time, also having a consistent relation with my Ph.D. thesis, whose theme was the universality of Orthodoxy in modern Greece.

This issue related to the theological and ecclesiastical affairs of Greece is old and begins in 1974, just after the fall of the military government, with the opposition of intellectuals and politicians to anything that starts from the West.

Nonetheless, the “fundamental” opposition of the neo-orthodox believers to the Enlightenment, which reaches into questioning the positive role of human rights in modern Western society, has to do with the abandonment of the emancipation of man, announced by the Enlightenment two and a half centuries ago.

They argue that the prevalence of Cartesian thinking in the West, finally disconnected, the economic, from the social, disconnected the social, from the political, and finally disconnected the political, from the “spiritual.”

Professor Mr. Christos Yannaras ultimately chooses to challenge the enduring importance of “human rights”, according to leading historians, of the cultural achievements and values of the modern world (and a basic axis of reflection of the current universal culture), considering the resulting derivatives of the individualistic spirit and climate, in which the economic and political liberalism is reflected.

In this he ignores that in the current configuration of “human rights” has contributed both philosophical movements: liberalism and socialism, through a multitude of socio-political and spiritual compositions, depending on the historical moment that the world was going through.

Historical experience has also shown that -sooner or later- the institutionalization of a right leads to the expansion of human freedom, sociability and creativity, by establishing additional supporting or other inherited derivative rights, in other areas of human life.

Let’s not forget here the famous encyclical of May 15th, 1891, “De Rerum Novarum” (On the New Things) of Pope Leo XIII, by which he is condemning the socialist and collectivist ideas ... he calls for the State to assume its responsibilities towards society, to

limit the fury in the voracity of the capitalists, to protect the workers' rights and ensure sound labor relations, so that the worker should not be the subservient puppet to the exploiters ... “.

It is also erroneous the opinion that civil, individual and other rights dispose of a frame of power that is exhausted at the limits of urban or western civilization.

For the simple reason that, since the underlying reference is every human, all over the world, it follows that these rights have a catholic and universal value.

Such views do not facilitate the outward formulation and promotion of the universality of Orthodoxy.

The human rights, though they are a creation of the Western world, through the course of the modern world, they became a universal value, since they are not just the basis of the European culture, with them as frontispiece, they are the struggling movements in Latin America, in the countries of Catholicism with the liberation movements, the liberation theology there acted primarily with the terms of a society and not of a nation and even more so in Africa and Asia for facing the diverse, various oppressions.

Moreover, faced with the globalization of the economy, with the annihilation of distances, population movements and the gradual relaxation of tariff barriers, human rights have emerged as universal constants, able to become a reference axis of the social forces at every corner of the Earth, to harness and restrain the rampant capitalist power that emerges as fear for the quality of man's relationship, with his fellow man and his natural environment.

Definitely, it is rightful for the universal perspective of Orthodoxy to criticize the distortions and the hostilities (e.g., depreciation of the natural environment) with which the historical human rights in the West were often expressed.

It is also legitimate for someone to want to be enriched from parallel to them, local/traditional values, so that universal human rights are expressed with clarity, to the boundaries of every culture and then the intercultural dialogue should be based on honesty, rather than mimicry.

Nevertheless, it is completely different for someone to underestimate the value of human rights, as the only possible value-orientation of modern universalism, in which Orthodoxy has much to offer.

Let us remember the late Damaskinos Papandreou, who determines and highlights: “Since we constantly proclaim the incarnation of God and the place of mankind in universe, we stand up for human rights for all people and all nations...”

The achievements of the modern era, which guarantee the security of liberty and of human rights must be protected, and then be developed, without such a point entailing their excessive underlining, at the expense of the Christian experience of transcendence, which Christians are called to introduce in European politics...”

If the biblical fixation and the functional consolidation of peace and justice cannot be

seriously challenged, then we should look for the reasons that lead some people to deal with interpretations concerning the partial (i.e. the internal human freedom) disregarding the general, which is the recognition of the human sovereignty.

Perhaps the fact that in the modern period, due to the autonomy of science, ethics, social development, etc., a growing inequity appeared, in both the production and distribution of material goods, in which unfortunately the Christian world for a long time period remained impassive, sometimes allying with the factors of injustice, the rulers of violence and with the opponents of Peace, says Professor Petros Vassiliadis and continues:

“... Genuine Christianity is universal, i.e. aimed at all mankind as a unity, not differentiated to upper and lower elements. Whoever understands this universality of mankind, whoever rejects the diarchy between spirit and matter, cannot experience Jesus Christ and his Peace, as a transcendental reality, in which the deeper is someone immersed, the more he avoids the problems of his time, that is all the worries and the obligations imposed by the historical reality, to find the supposed inner Peace and serenity...”

In my opinion this is not the case but, in the best of cases it is a completely arbitrary transfer of rules of monasticism, in the cosmic area and especially about the rule of obedience, which in monasticism is certainly applicable to the deep loving relationship that there should be between an old man, with his subordinate monk.

I am not able to judge how much such obedience helps spiritual love occur in the meeting of the monks with God.

However, I am almost certain that such a relationship between a holy man and a Christian, within the modern world, is not liberal and is subordinate only to the supposed spiritual insecurity that can serve.

It would be schizophrenic inside the Temple to plead for:

“Peace for the whole universe” and out of the Temple not struggle for the prevalence of Peace, the integrity of the built-up creation, abolition of armaments, prevent a nuclear or ecological holocaust, and so on and so forth.

The fathers of Mount Athos say: “The same action brings mankind to the always superior spiritual Peace”.

At this point, let me indicate you the views of Albania’s Archbishop:

«..In the Christian subconscious, even in secular European strata, Christianity has contributed to highlighting key principles, such as the respect for freedom and the self-identity of individuals and peoples, democracy, equality, peace, justice, social solidarity.

Along with the current tide of secularization, the European public is lately influenced by vague metaphysical religious ideas.

The best sellers of children’s literature are revealing such vague metaphysical religious ideas.

For 20th century’s children, one of the most beloved heroes was Oliver Twist of Charles Dickens. In the early 21st century, his place has been taken by Harry Potter of G.K. Rowling.

In the story of *Oliver Twist*, good and evil are largely determined by social conditions.

In the adventures of *Harry Potter*, good and evil are in the realm of metaphysics and are emanated from fate.

In the first case, the tragedy of life is transformed by the intervention of a noble intellectual.

Instead, in today's children's literature the hero finds refuge in the dark fantasy world, because his visible environment is hostile. The magic wand in his hand changes the image of the world.

His intention is to define his environment by using the metaphysical invisible forces of the universe.

The phenomenal success to a wide majority of readers in many countries indicates the particular fascination exerted by escaping to the fantastic, escaping to magical worlds. At the same time, however, it shows interest in an area that exceeds the classical logic upon which the European Enlightenment in the areas of science, philosophy, aesthetics, giving absolute confidence in the critical function of logic, in all levels.

The previous century passed into the influences, but also the turbulences and hopes created to millions of people, from one side of Marxism and Leninism, with their dream of social justice, and on the other hand, liberalism, the industrial revolution, the development of technology, which promised to solve all human problems with the scientific progress.

Along with the secularization and religious indifference diffused all over Europe, there is now worldwide a resurgence of religious interests for the Transcendental, for God as a metaphysical quest.

But here we see two emerging risks:

Firstly, the deterioration of religious experience with mutant products of various religious theories coming from various origins, which are proposing vague metaphysics and dubious spirituality, which ultimately leads to an infinite vacuum.

A second risk is the distortion of religious feelings, with an orientation to the contempt of the dissidents and a generalized hatred.

Its acme is in a blend of violence and religious slogans, which reinforce a series of terrorist attacks.

I'll finish with two very similar texts.

The first has to do with the objectives of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.) as outlined in Article 3, of its Constitution, in the sixth paragraph: where the I.A.O. is called to contribute to ...The defense of human rights and religious freedom of the Christians, as well as of the believers of other religions in the European countries and throughout the world, with interventions and protests in international organizations and to local government authorities.

The second text has to do with the 3rd Pre-Council Pan-Orthodox Conference (1986) – "Declaration on the need to dominate the Christian ideals for world peace"

“Since we live the experience of peace we cannot be indifferent by its absence from modern society”.

Since we **benefited from divine justice**, we **strive for the fullest justice all over the world** for neutralizing any form of oppression.

Since we live each day the **divine condescension**, we are fighting against all types **of fanaticism and intolerance among people** and nations.

Since we constantly proclaim the **incarnation of God and the deification** of mankind, we stand up for human rights for all people and all nations. ... “



PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND RELIGION

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Participatory democracy is grounded upon the normative principle that all citizens must actively participate in the political process that regulates the life of a particular city, state or country. The notion of ‘political’ is more than what ‘politics’ is in the daily news. It refers not only to the best form of government or what rulers should and should not do, but, also, about what things constitute the flourishing of human beings and how common life should be ordered in ways that promote that flourishing.

Citizens in a participatory democracy must have equal opportunities to contribute towards the formation of the common good through common deliberations. These require a high degree of common commitment, trust that all the citizens will be heard, and be part of the deliberative process. Democracy obliges citizens to show much more solidarity and much more commitment and trust to one another in their joint political project than what it was demanded of them by the hierarchical and authoritarian societies of the past. Currently, the popular sovereignty, the common will of the people, the legitimizing basis of modern democracy is undergoing a radical reconfiguration due to the impact of globalization, the advances of technology and mass communication, the voluntary and involuntary migration of people, the changing socioeconomic and cultural conditions not only on the local but also on a regional and global level. All these changing realities in the context of a free democratic polity lead to pluralism as the most salient reality that politics should address.

The multiple religious and philosophical communities as well as cultural, ethnic and racial communities in democratic states demand to be recognized in their particularity and allow to be active participants in the public deliberations towards the formation of the common good. Managing diversity has become the major challenge of modern

democratic state. An indispensable aspect of coping with diversity is the development of a culture of dialogue that allows the maximum possible communication among all in their particularity. This culture of dialogue has promising possibilities only if it is supported by a 'strong philosophy of civility' channeled through adherence to a democratic process, respect for human rights, equality and non-discrimination. The justification for such a philosophy of civility may rely on different systems of beliefs, religious or even non- and even anti-religious arguments. This overlapping consensus between different founding views on a common philosophy of civility is something quite new in history, relatively untried, and challenging. It invites citizens to subscribe their civility to a learning process of expanding the horizons of reality, because people often suspect that those with different basic views can't really subscribe to these principles, not the way they do!

