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***Christianity and Human Rights* before and after the Canon 8/VIIth. The *Christian* and the “*other*”, the “*any other*” (Gal 5: 15)**

(The existing *heterocentricity* of Christianity consolidates the *Eonism* of Human Rights and relativizes the realization of the Church within History)

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Abstract

The central thematic of this Essay “The Christian and the Other” sub specie of the dialectical relationship between *Christianity* and *Human Rights* represents a chance to tackle, through this article, an issue that is examined comparatively, as far as we know, not very often. This vision brings *Christianity* and the *System of Human Rights* (in link with the other Christian denominations) into a dialectical relationship and to dialogue.

Christians nowadays in History, in the world and society, do not represent an *ontological unity*, as well as this was the case during the first Millennium (Canon 8/VIIth [787] is the best example of “Human Rights” within the Church), and, therefore, do not represent a *single territorial Church* in a given place. The Ecclesial pluralism, the historic *multi-ecclesiality* in one place in the second Millennium gave birth to unilateral exclusivities, requests for Ecclesial unilateralism; it highlighted claims that resulted in the historic shrinkage of the Church and in communal introspections, it caused rivalries that led to clashes, to ecclesio-communal conflicts and to religious wars, things and situations that have nothing to do with the Church or with its *Ontological life*. When these very crucial events disrupted the Church, occurred and were

established, they brought the imperative need for safeguarding and ensuring both personal and collective (communal) choices of the *confessionalized Christians* [“we and the others”], who did not want to identify themselves commonly, according to the Ecclesiology of the first Millennium, but wanted to identify themselves distinctly and separately, according to the new *Ecclesial Confessions-Denominations* that occurred, within the same place, the same state and the same society. As we all know, this caused tensions, frictions and religious wars in Europe. This inspired the Orthodox also as well as, before them, the other Christian denominations. Such a climate made necessary the objective criteria for elementary Human Rights.

The conclusions stemming from these historical findings are numerous. Here we need only one for the stated dialectical relationship between these two poles: The decline of the Christianity of the 1st Millennium and the increased *Ecclesial Confessiocracy* in the 2nd Millennium produced the dire need to give birth to Human Rights. Nowadays, people do not need the decline Christianity; they turn to Human Rights to live, because of the non-solvency of contemporary Christianity (lack of justice, etc.).

Keywords

Christianity, Human Rights, Canon Law, Canon 8, Ecumenical Council

There are many challenges in the contemporary relations between the Orthodox Christians and the faithful of other Christian Confessions or other Religions. Moreover, through History, the Church has had the experience of living both as minority and as majority, in societies both hostile and favorable to the Church. In all these circumstances, Church has faced differently the “other(s)”, persons and communities of different Christian faith and Religion through the centuries. The present essay tries to bring [*diachronical*] *Christianity* and the [*contemporary*] *System of Human Rights* (in link with the different Christian Confessions/denominations or Religious affiliations) into a dialectical relationship as well as to an honest dialogue. Let us see the main topics of this article.

***Christianity and Human Rights* brought to dialogue**

A. *Unified and Divided Christianity*

1. The ontological content of *unified Christianity*-Canon 8/VIIth (1st Millennium)
2. The centrifugal *multi-ecclesiality* of *divided Christianity* (2nd Millennium)

*Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...***B. Human Rights as an alternative of the *Christian Confessocracy***

3. The *assertive multi-ecclesiality* [and *multi-religiousness*] as the operative event of Human Rights [and the necessity to implement them]

4. The existing *heterocentricity* of Christianity consolidates the *Eonism* of Human Rights and relativizes the realization of the Church within History

1. The ontological content of *unified Christianity*-Canon 8/VIIth (1st Millennium)

For the field of Religion, it is commonly accepted that Human Rights within contemporary societies mean “tolerance” and obviously complete “respect of the faith/inner conviction of the other(s)”. But, first, is this really true from a theological point of view and, secondly, has it been absolutely confirmed by History? What are the connections between the Civil Law for Human Rights and the Church Theology and Canon Law?

