

**SEMINAR ON
METHODOLOGIES IN APPROACHING SOCIAL AND ETHICAL
ISSUES**

A CASE STUDY

8 – 12 October 2003
at the Conference Center
La Longeraie, Morges, Switzerland

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
'Church and Ecumenical Relations'
'Justice, Peace, Creation'
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FOREWORD

Can the World Council of Churches (WCC) arrive at common statements regarding moral and ethical questions on behalf of its member churches? A joint response to the gospel imperative of Christian Unity and to God's call to justice, peace and reconciliation in a broken world requires dialogue and common engagement by the member churches. The experience of the ecumenical movement in the past more than fifty years has shown that the churches strive for common responses to many of the challenging concerns of the time, but also disagree on a number of issues. While churches draw their moral and ethical principles from the scripture they interpret scripture on the basis of their different theological traditions and contextual experiences and arrive, in some cases, at very different conclusions

For decades, such differences did not hinder WCC member churches from speaking together as Christians on matters of public concern like justice, peace, racism, human rights, and issues related to the environment, science and technology. The seventies opened up new concerns like the place of women in church and society, gender issues and questions related to human sexuality, and other issues of personal ethics and morality. Was it the role of the WCC to make public pronouncements on all of these issues? For some churches these were burning issues and they expected a response from the fellowship, for others these and similar concerns were not a priority; in some cases, they even challenged the role of the WCC in discussing issues of personal ethics.

Reflections on these questions remained on the agenda of the WCC¹ but did not invite sharp reactions until 1998, when the Eastern Orthodox Churches met in Thessalonica (Greece) and threatened to withdraw their membership from the WCC. The nineties were difficult times for many of the Orthodox Churches. In the new situation after the fall of communism, internally some groups were questioning the relevance of ecumenism to their faith, and externally, non-ecumenical Protestant groups were proselytizing. Two of these new groups exerted pressure on the local churches to distance themselves from the WCC.

The Thessalonica statement came on the eve of the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in 1998 in Harare (Zimbabwe). In response to this Orthodox challenge, the Assembly recommended the establishment of a Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. Soon after the Assembly, a committee of 60 persons was formed. The Orthodox churches nominated their members to this committee, and the Central Committee of the WCC nominated the members from churches of the Reformation. The composition of the Special Commission was unique. For the first time, a WCC advisory committee had half of its membership coming from the Orthodox churches and the other half from the Reformation churches.

The Special Commission met for the first time in Morges (Switzerland) in 1999, and then continued its work in plenary sessions and in sub-committees. It centred its work around the following question: "What kind of Council do the member churches want in the light of the acceptance by the Harare Assembly of the 'Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches'² (CUV, a policy document)?" This question led the members of the Special Commission to identify five areas of specific work: Ecclesiology, Social and Ethical Issues, Common prayer, Consensus model of decision-making, Membership in the Council and representation. It presented its final report to the Central Committee for adoption in August 2002³.

¹ Cf. "The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions." A Study Document of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 1996.

² The policy statement was the outcome of eight years of study and consultation with the member churches.

³ The Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. *Ecumenical Review*, volume 55, Number 1, January 2003. World Council of Churches, Geneva.

The sub-committee on Social and Ethical Issues met at Vilémov u. Litovle, Czech Republic, 29 July to 3 August 2003. The primary question for the sub-committee was the methodology by which churches arrive at moral and ethical questions. As preparatory material, the WCC staff put together a dossier⁴ including WCC and member church statements that expressed moral or ethical positions. The WCC statements were primarily on public issues addressing social ethics. Member church statements covered both public and personal ethical questions. At the end of its deliberations, the members of the sub-committee presented a report entitled "*The style and ethos of our life together in the World Council of Churches*" to the plenary of the Special Commission that met in Berekfürdö, Hungary 15-21 November 2001. In its final report to the Central Committee, the Special Commission stated: "The Council cannot speak for, nor require, the churches to adopt particular positions. It can, however, continue to provide opportunities for all churches to consult with one another, and wherever possible for them to speak together." It then continued, "By the same token, member churches should understand that not all matters discussed within their own fora can be imposed on the WCC agenda."⁵

While the Special Commission was deliberating, the Jubilee Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, at its meeting on August 14th 2000, adopted a pastoral document entitled *The Orthodox Church and Society: The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*.⁶ A WCC delegation consisting of representatives of member churches, WCC governing bodies and staff visited the Russian Orthodox Church 5-10 June 2001 and discussed the document with the members of the commission that drafted the document. This was considered another way of starting discussion on moral and ethical issues with a member church, hoping that it would help the WCC to create a forum where member churches could discuss sensitive issues. At the end of the visit, the hosts expressed the wish to have an ecumenical discussion on the document.

The staff of the Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations in cooperation with the staff of the Justice, Peace and Creation Team organized a Seminar on Methodologies in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues, using as a case study the document "*The Orthodox Church and Society: The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*". The meeting took place in Morges, Switzerland from 8-12 October 2003.

The purpose of the seminar was:

- 1) to discuss, with ecumenical partners, the pastoral document adopted by the Jubilee Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church at its meeting in August 14th 2000, entitled "*The Orthodox Church and Society: The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*",
- 2) to contribute to the ecumenical thinking on methodologies in approaching social and ethical issues, by bringing into the reflection pastoral or policy documents of other member churches of the WCC,
- 3) to continue and further develop the work initiated by the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC (Ref. Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, Section IV, Social and Ethical Issues⁷).

Four themes served as entry points to the agenda. These were:

⁴ Copies of the dossier entitled "Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues", are available at the General Secretariat of the WCC.

⁵ Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, p. 9, par. 27 and 28, Ecumenical Review, Vol. 55, no.1, January 2003.

⁶ See the website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

⁷ Ibid.

- The Church, and political ethics
- The Church and problems of bio-ethics and ecology
- The Church and personal and public morality
- International relations; problems of globalization

Dr. Anna Marie Aagaard introduced the topic and suggested some issues for discussion (see Appendix 1). Following her introduction, participants presented papers on each of the four topics (See appendices). For each topic there was one presenter and a respondent, each speaker representing one of the two traditions (Orthodox and Reformation churches). These topics were then discussed in small groups. The participants at the seminar synthesized their work in an Aide-memoire. The current publication includes the Aide-memoire and the papers presented on four of the above topics mentioned above. Unfortunately, the Orthodox paper on "International relations, problems of globalization" was not available at the time of the publication of this report. The seminar took place in an atmosphere of openness and readiness to listen to one another. It should be noted that the whole process of the Special Commission was an exercise of listening, learning from one another and respecting differences.

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AIDE-MEMOIRE **(Report of the Meeting)**

Introduction

A WCC seminar on “Methodologies in approaching social and ethical issues: a case study” brought together around 35 participants from Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant and Free churches, as well as persons representing partner ecumenical organizations, in Morges, Switzerland, 8-12 October, 2003.

The purposes of the seminar was to look at differences and similarities in how churches reflect on, and respond to moral issues facing societies today. The seminar was a follow-up to the decision taken by the Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC, to “provide opportunities for the churches to consult with one another, and wherever possible, to speak together”. The WCC took the initiative to organize a discussion on social and ethical issues by using the document “Bases of the social concept”, adopted by the Bishops’ council of the Russian Orthodox Church in the year 2000, as a principal case study.

The following four areas were identified based on the structure of the above-mentioned document:

The Church and social and political ethics,
The Church and problems of bio-ethics and ecology,
The Church and personal and public morality,
International relations; problems of globalization.

Each day began with a confessional prayer according to either the Protestant or Orthodox tradition.

Prof. Anna Marie Aagaard, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, former President of the World Council of Churches delivered an introductory paper on the theme: “Methodologies in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues. Suggestions for Reflection”. Two papers were presented on each sub-topic, one from an Orthodox participant and the other from a Protestant participant.

- “The Church and social and political ethics” by **Deacon Andrei Kuraev** (Russian Orthodox Church) and **Prof. Lewis Mudge** (Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, USA);
- **Dr Vachicouras** (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and **Bishop Eberhardt Renz** (Evangelical Church in Germany);
- “The Church and personal and public morality” by **Prof. Dr. Christoph Stueckelberger** (Swiss Protestant Church) and **Archpriest Vladislav Tsypin** (ROC);
- “International relations; problems of globalization” by **Priest Antony Ilyin** (ROC) and **Prof. Mark Ellingsen** (Evangelical Lutheran Church of the USA).

The following is a general outline of the discussions that took place in the plenary sessions immediately after these presentations on each sub-topic. The discussion continued in four sub-groups dealing with the above-mentioned sub-topics. All group reports are included in this Aide-memoire in the form they were presented by the four different groups in order to honour the integrity of the process and the individual contributions made. This material will serve in the evaluation of the meeting and provide the necessary information properly to plan and design future steps in the process initiated by the Special Commission.

I. Notes from the Plenary: Presentations and subsequent discussions

Opening Remarks

Bischof Eberhardt Renz, WCC president from Europe, opened the meeting with common prayer and introduced the background and the agenda of the meeting.

Yorgo Lemopoulos, the Deputy General Secretary of the WCC, spoke of the purpose of the meeting and its relation to the work of the Special Commission.

This is the first time there has been such an exercise of bringing representatives from different churches together to discuss as a case study one church's social teaching and methodology.

It is in the spirit of the Special Commission to discover why a church has spoken, what kind of mechanism was used, and which were the tools for discernment.

The World Council of Churches attempts to create the "space" for members of the fellowship of churches to consult each other, share the fruits of their deliberation and eventually speak and act together.

Introductory Presentation

Professor Anna Marie Aagaard, introduced the theme of the seminar "Methodologies in Approaching Social And Ethical Issues: Suggestions for Reflection", made suggestions and raised questions for further reflection.

Questions and clarification followed her discussion.

Participants shared insights on the difficult and complicated course of Christian history. The churches are divided into parts by different approaches, matters of faith and different ethos of confessions, as well as different historic reference points in the various traditions.

Following this discussion the four groups were constituted and continued the discussion after each presentation.

Theme I The Church and Social and Political Ethics

Deacon Andrei Kurayev presented his paper: "Traditions and Changes in Orthodox Social Ethics."

In response **Professor Lewis Mudge** thanked **Deacon Kurayev** for faithfully presenting a description of a new "social location" for the Russian Orthodox Church. His paper is an illustration of the different way in which the Bible and Tradition are now read from a new social location.

He noted that the paper provides a resonance with what other traditions are also facing in various issues. **Lewis Mudge** uses the word "resonance" to describe an ability to recognize that another church, in another country, is struggling with similar issues. He then presented his own paper.

Questions and Comments

For the Orthodox the most important consideration is not to break the golden chain of tradition. The social concept document responds to the social situation in Russia, emphasizing the

Orthodox perspectives on social issues and entering into dialogue with society. The response is that of Christian rather than political authorities.

Dialogue always presupposes some value or presentation of truth on the part of both dialoguing partners. The document refers to the new location of the Russian Orthodox Church in the independent States. It takes into consideration both the needs of Russia and of the whole of Christianity.

The document implies tension between rigidity of tradition and innovation in tradition. How big a space is open for innovation? What is the role of martyrdom in this new location of the Orthodox Church?

Theme II The Church and problems of bio-ethics and ecology

Dr. Gary Vachicouras presented his paper "The Orthodox Church and Problems of Bioethics and Ecology." **Bishop emeritus Eberhardt Renz** responded to the paper.

Bishop emeritus Eberhardt Renz shared some remarks prior to delivering his written paper "Reflections on the problems of bio-ethics and ecology." As a Bishop he has always strived to inform his congregation, raising the question, how to move from brilliant papers to assist the laity in particular action.

Questions and Comments

"Heavenism", "dominion theology" and "redemption reductionism" are three challenges the Lutheran World Federation has been lifting up. [For definitions, see the LWF tenth assembly report "Healing Creation", available on the Internet at <http://www.lwf-assembly.org/lwfimages/Studybook-Part3-10.pdf>.]

It is a challenge to bring the body and the soul back together. Becoming rich at the expense of others cannot be a blessing of God, for example, with the former colonies. We have forgotten what "enough" means.

There is gratitude for **Dr Gary Vachicouras'** reference to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios's text on ascetic spirit and self-restraint in relation to the environment. Yes, we have to get back to creation, that is fashionable, yet maybe we also have to get back to sacrifice. People are returning to a vocabulary that assists them to pick up their broken lives, where death intrudes, where creation falls apart. These cries are rising "from the bottom up". We hear Romans 8 and recite it, but do not know what to do after reading it. Where can we go for more?

What are possibilities of developing principles without "theological terms" in order better to join with and be more accessible with secular coalitions? How to build coalitions?

There is a convergence on the environment papers and it is more easy to converge on environment than on bioethics. The issue of the freedom of scientific research is important. St. Thomas once formulated that, even in research, we have to accept limitations. As churches it could be a task to try to develop criteria for limits to research.

Scientific research ought not to be described as a neutral process, but economic justice concerns need to be discussed. North and south relations, profits and benefit sharings, profit maximization and freedom of scientific research all need to be emphasized.

The environment of Africa is being violated day and night. Sustainability as a value in Switzerland and the renewed use of wood in heating systems in Germany are to be commended, but a strong focus on who is violating the environment in Africa needs attention.

According to the Orthodox tradition Man is created as a psychophysical unity, soul and body. God took the dust from the earth (physical) and gave it the breath of life (spirit). As a psycho-physical unity man is the link between the physical and the spiritual. Man is considered as a microcosm of the universal world while the world is a natural extension of the human being. Therefore cooperation is required between man and environment. Without this coordination neither the environment is able to serve man according to its destiny, nor is man able to avert the disturbance of natural balances or the obliteration of the natural harmony which God created. *Thus humanity, as the priestly microcosm, assumes the stance of mediator as well as king over the material creation.* From an Orthodox perspective, it is important to make a theological distinction between anthropocentrism versus anthropomorphism.

According to Metropolitan John Zizoulas, we must ask whether it is time to move from stewardship towards priesthood as the guiding concept in our relationship with ecology and creation.

On the topic of ecology and the convergence of Orthodox and Protestant ethics, we have to admit that Protestant churches have changed and were enriched by Orthodox Trinitarian theology.

Theme III The Church and Personal and Public Morality

Professor Dr. Christoph Stueckelberger spoke on "The Church and Personal and Public Morality." The **Very Rev. Vladislav Tsypin** responded to his paper.

In his response, The Archpriest Vladislav Tsypin felt that **Prof. Stueckelberger's** paper was an adequate presentation of the understandings of the Protestant and Orthodox positions. In most points the positions are similar. Concerning the theme of family, however, divergences are clearly recognized.

In his response Prof. Tsypin mentioned that there is a strong relation between economic ethics and family ethics. In many cases one should not blame the individual for his/her behavior, but view economic factors behind it. Economics and business ethics can be a factor behind family ethical problems. To show this kind of background can be a contribution of the churches.

Thirty years ago, Protestant and Orthodox family ethics would have been much closer. What is the reason for the broader gap today than thirty years ago? Even within Protestant traditions, the issues are more controversial.

The ethical landscape and how we think about these issues can be addressed more profoundly when we have an explicitly Trinitarian understanding of the issues. Is this a helpful clue to richer theological discourse? The Trinitarian approach from a more Orthodox perspective can be helpful for Protestants.

According to Prof. Tsypin, praise and prayers are also a basis for our ethical interpretations. The way in which we praise as Christian shapes us. This involves celebrating the feasts in their sequence, the ecclesiastical year. Here is a broader perspective even than theological understanding based solely on Christology. If we look at moral and ethical issues, we begin to see how the rich resources that we have actually inform and shape the moral formation of the members of the Council. The relationships between different church communities and the image we project into the wider society is harmed when we don't function properly as moral communities together and individually.

The speaker then asked about the status of the Christological argument concerning the beginning of life. Can various churches hold different views? How do we interpret this very Christian argument to society?

The norm should not be what society says. The church exists in order to transform or transfigure the world, not to imitate the world. Resistance to the world is a part of Christian identity. To resist particular aspects of the secularized world is an obligation. In the same way, accepting the bare facts of a contemporary situation would be ethically wrong. The question is, where is the point at which we are called to resistance? The criteria for Christians might be to try to improve the practice of love wherever we are, yet that is still too general; how can our goal be stated more concretely? The Trinity offers a promising, dynamic approach, as we can come at a problem from various perspectives to gain insights. The balance between continuity and renewal comes from the Holy Spirit. How are we to find the balance between continuity and renewal?

We are people of the “way” that calls us to responsible reflection and living. If called to an ecclesial ethic, it means a different thing than solving a moral quandary.

If we go too wide in relativizing the teaching of Christ, we lose the salt and the salt loses its power. The problem begins in the formation of the faithful.

How does our life together inform our reading of the world? How do we attempt to discern the Spirit at work in the world? The task is to discern those actions, events and presence at work in the world, and to acknowledge where we do not see the Spirit at work in the world. This is another way of approaching an ethical event in the world. We take another step, to involve ourselves where we see the Spirit at work in the world, so the world can see the Spirit in us, liturgically, morally and in other ways. We have to reflect the Spirit’s work in the world by the way we relate to the world. That would be a way of interpreting God’s image. We are “made to become God’s image in the world”. That image is incomplete. It is a calling, and not necessarily something that we are.

As Orthodox we accept the work of the ecumenical councils, inspired by “doctors of the church” and saints. Being confronted and faced with absolutely new issues that arise recently, we look first at Christ’s image, who gave his life for the life of the world. The notion of self-giving and self-sacrifice is of utmost importance when the Church proceeds to take moral decisions. Thus we discern what is good in science, what is bad, where is the blessing and the malediction. We have to see the reasoning: is it connected to selfishness and using the life of the other, or, is there evidence of self-giving, which is the highest expression of love? In the Russian State, the Orthodox Church is regarded by most of the people and even by the civil authorities as the only moral force that can provide ethical guidance. This is a huge responsibility. When people hear from the mass media about the liberal developments in ethics in some Protestant churches, they perceive this as though moral norms are relative. It is not a resurrection of the past. It is creation of the new. There are controversies in some churches in the West; the message of the churches together would be more credible.

The Church is not called to be successful in the eyes of the world, but to be faithful and it is the faithfulness that carries the credibility. The possibility of making a credible witness to the world is the motivation for our witness.

The witness we bring can be weakened or strengthened by the other churches.

Can we speak of a diaconal view of ethics? If we speak about serving people, that means to help them with their problems. There are needs and dilemmas. To say we are the church and we care about others is first to listen to their needs. If we are to be relevant to people, we must be supportive of them.

There is a strand of “goal-oriented” ethics rather than “prescriptive” ethics. What the church can do is present its sons and daughters with an icon of transfigured humanity, deified humanity. This is where we are headed---life in a free and divine relationship with God. Given the fallen nature of all of us, this image-centred or goal-oriented ethics has to be in interplay with prescriptive ethics. We are a witness to the world. What would transfigured humanity do?

Tsy-pin concluded by making a strong plea for considering that the body of Christ is a corporate entity, but the body of Christ also has members, so faithfulness includes a person-centred dimension to being a spiritual people in the world.

Questions and comments:

The greatest problem in Moscow is the cost of medicine. What can Christians do? Exchange of documents outlining problems and responses to the problems can be very helpful.

Theme IV International relations – problems of globalization

Rev. Antony (Anton) Ilyin, the secretary of the Representation of the ROC to the European Institutions in Brussels, presented his paper on the theme “International relations; problems of globalization”.

Following the presentation, **Professor Mark Ellingsen** presented “An American Lutheran Response to Globalization: Doing Social Ethics Together with the Orthodox Church.”

Questions and comments:

The intergovernmental and supranational governmental paradigms are helpful tools for understanding European Union reconstruction. Concepts can be helpful in working for good religious balance. Governments can protect national identity.

Both speakers took into account the broader concerns of globalization. However, Prof. Ellingsen cautioned the participants not to overlook the role economics plays in driving the trends towards globalization.

The question about dialogue among civilizations should be put on the internal agenda of Europe. Religious identity is at the most profound level of human consciousness.

If Christian values cannot be mentioned in the preamble of the European Constitution without mention of all religious traditions, then let all traditions be mentioned rather than none.

The session ended with a series of questions: Is globalization a zeal for over-dominance or something else? What is the underlying motive behind globalization today? What is behind the goal of creating multi-governmental structures today? The goal is to see the underlying ideological political trends. It is necessary to distinguish “spirits”.

II. Group Reports

Report of Group 1: The Church, and social and political ethics

Members:

His Eminence Metropolitan Anba Bishoy of Damiette (Moderator)

Rev. Peter A. Sulyok (Rapporteur)
Fr. Mikhael Gundyayev
Prof. Lewis Mudge
Bishop emeritus Eberhardt Renz
Very Rev. Vladislav Tsy-pin

Unity: The group affirmed that the pursuit of unity remains the primary goal, while some ethical positions may differ. Unity cannot depend on agreement on various positions, nevertheless different positions do matter. All Christians have and share the same gospel, yet can hold different political positions. Hence, the group asked, which issues are church dividing and which issues are not church dividing, and why? Can we learn to understand our different church positions so that they are not dividing?

Social location: The “social location” of the Russian Orthodox Church has changed to reflect a “shift in power” in church and state relations in Russia. There is a “new” symphony that reflects this change or shift in position/social location. Symphony is an ideal of which there are specific types of connections between the church and the state. There is a new openness whereby the Russian Orthodox Church is openly speaking from conclusions based on Christian conscience and is free from imperial power.