How does religion function in such a challenging situation? Is it possible for religious communities with metaphysical claims and authority to participate in democratic deliberations? Does religion in civil society promote and contribute to a culture of dialogue or is religion a conversation stopper because of its absolute doctrinal claims? The public role of religion is ambivalent in nature. It can either be a force that generates human solidarity; compassion, love, peace and justice or it can be a force of violence against others who have a different philosophy, pattern of life, culture and self-interests. Social science acknowledges that religion provides to a significant number of people constants (principles and values) by which they give structure and sense of direction to their personal and communal lives. This is the reason why religion continues to be a vital aspect in people's life and despite the predictions of its eventual demise persists manifesting an extraordinary resiliency and adaptability in the changing realities of life.

The emerging appreciation of the importance of religion in forming people's personal and communal identities has led many political theorists to reflect on how religious communities in pluralistic societies may participate in the dialogical process of public life promoting the common good. They recognize that finding ways to integrate religion in the public sphere is a vital challenge for democratic polity.

John Rawls, the American political philosopher, has suggested that the multiple religious, philosophical and cultural traditions in their public interaction and dialogue with one another should use public arguments by relying on 'natural reason' which supposedly all persons have equal access. He views public reason as the common denominator that all citizens share despite their religious, cultural, and philosophical particularities. He believes that public reason facilitates communication, while profound disagreements and conflicts may persist among the existentially relevant convictions of believers, believers of other denominations, and non-believers.

Communication in the midst of conflicts, for John Rawls, requires the exercise of a virtue of civility. The moral 'duty of civility', bestows on each citizen the task to explain to one another how principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by

the values of public reason. Of course, stubbornly persisting disagreements will not go away, but their impact will not be as severe if the parties involved learn to take the perspectives of each other. This involves a willingness to listen to others and a fair mindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should reasonably be made.

Neither public reason nor the virtue of civility, however, is sufficient to guarantee equal freedom for everybody. In a free democratic society freedom of religion is a basic right that democratic citizens accord to each other across the divides between the different religious communities. They enjoy the right to practice freely their faith and at the same time refrain from unduly attacking one another. The state, in Rawls view, should operate with strict impartiality vis-a-vis religious communities; parliaments, courts, and the administration must not privilege any religious community at the expense of the others. This means that politicians and officials within political institutions formulate and justify laws, court rulings, decrees and measures only in a language, which is equally accessible to all citizens. The State guarantees citizens freedom of religion on the condition that religious communities, each from the perspective of their doctrinal tradition, accept not only the separation of religion and state, but also the restrictive definition of the public use of reason. Yet, reasonable religious or non-religious arguments may at any time be introduced in the public political deliberations under the provision that in due course proper political reasons are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines are said to support. Religious communities, through the concept of public reason, are asked to adopt a secularist attitude, detaching their public contributions from the specificity of their religious claims and beliefs. It compels religious communities to express their contributions in the public life in secular terms.

The restrictive use of public reason that asks religious communities to refrain from putting forth arguments in the public sphere based on their doctrinal beliefs and instead use public reason that allegedly all citizens possess is controversial among political theorists. They argue that while religions and philosophical systems of belief have the potential to aggravate social disharmony and generate irresolvable conflicts, it must not be forgotten that religious communities can also be agents that contribute to the up building of a free and just democratic state. If belief is a source of energy and understanding that informs the entire life of its members, then for many religious believers it would be impossible to dissociate their doctrinal claims from their political implications without jeopardizing the integrity of their faith as it informs and guides the totality of their lives. Thus, it cannot be expected that citizens should justify their political statements independently of their religious convictions or world-views. While freedom of religion and equality in liberal democratic states demands that the state and the politicians operating within state institutions remain neutral towards competing world views, this attitude should not be expanded and applied to statements put forward by organizations and citizens in the political public sphere.

Jürgen Habermas attempts to revise the theory of John Rawls by taking seriously the criticism about the undue burden imposed upon the religious believers through the restrictive use of public reason. The irreversible pluralistic nature of the liberal democratic state makes necessary or inevitable the separation of religion and politics for the purpose of having political authority exercised with neutrality towards competing worldviews. Religious people in a liberal democratic state should have the freedom to express publicly their political views based on religious principles and values that inspire their lives in a reasonable language that allows others who do not share their religious or philosophical views to engage in dialogue with the endeavor to craft the common good. In this context, it is possible for them to refer to their religious heritage if it is difficult to find secular language and public reasons to justify their political convictions. In Habermas view, religious persons and communities must not be discouraged from expressing themselves politically based on their religious belief system, for it cannot be known, as he states, whether secular society would not otherwise cut itself off from key resources for the creation of meaning and identity.

Religious contributions in the public sphere are free of any restrictions but ultimately their efficacies depend on cooperative acts of translation. Eventually, they need to be translated for the purpose of being communicable to those who do not share the particular religious faith. Yet, the act of translation in Habermas view is a moral obligation not only of the religious people but also of the secular citizens who must open their minds to the possible truth content of religious contributions. For without a successful translation there is no prospect of the substantive content of religious voices being taken up in the agendas and negotiations within political bodies and in the broader political process.

Habermas invites the secular people not to deny from the outset the possible cognitive substance of the religious arguments in the political public sphere. Giving a hearing to religious public arguments, in his view, can be done without abandoning the premise of the precedence of secular reason in public life and the need of translating religious arguments in a reasonable language that communicates its truth claims. In the post-secular society, the persistence and the vitality of religions along with other philosophical, secular or agnostic systems of belief have the potential to enhance public life not only from their particular perspectives but also from possible new insights that their dialogues brings to life. In the post-secular society the religious people must adapt to an increasing secular environment, and the secular people must acknowledge the persisting vitality of religion and its possible political contributions in promoting human solidarity, compassion, peace and justice. For Jürgen Habermas, secularist citizens must not exclude the thought that they (world religions) still bear a semantic potential that unleashes an inspiring energy for all of society as soon as they release their profane truth content. Religious and secular citizens should view

their conflicts with each other as reasonably expected disagreements. They need to subscribe to a learning process that allows them to revisit and revise their particular systems of belief for the purpose to accept based on their metaphysical religious or secular beliefs the need to recognize otherness as an indispensable constitutive aspect of reality.

While the secularists must overcome the ideological predisposition against religion and recognize in religious arguments through translation reasonable positions, religions must also come to terms with modernity. Religious traditions need to undergo a highly complex process of modernization. More specifically, they must come to terms with plurality, the advances of modern science, the development of profane morality and law and accept, as well, the differentiation of society into multiple subsystems that operate with their own autonomous rationality. In addition, they must recognize and relate peacefully or at least coexist peacefully with other religions and systems of belief that were until then oppressed or misrecognized. And, finally, without compromising the premises of their faith, religious citizens must accept the priority that secular reasons enjoy in the political arena of modern society.

The modernization of religion with its focal points that we have identified in Habermas' view is painful and unsettling for many religious believers and inevitably generates internal divisions within religious communities. This, however, cannot be imposed upon the religious communities. Its success depends on whether each religious community relying on its particular tradition reconstitutes its public identity by taking seriously the challenges of modernity without giving the impression to its adherents that it compromises or relativizes its essential claims to truth or abandoning its heritage. It is the particular faith and practice of a religious community that decides, in light of modern sensibilities, whether the challenges of modernity have been successfully integrated in their reconstructed belief system. It is only then that a believer accepts it as the result of a 'learning process'.

The fact that the public use of reason in post-secular society requires a learning process for the religious and secular people is a strong reminder that a democratic state relies on a deliberative and participatory form of politics. However, such deliberative and participatory form of politics is endangered by complex mentalities and self-interests that generate dogmatic polarization into multiple fundamentalist religious and secular camps. This is a sign that many citizens are failing to meet the requirements of living in a free and democratic society and thereby endanger political integration. Overcoming this pre-political in origin polarization is an incremental highly complex and contested process in response to changing conditions of life. It requires persistence in maintaining, at all costs, the deliberative democratic process despite all the assaults by religious and secular fundamentalists.

Charles Taylor, the distinguished Canadian philosopher, operating within the spirit of liberal democracy further revises the theories of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas about the public role of religion and the secular state. In his view, ideas are dynamic notions subject to development based on new realities under which they are put into practice. More specifically, he recognizes that the prevailing views about the public use of reason and the strict separation of state from religion are western (American and French) in origin not easily exportable and applicable to other continents and cultures. He insists that neither one of them is sufficient in advancing the unity of the political realm. He reminds that 'reason' is not a timeless principle and in the highly complex, ever-changing and increasingly pluralistic context, there is a need to build political unity by using different kinds of 'agreed general principles' not independently of the realities of each situation. A democratic state, he suggests, manages the irreversible diversity of modern society by adhering to the following four political principles: first, it protects people in their belonging to and/or practice of whatever outlook they choose of find themselves in; second, it treats people equally whatever their choice; third, it gives them all a hearing in the ongoing process of determining what the society is about and how it is going to realize these goals; and fourth, it tries as much as possible to maintain relations of harmony and comity between the supporters of different religions and other systems of belief.

The realization of these goals or of any of these has been suggested to be possible using public reason or in some outlook that is free from religion with no need for further input or negotiation. Rawls advocated that one can legitimately ask in a religious and philosophically diverse democracy that everyone deliberate in a language of reason alone, leaving out from the public realm particular religious or philosophical views. Rawl's point in suggesting this restriction was that everyone should use a language with which they could reasonably expect their fellow citizens to agree. Its underlying assumption is that secular reason is a language that everyone speaks and can agree and be convinced in. On the contrary, religious language operates outside this discourse by introducing extraneous premises that only believers can accept. Religious reasons either come to the same conclusions, as secular reasons, but then it is superfluous, or it comes to contrary conclusions, and then it is dangerous and disruptive. This is the reason why it needs to be sidelined and everyone should talk the common language of secular/public reason. As for Habermas, he advocated that secular reasons suffice to arrive at the normative conclusions needed to establish legitimate foundations for a democratic state and its political ethic. Recently, his position on religious discourse has considerably evolved to the point of recognizing that its 'potential [to articulate more intuitions] makes religious speech into a serious vehicle for possible truth contents.' But the basic distinction still holds

that secularism has precedence over religion. Thus, when it comes to the official language of the state religious reference have to be expunged. "In parliament, for example, the rulers of procedure must empower the house leader to strike religious positions of justifications from all official transcript." Furthermore, Taylor objects the tendency to define the role of religion in a modern democratic state in terms of some institutional arrangement of separation of state and religion and the limitation of religion in the private realm of life. He states: "if the whole matter is defined by one arrangement of things, then one must just determine which arrangement of things best meets this formula, and there is not need to think further." Here is 'one master formula' that answers all dilemmas about the participation or nonparticipation of religion in participatory democracy. The privileged operation of public reason in a democratic state, for Charles Taylor, ignores the fact that there is not such a set of timeless principles that can be determined by pure reason alone. It also does not take into consideration that in an increasing pluralistic world, situations differ drastically, and require different kinds of concrete realization of agreed general principles, so that some degree of working out is necessary in each situation.