Regarding the verification of this, we can orientate to the Theological Historical Origin of Human Rights and refer back to our two thousand-year Church life. Let us give a historical example of a case when the Church displayed an exemplary *affirmation of the otherness* in terms of universality on a world wide scale. In the times, when Christianity was the “official” main prevailing religion of the Roman Empire and enjoyed its full benevolence (4th-8th century), a fact which actually meant it could exert what was theologically charged with a negative meaning, i.e. “tolerance” (*sic*) of religious othernesses, which is something clearly theologically derogatory for the ontological equivalence of the otherness within the one, complete and whole Creation. The Church of the 8th century has been giving the best message to fragmented Christians (and even Religions) for over two thousand years, especially to the divided Christians of the 2nd Millennium and of our times and even more to the divided Humanity, on a level of ecumenical behavior and ontological attitude towards deviating situations. Therefore, the Church introduces in History the question, grounded on a concrete mode (for the first time?) and emphasis – neither of “tolerance” (*sic*), nor of “*respect of the faith of the other(s)*” (*sic*), but the question – of the *ontological posture vis-à-vis the inner conviction of*

any person within the Humanity of all ages. Let us take this opportunity and clarify something which may “shock”, but gives an answer to a long-standing philosophical-theological question from a historical and theological point of view.

The incident brings us back to the Iconoclastic period of the emperor Leo III the Isaurian¹. Indeed, the emperor of the Eastern Empire Leo III the Isaurian (717-741), despite what has been erroneously recorded in History that he had Jewish advisors who inspired him through their *uniconic* tradition to become involved in Iconoclasm, actually fought against *Iconophil* Christians and casted them away, along with the Jewish people, who later on faced a great deal of hardship. In fact, after the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of Bar Kokhba (135 A.D.), Leo was, historically, the first, as political imponderable, to do persecutions against the Jews. Emperor Leo’s threat instilled in the Jewish people quite logical fears for their extinction, who, according to the proceedings of the VIIth Ecumenical Council (Canon 8) of Nicaea-787, started to “christianize” [once mentioned-*ἁπαξ λεγόμενον* on all Greek, theologian and non-theologian, literature], i.e. they began behaving in two different ways: officially they were considered as “Christians”, but actually, unofficially they still remained Jewish in their practice and their daily life.

When the Church, 40 years later, both theologically and synodically dealt with the issue of the empire policy regarding iconoclasm, theologically reinstated the icons after the VIIth Ecumenical Council (787), but at the same time displayed exemplary behavior of ecumenical stance towards people of different religious beliefs (and just, by the way, in our times, towards people of different Christian denominations). In others words, both, *Iconophil* Christians and Jewish people, were persecuted by the Empire. However, the Conciliar Fathers of Nicaea II encouraged the Jews to manifestate publically their religious conviction and their Religion. This exceptional synodical stance, this *ontological posture* of the Church, since it can be considered as an answer to the people of different religious beliefs, it can even more, or better yet proportionally, apply to the “other” [*heterodox*] Christians, the Christians belonging to different confessions and

¹ See this historical information in a general context, in Anna Lambropoulou-Kostas Tsiknakis (Eds.), *The Jewish presence in the Greek Territory (4th-19th centuries)*, Athens, ed. by National Hellenic Research Foundation-Institute for Byzantine Research/International Symposium, n. 12, 2008, 253 p. (in Greek).

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

denominations, or to the “other” [*heteroreligious*] believers of our times or, even more, to the “other” without any religion at all.

The Canon 8 of the VIIth Ecumenical Council mentions:

“Some persons of the Religion of Jews pretend to “*christianize*”, to be publically Christians, but, secretly and clandestinely, they keep the Sabbath and do other Jewish acts. We decree, state the Church Fathers, that the Jewish people, since they pretend to “*christianize*”, not to be admitted to the church, but to let them be openly Hebrews in accordance with their Religion; and that neither shall their children be baptized, nor shall they buy or acquire a slave. [...]”².

Church Canons are historically conditioned in the sense that they are concrete reactions to a specific historical challenge in a concrete context and in a given epoch. Therefore, Canons are limited, both formally and in content, because they are never an exhaustive expression of what they witness and attempt to say.