Unity of the church: In the Orthodox view, in our search for the unity of the church, one searches for the real and pure Apostolic Tradition, the task of which can be understood in two ways:

- the Holy Spirit during the Apostles’ time, gave them perfect understanding of the churches that our task now is to pursue, and
- yet, also, we have to understand more than the Apostles understood.

There is a tension here that is we struggle with in the common search for unity. One of the questions to pursue is whether we think the Holy Spirit is still at work giving insight and, if so, in what way? The Orthodox see the Holy Spirit at work to interpret the Apostles. For some, the issue of social location is present here. As an example, Jean Calvin, as a theological reformer to the city-state of Geneva, drew on the Patristic sources and Scripture, applying them to the new political reality of the city-state and addressing the King of France to show that Geneva is an authentic new form rooted in Christian tradition. New insights spring forth from the Holy Spirit to new situations in which we live, claim followers of the Reformed Tradition. The Russian Orthodox Church sees the focus to be on being in all things true to the gospel or alternatively to join in compromises, with the challenge being to be morally strong, uncompromising in order to defend Christian values, principles – the danger being that of speaking in languages of the secular world, and thereby being of no distinction or interest.

Consensus/unity relationship: Consensus decision-making is important as a formula for unity, yet consensus is different from unity issues. An example, shared by some, referred to the sense that service in the army may not be supported by the same position in every church, while it was said by some that human sexuality issues could have consensus, especially with regard to homosexuality. Hence, can we differentiate between two areas: 1) where there is more than one position in the church, and 2) where there is one position in the church? How do we practice consensus when we touch on social and ethical issues? How is unity to be understood? We are now coming to the 9th Assembly and should advise the Assembly to move toward consensus decision-making.

The following principles are advanced:

- Consensus in decision-making is a priority for us now and is essential to hold the Council together. Minority opinions need to be included in consensus documents to demonstrate the positions of the member churches.

- Unity is a longer-term goal and is unlikely to be reached in the next three years. The current goal has to be:
 - To keep those Orthodox still remaining in the WCC as members
 - To bring back those who have suspended their memberships.

Consensus can mean that any issue can be discussed, but this does not mean each church is instructed in how to believe. For instance, in the past, due to the World Council of Churches' custom of voting on ethical issues, the Orthodox did not want to discuss this particular issue since there was no reporting of those who dissented (minority view), as the majority vote alone would determine the outcome. It was affirmed that the principle of consensus allows any subject to be discussed. A final document might reflect consensus by all or even no common position but reflect many positions.

Church and Reform: All of the traditions reinterpret tradition to meet new situations; yet what is the criterion by which we evaluate new situations? The concept of *semper reformanda* ("the church reformed and always reforming") is part of the Reformed tradition. The goal is to ask where is the real Apostolic Tradition when we search for the unity of the church? Can we arrive at that Tradition by the lens of the Apostolic Tradition? Can we determine what is an authentic adaptation of tradition versus what are "inventions" added to Tradition?

It has been noted that there are similarities and differences between the Orthodox and the Reformed traditions: some are perceived, and some are real. There are similarities in reinterpreting and adapting tradition in new ways. We need to push each other harder to determine what the differences are between the two traditions. The Orthodox tradition has produced many books, which yields competition between them leading to the positive creation of "space" for people to discern what and how to use the material. The Roman Catholic tradition uses the word "desuetude" to describe how some traditions are not canceled, but instead are left behind as inactive. How do we use tradition in ethics? What are the principles for interpretation of tradition?

Parallel journey: Concerning bioethics and ecology, the Orthodox and the Protestant church traditions are pursuing "parallel journeys" both in the ecological presentations and in distinguishing between reproductive cloning and therapeutic cloning. If society sees possibility of significant benefits to life or extensions of life, there is a tension between the protection of life and sacrificing the life of the embryo. It may be harder to talk about the protection of the life of the embryo if it turns out that research with adult stem cells may not be successful. It was affirmed that in this respect ecumenism is working, moving forward in ways that were not occurring earlier. These journeys are approaching a "common mind," although there is distance to travel.

Dialogue: In dialogue with the secular world, it is important that we stand firmly on our theological principles, support the fundamental Christian values; otherwise, the voice we contribute doesn't really have any other content or matter.

Human Rights: His Eminence Metropolitan Anba Bishoy shared the example of the Coptic Orthodox Church defending human rights, demonstrating that it is good for the church to declare truth, defend human rights and justice, following the steps of the Apostles in carrying the Cross.

Homosexuality: Homosexuality is described by the Orthodox as a deeply problematic issue, which may be approached from a pastoral point of view, as "homosexuality exists as a distortion of human nature, not a fully equal state of human personality, sinful practice needing to be healed." Pastoral advice might advise that homosexuality is "an abnormal state of human sexuality", on the basis of scripture. Homosexuality issues can be dividing issues, not only inside communions, but also between Orthodox and some other communions.

Abortion: The Orthodox members of the group said that in their view abortion involves a “choice between sin (killing the child) and the right way.” The Orthodox mentioned the importance of keeping the child alive in order to give the child an opportunity to be baptized after birth and to exert maximum medical effort to keep the life of both the mother and the child. The Protestant perspectives are varied on this topic. The churches want to give moral advice and counseling in this complicated area, sometimes prohibiting abortion and sometimes permitting it under carefully defined circumstances. Some maintain the woman’s right to make decisions about her body. We asked, what can we do in a society where it is difficult to do what the church wants to do? Discussion centred on abortion as a sophisticated problem and how the church community might respond faithfully in ever-changing circumstances.

Family: The notion of Christian family from an Orthodox perspective recognizes an ideal level of family, one male and one female in monogamous marriage, brought together in order to have children. Others noted that there are many forms of families in the church and society.

Beginning of human life: We need to study precisely when human life begins, noting that different traditions hold different viewpoints they see as rooted in Scripture. The group wondered whether there may be guidance in the biblical study of when human life begins, the Christological point of the union between the divinity and humanity of Christ, from the first moment of conception. If Christ’s divinity and humanity are joined at the moment of conception, as many Fathers of the church maintain, then Christ, and we too, must be human beings from that point forward.

Death penalty: Failures in the judicial processes at times lead to the killing of an innocent person. Also, the pastoral dimension of offering a longer chance for repentance would be more adequate under a penalty such as prison. While there is warrant in the Bible for the death penalty, and there is the presumption that what has always been done should continue to be done, and that the church without grave reason should not challenge the reasons of the state, still the death penalty eliminates the possibility of repentance in the ending of life. Presbyterians in the United States have adopted a resolution on “restorative justice”.

Report of the Group II “The Church and problems of bio ethics and ecology”

Members:

Dr Peter Bouteneff (Moderator)
Ms Puleng Lenka Bula (Rapporteur)
Professor Mark Ellingsen
Rev Antony (Anton) Ilyin
Rev Beate Kraus
Rev Dr Martin Robra
Dr Gary Vachicouras

Group 2 began by reflecting on the insights deriving from Prof. Aagaard’s presentation:

- a. That we use the same basic Christian sources such as scripture, Tradition, experience, reason for ethical reflections or analyses yet we sometimes come to different conclusions because the relationship between them and their individual weight are configured and seen differently, partly also under the influence of our confessional histories, time and space, social location etc.
- b. That different churches have varying approaches in dealing with social and ethical issues.

- c. That the WCC can offer a neutral space and forum for dialogue for churches on ethical and social issues. It also provides churches the space and awareness of the approaches employed by others in addressing ethical issues.

We have learned that we share a common perspective in a broad range of fundamental areas of bioethics and ecological issues. For example:

- The value of life as a gift of God
- The human being made in the image and likeness of God
- The call to live in God's grace

We therefore are open to listen and to learn more from each other.

The group explored some of the bioethical issues that churches have been dealing with. These include:

- Stem cell research
- Embryonic research
- Research on ecology and biodiversity etc

We noted that there are differences among churches, even within the same tradition, in how we come to conclusions. Some of these are influenced by:

- Confessional tradition and history
- Context
- Gender

The fact that some ethical issues are new while others have been addressed before stresses further the notion of continuity and discontinuity concerning ethical challenges that churches face. We came, however, to the conclusion that the challenge we should face is not to disconnect theological or ethical reflections from our confessional stance and the life of the church as a whole.

Some of the questions that we posed for our discussion were:

Why have churches found it difficult in recent years to enter or engage in ethical matters, yet it had been easier for them to engage in theological dialogue?

What is the gift of discernment in a given moment?

Why do churches sometimes speak together, choose not to speak together or choose not to speak on ethical issues at all?

What is the link between doctrinal position and practical application?

The following are some proposals arising from our group:

Perhaps it is advisable to focus on one basic element in the method, for instance, tradition or an underlying theological theme, e.g. anthropology, clarifying similarities, differences and reasons for them.

That we consciously need to include Southern voices in our ethical reflections.

That we need to set priorities in dealing with ethical issues.

Report of the Group III "Church and public and personal morality"

Members:

Rt Rev Dr Denis C. Dutton (Moderator)

Fr Andrei Elisseev (Rapporteur)
Prof. Edouard Afanasiev
Dr Dag Hedin
Prof. Ioan Sauca
Prof Dr Christoph Stückelberger
Rev Konstantin Tatarintsev

The Church of Christ is called by her founder to reflect the Holiness of God the Father. From this derives her main task, which is the witness in the world and pouring a light of truth that the Lord has brought by His Incarnation, his life, teaching, his cross and Resurrection. The members of group III have agreed that in the circumstances of modern time, a society and, in many cases, the governments seek a specific Christian position on the most burning issues. The state and society do not need a church that would speak the same things as they speak, a church which would accommodate itself and follow the paths of a secularized world. There is a clear need to keep a particular Christian identity and not identify oneself with a society. However, Christian communities should not and cannot estrange themselves from the needs of people. On the contrary, they have to meet the demands of people in ways that are most relevant for each given time. A real challenge for Christian churches today is precisely how a modern society can be constructed on the values of the gospel. Another question is what limits there are to an “adaptation” to the moral and scientific development of society beyond the boundaries of the churches. To what extent can we coordinate with “secularized” or “humano-centric” values without losing our own identity as “the salt of the earth”?

In spite of the common understanding of a missionary task within the society where we live, there is a difference in approaching the moral issues between Orthodox and Protestant confessional families. An orthodox position is based primarily on the Holy Scripture and Apostolic Tradition of the Church Fathers. There is a certain freedom in theological reflection (theologumena) including on moral issues which, however, does not interfere with the dogmatic matters, unchangeable in their essence. A Protestant position is based on the Bible as well, but there is a specific pluralistic approach in scriptural interpretation and theological reflection, which explains the wide variety of opinions on moral issues within and between the Protestant churches. At the same time there is recognition of the value of tradition in a specific understanding of this notion. There is no clear difference between East and West, or West and South, since the methodology in approaching the ethics is greatly affected by a cultural environment in each given case. For instance, the Protestant churches in Central and Eastern Europe feel alienated by a liberal approach. All this constitutes a major difficulty for the dialogue of traditions within the WCC. Nevertheless, the members of the group discovered that in both confessional families a valuing of tradition is present, and this can serve as a common ground for a future discussion. It was discovered that there is also a certain flexibility in the Orthodox position and approach to ethics, which can be detected from the way ancient canons are applied or not throughout history.

As a participant stated it, morality in Protestant tradition does not have a static character. But attention has to be paid when some ethical decisions are adopted in the churches under the pressure of a civil authority, particularly in the case of state churches. Sometimes morality is defined by politics – national or global.

1. The formation of moral judgments on social and ethical issues must provide a continuity of the will of God rooted in scripture and Tradition.
2. Tradition plays a different role in our different churches/confessions; however, in our traditions we do share something in common.
3. Scripture, Tradition and analysis of the situation guide us in our difficult task of formulating statements on moral and ethical issues

4. In approaching Scripture and Tradition, we all seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for responsible ethical answers.
5. New and unforeseen issues, challenges and cultural phenomena constantly arise in our various socio-political contexts. We share a common experience of many of these new issues or phenomena.
6. Tradition may be interpreted and adapted when it comes to the ethical aspects of the social teachings of the Church.

Report of the Group IV “International relations, problems of globalization”

Members:

Prof. Andrei Zubov (Moderator)
Rev Dr Karen Bloomquist (Rapporteur)
Dr Anna Marie Aagaard
Dipl. Psych. Ulf Claussen
Dr Melaku Kifle
Ms Ekaterina Pastukhova

Group IV spent most of its time discussing common Orthodox and Protestant, approaches to Christian living, the possibilities of “a common way of life” and the obstacles we face. As a summary of our discussion we offer the following brief paragraphs:

1. The WCC can continue to be a “vital forum” for churches’ deliberations on moral matters (SC, Final Report 23), if the churches help to shape the content of debates on moral matters. The conciliar oikoumene needs increased mutual consultation (like the one we are engaged in at Morges) on member churches’ argued positions on both specific moral matters and the particular pathways of deliberation that the churches use in order to arrive at decisions on moral matters. We are convinced that serious engagement by one church with ethical positions and ecclesial traditions in other churches will open up constructive WCC debates aiming at common practice. If this is accepted as a ground rule, the challenge remains as to how the views of particular churches can be expressed and heard within the WCC structures.
2. We acknowledge that placing ethics squarely within traditioned communities runs the danger of reducing Christian ethics to a repetition of inherited, age-old principles with a bearing on only a narrow range of moral matters. There was no agreement in the group on all the specifics of the Russian Orthodox document on ethics, but we affirm its thrust: to “read” the current problems and struggles of world and humanity as Christians and attempt to deal with them so that a Christian approach becomes discernible. Churches need to adopt a truly Christian way of life that makes a difference and to talk “christianese” about current realities like global economic trends, changing family patterns and the politics of energy consumption. The churches’ impact on a given society and its institutions depends on a relevant witness to Christ and embodying a Christian approach in socially significant tasks. Divided churches with incompatible readings of moral matters become a counter-witness to Christ. The unity of the Church as the body of Christ enacts God’s blessing.
3. Rather than beginning with particular ethical issues, the focus instead should be on fostering deeper awareness of the bases (sources, configurations, etc) underlying the churches’ ethical positions.

Christian ethics involves far more than the positions or actions we take on certain questions, but how we reflect together about the moral life in light of Christian convictions. Focusing only on the positions often results in more heat than light, especially among those who may disagree with these positions (e..g, on questions related to sexuality). A more promising

approach is to engage in the kind of dialogue that enables us to articulate the different sources, assumptions, etc. that we draw upon in ethical reflection. Which Christian convictions are especially important, and how do these vary with the ethical question at stake? When brought to conscious reflection, we may discover that some of our assumptions reflect biases or inaccuracies that may themselves be highly questionable on Christian or other ethical bases. It may also be possible to develop more common ground on matters where the pre-stated positions are quite different, even in conflict.

4. Christian moral formation is key to fostering "a way of life" rooted in our traditions and able to face current critical challenges.

More attention needs to be given to how people can and are being formed morally in communities, especially in faith communities that are rooted in beliefs, traditions and practices that form "a way of life." Through such formation, we are prepared to respond to critical challenges we face, not with moralistic rules but with sensitivities toward particular circumstances that we would not otherwise recognize. For example, if who we are is grounded in God's grace, how is that reflected in how we respond to others? How does the Trinity, and what this communicates about the relationality of life, affect how we approach ethical questions differently from approaches that emphasize individual autonomy?

5. The distinction between conceptual, analytical language ("second order language") and the "first order" language of prayer and praise proved helpful for addressing the hotly debated question of ecclesial tradition in relation to changing social realities. All the WCC's member churches seek continuity with Christian tradition as the norm of faith. Disagreements emerge concerning the evolution of tradition in the light of changing social realities. Doctrinal language and jurisdictional decisions have, over time, informed the worship of the churches. We can identify – and, under specific circumstances, change – language formed by the thought patterns and the anathemas of a given time. We need to develop sensibility to the fact that also traditions of ethics are indebted to the specifics of the preferred language and thought-patterns. Doctrinal and moral aspects are intertwined, and difficult to keep separate.
6. In short: Ethics is the body politics of being the Church, growing out of identifiable traditions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

by

Professor Anna Marie Aagaard

From the early 1990s study reports reminded the member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) that ethics is a social practice marked by the respective communities within which it is situated.ⁱ

Whatever their impact (or lack of thereof) on the WCC's practice, the "ecclesiology-ethics" studies succeeded in identifying some salient features that shape the churches' conceptions of moral issues. I shall take up a few of these features and in that way attempt to deal with my somewhat abstract topic: "Methodologies in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues".

Ecclesial ethics, common sources and different configurations

The Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Vatican and the WCC spent some years in the mid-1990s on guidelines for dialogue on moral issues.ⁱⁱ The document merits continued attention because it proved equal to the challenges posed by a pluralistic, post-modern world

- a) by positing ethical deliberations and decisions squarely within traditioned communities
- b) by acknowledging that even common sources of moral discernment are used differently within different ecclesial traditions. There is no one, single Christian approach to decisions on moral matters.

ad a) Ecclesial ethics

I: Who are the primary agents?

The conciliar fellowship can deal responsibly with concrete moral issues at WCC gatheringsⁱⁱⁱ only by recognizing the churches as subjects of moral formation and decision-making. In concreto, this means that churches 1) must provide any common deliberation with clear statements of their own positions, and in so doing they 2) must articulate how they arrive at their particular positions by "discerning the will of God rooted in Scripture and tradition, liturgical life, (and) theological reflection, all seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit".^{iv}

An emphasis on the WCC's self-understanding as articulated in the "Common Understanding and Vision"^v will, inevitably, put fewer items on the Council's agenda, but within a Council committed to work by consensus a focus on the churches as the primary agents of moral decisions may allow for a moral discernment owned by the member churches participating in the conversation, and not merely by some meeting of specialists or by parts of the Council's constituency. Furthermore, procedures that move the churches into center-stage may move the Council toward a deepened awareness that the cultural and political pluralism of the present world and the deep-seated conflicts return the congregations to the joyful task of maintaining a clear identity - not just to be relevant to culture, but to be a distinct culture, a distinctly traditioned public. The cultural climates challenge the churches to become "a peculiar people" with a distinct way of life, embodying an identifiable story that may be encountered nowhere else. Christian ethics is the body politics of being church, and if churches have nothing to offer through their way of life but what secular people (and people of other faiths) can tell themselves, the churches are utterly superfluous in the marketplace.

... the community of the disciples... is the bearer of the tradition and the form and matrix of the moral life... Koinonia in relation to ethics does not mean in the first instance that the Christian community designs codes and rules; rather that it is a place where, along with the confession of faith and the celebration of the sacraments, and as an

inseparable part of it, the Gospel tradition is probed permanently for moral inspiration and insight, and where incessant moral counsel keeps the issues of humanity and world alive in the light of the Gospel.^{vi}

The assumptions are that faith and discipleship are embodied in and as a community way of life... the church not only has, but is, a social ethic.

The JWG document articulates the assumption in the following way:

The church has the enduring task to be a community of "The Way" (cf. Acts 9,2;22,4), the home, the family which provides the moral environment of right living and conduct "in Christ", who in the Spirit makes known "the paths of life" to his disciples (Acts 2,28; Ps 16,11). Discipleship holds together what Christians believe, how believing Christians act and how they give to fellow Christians and to others an account of why they so believe and so act.^{vii}

The utterances may mirror the beginnings of post-liberal Protestant theologies, but the fact is rather that ecumenical attempts at articulating new versions of ecclesial ethics were prompted by the WCC's Orthodox "undercurrent" (P. Scherle). From Orthodoxy conciliar ecumenism borrowed the phrase "liturgy after the liturgy"^{viii} as a marker of a distinctive communal life. Christian moral life is conceived as the practice of a liturgical existence, a continuous worship of the triune God (cf. Eph. 5,19-20), and understanding ethics as a "liturgy after the liturgy" thus makes ecclesiology inseparable from ethics:

All Christian traditions... have a particular way of linking liturgical practice, theological reflection, assessment of the issues of world and humanity, formulations of moral judgment... The approach is rooted in Scripture and living Tradition. We need to realize that highly divisive issues (e.g. attitudes to human sexuality, the status of women in church and society, the content of social justice in a given society and the notion of a just war) can be addressed only through a dialogue which draws on the particular configurations of Scripture, Tradition, experience and reason as used within the different ecclesial traditions.^{ix}

The Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC (SC) followed the lead of the earlier conversations:

faced with the need to develop Christian ethics that responds to current problems and struggles, it is the responsibility of each church to shape its own moral teaching,

and the Commission stated (rather bluntly):

Whilst the Council has a critical role to play in helping churches in fellowship... to work together to fulfil their common calling, the following affirmations should be kept in mind: Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC are the subject of the quest for visible unity, not the Council. Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC teach and make ethical decisions, not the Council.^x

Although the WCC's most recent policy statements (The CUV and the Final Report of the SC^{xi}) make the member churches the subjects of moral formation and decision-making, current practice continues an ecumenical history of policy decisions prepared by staff teams and pronounced by WCC meetings of international experts and church leaders. If unaddressed this tension will continue to obstruct reaching any consensus on which issues, by which procedural means, should find a place on the common agenda.^{xii}

II: The criticism

Addressing the doctrinal/ecclesiological differences involved in the current debates on "the prophetic voice" may prove more fruitful to ecumenical consensus on moral matters than a continuation of the inherited "political ethics" debates which combine diverse readings of Reformation heritage with varying degrees of commitment to Enlightenment agendas and liberal values. Such discussions exclude a priori parts of the Council's Orthodox constituency.