Charles Taylor believes that Rawls and Habermas are correct that there are zones of the secular state in which the language used has to be neutral. But these do not include citizen's deliberations, as Rawls first advocated, or even the deliberations in the legislature, as Habermas seems to think from the aforementioned quote. The zone can be described as the official language of the state: the language in which legislation, administrative decrees, and court judgments must be couched. This in practical terms means that the parliament could not contain a justifying clause of the type "whereas the Bible or the Orthodox Church tell us..." It would be also equally improper to have a legislative clause: "Whereas Marx has shown that religion is the opium of the people." or "whereas Kant has shown that only things good without qualification is the good will of people." The ground for these kinds of exclusions is the neutrality of the state. The state can neither be Christian, Muslim, or Jewish but by the same token, it should also be neither Marxist, nor Kantian, nor utilitarian.

Charles Taylor calls for a clear differentiation of the aims of secularism and its operational modes. The confusion of these leads some to grant to means an equivalent status or even greater than that of the aims. The aims of a secular democratic state, for Taylor, are summarized in the political principles: freedom of religion, including freedom of not to believe; the equality of all people regardless of their religious or ideological belief or nonbelief; giving to all citizens a hearing in the ongoing process of determining what the society is about and how it is going to realize its goals; and trying as much as possible to maintain relations of harmony and comity between the supporters of different religions and other philosophical systems and views. Taylor suggests that instead of being fixated with "mantra-type

formulae like ‘separation of church and state’ or the necessity of removing religion from public space, citizens should reflect on how and by what means these principles can be maximize in a democratic state. Some separation of religion and state and the mutual autonomy of governing and religious institutions are indispensable aspects of a democratic regime in its efforts to maximize its goals. The neutrality of the state and of its public institutions is also an indispensable feature of modern democracy helping the state to avoid favoring or disfavoring not just religions but also any basic positions, religious or nonreligious. Taylor insists that the operative modes of secularism must reflect the best institutional arrangements in a given historical context by which a democratic state achieves its goals. “One must start from the goals and derive the concrete arrangements from these.” The institutional arrangements by which a secular regime achieves its goals - once they are understood to be instrumental in nature and historically conditioned - can be resilient cognizant of contextual factors and adaptive to new realities that may not be necessarily adversarial to religious beliefs and practices.

Managing the increasing diversity of modern society presupposes a strong adherence to democracy, human rights, equality and the rule of law. The political ethic derived from these principles is not simple grounded on ‘public reason’ but on many different systems of belief and practice that people may have in a liberal democratic state. For instance, Taylor notes, “ A Kantian will justify the rights to life and freedom by pointing to the dignity of the rational agency; a utilitarian will speak of the necessity to treat beings who can experience joy and suffering in such a way as to maximize the first and minimize the second. A Christian will speak of humans, as made in the image of God.” Taylor observes that all of them concur on the principle of equality and the right to life, but differ in the deeper reasons for holding to this ethic. A liberal democratic state based on its axiomatic principle of state’s neutrality upholds the ethic and refrains from favoring any of the deeper reasons that different systems of belief espouse. Its challenge is to ensure that everyone comes to see the basic principles of political association as legitimate, based on his or her own perspective and tradition.

Given the importance and variations of deep commitments that orient citizens, there is no solution to be found by means of an institutional arrangement demarcating where deep values may be asserted and where they may not. What is more important for democratic societies is exploring ways to work for common goals – like liberty, equality, and fraternity. Constructing a democratic life together may depend more on being able to engage in such shared positive pursuits than on any institutional arrangements (or, indeed, agreement on all the reasons to engage in common pursuits). This also suggests that we should not understand the public sphere entirely in terms of an argumentation about the truth-value of propositions. It is a

realm of creativity and social imaginaries in which citizens give shared form to their lives together, a realm of exploration, experiment, and partial agreements. Citizens need to find ways to treat each other's basic commitments with respect; fortunately, they are also likely to find considerable overlap in what they value.

The three political thinkers that I have presented are concerned with identifying ways in which public sphere can help produce greater integration among citizens who enter public discourse with different views. While Rawls in his latest version and Habermas stress agreement and clearer knowledge, Taylor emphasizes mutual recognition and collaboration in common pursuits. But all of them agree that excluding religion from the public sphere undermines the solidarity and creativity they seek.



ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA

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Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations
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At a meeting of the International Orthodox Assembly such as this, it is relevant to point out that Orthodoxy in America and Orthodoxy in the traditional homes of the Orthodox Churches in Europe and the Middle East are interrelated and influence one another. It is self-evident that the Churches of Eastern and Southern Europe and the Middle East make a direct impact on Orthodoxy in America. It is also true that Orthodox theologians in America are known in Europe and the Middle East. For example, the works of Fathers Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff (both of whom served as Deans of St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, New York) have been translated into Greek, Russian, Serbian, and other languages.

The United States context has influence and impact on Orthodox life in America. The Orthodox do not live in some kind of bubble, separated from the surrounding society. One of the most interesting phenomena is the impact of the United States on the structure of Orthodox parish life in the US.

As Archbishop Demetrios mentioned yesterday, the percentage of the US population who go to church regularly is very high. This has influenced also the Orthodox faithful. The percentage of the Orthodox population attending church regularly is quite high. Furthermore, the life and mission of the parishes, the life and mission of the seminaries, the life and mission of the Church as a whole depend on the active support of the faithful. There is no state support. There are no sources of income other than the support of the faithful laity. The generosity and sense of responsibility of the lay people undergird the life and witness of Orthodox in the US. In this sense Orthodoxy in America is very much like the other Christian bodies and other religious communities.

This pattern of parish life and support for the mission of the parish and the work of the Church is not characteristic of the traditionally Orthodox societies.

Another impact of the US on Orthodoxy in America is the increasing number of converts in the Orthodox parishes and seminaries and monasteries.. I can say that during the last year or two a competent demographer and statistician has made a study based on questionnaires sent to three of the Orthodox Churches – the Orthodox Church in America, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. I did not bring with me and do not remember the exact statistics. I do remember that in all three “jurisdictions” the percentage of converts is quite high. The highest is the Orthodox Church in America, with forty-seven percent of its faithful identified as converts.

In the theological schools, whether Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology or St. Vladimir’s Seminary or any of the other schools the percentage of students preparing for the priesthood who are converts is very high. For example, beginning in the mid-1960s, approximately half of the students at St. Vladimir’s Seminary have been converts. The numerically significant presence of converts clearly brings to Orthodoxy in America the questions and debates of US society.

The statistics on conversion show that there is a constant spiritual quest in America and there are many persons who find fulfillment in their question quest and pilgrimage by becoming members and participants in the Orthodox Church. The spiritual quest can take people in the other direction – from Orthodoxy to another religious community. I think that the number of people who become Orthodox from Protestantism or Catholicism is higher than the number of Orthodox who join other churches. For me, a leader of the United Methodist Church is a case in point. An incident in the life of his family moved this man to the Methodist community. In this society is accepted and acceptable that there is freedom to find your own way in your spiritual journey.

The Orthodox witness and mission in America has undergone three stages or periods. The Orthodox Church came to North America first as mission. In 1794 a group of missionary monks arrived in Alaska after a long and arduous journey from Valaam Monastery in Northern Karelia. Alaska was then under Russian rule. The Russian Orthodox Church sent the missionaries to preach and to minister to the native people of Alaska. The missionaries created an alphabet for the native language, they translated scripture and liturgical texts. They evangelized the native people. They respected the native culture, finding in native beliefs elements of the Gospel of Christ and using these to demonstrate persuasively the truth of the Christian faith.

The second stage of Orthodoxy in America was characterized by immigration. At the end of the nineteenth century immigration to the US flows from Eastern Europe and Southern Europe and the Middle East. The Orthodox witness at this time concentrates on building parishes for the immigrant communities.

The third stage of the Orthodox journey in America is characterized by increasing numbers of converts to the Orthodox faith.

These stages overlap with one another. Today the fruit of the Orthodox mission in Alaska is evident in the Alaskan parishes and in St. Herman's Seminary in Kodiak. The immigrant communities and their parishes are now the institutional base of the Orthodox presence across the US. In many cases, these parishes are now the spiritual home also of many converts. New parishes emerge across the US, some of which minister especially to converts.

Some forty years ago a survey showed that in a radius of about ninety minutes there were more Orthodox parishes in the area of Greater New York than there were in Moscow. During the last twenty years the situation in Moscow has changed radically. Still, the survey of forty years ago was a sign of the vitality of Orthodoxy in America. This vitality continues as new parishes and institutions are created across the US.

The Orthodox are present today in American society, in American civil society and government. At the highest level, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is a steady presence in the White House, at events such as Presidential inaugurations, and at political conventions. The Archbishop and other Orthodox leaders, when they are involved in the events in civil society and government, are of course alongside representatives of other Christian churches and other religious communities.

Orthodox take part in the institutions of American society. We heard earlier today from Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, who has served for several years as a Commissioner of the US Commission on Religious Freedom Abroad. This Commission was created by the Congress of the US on the recommendation of the Secretary of State's Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad; I was one of several Orthodox members of this Committee. Andrew Natsios, who spoke earlier, has served as administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, the arm of the US State Department for international aid projects.

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is a vital and professional Orthodox presence in the area of relief and development around the world. Prior to the creation of IOCC twenty years ago as an agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas there was no Orthodox presence and voice in this sphere of humanitarian work. IOCC has worked in Eastern and Southern Europe and in Africa. The creation of IOCC has made a major contribution to the presence of Orthodoxy in American society.

In the period of the 1960s-1980s there was a strong trend to identify Orthodoxy as the fourth major faith in the US – together with Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. One dimension of this was the increasing number of Orthodox military chaplains, the increasing presence of Orthodox leaders, such as Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and Chairman of SCOBA, in major events. It is interesting that the language of "fourth major faith" has fallen into disuse. I believe one reason for this

is the growth of the Islamic presence in America. The impact of relations with Islam globally is a sensitive point to Americans.