In this perspective, the present canon decrees, laconically but clearly, that no one is to admit into church those Jews who only, by social necessity or because of the emperor’s persecutions, have become apparently Christians and have joined the Church, but secretly practice their Religion, keeping the Sabbath and other Jewish customs. But, on the contrary, *such persons are to be Jews as they were before and no one shall baptize their children* for the previous reasons, and let them *openly* be Jews according to their conviction and their Religion. In other words, this canon claims the freedom of religious expression and practice of heteroreligious persons and regulates the religious rights of Jews within the society, specifically *their freedom to remain Jews*. It is obvious that the Council opposes forced or superficial conversion of Jews to Christianity, but maintains that Jews

² See in P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IVe-IXe siècles). Les Canons des Conciles œcuméniques (IIe-IXe siècles)*, édition critique du texte grec, version latine et traduction française, [Pontificia Commissione per la Redazione del Codice di Diritto Canonico Orientale], Fonti fascicolo IX, t. I, 1, Grottaferrata (Rome), Tipografia Italo-Orientale «S. Nilo», 1962, p. 261-263 (trilingual), and in *THE RUDDER [PEDALION] of the Orthodox Catholic Church* [translated into English from the Greek original *Pedalion* (Leipzig 1800) by D. Cummings], Chicago, ed. The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, ¹1957; New York, ²1983, p. 438-439. See also in G. Rhallis-M. Potlis, *Syntagma of the Holy and Sacred Canons*, Athens 1852, p. 583-585, and in *PEDALION*, Leipzig 1800, p. 330-331.

should be subjected to certain civil disabilities, as we can see in the follow analysis.

This Conciliar canon constitutes, as it seems, the first elementary *Statutory Charter* of “Human Rights” during the primitive Christian era; that is really an entirely unexpected conception at an unsuspected time. Indeed, 1002 years before the Declaration of Human Rights by the French Revolution (787 ↔ 1789), the Church of Christ declares her own “*Human Rights*”, which constitute a Theological Declaration on an *ontological* level and of an *ontological* – and not only *sociological* – content. Let us see the constitutive elements of this Conciliar Declaration.

As we can see from this Conciliar canon, the Church of the first Millennium confirms essential elements and characteristics of the human being – inherited by her Conciliar past (IVth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon-451) – in the relationship formed with the other(s), which are the theological *affirmation of otherness, diversity, freedom and equality*. Let’s personify the stance and the content of the Canon 8 to analyze and to understand better the posture of the Church vis-à-vis the Jews people.

1. Otherness-Alterity (Ετερότητας)

- “We do not ask/oblige you to become Christian. Stay what you are”. By this statement, Canon 8 affirms the notion of *autonomous otherness*. Here, there is no contempt and disregarding or discrimination of the “other(s)”, nor imperial “*tolerance*” (*sic*), nor sociological “*respect of the other[s]*” (*sic*), but theological-ontological exclusive *affirmation of an autonomous otherness, affirmation of alterity (alteritas)*, which means that the canon emphasizes the uniqueness of the “other” (personal or collective), in the perspective of the *communional* relations, as we will see below, founded on *ontological love*, and free acceptance of the freedom of the other and the universalist nature of the personhood.

2. Diversity (Διαφορετικότητα)

- “You are certainly different from us, but we wish you to be so and declare that you do differentiate from us, as for example regarding your own *identity* and, consequently, your own religious life, as well as we are different from you”. By this statement, canon 8 declares, accepts and affirms the notion of *diversity*, the *religious diversity* of persons and communities.

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

When Church Theology evokes the notion of “diversity within the Community”, in other words, the dialectical relationship between *community* and *diversity*, it refers to the *Person*³, the diversity of every Person, not to the *Individual*. That way, it evokes a relationship in God with the *other* church, religion, world and creation. This is the notion of “catholicity” for Church Theology, the “itinerary of Incarnation”, as we commonly say, of Christ: “Reception-Integration-Communion”.