The deliberate move to ecclesial ethics and the churches as the primary agents of moral discernment and decision has been, and continues to be, contested vigorously by parts of the WCC's Protestant constituency. The opposition emerges (not exclusively) in demands for "keeping the Council's prophetic voice", and it takes the institutionalized WCC to be the prime ecumenical agent. Although it is far from clear what "a prophetic voice" might denote, it is possible to read the criticism as referring to the major objections to ecclesial ethics.

Three charges are invariably repeated: the charges that ecclesial ethics succumbs to relativism (epistemological objections), to tribalism (political objections) and to fideism (sociological objections).

First, prophets talk at the faith community. Keeping a "prophetic voice" thus means keeping a distance between what God does in creation and redemption and what human beings are empowered to do in the Holy Spirit. The criticism claims that the circularity between the truth of any story and the sort of community it generates is overblown in ecclesial ethics. The Protestant doctrinal extra nos must be kept. Faith and discipleship are, although mediated by the faith community, not intrinsically ecclesial.

I read the position as the ecumenical parallel to objections charging ecclesial ethics with relativism. References to "a prophetic voice" function in ecumenical parlance as theological resorts to an external vantage point that makes it possible to judge between versions of Christian life. Such references to a God-story over and above the church comply with Western modernity's insistence on having the justification of moral principles set off from their origin in order to avoid solipsistic self-validation of ethics.

Second, prophets seek - and find - alliances outside the faith community, and thus references to "a prophetic voice" challenge the tribalism of the church. The following lines capture some of the issues at work, and at stake, in ecumenical calls for the churches' prophetic voice:

There is... a danger for the ecumenical movement to be deserted because of its absence of relevance to the issues of our time... there are many, among the laity particularly, who would wish the ecumenical movement to deal with the whole inhabited world more than with the world of the churches.^{xiii}

The quote sets the world of the churches over against the whole inhabited world with its issues relevant to human persons, and it puts an emphasis on the churches' equal ecclesiastical navel-gazing. Assuming such fundamental polarity between world and church presupposes secular modernity's belief in a wider and deeper and broader community than the community in the body of Christ, and a more unified world than the world that holds together in and because of Christ. Secular groups and movements may, consequently, be better positioned than the churches to witness to a human community with no other limits than the whole human race.

Abiding firmly with the turn to ecclesial ethics the Special Commission's Final Report situates the demands for "a prophetic voice" within the pastoral obligations of each church:

It is critical that the result of such dialogue and cooperation (*i.e. member churches consulting with one another on moral matters and, wherever possible, speaking and acting together*) be clearly shown to be coming from a distinctively Christian

perspective, embracing the values of the Gospel. The churches take on a "prophetic role" when they truthfully describe and react to situations in the world precisely in the light of the Gospel... A prophetic voice can never be divorced from the pastoral role, which includes building up, encouraging and comforting (1 Cor 14,3).

I contend, however, that the charges of fideism carry the weight in the critique of ecclesial ethics, and the concomitant preference for abiding with inherited WCC policies that make dialogue on moral matters aim at policy pronouncements based on communication by argument and assumptions of a universal, single system of truth.^{xiv} A "charge of fideism" may be construed in different ways, but generally it implies that for religious beliefs and practices to be intelligible it must be possible to account for them in terms of reasons and explanations external to "the Way". Why would people listen to the prophetic voice of the churches, if it were not intelligible to all rational creatures? Why would the social witness of the churches be able to impact society, if it were not perceived as expressing a common moral ground?

The ecumenical "fideism objection" to ecclesial ethics does not assume that Christian beliefs can be reformulated within the idioms of secular culture. It charges ecclesial ethics with the lack of a proper foundational basis that upholds a distance, not a separation, between the church and human beings as also determined outside the church by the God of the Christian story. The Archimedian point may be articulated as a Christianized natural law, as "law" or orders of creation, or as the eschatological kingdom present; but basically is the assumption of church and world as "always antecedently being involved in one conversation".^{xv} Even the least elaborate articulations of the calls for the World Council to exercise its "prophetic voice" imply that it is possible to speak simultaneously to church and world on moral issues. It is possible, because the Word (the Creator Spirit; the reign of God) is also mediated in non-ecclesial ways. What is primarily done by God is only secondarily received - actively or passively according to the denominational divides - by the church.

III. "Liberal civil standards and the values of religious identity"

In a recent article,^{xvi} Metropolitan Kyrill reflects on the hegemony of liberal values in the present world of secular politics and economics. While identifying "an irreconcilable difference between secular liberalism and the traditional Christian world-view" (481) as one of the fundamental divides of "modern civilization", the Metropolitan does not plead for an illusory return to a societal past without the liberal values enshrined in international law and the codified human rights with their civil liberties. The essay aims, on the contrary, at challenging the Christian churches to concentrate on Christian ethical formation in order that the faithful will be able to assess their life-experiences in a liberally ordered world in the light of the gospel and engage critically with exactly this world. The Metropolitan's approach "aims for the church and every Christian to take a constructive part in the life of today's secularized society rather than to isolate themselves" (483). He is aware that any Christian impact on a given society and its institutions "depends on whether we are able to embody the world-view born by the faith in socially significant tasks, and in convincing answers to modern problems" (483).

Using the language of rights, which is grounded in notions of individual rights, to bolster a plea for nations' rights to order their own way of life - including "the preservation of their religious and cultural identity" (484) - might not serve metropolitan Kyrill's purpose, but I don't intend to open up a discussion of political philosophy and the metropolitan's understanding of particular liberal and Christian values.

More pertinent to our topic is the essay's emphasis on Christian formation and the adoption of "the truly Christian way of life" (480). The latter refers to a mode of existence in the world "built on religious motivation in everyday life, including professional work and participation in social affairs" (480).

These formulations beg the question: what is a truly Christian way of life? Metropolitan Kyrill claims

... the religious way of life is distinct in that it is rooted in the Tradition of the Church. The Tradition, for us, is a totality of doctrinal and didactic truths which have been adopted by the Church through the apostolic witness and which are preserved and developed by the Church with reference to the historical circumstances... In short, the Tradition is a living flow of continued faith within the Church and is nothing else but the norm of faith. We understand every deviation from the Tradition as primarily a breach of the norm, or, in short, a heresy... (480).

Metropolitan Kyrill's article thus situates the ecumenical discussion on Christian ethics in the living faith traditions and their diverging pathways of arriving at decisions on moral matters. It is possible to continue the World Council's inherited majority-minority ethos and make the Council's statements on the various ills of the world cover up the lack of Christian unity, but there are no shortcuts to ecumenical consensus on moral matters. The journey to consensus can only begin with doctrine and tradition - with the member churches' different configurations of "the truly Christian life".

ad b) Common sources and different configurations

No position on complex moral matters drops ready-made from heaven. It is developed as faith communities listen to the Scriptures, interpret liturgical and doctrinal tradition and bring to bear the resources of spiritual discernment and affirmed ways of reasoning on the formation of the faithful. Moral positions are part and parcel of a community ethos, and "one-issue shouting matches" between proponents of conflicting views on a particular moral matter do not make sense.

A summary of the JWG study on "The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues" claims

For those pathways of moral reflection and deliberation which churches use in coming to ethical decisions, the churches share the Scriptures and have at their disposal such resources as liturgy and moral traditions, catechisms and sermons, sustained pastoral practices, the wisdom distilled from past and present experiences, and the arts of reflection and spiritual discernment. Yet church traditions configure these common resources in different ways.^{xvii}

A recent collection of statements on "Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues"^{xviii} verifies that many churches do use the same resources for arriving at moral discernment. The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) establishes "memoranda" as orientation for the faithful by drawing on Scripture in the light of doctrinal and spiritual traditions of the Reformation (e.g., the law-gospel dialectics). The EKD policies for acting in society also draw on philosophy, empirical sciences and the history of German state-church relations.

The Russian Orthodox Church shapes its teaching on moral matters by reflections on Scripture in the light of doctrinal, moral, pastoral and cultural tradition. Findings of the arts and sciences (e.g., philosophy, history, law; medicine, psychology, and bioethics) impact the moral discernment.

The methodology used by these two churches resembles the methodology followed by, for example, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), although the material made available to the SC indicates that this latter church makes extensive efforts to include the local congregations as agents of a moral discernment that links personal faith to what goes on in the public sphere:

A faith community cannot be adequately understood solely by consulting its formal policy. It can be understood only as a gathering of persons who bring with them all kinds of life substance..., a community which aims at configuring all this so as to represent the identity of

Jesus Christ and thereby to articulate the shapes of God's presence in the world through the work of the Holy Spirit.^{xix}

Lack of shared resources is not the ecumenical problem. The problem is the configuration of resources that differs "even when similar attitudes and outcomes often emerge", as the JWG pointed out. Differing ecclesiologies and doctrinal traditions will keep the churches divided, even when these same churches react in a similar way to abortion, racism, armed humanitarian intervention or economic globalization processes. And divisive, conflicting views on specific moral matters will not be solved by ecumenical consultations on single moral matters. The following examples of different configurations must substitute for a sustained argument for prioritizing doctrine and ecclesiology in the ecumenical dialogues on moral matters.

I: Individual vocation

In the context of continued bilateral dialogues between the EKD and the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bishop Rolf Koppe has provided an introduction to the basic ethics guiding the EKD's engagement with secular German society. Koppe describes the adopted approach to ethics and ecclesiology under the rubric of "vocation" and claims:

The specific place of the human being within the social order, i.e. in his or her "office" or "vocation" in the world, determines to a large extent the scope and nature of his or her ethical responsibility... ((A) generally acknowledged and widely recognizable Protestant church ethic does not exist, if by this is meant an elaborate casuistry)... But there are characteristics of a Protestant ethic which are essential: fostering the ability to become a real person, able to live in community and to act within the tension between plurality and integration, reflection and action, community and institution... (In) Protestant thinking, it is the individual human being who is the acting subject. (But)... the believer lives, and makes decisions, as one who partakes of Christ - as a member of a local congregation or of the church in a broader sense - in the community of the people of God.^{xx}

This view makes individual "vocation" the configuring glue of the moral life. It places church and world, faith and "works", law and gospel, witness and service, ecclesiology and ethics in distinct, although not separated, spheres. In the perspective of the ecumenical "ecclesiology-ethics" dialogues it follows that the distinctive identity of this version of Protestantism is located in a law-gospel dialectic's ability to affirm the secular nature of the world and to empower individual responsibility and autonomy in ethical action. Moral life is the worldly "vocation" of the individual Christian, and the role of the church is not "to do politics" but to enable politics by "advocating values which serve the well-being of all, including the poor, deprived and powerless, the next generation of creation which has no voice of its own".

Social ethics as political ethics rallying individuals, believers and non-believers, around specific tasks of reducing perceived damages to life - the position makes sense of the moral experience of contemporary Germans. The individual must make moral choices and cannot find her or his evaluative commitments by tending to the question of one's own social identity. The individual moral agent is sovereign, and this sovereignty is backed up not only by the agent's (German) history and vocabulary, but by Protestant doctrinal convictions that makes the single human being stand before God as a justified sinner abstracted from all social relations and practices.

II. Building up the body of Christ

In the Orthodox tradition, ethics is an ecclesial, corporal matter. Decisions on moral matters involve informed use of complex resources, but these resources must be configured so that language, practices and virtues will be aiming at building up the body of Christ:

The Church is the assembly of believers in Christ, which He Himself calls everyone to join. In her "all things heavenly and earthly" should be united in Christ, for He is the Head of "the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1,22-23). In the Church the creation is deified and God's original design for the world and man is fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit.^{xxi}

The opening sentences of the Russian Orthodox position paper on personal and social ethics leave no doubt that the Christian story absorbs the world. The Christian narrative leaves nothing out, but encompasses all reality from alpha to omega, from beginning to end. But the Christ-centered narrative does not by and in itself figure all of cosmos and history in. The claims of the story to universal significance imply that the story must be inhabited and constantly shown to be able to absorb all human enterprises and all reality. Separated from a living, believing church which turns to Christ, confesses own sins, accepts forgiveness, and engages in becoming the eucharistia it celebrates, the story becomes empty fables. The God-story and the worshipping community are mutually constitutive. Unembodied, the Christian gospel loses its claims to authority; it is the ecclesial body of Christ that mediates and practices the reality and the purposes of all of cosmos, of life and human nature, of history and society.

Affirming the nexus between the Christian narrative and the church as its paradigmatic setting does not make Christian living or "the liturgy after the liturgy" identical with applying a fixed, ahistorical story to the stuff and conundrums of everyday life. Narrational foundationalism is not the danger of current Orthodox theology, but the absolutizing of a specific history-bound conceptual language employed to draw out the theological assumptions of the biblical story.

Where Orthodox theology keeps tending to the provisional character of the conceptual language that inform the Christian community's practice and readings of world and societies, a Christian way of life may be interpreted as the struggle to live transfigured life:

There is no final, rigid, arbitrary pattern to this process... First and foremost we will seek to keep before us all the time that our ultimate goal is conformity and communion with the Triune God, that all our ethical decisions - in order to be correct - must be in harmony with and contribute to growth for the fulfillment of the image and likeness of God in persons and to the realization of the Kingdom of God.^{xxii}

Ethics deals with the never finally achieved task of reading the world and living "the liturgy after the liturgy" in such a way that "all things heavenly and earthly" become transfigured and thus build up the body of Christ. Everything else would be to abandon the Christian claim that there are no more fundamental readings of the world and no more exemplary community than the practices that build up the body of Christ.

III: Make us an everlasting gift to you

Immediately after the attack on the World Trade Towers in New York, Anglican archbishop Rowan Williams wrote,

The hardest thing in the world is to know how to act so as to make the difference that can be made; to know how and why that differs from the act that only releases or express the basic impotence of resentment.

There is a lot of wisdom in the small book in which the quote appears,^{xxiii} but the sentence is relevant to our subject because it - transferred to the ecumenical debates on Christian ethics - articulates that it, in Williams' own words, is "profoundly hard work" to live in the body of Christ.

We delude ourselves, Williams claims,^{xxiv} if we equate making moral decisions with surveying the shelves in a supermarket and then settling for one choice. Ethics is not a matter of the individual, lonely self's likes or dislikes, but a matter of discovering what it implies to live involved in a particular set of relations that shape a particular kind of reaction to world and others. Human beings are always already involved in a specific kind of community. And for Christians, shaped by the community named church, "the goal of decision-making is to show what God's selfless attention might mean in prosaic matters of everyday life... to show God's glory (cf. Rom 15,7: 1 Cor 10,31)".

It involves remaining in communion with people judged to be "dangerously deluded in their belief about what (is) involved in serving Christ", because only in the body of Christ can disagreements, considered as betrayals of hearing and showing the truth, be enfolded in learning to live Christ's gift of self-giving, healing holiness.

An ethic of the Body of Christ asks that we first examine how any proposed action or any proposed style or policy of action measures up to two concerns: how does it manifest the selfless holiness of God in Christ? and how can it serve as a gift that builds up the community called to show that holiness in its corporate life? What I have to discover as I try to form my mind and will is the nature of my pre-existing relation with God and with those others whom God has touched, with whom I share a life of listening for God and praising God. Self-discovery, yes; but the discovery of a self already shaped by these relations and these consequent responsibilities. And then, if I am serious about making a gift of what I do to the Body as a whole, I have to struggle to make sense of my decision in terms of the common language of the Faith, to demonstrate why this might be a way of speaking the language of the historic schema of Christian belief. This involves the processes of self-criticism and self-questioning in the presence of Scripture and tradition, as well as engagement with the wider community of believers.

Moral decisions involve a risk, because we are trying to hear the truth and show the truth of God's character revealed in Christ, and at times we must recognize "that we are no longer speaking the same language at all, no longer seeking to mean the same things, to symbolize or communicate the same vision of who God is". There might be moments, when we have to conclude that there is no reality involved in maintaining communion, "yet our first call, so long as we can think of ourselves as speaking the same language, is to stay in engagement with those who decide differently".

Christian unity is Christ-shaped, or empty, and to remain in communion means remaining in solidarity with those who are wounded as well as wounding the church, "in the trust that in the Body of Christ the confronting of wounds is part of opening ourselves to healing".

No one will confuse this vocabulary and way of thinking with current Orthodox reflections on ethics, but Williams' emphasis on an ethic of the body of Christ does point to cracks in the walls dividing the Christian East and West.

Configurations matter. By placing ethics, moral life, and ethical decision-making in the context of asking what it means to build up the up the body of Christ, the conciliar fellowship of churches will at least be consistent with its own policy statements and begin to place ecumenical discussions of moral matters at the centre of its search for Christian unity.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Ecclesiology and Ethics. Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation and the Nature of the Church (Thomas F. Best and Martin Robra, eds.) WCC Publications, Geneva 1997. Cf. Duncan Forrester, The True Church and Morality, Risk Book, WCC Publications, Geneva 1997. Lewis S.

Mudge, The Church as Moral Community. Ecclesiology and Ethics in Ecumenical Debate, Continuum, NY and WCC Publications, Geneva 1998. Lewis S. Mudge, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Household. "Ecclesiology and Ethics" after Harare", in ER 3/1999,243-254. Additional documents on ecclesiology and social witness in ER 2/1995 and in "Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues", in Background Materials, Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, 2001. Some sections of the following paper recycle my essay "The Church, the Churches, the Orthodox Churches, and the World Council of Churches: Notes on "Ecclesiology and Ethics" in Conciliar Debate", in For All People. Global Theologies in Context (E.M.W. Pedersen, H.Lam and P. Lodberg eds.), Eerdmans 2002, 159-173.

ii ER 2/1996,139ff; available also in Background Materials (note 1),129ff.

iii. "Final Report...", ER 1/2003,25: ...(The SC) was created in part because of dissatisfactions raised by Orthodox and others with the ways in which certain social and ethical issues have reached the agenda of the WCC, and the ways in which they have been treated. Specifically, there was a perception that churches are coerced into treating issues they deem as either foreign to their life or inappropriate for a worldwide forum. There has also been a perception that the WCC has on occasion sought to "preach" to the churches rather than be the instrument of their common reflection

iv. "Final Report...", ER 1/2003,9

v. Towards A Common Understanding and Vision Of The World Council Of Churches, A Policy Statement, Geneva 1997, 3.5.2: The essence of the Council is the relationship of the churches to one another. The Council is the fellowship of churches on the way towards full koinonia. It has a structure and organization in order to serve as an instrument for the churches as they work towards koinonia in faith, life and witness...

vi. Ecclesiology and Ethics...(note 1),9.

vii. The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues (note 2),146;145

viii. The phrase is coined by Jon Bria. Cf. his "The liturgy after the Liturgy", in Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism (G. Limouris, ed.), Geneva 1994,216ff

ix. SC, Report Sub-committee III, 2000. Slightly edited.

x. "Final Report...", ER 1/2003,8,6

xi. The Final Report of the SC is inconsistent when it (B,III,20 on ecclesiology) expects the WCC/Faith and Order to be the prime agent for sorting out burning ecclesiological questions.

xii. Cf. Final Report IV,28 and 32-35

xiii. SC, Documents from the Meeting of Sub-Committees I and IV, March 2002.

xiv. Lewis S. Mudge's description of the inherited Presbyterian model of establishing Christian presence in the public sphere is also an apt description of the model hitherto preferred by the WCC: "Social analyses by specialists, public pronouncements by leaders. This has been a typical policy of mainline Protestantism. It describes what has gone on for years in the Presbyterian Church. The "social action curia" produces a mass of material each year, much of it of high quality. The general Assembly votes on it, usually with little attention to the details, although some issues call forth vigorous debate. The Stated Clerk from time to time issues letters to public officials or makes public declarations which seek to carry forward the policies the Assembly has enacted. These procedures are not as effective as they once were. It used to be that protestant church leaders were visible and listened to. Who is listening now? The media pay little attention unless something

scandalous or momentous is involved. Politicians, convinced that we command very short parades, pay little attention. They hardly know that the National Council of Churches exists. Above all these procedures are basically ineffective at the congregational level. Our congregations, absent very determined pastoral leadership, are as oblivious as are the media of what our assembly has said about public issues", in "The Church and Social Witness: Pastor, Congregation and Public Leadership in the Reformed Tradition", Special Commission, Background materials, 10

xv. Robert Jenson, "The Hauerwas Project", in Modern Theology 8:3 (1992), 285-95

xvi. "The Orthodox Church in the Face of World Integration. The Relation between Traditional and Liberal Values", ER 2001,479ff.

xvii ER 2/1996,147

xviii SC, Background materials (note 1).

xix. Lewis S. Mudge (note 14),14

xx. "Fundamental Protestant Principles for Acting in Society", provisional translation of "Evangelische Grundlagen für das Handeln in der Gesellschaft", in SC, Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues, Background materials, 29-34

xxi. <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/sd00e.htm>

xxii. Stanley S. Harakas, Toward Transfigured Life. The Theoria of Eastern Orthodox Ethics, Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis 1983,226. Cf. Background materials (note 1),26

xxiii. Writing in the Dust, Eerdsmans 2002

xxiv "Making Moral Decisions", reprinted in Background materials (note 1) 15ff

**The Church and Social and Political Ethics:
Traditions and Changes in Orthodox Social Ethics**

by
Deacon Andrei Kurayev

A summary

The Orthodox Church has never been an independent subject of politics. It is well known that the state institutions in the East and the West of the Roman Empire have developed in different ways. The Roman Church had to take upon itself a considerable part of state functions. The Eastern Roman Empire outlasted its Western sister for one thousand years. Its state institutions survived crucial times. The Church lived by the principle of “symphony”, which supposed that the Church supports the state in its political initiatives, while the state supports the Church in the defending of Orthodoxy defined by the Church.