Orthodoxy is not particularly visible to the general American population. Let me share a personal experience. A few years ago I was in Pomona, California, for the funeral of my stepfather. He and my mother were participants in the life of the local Romanian Orthodox parish, and so the funeral service was celebrated in the Romanian church. Before the service began, a bishop of the Orthodox Church in America, the parish priest, and I were standing outside the church, waiting for the choir and people to enter the church. As we conversed, two women were walking past the church. They saw three bearded men in robes, a sight which aroused their curiosity. They inquired what religion we represented. *Are you Jewish? No, we are Orthodox*, said one of my friends, realizing immediately that this meant to the women that we were Orthodox Jews. Then the other friend said, with great precision, *We are Eastern Orthodox Christians*. One of the passers-by then asked *How far East do you come from?* I still regret I did not say *Long Island*. (Which is where I live, and which is in the eastern part of the US.)

Clearly, we Orthodox have a recognition problem and challenge in the general American society. Americans can find us if they look for us. To look for us they have to know what they are looking for. Search engines help with this. Americans who are not looking for us most often do not easily recognize who we are.

Another current dimension of Orthodox presence in the US is the Orthodox position in the “culture wars.” For example, the ethical issues confronting US society – abortion, same-sex marriage, etc. – have caused deep divisions in US society. The debates most often are dominated by ideology. Sometimes those who profess their religious faith in these debates are co-opted by ideological thinking and political language. The Orthodox beliefs and convictions in these questions are clear at the level of moral teaching. Yet to be caught up in ideological and political language is to lose the specificity of the theological approach to moral teaching.

Yet another feature of American Christian life presents a challenge to the Orthodox witness and self-understanding. Most American Christians are comfortable in defining themselves as members of denominations. Some of the Christians in the US are sectarian. The Orthodox self-understanding is neither sectarian nor denominational. Our paradigm of the Church is catholicity rather than the sectarian paradigm or the denominational paradigm. One can meet Orthodox Christians in the US who have adopted either the sectarian model or the denominational model. The sectarian mind-set is narrow, intolerant, and aggressive. The denominational mind-set is inclusive, seeing Christian churches as interchangeable, asserting that Christians are all the same in their beliefs. For the Orthodox, neither of these models is acceptable.

There are many issues and challenges around the world demanding Orthodox responses. The division of Cyprus is one example. Another example is the question of the

Theological School at Halki. In the US, the Greek Orthodox community has tried to address these issues, pressing their case with the US Government and with international organizations. I am convinced that these issues should be addressed by all the Orthodox together. The tragedies of Christians in Syria, Iraq, Egypt are yet another urgent set of challenges which US Orthodox should address together. We hope that the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops will be able to bring together the Orthodox churches and jurisdictions in the US in making a common witness. The Eastern Orthodox communities should collaborate with the Oriental Orthodox communities in the challenges confronting us. We need to project the Orthodox voice in a credible way. We also need to develop alliances on certain issues with other Christians and other faiths. For example, Christian bodies collaborate with other religious communities in Religions for Peace, a global network offering a good opportunity to advocate for peace, religious freedom, and tolerance. Another valuable Christian forum on the global scale is the World Council of Churches. In the US, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and Christian Churches Together in the USA are the forums for inter-Christian collaboration on issues of mutual concern. Everywhere and at all times we Orthodox must be true to ourselves. This does not mean that we isolate ourselves. This means that we have the freedom to collaborate with others for the common good.

Father Alexander Schmemmann once wrote that Orthodox task in America is to be truly Orthodox and truly American. We are not appendices of other cultures and societies, foreign to the US. We are challenged to be full participants of American society. We have the freedom to be full participants of American society. We need to be truly American and truly Orthodox.



THE PRESENCE OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SPACE (CURRENT SITUATION – PERSPECTIVES)

Fr. VASKEN KOUZOUNIAN

Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church

Your Eminence, Reverend Clergy,
Members of the Board of the I.A.O., and Conference guests,

I was asked to represent His Eminence, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, who is currently out of the area, and share today, the “Presence of Orthodox Christians in the American Public Space” from the perspective of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

I will attempt to illustrate that the Armenian Church has, in its own way, impacted the greater American society, as much as is possible for such a small minority to impact a vast society;

but, also the continuing ministry to our own people, who are now every bit as American, and part of American society, as the offspring of this land’s earliest settlers.

I begin by sharing what I believe was the pivotal point of the Armenian Church entering the American public arena. It began in 1968, when the Armenian Church, and people, erected a national Cathedral in the heart of New York City.

Embedded directly below the Cathedral’s 120 foot dome are inscribed words from the 5th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how can it regain its saltiness?”

These telling Words, subtly articulated in the center of our cathedral, gave voice to the general theme of that which was yet to come for the Armenian Church in America, of the persistence of the Armenian people over the many centuries, and the translation of their tradition from the Old World to the New.

On a Spring day in 1968, His Holiness, Vasken I, of blessed memory, Catholicos of All Armenians, consecrated the cathedral in the name of St. Vartan Mamigonian, the heroic 5th century commander of Armenia's military forces, who defended his Church and countrymen from an invading empire hostile to the Christian faith.

Fittingly, for an institution built in the United States of America, the cathedral was named after a Saint who gave his life in the cause of liberty. For the then Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, and the clergy of the Armenian Church of America, St. Vartan Cathedral was far more than a centralized and national House of Worship, --it stood majestically as a symbol for what was yet to come through: Christian and Cultural education; social services, ecumenical endeavors; and participation in the wider culture of America.

For the Armenian Church, the "gateway" into a brave new world was the St. Vartan Cathedral, which became the Armenian American community's informal "embassy" to the surrounding society.

The late Patriarch Manoogian, then a young 46 year old Bishop, became the newly elected Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church at that time. He assumed the leadership of the Armenian Church in America at a promising moment.

The previous seven decades had included some of the most trying episodes in the history of the Armenian people.

While America had been a haven against the afflictions of the Old World, life in this adoptive home had hardly been devoid of struggle and sacrifice.

These experiences would not diminish in the Armenian memory. But now, as our people anticipated the completion of a National House of Worship on American soil, the difficulties of the past were cast into a somewhat different perspective.

Our cathedral would be a potent symbol that: the Armenians had overcome adversity; that they had defied annihilation; and that they would persist into the future.

This would be more than merely another achievement. It would be victory over the past. Even so, all believed that the deeper meaning of this victory lay in its promise of greater things to come.

Far from being the culmination of the achievements of the Armenian Church in America, the cathedral was really only a beginning, a launching point, from which Armenians could make an even more profound impact on the surrounding society.

From that point forward, the Primate's and clergy of the Armenian Church: walked alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Civil Rights walks in the South; sat with the Secretary General of the United Nations; raised awareness and funds for the victims of hunger and natural disasters both nationally and internationally; and drew the attention and respect of Mayors, Governors, Congressmen, Senators, Cabinet Secretaries, and Presidents of the United States.

Our cathedral did more than create a central place of worship for the Armenian orthodox people.

It lifted the message and ministry of the Armenian Church to new levels and established the Church of Armenia firmly in this new land.

To quote our former Primate, “St. Vartan Cathedral has been our window to the world, through which we have been able to make contact with other churches and other authorities.”

Likewise, he might have added that the cathedral was also the surrounding society’s “window” into the Armenian American community where they could view its accomplishments, its values, its aspirations, and its leading personalities.

In the nearly 40+ years that followed, the initial “seeds of outreach” into the greater American society began to blossom for the Armenian Church.

Ecumenical relations were pursued with greater intensity. And the Armenian Church of America saw a revitalization in its relationships with the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Episcopal Churches. Important relationships were also developed between our Primate’s and the Roman Catholic Church, enjoying lasting friendships with consecutive Archbishops of New York; of the Archdiocese of Boston, and other prominent cities across America.

Over the years, the Armenian Primate’s have also been intimately involved in the activities of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

As the head of a member denomination, the Primate attended the NCC’s Executive as well as

Governing Board meetings; helped to formulate its policies (especially with regard to the Middle East --as the Armenian people have been ancestral and constant neighbors in that part of the world since the 1st Century B.C. when Dikran the Great, King of Armenia, expanded the borders of his kingdom as far south as the Holy Land.); and met with national political figures in the White House and on Capitol Hill.

With the increasing ecumenical involvement of the Armenian Church of America in the work and mission of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), the Primate appointed a the full-time ecumenical officer to be the voice of the Armenian Church to this esteemed ecumenical body.

In less than 40 years after the construction of our cathedral, an Armenian clergyman, His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, was elected President of the NCCC in 2006. Through his work and election, the various Churches of America made a statement of the highest order, the Armenian Church was a valued member in the ecumenical world of America.

Likewise, Abp. Aykazian became heavily involved in the ongoing work of the World Council of Churches (WCC), following in the footsteps of His Eminence Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, of blessed memory, His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, and His Holiness Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians, himself a past Vice President of the WCC, of blessed memory, as well as more recently in Christian Churches

Together, Habitat For Humanity, and many other trusted and important national and international organizations.

Beginning in the 1980's, the Primate's of the Armenian Church of America have been welcomed to the Boards of such religious organizations as the Appeal of Conscience Foundation; Religion in American Life; and the American Bible Society.

This all being said, let me also state that as the Armenian Church has adapted to contemporary times, and continuously re-adapts as needed, it has never become the product of the modern world. Our message is timeless, but our ministry serves the people of current times. America is a wonderful democracy that continues to create itself, and therefore, is not the same today as it was when the Armenian Church formally entered these boarders. Democracies change according to the make up of its constituents. Accordingly, values, priorities, and outlooks are defined, and re-defined, but, our message is grounded in Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our message has not, and will not change, but the delivery of our message meets the needs of the day. For this reason, the Armenian Church has grown into: 2 separate dioceses in America; Established a Seminary in America; Purchased Camp Sites on both coasts of America; Created Leadership Conferences for our Young Adults; Sponsors annual pilgrimages for our youth to Armenia and the Holy Land; And has now grown to nearly 100 parishes, with 2 cathedrals, and more than 25 Mission Parishes from coast to coast.

The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the independence of the Republic of Armenia has had long-term and lasting effects on our Community and Church in America. We are today, a Church of: new immigrants, and 4th generation Americans. We are a community with a portion of our membership having been born, raised, and educated on these shores, with Armenian American traditions and experiences; and we have a growing portion of our community having been raised with the Soviet experience. So, our ministry re-creates itself to meet diverse needs. Today, all Churches in America exist in an increasingly secularized society.

Intellectual "fashions" of the day exalt and applaud various kinds of political expressions over and above religious faith, which is increasingly denigrated as a relic of an outmoded past. As a result, the Church seems to be in danger of becoming marginalized within American society. Innovations in science and technology have affected not only the material side of life, but also the spiritual, ethical, and social realms. Do to the social currents of today, such as: "A Technological Re-birth"; Continuously altered political landscapes; New views on moral and ethical issues; Fear of terror; The changing face of the traditional family unit; And economic turbulence within society and family-life have provided added cause for the Armenian Church to offer her timeless message through new methods as we zealously reach out to our people living in America.