3. Freedom (Ελευθερία)

- “We do not criticize you for what you are. It is your free choice to be what you are”. By extension, “because of external different pressures, you yourself have chosen to be *christianized*, but we refuse to admit you into the Church, because your choice is not the result of freedom and of free personal choice, but the result of a social necessity”. The Ecumenical Council does not accept them on grounds of social expediency, because this type/case of acceptance provokes the (*con*)*fusion* of the otherness. Here, it is not some form of preference or discrimination towards an eventual conversion, but an ontological pressure to protect or even guarantee the *freedom of religious otherness* and the *freedom of personal choice*. In other words, the Council grants non-Christian minorities the freedom to practice and believe a heterodox religion and, at the same time, individual persons the same ontological freedom to stay in their religion or to choose their religion (or, by extension, to have no religion at all). On what legitimate grounds may these freedoms be restricted, when the Church herself asserts this hypostatic element of *every* – and not only Christian – human being?

4. Equality (Ισότης)

- “You are different from us, but we do not marginalize you, because you are a minority; you are citizens of the same Empire/society as well as we are”. That means no *civil* or *human* discrimination vis-à-vis the “other”, and, by extension,

³ Cf. the Christological Definition of Faith of the IVth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon-451.

4a. Equality of honor (Ισοτιμία)

• “We do not wish to you to be as we are. Remain wholly at your religious situation or at your personal choice freely and you will receive vis-à-vis the civil Law the same honor from the society as we receive it ourselves”. It is quite characteristic that the appeal for equality and parity is not posed by the State (*Empire*). It is an appeal suggested by the Church herself echoing Apostle Paul: “Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman; you are all one in union with Jesus Christ”⁴. It is actually what the Church proposes as a development and elaboration on the Apostle’s perspective. An Ecumenical Council, what is considered as the highest Church authority on a par with the Holy Scriptures, prompted both by state and social occurrences/events decides to proclaim certain theological and anthropological issues which took contemporary European societies one thousand years (787-1789) to begin developing. One cannot help but wonder “why has this happened”? An immediate answer would be that during the second millennium, the Church suffering from various ecclesial disruptions leading it to frictions and wars (Crusades, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Religious wars and so on) eventually suffered from the loss of what herself had proclaimed during the first Millennium. Therefore, Human Rights arose from the Church’s theological Anthropology (starting with Apostle Paul in the first century up until the VIIth Ecumenical Council in the 8th century). However, can the Church actually boast of being a Church, when it has evolved into an institution which has abrogated Human Rights? On the other hand, can Human Rights still claim that they actually are *Human Rights* when they too have abrogated their own source which is the first millennium Church of Theological Anthropology? The above mentioned second issue/question in turn raises another important issue: the issues of the dialectical relationship with the *hetero-reference* (to the uncreated) of Theological Anthropology, as well as with the *self-reference* of autonomous contemporary Human Rights. In other words, could this after-the-fall created’s self-reference assist not only its fallen self by applying after-the-fall means (such as laws, etc.) but also humans in general within a constantly changing world? Yet, on the other hand, can the, otherwise praiseworthy, ecclesial hetero-reference persuade today’s man, when this Church herself seems to have forgotten what she has inducted in Humanity as a whole?

⁴ Cf. Gal 3, 28.

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

In this canonical document, there are also some other parameters to be analyzed (for example, not encouragement of religious hypocrisy in a public and social level, etc.), but we will only underline one very important for our examination. As we said, the VIIth Ecumenical Council of Nicaea claims primarily from the Christians – and, by extension, from everyone – the *affirmation of the otherness* as the main characteristic within the human relationship. This *affirmation of alterity* means and gives the possibility for an inauguration of productive *dialogue*, but a *dialogue on equal terms* (and not in a context of superiority of the *majority* vis-à-vis the *minority*). In other words, this Church Council clearly sets the question of a *dialectical relationship* between *otherness* and *identity*, as well as the question of a *dialectical relationship* between *unity* and *love*. At this point, we have to be reminded of the *christic* and the biblical word respectively: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself”⁵; and “neighbor” (*πλησίον*) here does not mean a *homodox* or a *homoreligious* neighbor, but unconditionally *any neighbor*, both *homodox* and *heterodox*. In the same perspective, “If you love *others*, you will never do them wrong”⁶, which constitutes the basis of Canon 8/VIIth. This reality also constitutes a challenge for all Christians to feel, in a next step, the “neighbor as [*personal* or *collective*] ourselves”⁷, *any neighbor* again, as an *icon* of God (*imago Dei*), and not only the *homodox neighbor*. Christic Theology can only be approached by *listening* to the *other*: to *other* Christian traditions, to *other* Religions, to the *other* person in whom Christ always comes⁸.