The Patriarch and the narrow circle of bishops participated in decision-making and in political struggle, but the Church did not teach its members how they should respond to social and political changes in their lives.

Social themes in the sermons were reduced to the calls to charity and rejection of luxury and overindulgence. There was no public criticism of the laws or decisions taken by the government with the exception of the cases when the government interfered in the ecclesiastical life. Nowhere does the Church Tradition say that a Christian must fight for his personal political and economic freedom.

Then the reporter compares the Church Slavonic translation of 1 Cor 7:21 (“If you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity”- RSV) with the translation by Luther and the Greek source, which says neutrally “choose the best”, without explaining what is the best. Yet, St. John Chrysostom in his interpretation suggested to remain in slavery. The modern ecumenical French translation is also mentioned, but, in the reporter’s opinion, the point is in the benefit for the soul.

The Church did not consider the usurpation of the throne and even the regicide a necessary cause for protest, as it considered the victory of those who seized power to be a part of God’s plans and prayed for an Emperor as for a man on whom the destiny of people depended.

There were conflicts between the Church and the authorities in the history of Byzantium and Slavonic Orthodox states. Occasions: dogmatic issues and the Emperor’s breaking of the canons of marriage. Unfortunately, the Church did not protest against political decisions, which limited the rights and freedoms of people. For instance, we do not know any bishop who protested against serfdom in Russia in the 18th century – the time of the Renaissance. Even two years before the abolition of serfdom a renowned Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov defended this institute. When his disciples published an article in which they asserted civil and personal rights of peasants, it was considered “a new teaching unheard of in the Orthodox Church”. Another example: a certain censor wanted to forbid the Holy Gospel, since it allegedly teaches socialism.

The problem of the loyalty of a Christian to the cruel Christian, non-Christian and anti-Christian rulers has always been a sore point in the history and life of the Orthodox Church.

It is amazing how many martyrs were among soldiers. They knew that they served a pagan Empire and obeyed their commanders who were gentiles, but were the best and most

courageous soldiers. That was their civil loyalty, but they flatly refused to worship the gods of the Empire.

Byzantium considered the power of the Muslims as that of "antichrist". Before the fall of Constantinople the Greeks preachers called Sultan Mohammed II the "forerunner of antichrist", but when he came to the throne, Patriarch Gennadius II of Constantinople took his crozier and mantle from him. Centuries of martyrdom and loyal obedience followed. It was very painful to the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire to draw a line between their loyalty to the non-Orthodox power and the desires of their Christian hearts. (Examples from the life of Patriarch Gregory V [19th c.] with long quotations from the documents. He was canonized by the Greek Orthodox Church in 1871. His name was entered in the church calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000 with the blessing of Patriarch Alexy II).

(Examples from the life of St. Nicholas of Japan).

The Church had not raise its voice in defense of civil freedoms in the last centuries, but it does not follow from this that it should not do it now. It may seem to us that nothing has changed in church life, but there is a turning point, namely, the radical change of the attitude of Christians to the authorities.

In the past Christian preachers thought that the firm state power was a barrier to chaos, with which the antichrist was associated. For centuries Christians were afraid of disintegration. At present the kingdom of antichrist is associated in the ecclesiastical consciousness with the tough totalitarian state system.

The 20th century taught us to see the life through the eyes of the persecuted rather than through those of the authorities. The Russian Orthodox Church has put itself in the place of the persecuted. On 7 March 2000 the Holy Synod brought its protest to the authorities against the introduction of the individual number of tax payers (The Letter of the Holy Synod is quoted).

The computerized account of the income and expenditures, electronic identification cards and travel documents will make the private life transparent. In case the state again decides that it knows how to live and believe, what kind of books and thoughts are correct, it will have at its disposal such information about people, which the secret police could not provide for the dictators of the past.

TV will make brainwashing, while the computers will monitor its results. It will be difficult to swim against the stream in this kind of a new society. Christians have grounds to believe that this stream will not be favorable to them. Suffice it to recall the lack of willingness on the part of the European authorities to mention Christianity in the Constitution of Europe as factor, which has determined the present countenance of Europe.

As to the European integration, the Russian Orthodox Church believes that it should be welcomed only if it guarantees the preservation of freedoms and identity to people. (Quotations from "The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" adopted by the Bishops' Council in 2000).

The Council occupies a special place in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. The mentioned document is based on the principle of the freedom of conscience, i.e. the separation of the Church from the state. It was maybe for the first time in its thousand-year history that the Russian Orthodox Church could calmly and freely look at its inner life and the world. It said openly: we are ready for a dialogue for the sake of witnessing about our system of values.

There is a shift of accents in the theology of the Russian Orthodox Church, as loyalty is no longer considered an unconditional duty of Christians. Members of the Church are proposed a

variety of possible responses to the events in society. The Church states honestly that a dialogue with the secular state and society is its right and duty.

**The Church and Social and Political Ethics:
Traditions and Changes in Orthodox Social Ethics**

**Response
by
Professor Lewis S. Mudge**

I thank Deacon Andrei warmly for his paper, which well serves the purposes for which we are gathered in this seminar. I think we are here to generate a kind of dialogical space in which certain "resonances" can occur. Not that we will very often simply agree. But maybe we can come to recognize in our respective traditions and experiences certain moments of parallel insight. Indeed I am struck by how similar are the issues with respect to social--and particularly political--ethics faced by our respective churches, and indeed how similar in some cases have been our responses.

At the same time, it is clear that we have been living in quite different worlds. I think that it is broadly true to say that nothing like either the Reformation or the Enlightenment has touched the Russian Orthodox Church within Russia (although of course expatriate Orthodox in many lands have encountered the intellectual and spiritual consequences of these Western movements). Reformation and Enlightenment alike have made a difference in how we of the West interpret both tradition as such and church-state relationships in particular. We have a longer history of critical approaches in each of these realms: more time to judge the consequences of the critical spirit (e.g. the use of "scientific historiography" and the value attached to the historical judgments of scholars) both for good and for ill in church life.

An example of this cultural difference is found especially in protestant attitudes to "tradition" itself. You may have noticed how careful I am in my paper (among the preliminary documents for this meeting) to stress that what we call, speaking theologically, "the Reformed tradition" is not very coherent as a historical phenomenon. This "tradition" is more like a continuing and unfolding field of argument taking many directions than it is like a single developing line of teaching. We tend to identify what "the Reformed tradition" is for us in whatever terms lead plausibly to wherever we believe we stand theologically today. Our "standpoints," all of them "Reformed," represent quite a range of possibilities! At the same time, our terminology and characteristic theological moves are quite identifiable across time. They are tangibly different from those of Lutheranism, or Anglicanism, or Roman Catholicism, or Orthodoxy.

We suspect that your own Orthodox past, if analyzed by Western historical methods, would look much the same way: not a single line of development but a wide swath of discourse including positions and arguments of various kinds, that looks to you more coherent than it does to us. We tend to think that what is called "tradition" in your community represents (like ours) the views held by victors in centuries of struggles. Your own tendency to support politically "the powers that be" in both church and state carries over to the definition and transmission of tradition. And we also acknowledge that there are many parallels to this phenomenon in the "Reformed" community as well. Seen in critical perspective, we are not that different.

The Original Calvinist Experiment

It is important to understand that the most important foundational document of Reformed Christianity, Calvin's Institutes, was the result of a long-term (five editions over more than twenty years) attempt to define the form of shared Christian faith presented to the world by a new kind of political community in sixteenth-century Europe: a city state that had declared its independence of the medieval papal-political system. Calvin was brought to Geneva by the authorities of this already "reformed" commonwealth to articulate what it meant to profess Christian faith in such a novel ecclesio-social frame of reference. He was determined that this new communal expression of faith should be, and be perceived elsewhere to be, thoroughly orthodox, despite its innovative characteristics. The dedication of the first edition of the Institutes to the King of France was designed to make this point. So, apparently, was Calvin's failure--or refusal--to intervene when the Geneva authorities decided to burn the heretic Servetus. He was in effect saying: "See, we here in Geneva are really orthodox: we burn heretics too!"

So, in a word, seeking continuity with "tradition," could mean making what we see now as serious mistakes. But it could also mean producing a brilliant re-framing of the theological patrimony. I use the latter word advisedly. John Calvin was an accomplished scholar of the works of the "church fathers" in their original languages. He quoted them often in the 1400 or so pages of the Institutes. To be sure, he quotes the Latin fathers more than the Greek ones. That was to be expected.

I draw now on parts of my paper included in our preliminary materials. There I argue that Calvin's views concerning public magistracy have conceptual roots at the heart of the Reformer's understanding of the interactions of law and grace. It is common to contrast Calvin's position with Luther's doctrine of the "two kingdoms." Caution is in order. We know that Luther spoke of the two "hands" of God, right and left. The right hand of God has to do with the grace in which, by faith, we have our salvation. Salvation takes place for persons in the realm of the church. Bringing human beings to God's throne of grace is the church's business, and the work of grace has nothing directly to do with those public matters reserved to the state. God's left hand, by contrast represents His providential care for the public realm, where law is an instrument of God's judgment. Here the conditions of salvation do not operate. Rather, expertise in matters of state is the criterion of service. Luther is noted for having spoken to the effect that he would rather be ruled by an intelligent Turk (i.e. Moslem) than by an incompetent Christian. It is not that public matters are outside God's concern. It is just that God deals with these matters in a different way from the way He brings human beings to saving grace.

Now Calvin's vision is subtly yet importantly different. Public magistracy is not simply a matter of expertise overseen by God's providence. Public magistracy can be a specifically Christian vocation, as Luther also thought, but grace is now at work in the world. The foundations of this conviction are everywhere, in many different forms, in the Institutes. We will mention only two: the so-called "third use of the law", and the priority Calvin gives to sanctification, expounding it in Institutes, Book III, prior to the doctrine of justification.

One of Calvin's innovations (although he may have been following a differently stated yet similar formulation in Aquinas) was to understand the Law (or Torah) as having three, rather than Luther's two, "uses". Law regulates not only private conduct. It is also the basis of public order, and hence an indispensable element in a Christian social ethic. By "law", Calvin undoubtedly meant first the Torah, but also the whole medieval tradition of civil law, thought compatible with Torah but also based on "natural law" principles, in which he was trained at the University of Paris. Not only does the law serve as foundation for public order, restraining the potential sinner, and not only does it convict us of our inadequacy thus rendering us open to grace, but the law also serves as a guide to conduct for the redeemed sinner. The redeemed person finds a new relationship to the law. He or she is rendered by grace more able to keep the law because the law no longer stands over against him or her as impossible demand. This means, quite simply, that the gospel is relevant to the standards that regulate the public world. The gospel, as Luther also believed but with a different emphasis, becomes directly relevant to citizenship.

A similar dynamic is at work in the sometimes overlooked fact that in the Institutes, Book III, the exposition of the Spirit's work in calling us to faith, regeneration and the Christian life--all that falls under the heading of "sanctification"--precedes the treatment of "justification". Luther, of course, has it the other way around. Calvin believes that the work of Christ's death and resurrection, applied to our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, is such to start us on the road to becoming better (or at least more pious) persons up to the point at which we gain the gift of realization that we could not be better persons if God had not already accepted us through justification by grace alone.^{xxv} The is the "mode of becoming which true piety induces". It includes "love of righteousness" and other public virtues. "We are not our own" but our way of life makes a difference to the world.^{xxvi}

The upshot is that, for Calvin, grace is indirectly at work in making possible good conduct, even citizenship. It has to do with how we live. And since our living is inevitably social, it has to do with citizenship, and with the lives of public magistrates whose responsibility it is to maintain a body politic in which our citizenship is worked out. The final chapter of the Institutes is devoted to this issue. Calvin's primary assertions are based largely on Romans 13.^{xxvii} On the one hand, he believes in a clear separation between ecclesiastical and civil government, yet at the same time believes--at least so far as Geneva is concerned--in a form of establishment of Reformed Protestantism that would be prohibited by the US Constitution. He regards civil government, and the civil magistracy, as a divinely ordained vocation, worthy of profound respect and obedience. Among other things such as keeping the peace, it is, he says, the duty of civil government to protect and promote the church and to help maintain Christian faith and morals as taught by the church. Civil magistrates enforce "both tables of the law", that is, those commandments having to do with religious duties as well as those having to do with civil behavior.

Calvin says that "Civil authority is a calling, not only holy and lawful before God, but also the most sacred and by far the most honorable of all callings in the life of moral men". Magistrates are "ordained ministers of divine justice". They are "vicars of God". In administering punishment the magistrate "does nothing by himself, but carries out the very judgments of God". And again, magistracy is a "jurisdiction bestowed by God and on that account to esteem and reverence them as ministers and representatives of God".

There is room here, and even an obligation (although the Institutes lays down rather stringent conditions) for people to rise up and replace magistrates who are not ruling according to the high standards Calvin sets. Even Catholic magistrates who rule justly are presumably in Calvin's view ministers of God. But we read that "Sometimes [God] raises up avengers from among his servants, and arms them with his command to punish the wicked government and deliver his people, oppressed in unjust ways, from miserable calamity." But, even then, Calvin admonishes us that such rebellion must be led by notable persons, and only after grave provocation.

If public authorities are already themselves "ministers of God", then public leadership by pastors does not generally mean an entry into political life as such. It does have to do with admonishment of civil rulers where necessary, and no doubt with certain modes of public advocacy. The important insight, however, is that the notion of righteous life in public sphere, for citizens as well as magistrates, depends for Calvin not only on political judgments as such but also on an understanding of the consequences of sanctification, in part guided by a "third use of the law".

Variations in the Calvinistic Tradition Through Time

The church-state pattern laid down by Calvin remains identifiable through subsequent variations, but yet it repeatedly shifts in many respects to meet new circumstances. I will illustrate such shifts in two cases: the "Puritan Revolution" in 17th-century England and the "separation of church and state" under Calvinist influence in late eighteenth-century America. I will close this section with reflections on what contemporary Americans call "civil religion".

The Puritan "Revolution of the Saints"

The tradition of monarchical rule in England (including, since Henry VIII, the custom of regarding the sovereign as head of the Church) had persisted unbroken for many hundreds of years in what might have been called, using Orthodox terminology, a kind of "symphony". But it is often forgotten that, by the 17th century, Calvinism had become the dominant theology (as opposed to polity) in the Church of England. In 1647 an Assembly of Anglican, Presbyterian and other divines completed a document known as the Westminster Confession of Faith, an attempt to express the faith of the English church formally in Calvinist terms. The significance of this confession for our purposes is that

it sought faithfully to recapitulate tradition but did so in terms appropriate to its day and time. And that recapitulation reflected increasingly democratic, anti-monarchical sentiment. During the 1630s and 1640s, the growing urban middle classes, many of the lesser country gentry, and the great majority of the Puritan Calvinists were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the established political order. Reflecting these sentiments, an equally dissatisfied Parliament rose up against the king and judicially executed him in 1649, just two years after the new Confession had been completed. The ensuing civil war ended with a triumph of the parliamentary army, and Calvinists (for the most part: it is only fair to say that there were many other, many quite innovative Christian groups in the picture) under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell found themselves ruling the British Isles. Compare Calvin's description in his Institutes of the stringent conditions justifying such rebellions.

By providing justification for these political moves the Calvinist tradition spawned a kind of republic offering more religious liberty to other groups than England had experienced before. Cromwell stood for a national church, supported financially and administratively by the state, in which the preaching of the Word would be assured and public morals enhanced but in which there would be no bishops and no use of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The tradition of the Church of England with all of its traditional political connections was here interrupted for a period of approximately eleven years (the son of Charles I returned to the throne in 1660). The importance of this experiment lay not in its stability or persistence but in the alternative model of church-state relations it brought to the English-speaking world, influencing the role of the Puritan Calvinists a century later in forming the government of the United States.

An important book on the Puritan revolution, which I recommend, is The Revolution of the Saints^{xxviii} by Michael Walzer, a political philosopher now at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Walzer's book sees the Calvinist tradition as having turned into a revolutionary ideology, with the Calvinist clergy as "rootless intellectuals" and their followers as "self-disciplined agents of social and political reconstruction". Hence these Calvinists provided an archetype for modern radical politics. What the Puritans did was to adapt their tradition to meet the needs of a period of social disintegration, of "unsettledness", when a traditioned order was crumbling and had not yet been replaced.

I am not sure how our Orthodox colleagues will see this example of de-traditioning and re-traditioning, where the problem was to deal creatively with discontinuity. Perhaps they will say that the restoration of monarchy and Anglicanism in 1660 shows this Calvinist upheaval to have been an aberration. It will be more difficult, however (but of course far from impossible), to say this of the next Calvinist church-state experiment, that involved in the founding of the United States.

"Separation of Church and State" in America

What appeared in Europe (and also in Puritan New England) as a homology of religious and secular notions comes apart constitutionally in America's separation of church and state.^{xxix} The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads:

"Congress shall make no law regarding an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Calvin wanted to maintain a clear distinction—both theological and administrative—between "Christ's spiritual kingdom" and the realm of civil government. But he permitted what the First Amendment would call an "establishment of religion." Although Reformed thought has influenced the American experiment, the founders and framers were in a new situation. Mark Noll has shown that eighteenth-century America was not as "Christian" as right-wingers have typically claimed, still many of the writers of The Federalist Papers and of the Constitution held together some form of biblical religion and some sort of republican sentiment in their own minds while they were to separate them on the Federal level (and eventually in the states) in juridical terms.

The "framers", for the most part, were both believing Christians of various sorts and believers in Enlightenment reason. The Calvinists among them thought that the church-state separation that Calvin taught could not be maintained if one Christian denomination had "establishment" status. Hence establishment had to go, and a non-sectarian civic space for political life needed to be created. That did not mean that individuals and groups could not bring religious motivations into their civic participation as citizens, even expressing their religious reasons in public. But it meant that public decisions, as made by Congress or the courts or local governments, could not officially make use of the reasoning of particular religious groups, but needed rather to use arguments of a "public" type: lines of reasoning that everyone could follow whatever their private convictions.

Now prohibited in the USA is anything that can possibly be construed as government-sponsored religious establishment. The First Amendment was intended primarily to protect the freedom of religion and the activities of churches from interference by the government. It has often been interpreted the opposite way: as if it meant protecting the government from the churches! The "Establishment Clause" does not prohibit participation of individuals and congregations as such in the political process. But there is an irony in the fact that, if religious bodies are tax-exempt, that constitutes a form of government protection for such groups and they may not then run profit-making businesses or become directly involved in electoral politics. To do either--under the government subsidy of tax-exemption--is to create a form of "establishment". Similarly anything that can be construed as governmental sponsorship of religious activity, e.g. prayer at public school football games, is also a form of "establishment".

Thomas Jefferson's famous letter regarding the "wall of separation" between church and state has confused the issue, and given ammunition to those who want to make preachers "stick to the gospel" without seeing that the gospel has political implications. When the right wing discovers that it can be politically effective for its own causes, it takes a very different view of the relation between religion and politics. The Bill of Rights says nothing about a "wall". The issue is not whether some wall is breached but whether the activity in question is establishmentarian in tendency.

Contemporary "Civil Religion"

What has made possible this public, constitutional, separation of factors so often in various ways united in men's and women's self-understandings? The American sociologist Robert Bellah would answer, "civil religion": that kind of public consciousness that accepts without much question the use of religious language on such occasions as presidential inaugurations. "Civil religion" explains a great deal about our public separation of perspectives that for many people are variously blended in mind and heart.^{xxx} How can this be so? To find an answer we need to turn away from constitutional interpretation as such and from the structural interests of sociologists to focus on the analysis of cultural power. The analysis of the relationship between religion and politics needs to come closer to human realities. Civil or civic religion can be understood as a collection of cultural resources drawing on religious symbols that have broad cultural rather than narrow sectarian meanings. These resources are used by different groups--including religious ones--to explain and justify their positions or agendas within the community.

Thus considered, the two themes of civic religion and separation do not contradict one another. Rather, they co-exist. Religious people may well support the separation of church and state because they find solace in civil religion, while secular people may well justify their participation in civic religion because of the limits prescribed by constitutional separation. Elements of each theme are thus contained within the other. This could be called a practical, rather than a juridical reweaving of religion and politics. Rather than seeing the participation of religion in politics as occurring despite societal secularization, we can conjecture that it is because of the separation of religious organizations from the official polity that churches are perceived as the carriers of morality in American culture. Though the dominant trend may still be toward religion's secularization, this process is limited by a sacralizing of civil culture. Secularization and sacralization thus call forth their own limiting conditions.

So Where Does This Lead Us?

I have sketched aspects of the Calvinist tradition, and two of its variations, with special attention to the relations of church with civil government. What is the yield of all this for the purposes of this meeting? My instinct is to say that the changes in the social and political position of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially since the early nineties as described by Deacon Andrei, present certain parallels with the Reformed experience. Calvinists have learned to deal with various kinds of social "unsettledness", and have taken leading roles in establishing new kinds of "holy commonwealth" in Western lands. The question is always how far traditional ways of thinking and acting in the Church are dependent on the maintenance of traditional social conditions and relationships in society as a whole. When social relationships and power structures change, we, too, must often change. One does not have to think of such change as disloyalty to one's roots. Such change may be the only way to be loyal to tradition in its true essence. Remember Calvin's great stress on continuity with the tradition while reading it differently to accommodate new circumstances and challenges.