On the local level, parishes are growing into more heightened awareness of social services to the greater community. Through servicing Soup Kitchen's, local Food-banks,

Children’s Hospitals, Nursing Homes for the elderly, Holiday Services to our American Troops overseas, parishes are growing in their understanding of their orthodox Christian role in the world. A re-awakening of their place within the American public space is growing daily, often led by the efforts of the younger generations who are growing up further and further removed from the perspectives of the “old country” and fully engaged in the American lifestyle. We strive, in our wonderfully multi-cultured society of America, to impart the ancient yet timeless faith of the Armenian Church into the lives of our people, building upon the ministries and work begun in the late 1800’s by generations of devoted clergymen who laid the foundations of ministry and Armenian culture within these borders. The ministry they provided, was to help the faithful: Remain firm in their Church and traditions; Overcome the challenges of this new land; And represent the voice of the ancient people of Armenia in this modern world of America.

The ministry they started was enhanced and developed through the years. For the Armenian orthodox faith is a faith handed down through the generations; from: grandparent to grandchild; priest to faithful; and from family to family. And that is how our ancient Church continues on even today in modern America.

Note: Historical information from:

“The Torch Was Passed” St. Vartan Press, New York, 1998



THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES RESPONSE TO GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Mr. PASCALIS PAPOURAS

Special Assistant to the Executive Office
of International Orthodox Christian Charities – IOCC

It would be quite easy for Orthodox Christians in the United States to disparage ourselves. If on the one hand we compare ourselves to the Roman Catholics or Protestant denominations of our nation, we lack the organized historic social outreach capabilities; and if on the other hand we compare ourselves to the Orthodox Christians of the east, we lack their numbers and societal centrality. In America, Orthodox Christians make up 1/3 of 1% of the total population, if one combines the Eastern and Oriental families. This is less than a marginal presence – it is a footnote, which usually falls under “other”. Last year I was in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, coordinating IOCC’s response to the tornadoes which devastated that community, and met with a pastoral leader from a large local Evangelical parish in order to assist the community. When I identified myself as Orthodox Christian, the lady looked at me with a confused awkward expression, and she shyly asked if that was like Jews for Jesus. I replied that technically the Orthodox Church was founded by a dozen Jews, though I believe the irony was lost on her. This, my dear colleagues, is our starting point in the west. We are in a position where we must educate our neighbors about our very existence, but not through academic tomes or pamphlets or even proselytization. We must do so through extending the embrace of the Church to them where they are – sharing with them the Divine Love of our Lord. My colleague, a Deacon in the Church, stayed with that community in Alabama over the next several weeks and assisted them with the basic necessities of life, such as food, water and shelter, but his true contribution was nothing material at all. I received a phone call from this same lady about a month later, and with the thankfulness that only can come from

someone who has experienced great loss, she told me that the Deacon had been a true blessing for them all. She said with her voice breaking from tears, “He looked like the presence of the Creator’s Love amidst all of this destruction.”

We Orthodox bear a heavy burden in that we have inherited the Apostolic Traditions, and are obligated to exercise them in our lives. Orthodox Christians, notwithstanding our small numbers in the west, have risen to many leadership roles in the public space – from the Senate and House of Representatives to local soup kitchens for the homeless. And yet as Orthodox individuals shine in existing public institutions, institutions that are specifically Orthodox often do not have the same public exposure. Perhaps it is because we dogmatically follow the instruction to give so that not even our other hand knows we did it, but conveniently forget that we are also instructed to let our works shine so that all my glory in the Lord.

The Orthodox Churches have quietly and with humility assisted survivors of the earthquake in Haiti, victims of conflict in Syria and the Holy Land, cared for orphans in Guatemala, provided education for students in the Democratic Republic of Congo, provided lunches for students in Lebanon, developed the capacity of farmers and ranchers in the Balkans and the Caucasus, offered counseling to substance abusers in Russia, and assistance to those living with HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, and many, many more projects to vast to enumerate in this forum.

Though the organizations of the Orthodox Churches throughout the world tasked with implementing the diaconal charge of the Christ to those in need, to those suffering, are separated by great distances, by disparate governmental systems, by spoken languages, by unique cultural traditions, they are all nonetheless unified by a common mission: in the Spirit of Christ’s love, to offer emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and thus strengthen the capacity of the Orthodox Church as a whole to so respond.

In March of this year representatives from a dozen Orthodox organizations worldwide met at Balamand Monastery in Lebanon to share their respective programs and viewpoints, with a view to building stronger programmatic relationships. The common statement that was elaborated at the meeting begins:

Our common Orthodoxy strengthens our similar missions and common purpose engaged in the diaconal work of the Orthodox Church. While recognizing that each organization has different and diverse capacities, the resources and insights of each Orthodox agency or department ought to be shared among one another with more intentionality; with direct and indirect benefits resulting for each other and the people each organization serves.

By doing so, we can:

- Improve cooperation among Orthodox agencies and departments also engaged in diaconal work, humanitarian relief and development and strengthen the Orthodox witness;

- Offer mutual support for common challenges, demonstrating an active, working solidarity;
- Provide opportunities for coordinated response and Orthodox witness;
- Improve the effectiveness of and build the capacity for diaconal work in our churches through sharing of resources and experiences;
- Strengthen the profile of Orthodox diaconia in international forums.

For centuries the Orthodox Church has been in a state of persecution, whether as immigrants to foreign lands, or by other faiths, or even by those who would seek to destroy all faith in anything other than the state. We have come to a historic junction, when global Orthodoxy is becoming more connected through technologic bounds in communication. We have discovered that though we are separated by many material factors, we are truly one in faith, and we earnestly look towards the day when the world look at our works and aspire towards our faith in the Risen Lord.



THE PRESENCE OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SPACE (CURRENT SITUATION – PERSPECTIVES)

His Grace Bishop DAVID ANBA
General Bishop, Archdiocese of North American
Coptic Orthodox Church

In the name of the Father the Son the Holy Spirit one God Amen.

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is an apostolic church that was established by St. Mark in the middle of the first century. The 117th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, Pope Shenouda III departed on March 17, 2012 after leading the church for more than 40years. H.H. was well known for being successful in holding numerous ecumenical meetings to unite all of the Orthodox churches under one umbrella.

Before H.H. Pope Shenouda III the service in the US was limited. There were only a few churches and not many clergy. During his time as Pope the church grew in the US to consist of more than 250 priests and over 200 churches were opened in the US.

The Coptic Church of Alexandria played an influential role in the WCC (World Church Council), and MECC, (Middle East Church Council), and was very active in the bilateral and multilateral theological dialogue in the formal and informal levels towards unity.

H.H. Pope Shenouda led the Coptic Church during different eras of political and social instability:

- HH led the church from the presidency of Anwar El Sadat until the revolution saw the end of the presidency of Hosni Mubarak. He witnessed the Egyptian revolution in January 2011 and the corresponding instability and societal changes. He faced a lot of pressure and many problems. He faced the burning and destruction of churches,

the martyrdom of Copts, discrimination in jobs, prohibition of church building, and the abduction of minors.

He faced all these trials and tribulations and with wisdom and faith he maintained the peace of the church and the solidarity of his children. In 2011, he witnessed martyrdoms of several Copts in heroic incidences. These included a suicide bombing in a church in Alexandria on New Years Eve and Copts being run over by military vehicles in October 2011 in Maspiro, Cairo.

Therefore H.H. Departure resulted in major disaster in difficult circumstances. The Islamic political parties essentially stole the Egyptian revolution. They succeeded in having 70% of the elected parliament which they achieved by using forgery supported by the government as well as by foreign powers. They pretended to be okay with several regimes but in reality they are insisting on an Islamic regime in Egypt, raising Islamic Khalifa sharia and a constitution based on the Koran. They pressed onward and succeeded in running the election before finishing the constitution.

Harassment and tribulation increased in light of the dominance of the Muslim brotherhood, and the Salafist movement. They fabricated and started conflicts with the church and Copts in all aspects, i.e. their houses, belongings, work etc...) Many crimes occurred without capturing the real offender, many young girls were kidnapped and forced to convert, houses were stolen and burned down, and most recently teachers have cut the hair of young Coptic girls, in addition they are refusing to let the Coptic governor do his job, and they have evacuated numerous Copts from their homes.

In June 2011, the Muslim brotherhood candidate for presidency, Mohammed Mursi was elected to the presidential office through the use of forgery. He made a promise to be a president for all Egyptians, regardless of religion, but after more than 5 months he has failed to do so. He has not improved the status of Copts nor protected them from terrorist attacks.

With all these unpleasant circumstances, the constitution committee which consists of 100 (only 6 of whom are Christians) began to write the constitution. The Islamic political parties are insisting that this constitution lead to an Islamic ruled country.

But during that tough time, "God does not leave Himself without a witness" (Acts 14:17); the church witnessed the birth of the new Pope. According to the rites of the Coptic Church after the repose of the Patriarch, the synod assembled and called for the election of one of the elder metropolitans to act as patriarchal Locum Tenens. H. E. Metropolitan Pachomius was nominated for the role. He led the church through very rough times. According to the bylaws of 1957, these are the same bylaws that were used to elect H.H. Pope Kyrillos VI and H.H. Pope Shenouda III.

- 1- Determine voters' committee clergies and laymen to prepare voters list.
- 2- Committee of candidates 9 bishops and 9 laymen headed by the Locum Tenens.
- 3- Candidates must be: nominated by at least 6 bishops, be over the age of 40, be of Egyptian nationality, and have been a monk for a minimum of 15 years.

4- 17 candidates were nominated- 7 bishops and 10 monks. After 3 days of fasting and praying the committee of candidates met to examine every candidate in detail to finalize the list and they approved 5 candidates- 2 bishops and 3 monks.

5- After 3 days of fasting and praying an election was held to choose 3 candidates.

6- After another 3 days of fasting and prayer, an altar lot was done to see which of the 3 candidates would be chosen by God to be the next pope.

7- Pope Tawadros II is the 118th pope and will be enthroned tomorrow Sunday the 18th, of November 2012

Pope Tawadros II was born in Mansoura in 1952. He has a pharmacy degree which he obtained in 1975; and a bachelor degree in theology which he obtained in 1984. He joined the monastery and became a monk in 1986. He was ordained a priest in 1989 and served in the Behara diocese. He was ordained a general bishop in 1997. His priorities are to solve internal problem in the church (education, bylaws, etc...).