Can we derive from all this anything like a theological principle for regulating continuity and change in ecclesiology and ethics? I am hoping that our conversations here can help illumine this matter. If we were able to draw on our respective traditions to produce a genuinely ecumenical social ethic we would ipso facto be nearer to having a common mind with respect to our reading of tradition. My own tendency is to employ various forms of second-order language--both traditional and contemporary--to talk about the first-order languages of prayer and practice that genuinely constitute what we are about. There is danger in that: that we depart from the substance of our concern into esoteric explorations dependent for their seeming cogency on one's knowing a lot about the work of contemporary philosophers! And yet such second-order languages sometimes help us uncover what we presuppose when we pray and act as we do.

With all these caveats, I propose something like the following. In part, this represents my reading of elements in the Orthodox tradition in a way that I can understand from the standpoint of my own. First, the notion of imago Dei: I am told that the language of Genesis 1:27 expresses something that has been begun but remains incomplete. We are not God's image. We--together as ekklesia--are summoned to become God's image in the universe: God's representation or ikon. This is a process within history and its fulfillment depends on the kind of community-in-context we become. The responsibility self-consciously to manage this communal signification--to be sure that it really does signify the gospel--is handed over to us in the acts of creation and redemption. But all this also takes place in a larger, divine, context. Our humanity is already taken up into God through the death, resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the sacraments we are enabled to participate in that ascended God-manhood. Indeed we thereby participate in the life of the "economic" Trinity that ramifies through the historical process, suffusing the household of God and adjusting it to the needs that present themselves along the way. Being a part of "tradition" means participating in this "householding" process.

Tradition, then, cannot be just books and words and liturgical actions; it must be a stream of life. We live it. And as we do, we become it and we, too, can be "read." As a people we express something to the world. We send a message. And what we express (let us say, by our "social being") depends in part on our "social location," by which I mean how we comport ourselves in relation to the structures of society, the power interests, and all the other factors that make up the fabric of human life. To consult tradition is to try to read the message our predecessors have sent, not merely by perusing their published works but by "reading" the transfigural properties of their lives and opening ourselves to the same expressive transfiguration of life. New social and political conditions may require such transfiguration to be visibly configured in different ways: in order to say the same thing to the world.

Thank you again, Deacon Andrei, for your paper, and thank you all for your attention.

Notes

**The Orthodox Church
and
PROBLEMS OF BIOETHICS AND ECOLOGY**

**AN ORTHODOX VIEW
by
Dr. Gary Vachicouras**

The Orthodox Church and Bioethics

Although the Orthodox Church is constantly engaged in dialogue, debate and discussion in response to contemporary and controversial issues, she is actually unprepared to express a well-grounded and credible proposal of its own on a panorthodox level to elaborate *“the prospects and dangers arising in the impressive achievements of modern genetics and biotechnology, and in particular to issues of bioethics implied in the application of these scientific interventions on a) the beginning of life, b) the duration of life, and c) the end of human life”*. For this reason, at the request of many local Orthodox Churches, the Ecumenical Patriarchate convened for the first time an international scientific congress in September 2002 at its Orthodox Center at Chambésy-Geneva on the timely and complex theme: *“The Church and Bioethics: The Word of Science and the World of Religion”*.⁸

This congress has provided the necessary background for constructive dialogue in the search for a common meeting ground, without implying in principle any opposition or contradiction between religion and science. It also aimed *“to resolve the great confusion that exists in terms of the possible negative repercussions arising from the decoding of the human genome, in particular by the extreme and arbitrary interventions of science in human genetic material”*. The proceedings of the congress launched a new process on a panorthodox level using an interdisciplinary approach to continue this important dialogue about the *sanctity of life, the freedom of scientific research and the fundamental principles of human rights* in order to arrive at some minimum common code of bioethical principles.

On the occasion of the Synaxis-Assembly of the Primate of the Orthodox Church in December 2000, at the Phanar, it was decided to create an interorthodox Committee on bioethical issues. In the meantime, the Churches of Greece and Moscow have created Synodal Commissions to formulate a series of statements related to bioethics. The Church of Greece has also established a Center for Biomedical Ethics and Deontology, a forum for research. The Theological Institute of Saint Sergius in Paris organizes an annual colloquium on bioethics since 1997. Orthodox theologians of Member Churches of the Conference of European Churches are also members of the Working Group on Bioethics and Biotechnology of the Church and Society Commission which follow developments within the Council of Europe and the European Union. The results of these initiatives will indeed contribute to formulating position on bioethics issues and developing an appropriate language on the subject.

However how does the Orthodox Church do bioethics? Orthodox bioethics draws from the experience grounded in Holy Scripture and Tradition which refer to the very existence of human beings in all its dimensions, material and spiritual. Orthodox theology is expressed in its dogma, worship and sacramental life. This has ethical implications for life issues. Our theology therefore cannot be marginalized in the ethical decision making process. It is the very essence of ethics. *Ethics is applied theology, theology in action* - the Christian way of life. Our theology must be interpreted in existential terms and made relevant to the existential needs and demands of humankind with all their aspirations and hopes as they confront the mystery of life and death. Orthodox bioethics is the word of God, theology, to address the results of progress in medicine and biology.

⁸ See Conclusions of the International Scientific Congress, *Episkepsis* 614 (31.10.2002) p. 3-10.

Therefore, we the faithful, both clergy and laity, cannot simply remain indifferent or blind *consumers* of the medical and technological options. Neither can we allow ourselves to be subjected to medical experimentation for the sake of scientific progress or economic and political interests that jeopardize the destination of man in relation to God and his creation. This can also pose a threat both to a nation's internal social cohesion, and to the peaceful co-existence between peoples and nations.

To avert this process, the Orthodox Church has the duty and responsibility in terms of both human reality and divine purpose, to devote all its efforts to emphasise the importance of man as a *person* and help provide clear guidelines, through formation and education, for clergy and laity alike. The will of God, while preserving our freedom, guides us to discover the "mind of the Church" from Tradition on these crucial issues, thereby to preserve our salvation in Christ and to reflect the truths of the Faith. The *ethos* (from which etymologically the word *ethics* is derived) of the Orthodox Church can be summarized in the words of Saint Paul: "*And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*" (Rom 12:2).

MYSTERY OF LIFE: SANCTITY OF LIFE, FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The center of the dialogue in the area of bioethics therefore is the human *person* who for the Orthodox Church is the real object of its mission in the world and in the history of salvation. Man is created in the image and likeness of God. The ontology of man is founded in the person of Christ, God's incarnate Logos. Christ assumes human nature and of all creation restoring man to his holiness by eliminating evil and death. The relationship between God and man is restored. Any betrayal of the true nature of man is a betrayal to the truth. Thus a key theological principle in Orthodox theology is the following: the degree of being of the individual person depends on the degree of participation in God. The transcendence of death can only be achieved in the unique calling for humanity who is created in the image of God (the only absolute good) to become "like God", Who is Immortal, thereby achieving *theosis*. This is the mystery of life. Endowed with sacredness from its conception, human life thus finds its ultimate sense, its deeply spiritual meaning in the quest for sanctity or holiness.

"The divine gift of freedom is the fulfillment of the human person, and is so to the extent that on the one hand the individual carries within himself or herself the image of the personal God and on the other hand personal community on the basis of the unity of the human race mirrors the life of the Holy Trinity and the community of the three divine persons." The dignity of the human person and the value of human freedom are mutually dependent. When man is free independent of his Creator he becomes autonomous self-determined in relation to God and thus falls away from Him. If human freedom is abused and human rights are not applied affirming the inviolate dignity as a human person, this will give rise for more evil in life and in the world. Furthermore, only in community can individuals achieve personhood.

Two dimensions of the sanctity of life include the care for life,⁹ since life is a gift of God, and the transmission of life. To alleviate disease, fear, misfortune, pain and suffering, God has entrusted us with the responsibility to use all available methods to restore both spiritual and medical health of the faithful from their conception until death. Pain and suffering in the Christian life possess *redemptive value*. Concern for the sick manifests itself in the ethical teachings of Christ who is the Great Physician of body and soul without down grading human efforts through science and medicine in cooperation with God's will in the healing of human illnesses. Faith and medicine were integrated into the healing process as many priests, monks and theologians studied researched and practiced medicine.

⁹ See Presentation on *Caring for Life* to the Central Committee of the World Council of Church on August 28th, 2003 in Geneva.

The transmission of life is taken up and sanctified in the sacrament of marriage, which determines the nature and identity of the Christian family. Marriage is a fundamental relation in which the two persons are united into a communion of love *reflecting the union between Christ and the Church*. Resorting to medically assisted procreation by donors, for example, attacks the integrity of the marriage, the mother-child and/or father-child relationship and each person. The decomposition of the family, the very cellule of society, affects in turn the social cohesion of society.

Man is not an autonomous being. He is created in the image and likeness of God that bears responsibilities on his destination and transfiguration of the world. *Therefore, the Church, insisting on Christian anthropology, declares the sacredness of the human person and the inviolability of divine creation for any scientific research, which sometimes violates the natural law in order to improve the quality of duration of human life. The Church sincerely respects the fundamental principle of freedom of scientific research and progress, particularly in the human sciences. But at the same time, it defends its special spiritual relationship with man, as this is defined through faith regarding the relationship between man and God and man and the world.*

The following conclusions were made on the question of the method of therapeutic cloning of genetic material from the embryo: science and religion perhaps could find and *seek possible convergence* on this method *in order to correct any genetic abnormalities observed during pre-natal testing or to improve the quality and duration of human life*. This would be based on the presupposition that this method not affect the sacredness of the human person and the *genuine continuity of the mystery of life in accordance with the reason of divine creation. The Church however has legitimate reservations not only with respect to the extreme methods used but also to the predicted results for human life*. In addition, this method *forces nature to take part in something which nature cannot do alone*. The participants, scientists and theologians also *unanimously rejected the use by science of the genetic material of the embryo, and of man more generally, for reproductive cloning, an effort that was deplored unanimously as lacking any moral base and should be prohibited by strict sanctions*.

FOUNDATION (OR PARAMETERS) FOR ORTHODOX BIOETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The model of the compatibility of faith and medicine during the Byzantine Empire and the creation of the hospital by the Church cannot but only reinforce the relation between the Church and medicine and biotechnology. They have the possibility to determine separately and/or together the fate of each human being. The act of death can either be averted (or suspended), accelerated, or leaving it to its natural process. On one hand the Church affirms the reality of death and transcends it in the person of Christ through her sacramental life. However on the other hand the affirmation of the reality of death challenges medicine and biotechnology to transcend death within the limits of created existence: place, time, change etc. the innate characteristics and attributes of the cosmos with the purpose to counteract death with the cost of another act of death or to conquer death by death. The word of knowledge and the word of religion must be fused with the motivation of the virtue of charity, philanthropy, in all its dimensions.

Based on the key theological principle of the absolute and universal value of human dignity and the restoration of the image and likeness of God, the following so-called *parameters* can be applied in the area of bioethics to reach bioethical principles:

1. The philanthropy of God is expressed in His Incarnation, death and resurrection. The *Economy* (dispensation) of death is the Economy of Christ and not the economy or saving work of man of man. The economy of death cannot be used by man. Christ "manipulated" death by dying Himself. However, because of the incarnate God, death is annihilated by death. Man of course manipulates death for various reasons however cannot annihilate death from created existence. It is the mortal nature of creation and the state of mortality of humanity due to its Fall.

2. Life and death must be seen from the perspective from the divine plan of God through the Incarnation and the transcendence of death in the life of the Church. Therefore the act of death must be left to the natural process of man in the same way there birth is. Rev. Nikolaos Hatzinikolaou vividly describes the psychology of the human being with respect to the mystery of life and death: *“The more we try to forget the laws of disintegration biologically, the more nature reminds us of them mechanically. In addition, the closer we come to mystery of life, the more we lose the elixir of soul’s immortality. Whatever biologically eternalizes man, it spiritually deprives him of the sense and essence of his immortality. Refusing to accept the reality of death transforms it from a momentary event to a predominant condition. Death only eternalises and immortalises...”*¹⁰
3. Bioethics must affect the entire human being, body and soul and not only the body. The Orthodox Church believes in the unity of the psychosomatic constitution of the human person even after death. *“The whole man consists of both body and soul. Man lives with a body, and even with the body he will be judged for whatever good of evil he has done”* (2 Cor. 5:10). We, theologians, need to make an appeal to those who affect the separation of the body and the soul because paradoxically it sets the stage for the ultimate eradication of the separation of the soul from unity with God.
4. Science does not have the moral prerogative to use death as a tool to grant life or to interrupt life for a higher goal. Death for science cannot be an instrument to serve higher ideals for the prestige of medicine and/or to fulfil the desires of individual human beings. There is no beneficial role of death in science. Science unfortunately cannot create a new world free from the act of death. Death is inevitable and cannot be defeated. Death may be averted but not for an indefinite period of time. The *act of death* is irreversible in the limits of created existence, thereby restricting the word of science. God is the One who reverses this condition to a state of blessedness of immortality
5. The freedom for scientific research is limited when dependent upon God the Creator since creation and man is respected. Freedom of scientific research is preserved in the image of God in man who is a creative being. The freedom of the human person to create however must be accompanied with discernment. The freedom of scientific research is preserved only in divine origin. Science and technology devoid of divine origin leads to other forms of evil. This existential outlook on the scientist’s being will not betray the true nature of the psychosomatic unity of the human person. Science has the sacred function to respect the human being and not treat it simply as a biological entity.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The criteria for evaluating the sanctity of human life are valid analogously for the life of the world as well, since man is a microcosm of the universe, while the world is a natural extension of the human being. The physical interdependence of the life of man and of the world determines not only their deeper existential relationship, but also the validity of ethical values with respect to protecting the human environment. In this way, the providence of God covers all of divine creation, with its fundamental principles of natural law and also the personal responsibility of the human being to function as a steward (*oikonomos*) of divine creation. With this understanding, the sanctity of human life and its protection from any arbitrary or inappropriate usage constitute the highest duty of every human being before God, his fellow man and the world.

¹⁰ Archimandrite Nikolaos Hatzinikolaou, “Transmitting Bioethics on Spiritual Wavelength”, In: 2-3 *Annals: Theological Perspectives in Bioethics and Orthodoxy and the Third Millennium*, St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology, University of Balamand, 2001.

For this reason the Ecumenical Patriarchate¹¹ has foreseen in a timely manner the contemporary ecological dangers of humanity as a whole, and has undertaken initiatives, drawing from its spiritual mission, that aim at promoting a responsible human attitude and behavior towards divine Creation.

For this purpose the Ecumenical Patriarchate:

- 1) In light of the crucial state of the ecological problem, in 1989, His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios, by decision of the Holy Synod, named September 1st of each year as the Day for the Protection of the Natural Environment, something that been accepted by the Orthodox and some other Christian Churches. This day in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church is the Feast of the Indiction and the first day of the ecclesiastical year. In his message the Ecumenical Patriarch stressed the importance of Orthodox tradition to the contribution in overcoming the ecological problem and called upon the Orthodox faithful and every person of good will to be aware of their responsibility and to take necessary action to help change our behavior and attitude so that we can protect our natural environment and restrict its destruction. It was especially emphasized the need for all of us to display a "Eucharistic and ascetic spirit": *"the Eucharistic spirit reminding us"*, in the words of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the Closing Address at the Fourth International International Scientific Symposium "Religion-Science-Environment" on the Adriatic Sea "A Sea at Risk, A Unity of Purpose" held in June 2002, *that the created world is not simply our possession but it is a gift - a gift from God the Creator, a healing gift, a gift of wonder and beauty – and that our proper response, on receiving such a gift, is to accept it with gratitude and thanksgiving. The ascetic spirit in relation to the environment, we are to display enkrateia, "self-restraint", that is to say we are to practice a voluntary self-limitation in our consumption of food and natural resources. Each us of us is called to make a crucial distinction between what we want and what we need. The missing dimension in our environmental ethos and ecological action is **sacrifice**: to move from theory to action, from words to deeds. It is an ethical issue. The fundamental problem of the ecological crisis lies not in the environment but in the human heart, inside ourselves and in the way we think about own selves, about our relationship with the world and with God. It is a question of metanoia a revolutionary change of mind.*" This attitude to nature involved in the Eucharist and the ascetic tradition of the Church had been previously emphasized in the Message of the Primate of the Orthodox Church at the Phanar on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the 15th of March 1992.
- 2) It promoted inter-disciplinary dialogue on ecological issues on the local and the international levels and at the same time engaged in warning, as far as possible, the sensitivities of the religious, political, and academic leadership and also that of public opinion in this regard. The Patriarchate's related initiatives are directed to this end and not to any transient or sensational purpose. These initiatives include: international conferences; group activities on land, rivers, and seas, which are exposed to special ecological violations; messages, appeals, paternal admonitions, and declarations, such as the recent one that was jointly signed by both the Pope of Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarch.
- 3) It encouraged approaching and investigating ecological issues not only from the narrow spectrum of economics and technology, but also under the broader prism of spiritual and related parameters

¹¹ See Memorandum on the efforts undertaken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the Protection of the Natural Environment, 3 October 3, 2002; Papas, Metropolitan Athanasios of Heliopolis and Theira, The Ecological Activities of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, *Kleronomia* 32, Issues I-II, June-December 2000, 131-145 (in Greek).

- 4) It prompted ecclesiastical institutions of the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch to develop special activities (The Orthodox Center of Chambésy/Geneva, The Orthodox Academy of Crete/The Institute of Theology and Ecology, etc.).
- 5) It advances the cooperation of the church with political, social, academic and other agencies of environmental interest and took steps to introduce the ecological problem in the agenda of inter-church and interreligious dialogues and activities.

The broad acceptance of the initiatives and activities of the Ecumenical Patriarchate constitutes a clear indication that society expects and receives the responsible word of the Church on the environment, and hence the Church must intensify her efforts in this direction, given of course the deterioration of the ecological, biotechnical and other related difficulties.

CONCLUSIONS

The above theological foundation affirms the sanctity of life, freedom of scientific research, human rights. Our theology provides the parameters for reflection and dialogue to reach at Orthodox bioethical principles, acknowledging that the world in itself does not have the divine means to affect ontologically the destiny of human nature. The fields of bioethics, technology, medicine and science must be developed in such a manner that they will *“keep our relationship with the other pole of our existence – with our Creator and our archetype”*.¹²

The debate remains open with respect to the existential question related to bioethical issues: what are the criteria to affect the natural process of life and death with its positive and/or negative repercussions directly affecting the destiny of man, biologically and spiritually? The wider context of this question entails also the social, political, economic and cultural consequences. A most profound and important text which will enable to evaluate the implications of bioethical issues are the decisions of the IIIrd Preconciliar Panorthodox Conference in 1986 on the subject of *“the contribution of the Orthodox Church to the realization of peace, justice, freedom, fraternity and love between the nations as well as to the elimination of racial and other forms of discrimination”*.¹³

The concluding paragraph of the decisions of the IIIrd Preconciliar Conference which defines the mission and task of Orthodoxy in the world today: *“Because we Orthodox Christians have access to the significance of salvation we must devote ourselves for the alleviation of disease, fear and misfortune; because we have access to the experience of peace the lack of peace in contemporary society must not leave us indifferent; because we have experience the benefits of God’s justice we commit ourselves to greater justice in the world and the overcoming of all oppression; because every day we experience God’s grace we commit ourselves to the fight against every kind of fanaticism and intolerance among people and nations; because we tirelessly proclaim God’s becoming and man’s being raised to the level of God we commit ourselves to the defense of human rights for all people and nations; because thanks to Christ’s act of redemption we experience the freedom bestowed by God we can better proclaim its universal value for all people and nations; because in the holy Eucharist we are nourished with the body and blood of the Lord we experience the necessity of sharing God’s gifts with our brethren, we understand better what hunger and deprivation mean and fight for them to be overcome; because we await a new heaven and a new earth when absolute justice will reign we commit ourselves here and now to the rebirth and renewal of man society.”*

¹² Paulus Mar Gregorius, *Cosmic Man: The Divine Presence*, Paragon House, New York, 1988, p. 225

¹³ Decisions of the IIIrd Preconciliar Conference (1986), *Episkepsis* 369 (15.12.1986) p.27-28.

It has been therefore the mission and task of Orthodoxy to accelerate the process of study and reflection on the issues of bioethics and ecology, on an interorthodox, ecumenical and interreligious level.

Notes

¹ See Conclusions of the International Scientific Congress, *Episkepsis* 614 (31.10.2002) p. 3-10.

² See Presentation on *Caring for Life* to the Central Committee of the World Council of Church on August 28th, 2003 in Geneva.

³ Archimandrite Nikolaos Hatzinikolaou, "Transmitting Bioethics on Spiritual Wavelength", In: *2-3 Annals: Theological Perspectives in Bioethics and Orthodoxy and the Third Millennium*, St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology, University of Balamand, 2001.

⁴ See Memorandum on the efforts undertaken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the Protection of the Natural Environment, 3 October 3, 2002; Papas, Metropolitan Athanasios of Heliopolis and Theira, *The Ecological Activities of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*, *Kleronomia* 32, Issues I-II, June-December 2000, 131-145 (in Greek).

⁵ Paulus Mar Gregorius, *Cosmic Man: The Divine Presence*, Paragon House, New York, 1988, p. 225

⁶ Decisions of the IIIrd Preconciliar Conference (1986), *Episkepsis* 369 (15.12.1986) p.27-28.

“The Church and Problems of Bioethics and Ecology”

**Response
by
Bishop Eberhardt Renz**

Reflections on the problems of bioethics and ecology

BIOETHICS

Questions of bioethics have been raised within the churches again and again. Every instance of “progress” in medical research raises new problems and questions which start the discussion anew. If for instance a scientific step that has been found problematic proves to be helpful for mankind, the question comes up whether this debatable and possibly dangerous, and therefore prohibited, method should not be allowed henceforth.

For this reason the discussion about, for example, pre-natal-diagnostics, pre-implantation-diagnostics or the use of stem-cells of embryos will come up again and again, whenever further successful steps seem to have been reached in - as it is claimed - eliminating diseases, or whenever parliaments decide on bio-ethical questions, and more so when parliaments come to differing positions in individual countries.

The situation will be even more difficult when this happens within the European Union because not only the freedom of medical research is at stake, but for many the much more weighty and important economic consequences and possible financial profit.

The central question to be answered is whether we are allowed to do everything we are able to do. This question bears enormous weight, because medical research and new medical developments concern always the dignity of man. This is the case for example in the actual debate about using embryonal stem-cells or only adult stem-cells or as another example the method of pre-implantation-diagnostics.

The question is raised: Should it be possible to select between embryos in order to prevent the development of a possibly handicapped human being? Should it be possible to destroy embryos because you need many of them in order to be successful in research for new methods of transplantation?

New - at least claimed - possibilities for medical care stand against the unknown consequences and side-effects; excessive, often unrealistic hopes and promises for help against so far incurable diseases, challenging clear-cut limits on irresponsible experiments.

The biblical sources give the frame-work within which Christians find space to move in trying ways to identify responsible actions. Man as creature lives in an indissoluble relation with God, a relation which is renewed through baptism. This relationship is the reason for the dignity of man which is described even in the German Basic Law as “inviolable”.

This dignity is valid for man at any time and in any form of his or her life, at the very beginning and at the very end, in life with a so-called handicap or without handicap. Man is a creature and a child of God without any gradation of more or less, of higher or lower. The question with regard to greater or smaller “value of life” has no place in Christian ethics.

The dignity of man grounded on God’s relation to his creature, created in his image, makes careful reflection necessary: how far can we go? This question implies these consequences:

- to be sceptical against so-called pragmatic solutions
- to consider alternative possibilities
- to find out the desirable as opposed to the feasible
- to maintain limits while sounding out possibilities.

The dignity of man, of the individual, has to be protected. At the same time we are creatures of God together with other creatures, which means we are challenged to solidarity with the whole of creation around us. Through justification in Christ man gains freedom to act according to her or his decision. But this does not mean arbitrary use of possibilities or power. Man remains always part of creation. His or her freedom is bound in love, which means freedom in responsibility before God and in solidarity with the fellow human being and creation as a whole.

Human life starts with the fusion of ovum and sperm. Any other position with regard to the beginning of life remains arbitrary. Therefore at the present stage in Germany pre-implantation-diagnostics should not be allowed, according to the churches' position.

Christian tradition however allows ethical appraisal of a situation involving difficult and serious conflict. In such cases, pre-implantation-diagnostics may be possible. But there is dissent considering individual fates and principles. Many fear that it will not be possible to stick to a clear guideline or policy while allowing exceptions.

ECOLOGY

The brochure "Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change", published by the World Council of Churches, describes clearly the principal tasks of the churches after Rio and Johannesburg with regard to world wide consequences in large scale steps which have to be made, even though churches cannot take over the role of the politicians but can make better politics possible.

The question is however what the individual Christian can do in his or her Christian community – in a certain place, under particular circumstances. The examples from my own church in Germany are attempts on the way to build up awareness within our society, awareness of the huge responsibility as over against nature while taking small steps in the own environment very self-consciously.

In this way - we do hope - we may be able to regain the notion that the environment, climate, nature, the small world around us and the whole planet earth are God's creation. God has entrusted us with the responsibility to preserve it. We have to regain a spiritual orientation on what is often seen as merely technical development.

"Sustainability" has been a guiding principle of biblical tradition (Gen 2,15). The instruction to man was to cultivate and to protect creation which means not to separate economy and ecology. In Switzerland the principle of sustainability for forests was introduced in 1818. No more wood in the forests could be cut annually than the new wood that would grow during a year.

Years before the Brundtland Commission adopted the formulation of "sustainable development" in 1987, the churches used this principle. The commission's report says: "Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present time without risking that future generations will not be able to meet their own needs."

My church has issued seven guidelines for creation and they have been accepted by 13 other churches in our region:

1. We understand the responsibility for creation as a central task of the churches.
2. We are on this way as churches together (as taken up in the "Charta Oecumenica").
3. We act for the future of creation.

4. All we do must be long-lasting, ecologically justifiable and socially tolerable.
5. We act as a learning community in solidarity.
6. We foster environmental management within the church.
7. We seek dialogue with society.

These guidelines take up elements of the Agenda 21 originating from the Rio and Johannesburg conferences. Our local government established an academy to estimate consequences of technical development by constantly measuring results with regard to sustainability for all economic and social structures, a very helpful tool for society, economy and industry. Unfortunately our government has closed down this institution just recently, for financial reasons.

The European Commission has introduced the “Environmental Management and Audit Scheme”. Originally established for commercial purposes it is now used also for service industries, administration, banks, homes and houses, education.

My church has introduced this scheme which helps to check decisions in the beginning of a working process. It emphasizes transparency: people who work in the church should know what happens. They should be able to participate and should be trained accordingly.

In 1999 the synod decided to introduce a day of creation every year following the proposal of the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I who in 1989 declared September 1 as the day for the protection of creation. (I had the privilege to participate in the “Baltic Sea Symposium”, initiated by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomäus in June 2003, an attempt to consider environmental problems for a whole region, the Baltic Sea. Lawyers, environment experts, natural scientists, politicians, economists, theologians and journalists were together on a ship for one week, visiting countries around the Baltic Sea, meeting churches and governments, discussing the ecological problems in this region. The whole concept of “sustainable development” was questioned, as it allows one to put emphasis either on “sustainable” or “development” following one’s own interests rather than holding both together as critical elements, questioning one another).

Let me give you a few examples how these ideas can be realized on the level of a normal congregation.

1. Solar technology for warm water, for the heating system or electricity has been installed in congregational centres or pastor’s houses, but few such systems in church buildings. In a brochure encouraging this technology, solar cells are called “a window of creation” or “gift of heaven”.
2. Heating systems use wood again, not in a traditional way, but with wood chopped up in small pieces, due to the fact that in Germany more wood in the forests is growing every year than is being used up.
3. Natural shaping of the playground of a kindergarten, done by parents and children themselves without complex technical equipment, using natural resources like stones, wood, soil, plants, water.
4. Animals like falcons or bats have become rare in our region. They lost their breeding places like church steeples and the high roofs of church buildings. Now these places are deliberately opened again and also are protected accordingly.
5. “Mobile without car” is a slogan used not only during Lenten season when people abstain from using their car as a form of fasting. This implies going in for more paths for bicycles instead of sacrificing every square meter for roads made for automotive traffic.

I admit these are only a few examples and small ones as well. But only with such understandable and convincing steps will we be able to regain the spirituality of creation, creation as a gift of God in all its small beauties.

The Church and Personal and Public Morality
by
Prof. Dr. Christoph Stückelberger

1. Theme and personal background

The issue of personal and public morality, including especially family ethics, is a hot issue in the ecumenical dialogue. First, I will describe a Protestant position in Switzerland, then compare it with an Orthodox position and show the methodological common ground and differences. But let me start with a few information on my personal background for the better understanding of this short presentation.

The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FSPC), a member of the WCC, which I represent here, develops ethical positions mainly through its Institute for Social Ethics. I participate in the discussion of these themes since twenty years as a member of the Commission for Social Ethics of the FSPC. I myself look at the themes from the point of view of a theologian, as professor of Ethics at the Theological Faculty of the University of Basel. My publications focus mainly on economic ethics, environmental ethics, bio-ethics and peace ethics¹⁴, but family ethics is the theme of a seminar this semester at the university and is of course very important for Christian ethics, also for me personally as husband and father of four children. As a member of two consultative commissions of the Swiss Government (for International Relations and Bio-Ethics) and head of the development organization "Bread for all", I'm constantly obliged to make Christian ethics relevant for society and test it in the dialogue between the church and society. Since the WCC conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" at MIT in 1979 I participate in WCC-related ecumenical debates on ethical issues.

2. Swiss Case Study: Consultation on the Future of Switzerland

"Common Future. Ecumenical Consultation on the Social and Economic Future of Switzerland."¹⁵ This is the title of a contribution of the Reformed and the Roman-Catholic Church in Switzerland for the reorientation of Swiss society and politics at the beginning of the new millennium. The study is the result of a broad consultation between 1998 and 2000 among the public and specific target groups. It deals with economy, labour, environment, migration, politics and in chapter 3 with "family: life in alliance"¹⁶. The chapter starts with the reaction of Swiss people describing their difficulties in modern family life and the high expectations that the churches should defend more often the family interests in political and social life (para. 47-49). The churches then describe their own analysis of the situation of families (para. 50-57) which broadly concludes as follows: not enough public recognition of the importance of families for society and especially economic reasons for the difficulties of young people to build sustainable families (job mobility, necessary flexibility in professional life, speed of productivity, pressure for individual professional success). Families exist in pluralistic forms.

Under the title "our clue", the document then comes to criteria for value judgments of family life (para. 60-65):

¹⁴ See e.g.: Stückelberger, Christoph: *Global Trade Ethics*, WCC Geneva 2003; *Umwelt und Entwicklung. Eine sozioethische Orientierung*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1997, *Vermittlung und Parteinahme. Der Versöhnungsauftrag der Kirchen in gesellschaftlichen Konflikten*, TVZ, Zürich 1988. List on the homepage www.christophstueckelberger.ch

¹⁵ Schweizer Bischofskonferenz SBK/Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund SEK: *Miteinander in die Zukunft. Ökumenische Konsultation zur sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Zukunft der Schweiz*, Bern/Freiburg 2001; *L'avenir ensemble. Consultation oecuménique sur l'avenir social et économique de la Suisse*, Berne/Fribourg 2001; idem: *Welche Zukunft wollen wir? Auswertungsbericht (Evaluation Report)*, Bern/Freiburg 2000.

¹⁶ *Miteinander in die Zukunft*, p. 31-42. The FSPC published various other studies on family issues, such as: *Freiheit und Verantwortung in Partnerschaft, Ehe und Familie*, ISE, Studien und Berichte 34, Bern 1984; *Familie. Sieben Beiträge*, ISE Studien und Berichte 46, Bern 1994; *Ehe und Familie für homosexuelle Paare? Rechtliche und ethische Aspekte*, ISE Studien und Berichte 49, Bern 1995.

- The families are seen as the most important form of community life.
- “People who say yes to family life take – in a Christian perspective – the chance to experience God’s love through the family members and to pass it on to other people.” (para 61)
- The family provides the chance of a “life in all its fullness” (John 10,10).
- The family provides the opportunity of free space for display and responsible life for the balance between display and life in a community.
- The modern plurality of forms of family life is positive and an expression of freedom. “In the Protestant churches, marriage and wedding are very important. Yet, the content and the quality of the human relation in marriage and family – even in form of homosexual couples – is more important than the historic forms. The forms have to serve people and not the opposite.” (para 53)
- Families contribute substantially to the humanisation of society.

Overall, the study wants to motivate people to respect the importance of family structures and to appreciate their advantages and not only their limitations. “To struggle for families is an innovative, future-oriented task” says the study (para 65).

The chapter on the family concludes with concrete recommendations and steps to be done (para 65-74):

- The freedom of everybody to choose his or her own form of life must be respected.
- But economy and politics have to create conditions in favour of families, such as family-friendly tax systems, apartments, salaries (one salary per family should be enough to maintain the family), reconciliation between gender equality and family life (work/jobs in and outside the household for women and men), social security system affordable for families,
- social nets in the neighbourhood and social support for divorced persons and broken families.

The study emphasises the public (economical and political) responsibility for the private morality of human relations.

3. *In Comparison with the “Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”*

The document “Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”¹⁷ is very substantial and helpful for ecumenical dialogue. It includes family ethics in chapter X on “Personal, family and public morality”¹⁸. This chapter is mainly concerned with four issues related to family life: marriage (X,1-3), family (X,4), women (X,5), chastity and vices (X,6)¹⁹:

Marriage: The Orthodox Church respects common-law marriage (X,2), but underlines the importance of Orthodox marriage which is in principle indissoluble (X,3). The document gives nevertheless 15 reasons where divorce is valid. A second marriage is accepted only for the innocent spouse or after repentance of faults committed in relation to the marriage ((X,3).

Family: The family is seen as a “domestic church” which plays a central role in forming personality (X,4).

¹⁷ Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, in: Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues. Background Material, WCC Geneva 2003, 69-126.

¹⁸ Ibid., 99-105.

¹⁹ See also, as another example of Orthodox family ethics: Sister Magdalen: Orthodox Tradition and Family Life, in: Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World, eds. By Andrew Walker and Costa Carras, New York 2000, 50-63.

Women: The document starts with the theological basis that men and women are “equal bearers of the divine image and human dignity” (X,1). On the other hand, it accepts Paul’s view that the marriage is like the union between Christ and the Church and “the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church” (according to Eph. 5,22-33). The woman’s role is mainly seen as wife and mother, but also as a “participant in the cause of the human salvation” in church community, in “liturgical life, mission, preaching, education and charity” (X,5).

Chastity and vices: *The document underlines the importance of chastity as the “basis of the inner unity of the human personality” (X,6) and condemns pornography, fornication and free love as an exploitation for commercial, political or ideological purposes (X,6).*

This Russian Orthodox document and the Swiss Protestant document are written in the same period (2000 and 2001), but for different target groups. Nevertheless, a comparison of the content and then of the methodology is fruitful:

Common content: Both documents emphasise the importance of families for forming personalities and for contributing to society. Both see the modern family under pressure from society and contemporary developments (the Swiss document more than the Russian one). Both recognize the secular legal framework of the state and the special role of church marriage. The equality of the sexes is an important common basis between Orthodox and Protestant ethics.

Different content: Fundamental values such as faithfulness and freedom are common, but weighted in a different way. Whereas the Protestant position encourages people to decide for a family life in freedom and accepts different family forms, the Orthodox position emphasises faithfulness and describes marriage and family in a church framework. The Orthodox position sees – implicitly – the roots of the difficulties of modern families rather in the individual morality whereas the Protestant side underlines the influence of the structural (political and economic) factors and the responsibility of the state and the private sector to support families.

4. *Protestant Ethical Methodologies*

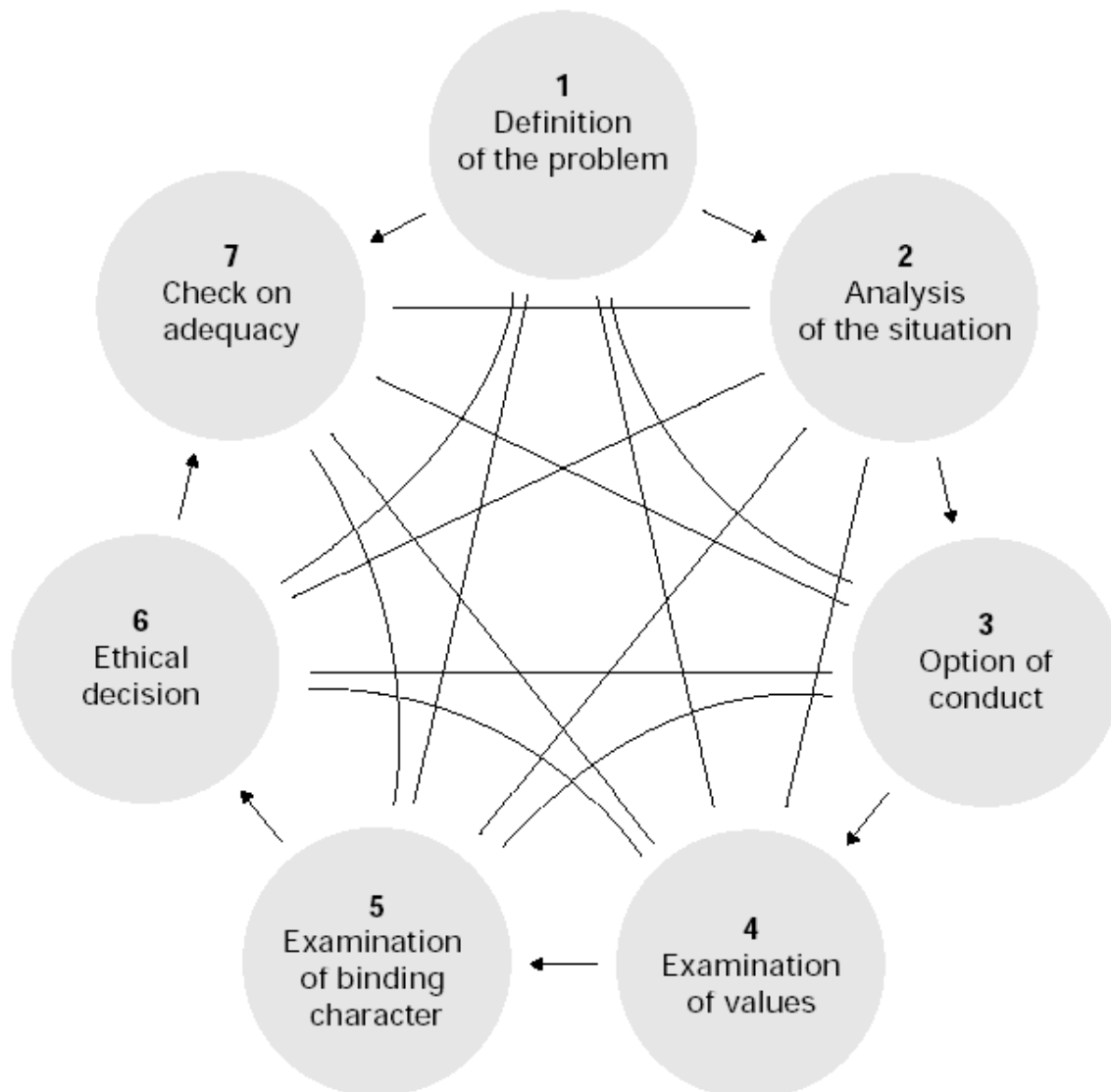
There is not one Protestant or Reformed ethical methodology, but different methodologies. The one in the case study “Common Future” of the Swiss churches represents an important and often used protestant methodology in ethics. What is the ethical methodology in the case study? Particularly five characteristics should be emphasised:

1. Participatory: A consultation means a broad participation of the population or specific target groups. Listen to the needs of the people means theologically to listen to the cry of God in a specific context and situation. Of course, protestant ethics knows that “*vox populi non est vox Dei*”, the peoples voice is not automatically God’s voice. “The majority does not make the truth.” (Reformer Huldrych Zwingli).
2. Contextual: People formulate their problems and describe their situation which has to be taken seriously. Why? God’s truth is not abstract but God’s word incarnates always in a specific context. In a specific context God’s eternal word has a specific expression. In protestant ethical methodology, incarnation, inculturation and contextual ethics are linked. That’s the reason why in the case study the description of today’s families and their needs is an important part of the chapter. Contextual ethics does not mean situation ethics which denies in its extreme form common values beyond a concrete situation.
3. Biblical: of course, Protestant ethics has to be rooted in the biblical revelation, otherwise it can not be called Christian ethics. The use of biblical references varies in the different position papers. In our case study it’s – in my view - rather weak.
4. Value-oriented: On the basis of biblical and theological reflection, Protestant methodology often develops norms and values as criteria for value judgment (in the case study values such as freedom, self-reliance, responsibility and solidarity).

5. Ecumenical: The consultation was done ecumenically. In the Swiss context where half of the population are Protestants and the other half Catholics, a common voice is much more relevant for society than a confessional voice. Protestant methodology therefore tends to be quite often an ecumenical methodology.

Today's most often used Protestant ethical methodology can be summarised by mentioning the methodology of seven steps of the ethical decision-making process (developed by the late German professor of ethics Heinz-Eduard Tödt). Here below, a graphical illustration of this process²⁰:

²⁰ Stückelberger, Christoph: Global Trade Ethics, Geneva 2003, 38.



Most important is the fourth step which is the ethical and theological “core business”.

5. In comparison with Orthodox Ethical Methodologies

The methodology in the Russian orthodox document can be described with the following characteristics:

1. Biblical: Biblical references, in a christological perspective especially from the New Testament, play a central role.
2. Value-oriented: Fundamental values build the key criteria in this position as in the protestant one.

3. Church-related: The historical positions of the church and therefore the emphasis of the ethical continuity and the church-centred arguments play a central role.
4. Hierarchical: The binding character of the orthodox position is rooted in its ecclesiology. "The Church is a divine-human organism" and "the body of Christ" (1,2).

Common methodology: The fundamental premise of both documents is that God is creator and king of the whole world and the churches' ethical contribution therefore wants to be relevant to the whole (secular) society and not only to the Church. The biblical references are a strong common ground even if it's less explicit in the Protestant position.

Different methodology: The way to define the ethical problem is different. While the protestant participatory approach is mainly based on today's experiences, the orthodox hierarchical approach defines the problem more as a tension between reality and dogmatic positions. The sociological, economic and political analysis of the context plays a much more important role in the protestant position than in the orthodox. On the other hand, the continuity with positions of Church history, especially the Church fathers, is much stronger in the orthodox methodology. Ethical positions of the orthodox church hierarchy as a "top-down approach" claim to have a stronger binding character than the ethical positions in the protestant "bottom-up" approach.