The Coptic Orthodox Church is a church filled with faith. The true faith which it has kept strong and steadfast over hundreds of years. We, as a church, know that God loves us and He will never leave us. We know that He is always watching over us and is guiding us with His loving hands. Our Lord says to us, *“if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”* Matthew 17:20. Many years ago the Coptic Orthodox Church was going through trials and tribulations. But they fasted, prayed and most of all had faith in the Lord our God. Because of their fasting, prayers and their faith the mountain of Mokattam was moved. As a result of all of this, even their adversary came to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. As history has shown, our faith literally moves mountains. We pray that God grants us wisdom, peace, hope and most of all faith through these turbulent times to know that we should put all our trust in Him because He is all we need.



PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH: HIV/AIDS AND OBESITY AS EXAMPLES

Ms. NADIA ABUELEZAM

Doctoral Student

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Good afternoon you eminence, your graces, and distinguished guests.

My name is Nadia Abuelezam and I am a doctoral candidate in infectious disease epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health. I received my bachelors of science in mathematics and biology. I fell away from the church for a number of years during high school and for the first few years of college, and anxiously returned hoping to find answers, comfort and hope. I currently am a parishioner at St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Cambridge and serve as the teen advisor and high school discussion group teacher. I meet weekly with a group of 20 high school students to discuss current events, controversies, and popular topics as they relate to the Orthodox church. I hope to represent some of their perspectives in my remarks today as well as anecdotes from my own experiences.

I was very humbled to receive an invitation to come speak to you today about Orthodoxy and civil society from a young person's perspective. It's not often that I get the chance to speak to such influential people on topics that I am passionate about. I often attend these conferences and sit in the back row, unsure if my female scientific voice should be voiced when discussing theological and religious matters. Science and religion are posited as opposites, enemies even, in academic settings. In fact, in college, I attended a conference about how to come to terms with being both a Christian and a scientist. The conference was focused on supposed "conflicts" between the church and the scientific community like evolution and stem cell research. It wasn't until I came to

Harvard and did more research that I learned that these “conflicts” were actually relatively non-existent. Unfortunately though, I didn’t learn it from the church. I had to go to popular media sources to do my research and compare it to texts recommended to me by friends. This subject came up in my high school discussion class as well. Teens had no idea what they were supposed to take away from their biology lessons on evolution. Some even felt they were being anti-Orthodox by believing in evolution. I’ve discussed this issue with other Orthodox scientists who faced similar challenges in trying to understand how to come to terms with science and religion. Most feel they have little guidance from the church on these matters.

My premise today is that the Orthodox church must engage with science and research actively in order to educate its flock, but also to stay relevant in a world where science (and not religion) is driving decisions and actions around the world. Theologians need to learn to relate their research to lay people in lay terms in order to engage with those most in need of their theology. Bishops and priests need to be or stay educated on current scientific and cultural topics in order for them to have frank and open discussions with their parishioners about topics that matter. This is especially relevant to public health, an important facet of civil society, which receives little attention from the church today. As many of you know, the church considers it a moral imperative to care for one’s own health and societal concern for public health. The first hospitals were created by the church. We’ve simply lost touch with this important connection over time. But public health is an area which the church and many of its ministries have plenty to offer. I will be framing my arguments with two specific examples: HIV/AIDS and obesity.

How many Orthodox priests know the basic modes of transmission of HIV? Are priests educated on HIV and other public health risks that their parishioners may be facing? The answers to these questions may be very different in countries like the United States and Ethiopia or Russia. In the United States the HIV prevalence in the general adult population is about 0.1% (although this number is on the rise in black populations in the South). In Ethiopia the adult prevalence is 4.4%! That’s a staggering number! Although not as high as the 25% prevalence of HIV in South Africa, it still boasts the highest HIV prevalence in a country with a significant portion of Orthodox individuals. In Russia, the adult prevalence is over 1% and is the fastest growing HIV epidemic in the world. In these countries with sizeable proportions of Orthodox populations, what is the church doing to educate their parishioners and aid those who need help? Organizations like IOCC are doing a great amount of work in the arena of HIV education in countries like Ethiopia. They have garnered the support of clergy and church leaders who stand up and educate their parishioners about HIV/AIDS and ways to prevent its spread. HIV/AIDS is often considered a “tough” subject because it involves talking about things like sex, homosexuality, and injection drug use. What’s ironic is that these topics (sex, homosexuality and drugs) are the topics that are in the United States media practically

everyday. Television shows like *Glee* and *Modern Family* deal with these controversial topics with ease and normalize the existence of behaviors that the church would not always agree with. These TV shows, though, have the most influence on our young people. I would bet that more teens consistently watch shows like these than attend liturgy across the United States. My teens constantly remind me that they are awaiting our discussion on same sex marriage, abortion, and homosexuality, and I keep delaying the discussion because I don't feel knowledgeable enough about the church's doctrine to have an appropriate conversation. But the church must engage on these topics by having church leaders discuss these subjects in sermons, have educational material for church school teachers and others interested, and by having open and honest conversations with young people on the challenges they face in their everyday lives.

Jesus did not shy away from the lepers, the prostitutes, and the sick. In fact, he found his way to them to the shock and chagrin of many of his followers and enemies. Why then are we afraid to engage these individuals in conversation? Why does the church shy away from engaging parishioners on topics that are difficult? Where are Orthodox people left to get their information? Facebook? The internet? These are not the best options for development and growth in the Orthodox Church. A great example of engagement of the church in the realm of HIV is exemplified by the Russian Orthodox church: which has targeted both a national health and spiritual issue with church-run ministries and laypeople representing one of the few attempts to rehabilitate injection drug users. But it wasn't until 2004 (nearly 20 years after the start of the HIV epidemic) that the church made an official statement on HIV. Going forward, the church should aim to get involved early and often, regardless of impact. I would argue that similar programs can be adapted to other countries like Ethiopia and the United States. In fact, I'm in the process of writing a proposal to not only write up a theological perspective on the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but also to educate the general Orthodox public about HIV, serve HIV positive individuals in parish communities, and raise money to help those with HIV in disease burdened countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. I hope this brief discussion on HIV/AIDS has brought to the forefront the need for the Orthodox church to engage in tough subjects, because it is often a matter of life or death. There is no cure for HIV and individuals who contract the disease are faced with horrendous medical bills and debilitating side effects. The transmission of HIV can be prevented with knowledge of its transmission and the empowerment of people. Both of these aspects can be promoted by the Orthodox Church.

I'll now move on to the topic of obesity.

Are parishioners told that taking care of one's body and being in the best physical health is actually a way to glorify God? Obesity is a topic that has been rampant in the media in the United States. We learn every day the horrific health consequences of sitting for extended periods of time, of eating processed foods and saturated fats. We are

bombarded with media campaigns to lose weight and to eat healthy while simultaneously drinking our sugar laden beverages and eating delicious desserts. But what example do we set in the church for taking care of one's body? According to a survey done by Pulpit & Pew (A Lilly Endowment-funded research project), 79% of clergy are either overweight (48%) or obese (30%). While this survey was done to survey the priests of the Methodist church, we can assume the same is true for our clergy. What kind of example is this setting for parishioners and young people? I can count on my hands the number of priests I know that are in good enough shape to play basketball with their teens or who take parishioners on nature hikes. We were created in the image of God, yet we have altered the basic biochemistry of our bodies with sugary drinks and a lack of physical activity. And this isn't just a phenomenon that is plaguing US society. Nearly 26% of men in Greece are obese (more than 1 in 4 men). In places like Russia, Serbia, Cyprus, and Bulgaria the female obesity prevalence is well over 20% (1 in 5 women). Albania, Lebanon, and Egypt have obesity rates that tower over 35% (1 in 3)! These are all countries where Orthodoxy has influence (at least on a portion of the population). Imagine what kind of difference the church can make if they got involved in people's health or at least referred people to information on how to improve their health. Imagine what kind of emotional and mental obstacles people could overcome if they knew they had an entire parish behind them and supporting them in their endeavor to lose weight or to realize that getting healthier is a way of glorifying God! Rick Warren and the Saddleback church in Los Angeles California are one example of a church empowered to make the lives of their parishioners healthier and happier through what they've called: "The Daniel Plan." The notoriously overweight pastor began a public weight loss journey and supplied parishioners the tools they needed to join him. They built multiple gyms on their mega-church property and hired famous nutritionists and consultants to create healthy plans for parishioners. The program boasts the combination of changing one's lifestyle and asking God for help on one's journey, uniting the physical and spiritual components of life that many struggle to connect. In a year, all members participating lost a total of 260,000 pounds. Another example of a church's engagement with science and research is the Duke Divinity School's 12 million dollar grant to study health factors affecting pastors' performance and to improve the health (and reduce the weight) of many pastors in the Southern United States. Although Saddleback church is an extreme example of a church's involvement in parishioners lives, starting with providing our clergy and leaders the tools they need to get healthy and the tools they need to educate their parishes on healthy behavior is a good and basic start.

Other questions that the church can help parishioners with are: what are the benefits of vaccination for newborns?, how can parishioners do more to help the environment and prevent the inevitable effects of global warming?, should individuals get a flu shot?, what are the best options for couples who cannot conceive? All of these questions re-

quire leaders to have a grip on science and an understanding of the church's viewpoints. These are challenging questions that many researchers around the world are attempting to answer and the church needs to engage with the research and the technology to stay current and relevant. Young people around the world are flooded with more information than they can handle through the internet and social media. The church needs to step up and be a competing influence.



ORTHODOX YOUTH IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

Mr. THOMAS MANUEL

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My main topic of conversation today is on the Orthodox youth as an element of American civil society. Though, before I start my discussion of American civil society as it relates to Orthodoxy, I wish to say a few words on myself so you can see what has helped to shape my views. Next, I will detail a few points on American civil society that relate to Orthodoxy. These will be beneficial because they will contextualize the world that Orthodox in America live in and also will give some insights as to how Orthodoxy relates to the larger American society. The three points I will discuss are first America's pluralistic society, second the concept of separation of Church and State, and third the individualistic nature of religion within America. Each one of these points at the least creates complications for Orthodoxy in America, if they are not outright opposed to it. Then once I have laid my foundation I will speak specifically about the Orthodox youth and how they confront this American society.

I was born and grew up in America, being the grandson of immigrant grandparents from Greece. My family was always very close to the Orthodox Church. Both my father and my uncle are priests and my grandfather was a professional iconographer. In my household growing up, we did not speak Greek, the language of my ancestors, but rather English. This is a consequence of naturalization and the American Phenomenon of religious intermarriage whereby one spouse enters the faith through marriage. So in our household, we knew that we were of Greek heritage, though we did not speak the language. Though I grew up in an Orthodox world, it was apparent that that world was not necessarily shared by all of those around me.