6. Some Conclusions

There is a broad common ground for ecumenical ethics, based on the common biblical ground and on Christ's call for all churches to be his body, his witness and to work for his kingdom in society. The comparison of the two case studies shows that the different traditions can learn a lot from each other, while respecting at the same time the differences. I see two main challenges which should be addressed in more depth and detail:

1. The balance between common fundamental values and their *contextualization*. We can continue this reflection on the broad methodological experience in the ecumenical movement during the last decades²¹.
2. The different theological images of God and the understanding of trinity and its role for ecumenical ethics. An example: The protestant theologian Emil Brunner in his family ethics was nearer to some Orthodox positions than some of today's Protestant positions²². Why? His ethics is mainly based on the protological part of trinity. God as creator created an eternal world order which includes marriage and family as an eternal "institution". A christological or pneumatological approach in ethics makes a difference, in family ethics as well as in ecological ethics or bio-ethics. An ecumenical consultation on "Trinity and Ethics" therefore could be a fruitful next step.

Notes

¹ See e.g.: Stückelberger, Christoph: Global Trade Ethics, WCC Geneva 2003; Umwelt und Entwicklung. Eine sozialetische Orientierung, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1997, Vermittlung und Parteinahme. Der Versöhnungsauftrag der Kirchen in gesellschaftlichen Konflikten, TVZ, Zürich 1988. List on the homepage www.christophstueckelberger.ch

² Schweizer Bischofskonferenz SBK/Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund SEK: Miteinander in die Zukunft. Ökumenische Konsultation zur sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Zukunft der Schweiz, Bern/Freiburg 2001; L'avenir ensemble. Consultation oecuménique sur l'avenir social et économique de la Suisse, Berne/Fribourg 2001 ; idem : Welche Zukunft wollen wir ? Auswertungsbericht (Evaluation Report, Bern/Freiburg 2000.

²¹ See the short overview of Martin Robra: Methodology in Approaching Moral and Ethical Issues, in: Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues. Background Material, WCC Geneva 2003, 35-39.

²² Brunner, Emil: Das Gebot und die Ordnungen. Entwurf einer protestantisch-theologischen Ethik, Tübingen 1932, 324-368.

³ Miteinander in die Zukunft, p. 31-42. The FSPC published various other studies on family issues, such as: Freiheit und Verantwortung in Partnerschaft, Ehe und Familie, ISE, Studien und Berichte 34, Bern 1984; Familie. Sieben Beiträge, ISE Studien und Berichte 46, Bern 1994; Ehe und Familie für homosexuelle Paare? Rechtliche und ethische Aspekte, ISE Studien und Berichte 49, Bern 1995.

⁴ Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, in: Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues. Background Material, WCC Geneva 2003, 69-126.

⁵ Ibid., 99-105.

⁶ See also, as another example of Orthodox family ethics: Sister Magdalen: Orthodox Tradition and Family Life, in: Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World, eds. By Andrew Walker and Costa Carras, New York 2000, 50-63.

⁷ Stückelberger, Christoph: Global Trade Ethics, Geneva 2003, 38.

⁸ See the short overview of Martin Robra: Methodology in Approaching Moral and Ethical Issues, in: Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues. Background Material, WCC Geneva 2003, 35-39.

⁹ Brunner, Emil: Das Gebot und die Ordnungen. Entwurf einer protestantisch-theologischen Ethik, Tübingen 1932, 324-368.

The Church and Personal and Public Morality: Church and Morality, Public and Personal

**Response
by
Archpriest Vladislav Tsy-pin**

The basic imperatives of the Christian ethics do not undergo changes under the influence of historically altering temporal circumstances. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13, 8), and His doctrine is not subject to revision. Even the Old Testament commandments such as "Honour thy father and thy mother... Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal... Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife... nor his ox, nor his ass..." (Ex. 20, 12-17) are equally significant in any age, on any continent and in any socio-cultural context, no matter whether the actual public morality of the society recognizes or denies them. The more so this is the case of the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes of the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for Christ's sake (cf. Matthew, 5, 3-11) is from the Christian point of view a self-evident truth. It does not depend of whether those following the narrow way of Christ's commandments are considered blessed, miserable or even unworthy of bliss in this world's eyes.

For centuries European humanity considered Christ's doctrine and its moral component in particular sacred, and worshipped it, no matter to what extent societies and people actually fulfilled Christ's commandments in their life. Obviously, there were still rudiments of pagan ethics in the medieval times, and even more obviously, evil deeds and evil human passions and thoughts had always been there, for St. John's words "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5, 19) are true, though to a degree that may vary, for all ages of the history of mankind. Still, even while committing sins, the medieval man was well aware of it and in doing things against the Gospels he knew that the truth was in the Gospels. Certainly, it would be non-realistic over-simplification to argue that in the age of Church's predominance sin was reduced to individual deeds and that Christian moral basics exclusively permeated public morality. There were of course powerful ethic systems in the medieval European society that in their principles contradicted Christian morals. The medieval code of chivalry (later that of noblemen) is a good example of such contradiction, its rules approving of a pride inappropriate to the Christian behavior. On the one hand, bearers and adepts of the nobility code completely deluded, with all sincerity, about compatibility of Christ's teachings and their class ethics. On the other hand, they were quite aware of the contradiction and never dared to rise against the Gospels; and in the end used to bring the actions that the class ethics had been imposing on them to the Church's trial – for instance, they repented the duel killings that because of code of honor they could not prevent. I am of course talking about norms, and not about excessive departures from them.

Nowadays the situation is different in the main. The riot against Christ's doctrines, born during the Renaissance, when ancient idols that seemed long dead were indeed reborn in many humanists' hearts, is celebrating victory time and again. These victories, however, were foreseen by Our Savior: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24, 12) and "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18, 8). The refusal to include in the European Council Constitution a mere mention of the European civilization's Christian roots (though the historical correctness of this seems indisputable) can be viewed as one of such victories of the modern worldly spirit. European Christians trying to introduce this obvious historical fact into the project of the Constitution one more time lost their fight.

In the case of the Eastern Europe, and of Russia in particular, the Church's fight against her opponents, so-called scientific atheists, was won by the former after the crash of communism. But the triumph becomes less evident when looking at the moral condition of the contemporary Russian society. The slogan of non-scientific atheists "Carpe diem", which basically means "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die", is quite widespread. And even among those who

cannot 'be merry' because of their abject poverty, the Christian acceptance of poverty as salutary comes hand by hand with an absolutely non-Christian bitterness and despair, leading to alcoholism and drugs, destroying families, inciting to crimes against one's neighbors and even to sinful attempts to put an end to one's own life: the number of suicides has been lately dreadfully increasing.

But even in facing the world turning away from Christ, the Church cannot confine her concerns to the faithful children safely sheltered in her ark, without striving to help those who stay outside to see the Truth. Neither can she abandon the task of bringing the withering world to be in its ways as close as possible to Christ's truth. In this the Church follows the example of St. Paul, who, though being "free from all", made himself "servant unto all, that [he] might gain the more..." and who was "made all things to all men, that [he] might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9, 19, 22).

One has to recall (for we remember all too well an entirely opposite situation) that nowadays in Russia social problems can be discussed freely. After decades of ghetto-like existence the Church has finally gained freedom and her influence in the society has increased. The faithful, the outers, those who seek the truth and those who are already on the way to her gates are all expecting from the Church firm and responsible judgments on questions of public morality. The Russian Orthodox Church had to state its position on the most important issues of modern society, including legal, political, economic and state problems, without taking a political position itself, but staying in its assessments on the grounds of Christian ethics. As a result, a document appeared in 2000, adopted by the Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church and entitled *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, which will be our main subject.

I am going to touch upon the subject of law, as discussed in the *Social Concept* and represented in the light of Christian ethics and Christian anthropology. Law is a necessary and unavoidable factor of human social life. It is obvious and cannot be contested. However, in the law theory there is a concept that tightly links law with State realities. For instance, during the absolute monopoly of Marxism in the human sciences in Russia, Soviet theorists viewed law as consequence of class struggle and interpreted it as the will of the ruling class made law. The very phenomenon of law in itself was therefore considered secondary to that of State, and law could be defined as totality of obligatory rules sanctioned or established by the State, with the State ensuring observance of the rules. The common law such as it existed on the patriarchal stages of history long before the very phenomenon of State, the corporate law and the canon law are excluded from this system. But such an approach is biased from the political point of view and limited from the scientific one. At least the old axiom "ubi societas, ubi jus est", that states that law exists whenever there is society seems to correspond more adequately to the actual status of law.

However, legal nihilism, the strife to narrow the very notion of law or even, in the sphere of social practice, to overcome law and to deny its vital significance, is quite usual for non-religious social and utopian, anarchic ideologies overemphasizing or rejecting state control, but also for certain systems with religious basis, sometimes contiguous to Christianity and even placing themselves within the Christian tradition. The refusal of the law's positive value has also been common to many heretical trends and to sects, such as Gnostics, montanists, paulicians in Antiquity, waldenses and Anabaptists in the Middle Ages, to most of the teachings of the early Reformation and recently to Russian tolstovians. The antinomist and anti-statist ideas both of quasi-Christian religious sects and of secular anarchism visibly betray Manichean and millennial influences.

The antinomist ideas influenced the orthodox thought as well. They can be easily detected in early Slavophilian writings, in those of K.S. Aksakov and A.S. Khomyakov, who believed the main reason of the Western Church's break with Orthodoxy to be the former's rationalism and its legalism of Roman origin.

The skeptic view on law's value characterizes works of archpresbyter Nikolai Afanassiev, a known XXth-century Russian theologian and canonist. In order not to ignore real conditions of human existence, he on the one hand admits that "law is a necessary basis of empirical life", that it is "humanity's highest achievement on its historical route" (p. 288) and that the Church "acknowledges" law as the most important feature of the State's social life "in which the Church sojourns". But his judgment of consequences of what he calls "law's penetration in church life" is quite negative and he cannot help saying that "since Constantine the Great the Church has found the peace she needed, but it also took her unwillingly under a foreign yoke: that of the Roman Caesar and the Roman law. St. Paul's fears of communion of light and darkness, of believers and infidels, have come true". (p. 284). To illustrate his argument, arch. Nikolai Afanassiev quotes the apostle: "And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. 6, 14-15). In this context the idea of complete alienation of the legal basics to the Church leads to the fact that images such as "foreign yoke", "Belial" and "darkness", define law's nature from the Christian historical perspective. But it is not at all clear how the necessary element of 'empirical life' can be compared in its nature to the realm of "darkness" and "Belial" unless the point of view we take should be similar to the Manichean dualism.

At the same time, the Church itself gave quite a different value to law and took quite a different position concerning law's relationship with Christianity's basics. In recognizing this position, arch. Nikolai Afanassiev considers it a great catastrophe for the Church. The Church's thankfulness to God for having appointed a faithful king can be seen in many liturgical texts, such as those of St. Constantine celebration: "Forever-remembered king, the first he was to willingly commend his crown to Christ" or "Enlightened by the sun-like glow of the Holy Spirit, and by baptism received from St. Sylvester, he became triumphant among kings, for he gave the universe like a gift to his Creator". These words taken from liturgical canticles are far indeed from regrets about the "foreign yoke: that of the Roman Caesar and the Roman law" (p.284). Arch. Nikolai Afanassiev, however, comments such attitude of the Church to St. Constantine's conversion in the following way: "The fact of the Caesar's conversion conquered the Christian consciousness. Bewitched by this fact, they did not notice that the Roman empire basically stayed as it had been when it prosecuted the Church, and it goes without saying that morally and spiritually Constantine's Empire was inferior to that of Marcus Avrelius or Trajan". The statement goes further indeed than Donatus's "What has the Emperor to do with the Church?"

Constantine's Christian Empire, as well as that of his successors, certainly did not stay "as it had been when it prosecuted the Church". But the continuity that the Christian Rome showed in relation to the pagan Rome, including the continuity in legal matters, is evident enough. Thus, St. Justinian's "Codex iuris civilis" that constituted part of the Christian Roman Empire actual laws, included imperial laws since St. Adrian (117 AD). It is also important to say that the Roman law, going back to pagan emperors, was adapted by the Church and that some of its statements were included in important books of canon law. The definition of law included in St. Justinian's *Digests*, further borrowed by Byzantine legal texts collections such as *The Basilics* and *Prochiron* (IX c.), and also in the canonical collection *Syntagma Canonum* by Blastares, went as follows: "Law is creative work in the domain of the good and the equal". This definition, however, had been drawn up by the pagan Rome lawyers, although adapted, as we have seen, both by the law of the Christian Empire and that of the Church.

Law's purpose is to regulate human relationships by establishing rules of conduct common for all who are subject to the law. It also provides for coercive measures for making people obey it, if necessary. "The legislative sanctions to restore the trampled law and order make law a reliable clamp of society unless, as it has often happened in history, the whole system of the enforced law capsizes. However, as no human community can exist without law, a new legislative system always emerges in place of the destroyed law and order" (*Social Concept*, IV, 2).

Distinguishing between law and morality is the most difficult problem in law theory, unless law's existence should be considered in direct dependence from the state functioning and the state existence itself.

Our Lord's wise parable about workers in a vineyard shows us a practical case drawing clear distinction between law and morality. The master paid the same amount – a penny - to the workers who came about the eleventh hour and to those "which have borne the burden and heat of the day". The latter murmured against the goodman of the house, but he answered: "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matthew, 20, 1-15).

The master's actions were just in the case of all workers, for no one received less than a penny – the amount that was agreed upon. But the master was not only just, but also generous to those who came about the eleventh hour, and his love and generosity lies in the field of morality. The jealous worker tried, without right or reason, to make a legal norm out of the master's generosity and hoped that he would as well receive a penny per hour, instead of per day as agreed. He blamed the master for lack of equal generosity to all workers, thus failing to distinguish between right and morality.

V.S. Soloviev, a Russian philosopher, wrote: "Right is the lowest bar, a minimum morality compulsory for all". He believed that law's goal was not "to turn the world lying in evil into the Kingdom of God, but to prevent it from turning into hell". Law, according to the *Social Concept* 'is called to manifest the one divine law of the universe in social and political realms. At the same time, any legal system developed by the human community, being as it is a fruit of historical development, carries a seal of limitation and imperfection' (IV, 2). Thus, law is on the one side a vital element for human existence, with its appearance and development sanctioned in some sense by God. On the other side, its very existence is the symptom of problem, for "the righteous do not need law". First, if mankind had solely consisted righteous and sinless men, there would have been no necessity of such thing as law. Secondly, even blessed by God, law in itself is developed within history by effort of human societies and therefore, being product of human activity, cannot avoid imperfection.

The anthropologic reason of law's ambivalence is obvious and takes root in the Fall. The phenomenon of law, similar to that of State, has God's blessing as a required element of life in the fallen world, where one should be protected from dangerous consequences of each other's sinful nature as well as from one's own, for they threaten the very basics of life. At the same time, the need for law is not originally inherent to God's intentions about the first-created Adam, but it is a consequence of the Fall and of the sin's reign in this world. The Fall of Adam and Eve that distorted man's nature, will and reason, does not allow him to accept the divine law in all its fullness. But according to God's will, even the imperfect law created by mankind, blemished as it is, has to be observed with eagerness. That is why anarchy, lack of state and order, and any tendency to destroy law contradict both Church's doctrine and God's commandments.

The Son of God Who reigns over heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18) through becoming man subjected Himself to the worldly order of things, obeying in particular the bearers of state power. In telling His crucifier Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator in Jerusalem, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11), He confirmed that earthly power had Divine sanction. And His answer to the tempting question of a Pharisee was: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Mt. 22:21).

St. Paul talks unambiguously about obeying state power as well as the order established by those who hold it. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13, 7). Similarly, St. Peter says: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers,

and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Peter 2, 13-16). We see that the Apostles teach the faithful to obey state power whatever the relation between this state and the Church. One should remember that during the apostolic age the Church was persecuted both by local Jewish authorities and the central Roman ones. This fact did not prevent martyrs and other Christians of the time from praying for the persecutors nor from recognizing their political authority. The Church therefore not only prescribes to her children to obey state power regardless of the convictions and faith of its bearers, but also prays for it, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2, 2).

Our Lord was also the One to define limits of the obedience to the authorities. When the Jewish Council tried to forbid the Apostles to profess Christ, the answer of St. Peter and St. John was: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4, 19).

In the *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* there is a clause explaining that in some cases and in some conditions law ceases to be lawful and is not to be followed by Christians: "However, in the cases where the human law completely rejects the absolute divine norm, replacing it by an opposite one, it ceases to be law and becomes lawlessness, in whatever legal garments it may dress itself. For instance, the Decalogue clearly states: 'Honour thy father and thy mother' (Ex. 20:12). Any secular norm that contradicts this commandment indicts not its offender but the legislator himself. In other words, the human law has never contained the divine law in its fullness, but in order to remain law it is obliged to conform to the God-established principles, rather than to erode them" (*Social Concept*, IV, 3).

Law of the Christian States, especially that of the Roman Empire, revised the pagan law while absorbing it, and rejected pagan legal norms going against the Divine Law. But there was no utopian aim of creating a law system based entirely on the Christian code. Any attempt to develop the civil, criminal and public law based on the Gospel alone cannot be efficient, for without the full churching of life, that is without complete victory over sin, the law of the Church cannot become the law of the world. This victory is possible, however, only in the eschatological perspective, and in such a perspective there would be no need of any kind of civil law.

Even in a Christian State, the Sermon on the Mount cannot constitute the basis for law. What it can do is to exercise a benign influence on the State's legal system, for a Christian State would obey Christ's doctrines. Clearly, the Gospels influence the Christian society's perception of law. Any legal system is based on the dichotomy of right and obligation, but when it comes to the emphasis in this dichotomy, Christian and non-Christian perception will differ. For a Christian, obligation or duty is the cornerstone, and he needs rights as far as they enable him to accomplish the duty. The *Social Concept* states that "the Christian needs rights so that in exercising them he may first of all fulfill in the best possible way his lofty calling to be 'the likeness of God', as well as his duty before God and the Church, before other people, family, state, nation and other human communities" (IV, 7). However, as secularism developed and moved the society away from the Christian principles, the idea of inalienable human rights turned into a notion of the rights of the individual beyond his relations with God and without taking into account his fallen nature begging for cure. The theory of natural law that dominates modern philosophy goes precisely in this direction.

International Relations, Problems and Globalization: Doing Social Ethics Together with the Orthodox Church

Response*
by
Professor Mark Ellingsen

Controversies over social ethics threaten to shred the ecumenical movement. There is much that both the Protestant establishment and Orthodoxy can agree about regarding globalization (the termination of all trade barriers and import taxes, the creation of free trade).

Given America's present pro-business ethos, globalization will seem to be just what the world needs, from an American perspective. Its proponents contend that as we give businesses the chance to grow without government interference, the poorer nations of the world will be better enabled to share the fruits of Western business and technology. They will be better enabled to "grow" their economies like we have ours.

This standard way of evaluating the dynamics of globalization is a long way from reality, it seems. The various national economies do not start on a level playing field in the free market. The scales are heavily tipped in the direction of the wealthy and in the interests of mega-corporation rooted in wealthy nations.

We have all heard of the Third World sweatshops which have produced cheaper clothes and cars with an underpaid labour force. Kathie Lee Gifford's line of clothes comes to mind. By opening itself to trade in agricultural products, poor nations in the Southern Hemisphere have virtually abandoned their small farmers. In Mexico, as a result of the NAFTA trade agreement, farmers have been squeezed out of business by agricultural products imported from the U.S. These products sell at a lower price than Mexican-grown foods because their American counterparts have been grown cheaply and massively with the help of government farm subsidies which the mega-farm lobbies have won from the U.S. government. The Mexican poor are getting poorer while rich Americans get richer.

Simple economics is sufficient to clarify how poorer nations are victimized by free trade, with no strings attached. The whole point of capitalism is for the business owner to make a profit. Thus if poorer nations are only importing or only hosting the factories and providing the labour, then the multinational businesses and their host nation (America in most cases) will receive more than they provide the already impoverished nation. Exploiting the impoverished is the outcome of globalization with its present rules.

Let us be realistic and balanced. Everywhere capitalism has been indigenized, from the time of the Roman Empire, if not earlier with Jeroboam II in Israel's Northern Kingdom, it has produced wealth and raised living standards. But those in impoverished nations who already possess some wealth, have education, or own the means of production are about the only ones who profit. The problem in our 21st century context is exacerbated by the fact that the main international agencies charged with managing international trade and aiding developing nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), pressure poor nations to tone down or limit the government safety-net. The rationale is that citizens can then be assessed for less taxes. It is contended that this will result in increased revenues which can be ploughed back into business or provide excess wealth for consumers, rather than be utilized to grow the government and its programs. However as a result, the standard of living in most Third World nations is down for the masses, since globalization became a compelling economic force in the 1980s. (Chile, which has defied this trend to smaller government by enlarging its social programs and as a result is enhancing its schools and provided low-income housing subsidies, is a notable

** International relations; problems of globalization by Rev. Antony Iliin. The paper is not available in written form*

exception. Between 1987 and 1998 it cut poverty in half.) Free trade, globalization without safeguards (including government intervention and safeguards to protect the poor), contributes to the further exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful.

We dare not forget the inherently exploitative nature of capitalism. Free-market capitalism and the profits it seeks to make must entail that the owner of the capital gains something at the expense of someone else. Thus in globalized economics, the owners often retain the know-how, not sharing it with their host nations and local businesses.

We see a glaring example of these dynamics in Mexico. For forty years it has hosted a Volkswagen plant, the largest industrial site in the nation. Yet little local business has been generated by VW's presence. Volkswagen poses as the ally of its host nation, insisting that it buys 60% of its parts from Mexican companies. But in fact almost all of these companies are foreign owned. Mexican entrepreneurs are not profiting from VW investments on Mexican soil. Despite being host to many car plants, Mexicans still do not have local ownership of the technology which would enable them to build cars themselves.

International free trade can even hurt local businesses. I have already referred to how farmers in the Third World have been hurt by the import of American crops which has lowered the prices on crops produced by these nations, ultimately driving a number of farmers into bankruptcy. American farmers effectively steal from their small impoverished counterparts in this exchange.

These dynamics have also in turn driven up the price of medicines, since all nations participating in globalized free-trade exchange are forced by the World Trade Organization to accept patents from other nations. Unable to manufacture their own equivalent medications at prices within reach of their citizens' pocketbooks, such nations become subject to the prices charged for patented medicines of Western nations. Failure to treat the AIDS epidemic in Africa with medicines already developed seem explained by these dynamics. The American pharmaceutical conglomerate wins at the expense of the health of sub-Saharan Africans.

The new internationalizing globalizing tendencies effectively erode national borders, as transnational business ventures bind together people from all over the world. Of course, since these businesses are located in rich Western nations, the business that is done all over the world today is largely on Western (esp. American) terms. But in apparently minimizing ethnic and cultural differences, a backlash has been inevitable, especially from segments of the global population that are being left behind in the new economy. Consequently some of the more recent outbreaks of nationalism--like the ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Pan-Africanism, and the terrorism inspired by Islamic fundamentalism--might be understood as reactions to the monolithic drives of business to level national and regional distinctions. These ethnic groups may feel that they are being swallowed up in the new global society without their contributions to the coalition or their interests being taken seriously.¹

THEOLOGICAL SUPPOSITIONS FOR ANALYSIS

The analysis of globalization I have provided is very Augustinian, insofar as with the African Father I have interpreted human behaviour (globalizing economic trends) in light of concupiscence (selfishness).² In making my points I have also been Augustinian, in a Lutheran way, by not appealing to the Gospel or God's Word in Scripture, but merely by undertaking rational analysis rather than invoking Biblical-theological themes to make my case. Such a genre of analysis accords both with my own Lutheran heritage (the Two-Kingdom Ethic) and the Lutheran reading of Augustine.³

DIALOGUE WITH RUSSIAN ORTHODOX SOCIAL ETHICS

I wrote the preceding analysis of globalization for other purposes before receiving the "Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church". Thus I am struck by the similarities between my own analysis of globalization, the Russian Orthodox discussion of the topic, and the commitment of my own Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to "redress the persisting social and economic inequalities that prevent many from participating effectively [in democratic processes]".⁴ The Russian statement similarly urges "a critical and careful approach to the legal and political internationalisation". It further advises "the need to establish comprehensive control over transnational corporations and the processes taking place in the financial sector of the economy". On this point more recent 1995 and 1999 Social Statements of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America agree.⁵

These similarities do not negate the existence of a difference in emphases between my own ELCA analysis and reflections on globalization evidenced in the Orthodox analysis. The difference in emphasis is, I think, symptomatic of the different methodologies in approaching social and ethical issues which have been dividing Orthodoxy and the Protestant-founded WCC. Understanding this difference and its root causes may furnish insights for overcoming tensions that have arisen on more controversial issues.

A close study of the differences between my own analysis of globalization and the Orthodox statement reveals that they differ with regard to the viewpoint from which they issue warnings about globalization. I operated with a critical perspective, assuming that the capitalist dynamics which have given rise to globalization are a manifestation of sin (our concupiscence). The Orthodox document is more neutral, inclined merely to advise caution about possible abuses of the globalizing tendencies. There is another noteworthy difference (though this is more related to differences between Orthodox theology and my own Lutheran heritage, and is not as relevant for understanding the differences in methodology between Orthodoxy and the Protestant establishment which created and still dominates the WCC ethos). The Orthodox document claims that the Golden Rule (the Gospel) is the criterion for making ethical judgments, while my own Lutheran approach relies more heavily on the concept of justice, presupposing the natural law.⁶ In fact, a real skepticism about doing ethics by appeal to the natural law is expressed in the Russian statement.⁷ Of course many Protestant Confessional traditions would share this critique.⁸

My comments about the Orthodox document's neutrality regarding globalization is, I submit, typical of the characteristic Orthodox perspective on most social ethical issues. There is a clear propensity to accept what has been established (or what is traditional, such as the rejection of divorce and remarriage or the repudiation of feminism).⁹ I believe that this Eastern confidence and contentment with what is has developed at least in part because of an essential Orthodox optimism (not a naivete) about the direction of the cosmos.

Such confidence has several theological roots. The Orthodox doctrine of theosis implies that the created order is being impacted by the divine energies which the Incarnation has injected into the created order.¹⁰ A related factor is that the Eastern church has not been so unequivocally committed as the West to the Augustinian doctrine of original sin.¹¹ To devote undue attention to original sin and its perdurance among the redeemed might connote disbelief in the redeeming Work of God initiated by the Incarnation. We see the Orthodox optimism in the Russian Orthodox statement we have considered, as it is claimed that "fallen man has retained the freedom to choose the right way with God's help".¹²

This optimism about the created order manifests itself in the Orthodox assessment of the socio-political order. I submit that this is in the background of the more neutral appraisal of globalization, the militant affirmation of more traditional forms of personal and family morality in the Russian Orthodox statement.

The Russian theological tradition clearly bespeaks this sort of confidence in what the socio-political sphere can accomplish. F. M. Dostoyevski, a 19th-century lay Russian Orthodox theologian and famed novelist, spoke of an historical process by which the state is transformed into the Church [and] will ascend and become a church over the whole world.¹³

Such a high view of government in Orthodox tradition has earlier precedents, dating back to the era of the Eastern Empire and before. The Synod of Hieria and Constantinople (754) claimed that God raised up faithful emperors, that they are peers of the apostles. In the same century Theodore of Studios claimed that in the Empire affairs on earth are healed and ordered as they are in heaven. The history of Orthodoxy has tended to equate the Church with the Empire, perhaps because of its emphasis on transformation which allows for a theocratic spirit. This is echoed in the Russian Orthodox document under consideration as it states that "the secular culture can be a bearer of good news."¹⁴

Protestant Augustinianism, by contrast, is more critical of socio-political dynamics on grounds that they are flawed by sin, and this accounts for the more critical Protestant and WCC perspectives on traditional values and existing structures.¹⁵ Such positions are not so much a manifestation of liberalism, as the Orthodox and sometimes Catholics allege. When you realize that the very essence of society is rooted in sinful selfishness, you had better be critical of its fruits (even of "family values" and traditional expressions of sexuality).

TOWARDS AN ECUMENICAL METHODOLOGY

The Augustinian viewpoint's critical perspective on human social dynamics may not ordinarily embrace the Orthodox confidence in the state. However, this does not imply that Augustinian-influenced Protestantism denies God's guidance of the created order or of the affairs of state, anymore than Orthodoxy denies our fallen human state. But given the imperfect world in which we live since the Fall, one might say that for Protestantism (and perhaps also its Roman Catholic partner) the cup is "half-empty". For Orthodoxy, by contrast, the same cup is "half-full". If we are going to do social ethics together we need to be respectful of each other's emphases. (And the WCC cannot at this point overlook how its history, indebted as it is in its founding origins to Augustinians like Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr, is biased to the Augustinian pessimism/realism, such that sometimes the Eastern church may feel left out.¹⁶)

I believe that my proposal is somewhat authenticated by the convergence on globalization between the American Lutheran and Russian Orthodox documents I have compared. It is further authenticated by a comparison of WCC-member stands on feminism, homosexuality, and divorce-remarriage. Regarding globalization, the fundamental agreement may be a function of the fact that the Orthodox document does reflect some awareness of human sin at that point, as it expresses concern to identify with victims and also that societies are driven by self-interest (the latter most suggestive of Augustine's views of social dynamics). And the statement at one point endorses a government of three branches sharing power, an affirmation most compatible with an appreciation of the flawed sinful character of politicians, mandating that we cannot trust any of them to exercise sole authority.¹⁷ Correspondingly, the Orthodox concern to affirm how Christ's Incarnation has transformed the created order is not neglected by American Lutheran statements.¹⁸ When each side is careful to affirm the theological emphasis of the other side, they come closer to agreement on ethics. Likewise, could it be that the reason that the Eastern church has been in tension with WCC-member stands on feminism, homosexuality, and divorce-remarriage is that this church has not, like in the Russian Orthodox statement under consideration, consider the fallen character of heterosexual marriage and of traditional male-female patterns of relationship? (The Protestant WCC-establishment also needs to apply both the Augustinian analysis to new patterns of social behaviour [including homosexuality and extra-marital sex] as well as an appreciation of the divine purpose in the traditional models of social relationship.)

My suggestion is a simple one: The Eastern churches need to approach today's social issues with more sympathy to the flawed, "half-empty" character of present socio-political realities. WCC and Protestant documents need to be more sensitive expressing how present realities have been in many cases used by God to work good. As we learn better to share each other's characteristic theological-ethical emphases, could it be that we will then begin to find it easier to do ethics together?

NOTES

1. See Joseph Stiglitz, Globalization and Its Discontents (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).
2. Augustine, De nuptis concupiscentia (418/420), I.24-25; Augustine, De civitate dei (413-426), XIV.28; III.14; I.Pref. These comments are obviously in the tradition of the great American theologian and social commentator, Reinhold Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol.1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp.14,186ff. Also see my Blessed Are the Cynical: How Original Sin Can Make America a Better Place (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2003), esp. pp.101- 103, for such express theological reflection on globalization. Such commitments are also expressly endorsed in two Social Statements which also address globalization critically; see Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "The Church In Society: A Lutheran Perspective" (1991), p.3; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "For Peace in God's World" (1995), p.4.
3. Augustine, De libero arbitrio (387/388-395), I.vi.15; Martin Luther, Auslegung des 110. Psalms (1534), ·St.L.± 5:857,140.
4. "Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" (n.d.), XVI; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "The Church in Society," p.5.
5. Russian Orthodox Church, XVI.1,3; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "For Peace in God's World," pp.5,8; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" (1999), pp.13-14.
6. Russian Orthodox Church, XVI.1; V.3; cf. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "The Church in Society," p.5.
7. Russian Orthodox Church, IV.7.
8. For such commitments in the Reformed tradition, see Second Helvetic Confession (1566), 30; The Westminster Confession (1646), 23. For such commitments in Methodism, see The General Rules (1789), 30. In the Baptist heritage, see Second London Confession (1689). 24.
9. Russian Orthodox Church, X.3,5.
10. Athanasius, de Synodis (359/361), III.51.
11. For this insight I am indebted to the analysis of Jaroslav Pelikan, Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700), Vol.5 of The Christian Tradition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp.280,36.
12. Russian Orthodox Church, IV.1. Concedes in Ibid., IV.3, that the fallen nature of humanity has distorted our awareness of the divine law in all its fullness.
13. F. M. Dostoyevski, The Brothers Karamazov, 1.2.5.

14. Russian Orthodox Church, XIV.2; Theodore of Studios, Epistles, 16. Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700), Vol.2 of The Christian Tradition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp.5,144,168.

15. For this critical perspective, see Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "The Church in Society," p.3; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "For Peace in God's World," pp.4,8.

16. See Ion Bria and Dagmar Heller, ed., Ecumenical Pilgrims: Profiles of Pioneers in Christian Reconciliation (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), esp. pp.18-19.

17. Russian Orthodox Church, XVI.1; III.9; cf. Augustine, *De civitate dei*, XIX.5; XIV.28.

The American version of such a separation of powers presupposes such an Augustinian vision of human nature. See James Madison, "Nos.49,51,63," in The Federalist Papers (New York: Mentor, 1961), pp.314-315,323,384.

18. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "The Church in Society," pp.1-2; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "For Peace in God's World," pp.2-4. A Biblical/Gospel oriented approach to social ethics may be even more in evidence in the church's "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," esp. p.13.

COMMUNIQUÉ

A WCC seminar on Methodologies in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues brought together participants from Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, and free churches, as well as persons representing partner ecumenical organizations, in Morges, Switzerland, 8-12 October, 2003.

Origins and goals

The seminar follows on the work initiated by the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, whose final report speaks to both the problems and the possibilities of common reflection on social and ethical issues. The Special Commission makes recommendations as to how the WCC can best create a “space” for such common reflection, where open and honest discussion can take place without pressure, and where any decisions are taken by consensus. Paragraph 27 of the report was seen as of particular significance to this meeting:

27. The Council cannot speak for, nor require, the churches to adopt particular positions. It can, however, continue to provide opportunities for all churches to consult with one another, and wherever possible, for them to speak together.

The seminar also stems from the recommendations of a WCC team visit to Moscow in June, 2001. That visit was prompted by the recent social and ethical reflections taking place in the Russian Orthodox Church, resulting in the “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”. This document identifies foundational principles from which the Church can deliberate on a broad spectrum of issues of the Church and society. The WCC team recommended a follow-up meeting bringing together a wider group of people to learn about the context and methodologies underlying the document.

Method

The seminar took the “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church” as its principal case study, and benefited from the participation of a substantial delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church, among whom were several of the document’s main drafters.

In addition, substantial papers were delivered in the areas of social and political ethics, bioethics and ecology, personal and public morality, and international relations and globalisation, by participants from Orthodox and Protestant churches who have particular experience in those areas. Each paper generated a formal responses from other members, as well as larger and smaller group discussions.

Outcomes

The seminar represented an effort to engage in constructive dialogue on social and ethical challenges confronting the churches. Focusing on the methodologies and contexts which underlie moral and ethical positions, the discussions served to deepen mutual understanding among participants of the particular configurations of Scripture, Tradition, experience and reason that are used within different ecclesial traditions.

In addition, participants were able to discover how churches in different regions and socio-political contexts deal with moral issues stemming from new and evolving realities, and more generally how the theological principles which underlie ethical positions interrelate with the particular concerns and needs of the society as seen by the respective churches.

Fostering a wider ecumenical engagement with the ethical statement of a particular church, the seminar in many ways reflected both the WCC's expressed commitment to broadening and deepening church relations, as well as the Special Commission's recommendations that the Council provide the space for precisely such deliberations. The discussions were honest about convergences and mutual resonances, as well as about divergences and tensions – some of which remain serious and divisive. Yet the discussions were characterized by a growing mutual trust among participants, by the attempt to listen to each other, and by the effort to understand churches' struggles to provide guidance on social and ethical issues, old and new. The seminar proved to be a promising way forward within an area of ecumenical life that is often difficult and controversial.

Sincere desire was expressed that future opportunities be provided to discuss further, and perhaps with greater specificity, the sources and methods of the churches' moral and ethical thinking.

**SEMINAR ON
METHODOLOGIES IN APPROACHING
SOCIAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES:**

A CASE STUDY

8-12 OCTOBER 2003

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ⁱ Ecclesiology and Ethics. Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation and the Nature of the Church (Thomas F. Best and Martin Robra, eds.) WCC Publications, Geneva 1997. Cf. Duncan Forrester, The True Church and Morality, Risk Book, WCC Publications, Geneva 1997. Lewis S. Mudge, The Church as Moral Community. Ecclesiology and Ethics in Ecumenical Debate, Continuum, NY and WCC Publications, Geneva 1998. Lewis S. Mudge, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Household. "Ecclesiology and Ethics" after Harare", in ER 3/1999,243-254.

Additional documents on ecclesiology and social witness in ER 2/1995 and in "Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues", in Background Materials, Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, 2001. Some sections of the following paper recycle my essay "The Church, the Churches, the Orthodox Churches, and the World Council of Churches: Notes on "Ecclesiology and Ethics" in Conciliar Debate", in For All People. Global Theologies in Context (E.M.W. Pedersen, H.Lam and P. Lodberg eds.), Eerdmans 2002, 159-173.

- ii. ER 2/1996,139ff; available also in Background Materials (note 1),129ff.
- iii. "Final Report...", ER 1/2003,25: ...(The SC) was created in part because of dissatisfactions raised by Orthodox and others with the ways in which certain social and ethical issues have reached the agenda of the WCC, and the ways in which they have been treated. Specifically, there was a perception that churches are coerced into treating issues they deem as either foreign to their life or inappropriate for a worldwide forum. There has also been a perception that the WCC has on occasion sought to "preach" to the churches rather than be the instrument of their common reflection
- iv. "Final Report...", ER 1/2003,9
- v. Towards A Common Understanding and Vision Of The World Council Of Churches, A Policy Statement, Geneva 1997, 3.5.2: The essence of the Council is the relationship of the churches to one another. The Council is the fellowship of churches on the way towards full koinonia. It has a structure and organization in order to serve as an instrument for the churches as they work towards koinonia in faith, life and witness...
- vi. Ecclesiology and Ethics...(note 1),9.
- vii. The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues (note 2),146;145
- viii. The phrase is coined by Jon Bria. Cf. his "The liturgy after the Liturgy", in Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism (G. Limouris, ed.), Geneva 1994,216ff
- ix. SC, Report Sub-committee III, 2000. Slightly edited.
- x. "Final Report...", ER 1/2003,8,6
- xi. The Final Report of the SC is inconsistent when it (B,III,20 on ecclesiology) expects the WCC/Faith and Order to be the prime agent for sorting out burning ecclesiological questions.
- xii. Cf. Final Report IV,28 and 32-35
- xiii. SC, Documents from the Meeting of Sub-Committees I and IV, March 2002.

xiv. Lewis S. Mudge's description of the inherited Presbyterian model of establishing Christian presence in the public sphere is also an apt description of the model hitherto preferred by the WCC:

"Social analyses by specialists, public pronouncements by leaders. This has been a typical policy of mainline Protestantism. It describes what has gone on for years in the Presbyterian Church. The "social action curia" produces a mass of material each year, much of it of high quality. The general Assembly votes on it, usually with little attention to the details, although some issues call forth vigorous debate. The Stated Clerk from time to time issues letters to public officials or makes public declarations which seek to carry forward the policies the Assembly has enacted. These procedures are not as effective as they once were. It used to be that protestant church leaders were visible and listened to. Who is listening now? The media pay little attention unless something scandalous or momentous is involved. Politicians, convinced that we command very short parades, pay little attention. They hardly know that the National Council of Churches exists. Above all these procedures are basically ineffective at the congregational level. Our congregations, absent very determined pastoral leadership, are as oblivious as are the media of what our assembly has said about public issues", in "The Church and Social Witness: Pastor, Congregation and Public Leadership in the Reformed Tradition", Special Commission, Background materials,10

xv. Robert Jenson, "The Hauerwas Project", in Modern Theology 8:3 (1992), 285-95

xvi. "The Orthodox Church in the Face of World Integration. The Relation between Traditional and Liberal Values", ER 2001,479ff.

xvii. ER 2/1996,147

xviii. SC, Background materials (note 1).

xix. Lewis S. Mudge (note 14),14

xx. "Fundamental Protestant Principles for Acting in Society", provisional translation of "Evangelische Grundlagen für das Handeln in der Gesellschaft", in SC, Methodology in Approaching Social and Ethical Issues, Background materials, 29-34

xxi. <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/sd00e.htm>

xxii. Stanley S. Harakas, Toward Transfigured Life. The Theoria of Eastern Orthodox Ethics, Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis 1983,226. Cf. Background materials (note 1),26

xxiii. Writing in the Dust, Eerdsmans 2002

xxiv. "Making Moral Decisions", reprinted in Background materials (note 1) 15ff

xxv. This, by the way, is the logic by which Calvin, in the 1559 edition, places the doctrine of election toward the end of Book III instead of within the exposition of the doctrine of God in earlier editions. Election now arises as a theological reflection on the already established fact of my justification and sanctification. In short, salvation as well as evil prompts the question, Why me? Weal as well as woe prompts this question.

xxvi. The "Declaration of Debrecen" voted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1997 reads these "we are not our own" sayings in a decidedly public context.

xxvii. Reformed theology, as we all know, tends to begin with issues about how the Bible is read. We are more likely to take our beginning from Romans 13 than we are from Revelation 13. That is, we cotton more easily to "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities..." than we do to "And I saw a beast arising out of the sea..." with its apparent reference either to Babylon, or, more likely, the Roman Empire. The first passage treats political authorities as authorized by God to give order to public life, therefore to be obeyed. The second passage sees the great empires as bestial and therefore to be resisted. How do we judge? Can both pictures be true under different circumstances? In fact we can see from church history that Christian communions occupying "establishment" positions in their society (e.g. Calvinists in 16th-century Geneva, Puritans in 17th-century Massachusetts) have stressed the Romans passage, while social outsiders (e.g. Anabaptists, Mennonites, etc) have read the second with more sympathy.

xxviii. Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

xxix. We all tend to see our own political experiences as normative. Americans, for example, need to realize that Britain, a far more secular country in terms of church membership and attendance than the USA, still teaches "religious knowledge" in state-run schools. Obviously a different interpretation of what democracy requires, (although we are just beginning to teach religion in the public schools under very strict guidelines). Just to remind us that what we take for granted is not taken for granted everywhere!

6. See Bellah, (et alia), Habits of the Heart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), for a fascinating, interview-based phenomenology of these relationships.