Though I speak of an overarching American society with which Orthodoxy interacts, in fact it would be more appropriate to speak of multiple American cultures which Or-

thodoxy confronts. American society is highly pluralistic would be better described as a conglomeration of many subcultures living and interacting together in the same country. It is no secret that America is a “melting pot” of many ethnicities from all over the world. Orthodoxy within America is but one of the many hundreds of subcultures, and a tiny one at that. Orthodox in America constitute anywhere between one and one and a half million members. That number comes out to be about one three-hundredth of the total population of the United States. This is a very important point because not only does a highly pluralistic society differ drastically with many traditional Orthodox countries, such as Greece and Russia, but also because this high level of pluralism deeply impacts the views and values of Orthodox in this country.

The second concept in American society that impacts Orthodoxy is the idea of separation of Church and State that has permeated every aspect of our society. When the founders of our nation met to compose the constitution, they composed it in the mind of the Enlightenment with the consequence that the religious sphere was kept separate from governance. In older nations than my own, such as Spain, England and Russia, one can find a dominating religious tradition with a long history of sharing in the governance of that nation. In fact, if given a map of modern Europe, one could point to any nation on that map and say which religious tradition dominated there. In the United States, there is no dominating religious tradition. One can argue Protestant Christianity, but I would disagree since Protestantism is very diverse unto itself as to not allow one dominating system.

A consequence of separation of Church and State within American society is the divide that is created within people over their religious and civil identity. The separation of religion with civil society on an official level creates two, sometimes competing, identities within Americans. The Orthodox Church may teach me one set of values it finds important, but my identity as an American citizen teaches me drastically different values that are incompatible with my Orthodox faith. A good example of this divide between religious and civil life can be seen in the difficulty with which many Orthodox find in voting in particular and politics in general. Both of the major political parties in America have elements that are attractive and unattractive to an Orthodox Christian. This is because Orthodoxy and politics seek different goals. Orthodoxy strives for a life in Christ while politics seeks early earthly authority. Therefore, many Orthodox Christians in America find it difficult to pick which party they identify more with when in reality they do not identify with either party since neither is centered on Christ. This is because Orthodox Christianity simply transcends both political parties and cannot be identified entirely with either system based in their differing goals. In many countries where there is no concept of a separation of Church and State, one can identify their faith with a political party such as the phenomenon of Christian Democrat parties that have sprung up in Europe and Latin America.

Finally, in describing American culture I want to touch upon how many American perceive and interact with religion on an individualistic and private basis. Both because religion is taken out of the public sphere, and because there is a plethora of religious traditions living in the same country, religion has become a private matter that is left up to the individual. Everyone has their own private beliefs which they are not permitted to share with anyone else at the risk of offending those around them. Religion has a besieged social aspect, and therefore it is pressed as a personal belief that should remain in the private sector. Both the individualism and the privacy of religion in America are foreign to Orthodoxy, which is by nature a communal religion meant to be proclaimed to the whole world. Now that I have given a few broad points on American society and religion, I would like to turn specifically to our Orthodox youth and how they interact with that society.

Concerning the Orthodox Youth in America, I think it is first important to distinguish between what I would like to call “active” versus “passive” Orthodox. It is also important that this may also apply to the larger Orthodox context. As all human beings define themselves by their relationships, I believe that an “active” orthodox Christian is characterized by one who understands and sees as their primary relationship in life to be their love for God, their Orthodox faith. For an active Orthodox Christian, the foundation of their life is their faith and whatever they encounter along the road of life they filter through their faith first before making a decision. Issues such as wealth, the concept of happiness, political views, abortion, war, science constitute some of the issues that one may filter their faith through to make decisions. These are all filtered through one’s faith. They do not neglect other influences in their life, but they also see their faith as one of the most important relationships in their life.

A “passive” Orthodox by contrast is one who does not see their relationship with God as the foundation of their life, but instead they mix their relationship to God with that of friends, family, philosophies, ethical systems, scientific theories, political theories and much more. Whereas an active Orthodox will look at the concept of what it means to be truly happy through the lens of their relationship to God alone, a passive Orthodox will use a number of factors to determine what it means to be happy and their faith is usually not high on the list. I bring this up because I think it is important to realize that most Orthodox youth in America would fall into the second category of passive Orthodox and their faith is not an important factor in their lives. They are generally characterized by low church attendance, specifically on Easter and Christmas. They see the Church as an ethnic social club and participate in the life of the Church insofar as there are no discussions of religion and God. They generally understand their faith as a part of their ethnic and cultural milieu, and in this respect they fall into the larger secularized American society where religion is thrust to the margins. This is compounded by the confusion of a pluralistic society marked by separation of Church and State. Therefore, for the remain-

der my discussion I would like to focus on the much smaller group of active Orthodox youth, or those who consider their Orthodox faith strongly through everyday affairs.

One of the major struggles I see for our Orthodox Youth here in America is making the faith relevant and something important in their lives. I have been working at Orthodox summer camps for the last six years and every year there is always discussion amongst the youth there over the relevancy of the faith. For some it is a real struggle to see why it matters to put forth all of this effort when they see no immediate results. In our modern society, our youth are used to getting near instant gratification. If a young person wants to download a music album it is literally only a few clicks away from reality. A thousand and one different ways for our youth exist for their enjoyment and relaxation. There is little in many of our youth's lives that take any length of time. Conversely, our Orthodox faith asks for not simply a baptism and a couple of visits to the church every year, rather it asks for a lifetime of struggle and great effort that many times does not bear fruit with tangible results. Why would a young person want to get on the narrow and difficult path when the wide and easy one is so readily available to them? The first struggle that our youth go through, and that is our responsibility to support them with is simply making the faith alive and relevant in their lives.

Once they have made some relevance to their faith, the next struggle that I see constantly is how to take their embryonic faith and apply it to their everyday lives. Orthodox youth very early on notice the different value systems between Orthodoxy and American society. In American society, wealth is measured by the number of cars in your drive way and the size of your bank account; while Orthodoxy measures wealth not in treasures built up here in material goods, but rather in immaterial goods such as love and humility. In American society, success is measured by your utility to society and the prefix at the beginning of your name; while in Orthodoxy success is measured by one's ability to follow the will of God. They are being fed two different messages that in many respects contradict one another.

Specifically, Orthodox youth find a major disconnect between American society and Orthodoxy when the discussion of sexuality and romantic relationships appears. From American society they see two answers, neither of which is the Orthodox approach to the issue. Either sexuality and romantic relationships are wholly embraced since the person has full autonomy and freedom in respect to their body, or they are taught the puritanical view that the body is evil and anything to do with sexuality is evil, therefore to be abhorred and shunned. Our faith though says neither of these, but rather says that we are to love the other wholly and to see Christ is every single person we encounter, including those we encounter in romantic relationships.

In this short paper I have presented a snapshot of American society and how Orthodox Youth interact with it. I started off by explaining a bit about the unique American landscape which Orthodoxy finds itself within. How Orthodoxy finds itself in a pluralistic

CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOXY

society marked by a separation of Church and State. Due to these two factors, religion has become a private and individualistic affair, contrary to the nature of Orthodoxy. The Orthodox youth of this country are constantly confronted with a secularized American society that many times says the opposite of what our Orthodox faith teaches. It is imperative that our Orthodox Church be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” so that our youth know what Christianity truly means.



ORTHODOX YOUTH IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

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I am a first year Master of Divinity student at Holy Cross. I grew up in a small suburb on the Connecticut and Massachusetts border. My father's side of the family is of Belorussian, Austrian, and Polish descent, while mother's side is English and Irish. My father grew up in an ethnically Russian community in Bridgeport, Connecticut, while my mother was a devout Roman Catholic, who later converted to Orthodoxy herself when I was about eight or nine years old. I grew up in a moderate sized OCA parish in Hartford, Connecticut (about 60 people on average every Sunday), a forty-five minute drive from my house (the closest English speaking parish). There were not a great deal of children my age at my home parish, and the few that were my age did not live close enough to see them outside of church on Sunday. There was a Sunday school program, but I did not get very much out of it besides a general understanding of Christian morality and teachings. The majority of my early education in the faith instead took place at home and while I was serving in the altar. I started serving at the age of five, encouraged by my father who is an ordained subdeacon. At the age of fifteen, I received the blessing from Metropolitan Herman to wear an orarion and serve as a blessed subdeacon.

I attended the University of Connecticut where I earned a degree in History. While there, I became involved with the local chapter of Orthodox Christian Fellowship (the Episcopal Assembly approved Pan-Orthodox campus ministry organization). The group of about eight students provided rides to a local OCA parish for liturgy every Sunday and held weekly meetings to discuss Orthodoxy and some of the struggles we had trying to live an Orthodox life on a college campus. It was through UConn OCF that I would get my first real exposure to Orthodoxy outside of my home parish. Throughout the year we would visit numerous parishes in Connecticut, of several jurisdictions. I attended OCF

programs such as College Conference and Real Break which gave me greater insight into Orthodoxy in the United States and around the world. I served as president of UConn OCF for three years and was the Northeast Regional Representative on the OCF Student Advisory Board my senior year of college. Currently, I am the Chairman of the Interim OCF Alumni Board. After completing my degree here at Holy Cross, I hope to work professionally in youth ministry.

From my experience, the biggest challenge that Orthodox youth in the US face is trying to live their faith in a non-Orthodox, and what seems to be an increasingly non-Christian, society. The years immediately following High School are the critical period when many American youth decide on the religious beliefs they will hold for the rest of their lives. The post high school and university world is full of many who dismiss organized religion as corrupt institutions that exploit weak minded people to further their own backward socio-political agenda. This perception can make the Christian witness difficult since Christian youth will face immediate hostility and skepticism for simply identifying themselves as a Christian. Orthodox youth may experience a lesser degree of this since Orthodoxy in American culture is still rather unknown, but as a result of this, many Orthodox youth feel they are judged as the sole representative for the Orthodox Church as a whole. While this is a witness we are all called to as Christians, it can be a lot of pressure for young people who are still developing their faith and have only recently taken the initiative to take their faith seriously in the past four years or so of their lives.

Since the year 2000 or so there has been a revival of Orthodox ministry on campus, which I believe reflects several trends with Orthodox youth today. One of these trends is that there seems to be a shift to a more pan-Orthodox identity among youth. Whereas previous generations relied heavily on their close ethnic communities, youth today are interacting more with those in the larger community of faith. That is not to say that youth are relinquishing their ethnic ties and traditions, but rather they are developing an appreciation for the diverse cultural expressions within Orthodoxy, and making their faith a more important part of their identity than just being Orthodox because they were born into a family that comes from a traditionally Orthodox ethnic background. The prominence of internet and social media usage in daily life has also made it more convenient to discover more information on all aspects of the Orthodox Church. Coupled with this growing awareness and consideration of being part of larger Orthodox community is the trend of Orthodox youth becoming more informed on the issues affecting the Orthodox Church in the United States and throughout the world. For example, I have learned a great deal about the situation of Christians in the Middle East from my relationships with Orthodox Christians from Arab backgrounds, some of whom may have family being directly affected by the conflicts there.

Another result of the growing Orthodox identity, is the trend of Orthodox youth becoming more attuned to what is happening in the US political sphere, and specifically

how it affects their faith. From my experience, I would say that most Orthodox youth who are serious about their faith look at any major social or political issue through the lens of Orthodoxy, but this faith-based mindset contrasts the American stress of political identity and civic duty. It is also a reality that there is not a political party in the United States that completely or directly represents the position of the Orthodox Church, and nor will there ever be one in my opinion. This creates a situation where there is some flexibility, as well as some uncertainty, in how to approach civil matters.

Orthodox youth tend to be spread out across the spectrum when it comes to political identity. From talking to my Orthodox friends and seeing the political posts some of them make on Facebook and other forms of social media, there seems to be an even split among Orthodox youth who are liberal, conservative, and independent, and all of them will use their faith to justify their political beliefs. While I do not believe this is an inherently good or bad situation, I do believe it adds some challenge to those in youth ministry today. When thinking about issues of Church and State we often hear about religious beliefs overreaching into the political sphere, but I believe that the inverse, political issues spilling into the church, can create delicate situations that could turn young people away from the church if not handled correctly.

This brings up the topic of how do we, as Orthodox youth, witness in the American political context. It can be difficult to reconcile being called to witness to my faith, but as long as it doesn't infringe on the rights of others. I know many Orthodox friends who get turned off when they hear priests get overly political in sermons, regardless of whatever party they endorse, but they also understand that many of the controversial issues need to be brought up since, as Americans, we have some degree of participation in our own governance. This again, adds to the feeling of uncertainty when dealing with civil matters.

Many Orthodox youth struggle with reconciling the relationship between Church and State. I think that they are looking for some guidance from the hierarchs and leaders of the church, but they haven't really found an approach they completely agree with, so they feel they are forced to discern their beliefs on these issues alone. The jurisdictional divisions and lack of a unified Orthodox hierarchy in the United States further complicates the issue. Part of the reason many young people get turned off from organized religion is because they believe the institutions are too rigid in their views and many of the controversial issues in politics today can't be dealt with in such a black and white manner. For example, gay marriage is an issue on the mind of many young people, including Orthodox youth. It is fairly easy for an Orthodox young person to understand what the Church's teaching is on it and why, but it becomes more difficult for them to explain that position to a gay friend who just wants to be happy with the person they love. If something gets perceived the wrong way, that friendship could be over and the friend will go away bitter towards the Church.

By nature of their position in society, Orthodox youth are being forced into being the apologists of the Church in America today. Many feel like the Church is not approaching issues as pastorally as it should, and with what is perceived by those outside the Church as a condemning attitude, is creating a barrier to those seeking Christ. They do not believe the Church should make any concessions or compromises on any of the issues to appease people, but instead that they should modify their approach to be more loving and explanatory as to why the Church holds the beliefs it does. Telling someone that you hold a certain position on issue simply because “that’s what the Church teaches,” is not a sound argument in an increasingly skeptical society, nor effective ministry in my experience. Young people in the Church need to be equipped to handle these sensitive situations. They won’t all have the calling or opportunity to further their religious education at an Orthodox seminary, but they are still quite capable of articulating and discussing some of the deeper aspects of the faith as they intersect with controversial social and political issues.

In terms of the future, I believe that the feeling of being in a pan-Orthodox community of Faith will continue to grow among Orthodox youth, and thus they will continue to become better informed of the issues affecting Orthodoxy in the United States and abroad. They will have a tough witness as the political landscape becomes more divided and as more Christians become displaced due to escalating violence and regime changes in the Middle East. In those tough times, the Church will look to its leaders for guidance on how to respond and engage to the dramatic changes. I believe it is crucial that the Church articulates itself clearly and lovingly, in same manner as Christ Himself ministered to those around Him, regardless of how they kept the law or not. Youth ministry is one of the most important ministries of the Church today, and it vital that we equip our youth and those who minister to them with everything they need to spread the Gospel of Christ to all whom they encounter.

PHOTOS



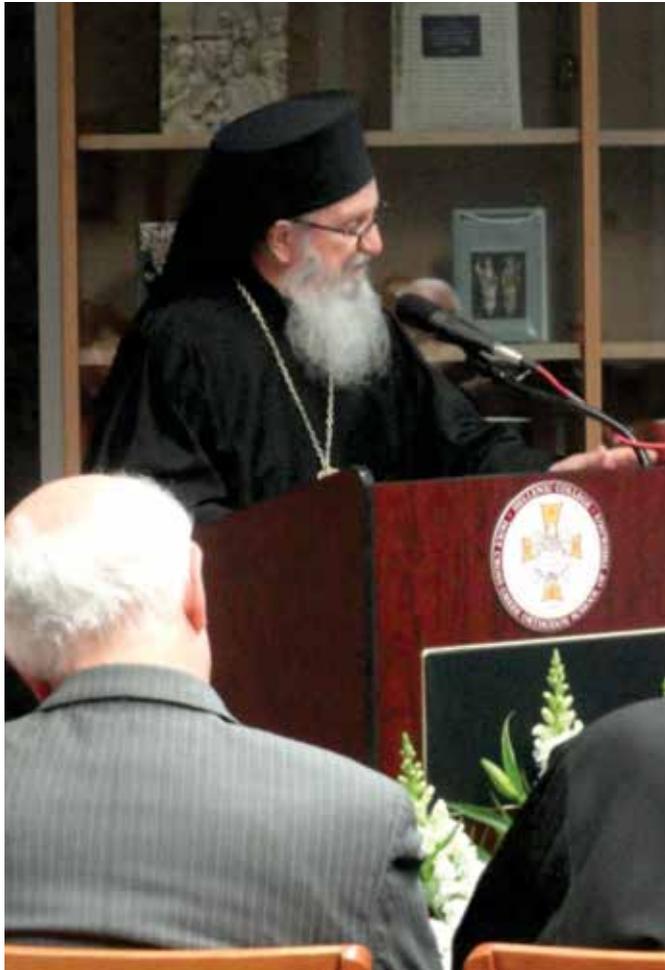
Rev. Fr. Nicholas Triantafilou addressing the conference



Participants at the conference



Mr. Anastasios Nerantzis, I.A.O. Secretary General



His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America



Commemorative photo of H.E. Archbishop Demetrios of America with the I.A.O. delegation members





Commemorative photo of H.E. Archbishop Demetrios of America with the I.A.O. members Mr. Lefteris Christoforou and Mr. George Varnava



Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Center for European Studies, Harvard University;
Co-Chair, Southeastern Europe Study Group



I.A.O. Advisor, Prof. Valery Alexeev



Dr. Marian Gh. Simion, Assistant Director, Boston Theological Institute,
Field Education Supervisor, Harvard Divinity School



Overview of the conference participants



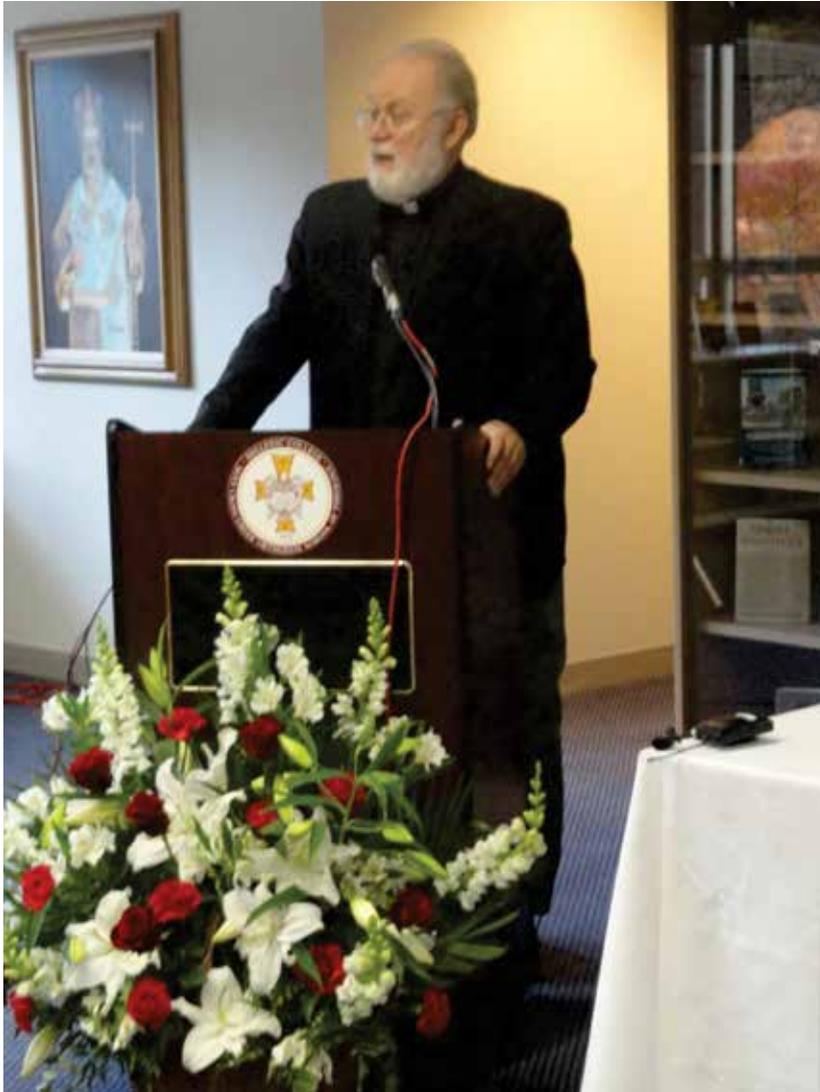
Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis, Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Systematic Theology, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology



Presidium of the conference



Dr. Kostas Mygdalis, I.A.O. Advisor presents a commemorative gift to Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis



Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Church in America



Mr. Pascalis Papouras, Special Assistant
to the Executive office of IOCC



Ms. Nadia Abuelezam, Mr. Thomas Manuel, Mr. Michael Andrzejewski



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