On one hand, in this canonical document also, we cannot see the notion of “tolerance”. It is only about a positive stance to encourage the weak other, to guarantee his own hypostasis in its integrity. The posture that we have come to know through the historical praxis of the second Millennium: “I *tolerate* you to believe anything you want to believe”, does not exist both in the letter and in the spirit of Canon 8 and we cannot consider

⁵ Mt 19, 19 and 22, 39; Mk 12, 31. 33; Lk 10, 27; Rm 13, 9; Gl 5,15: “For the *whole Law* is summed up in one commandment: Love your neighbor as you love yourself”; Jc 2, 8: “[...] the kingly Law, which is found in the Scripture: Love your neighbor as you love yourself”.

⁶ Rm 13, 9-10, but also Lk 10, 29 and 36; Act 7, 27; Eph 4, 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See, in this perspective, John 10, 16: “There are *other* sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd”.

that this notion belongs to a level of reciprocal Equality. Because, the verb “to tolerate”, this erroneous term and conception of contemporary Human Rights, means “abide”, “endure”, “bear”, “put up with”, “have forbearance”, in the well-known unacceptable expression and context: “to *tolerate* somebody’s views/beliefs/religion/conviction”. So, it reflects in reality a feudal mentality of the second Millennium or an overwhelming majority, which “tolerates”, “abides” the little and weak *minority* (-ies); *minority*, finally, because of its difference vis-à-vis the inner convictions of the majority. By the way, on the other hand, the Ecumenical Council, at the same time, does not refer to any notion of “*respect* of the Jews faith”. According to the Patristic Theology, there are three levels of human communion: a) the level of *fear* [which corresponds to a *slave*-negative posture], b) the level of *respect* [which corresponds to a *salaried*-neutral posture] and c) the level of *love* [which corresponds to a *son* vis-à-vis his family’s father-positive and affirmative posture]. Among these three different levels, only the third one has an *ontological* content, but the other two do not display such content. Within the Church, we cannot see any other dimension of life from the *ontological dimension of love*, realized in the *ontological visible dimension of “communion with the otherness”*. This is why, not only the level of *fear*, but even more the level of *respect*, are both considered as two cases of low stature life and civilization. In this case, if we are not able to love, we are *obliged (by the civil law)* to “*respect* the other”. But, that is an *ontological degradation* of human life. So, this is also why the Conciliar Fathers, by Canon 8, do not propose “tolerance” (*sic*) vis-à-vis the Jews people, but *liberty of conscience* [in order to declare “tolerance”] and *freedom of religious expression* [in order to declare “*respect* of their faith”], respectively. Therefore, now, it is much clearer why Canon 8/VIIth entails an entirely content than that different kind of “Human Rights”.

So, let’s summarize the *ontological* content and vision of this Conciliar Canon 8/VIIth.

Canon 8 of the VIIth Ecumenical Council of Nicaea-787

The elements of *ontological posture* of the Church vis-à-vis “any other(s)”

1. [*Autonomous*] Otherness-Alterity (Ετερότης)
2. Diversity (Διαφορετικότητας)
3. Freedom (Ελευθερία)

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

4. Equality (Ισότης)
- 4a. Equality of honor (Ισοτιμία)
5. The *any other* as notion and feeling of ‘neighbor’ (πλησίον)

This Ecumenical Council specifies:
No “*tolerance*” (*sic*), no “*respect of the faith of the other(s)*” (*sic*),
but
ontological posture vis-à-vis the inner conviction of any person
(Christian or non-Christian, believer or non-believer)
within the Humanity of all ages.

This is the heritage of the *Biblical* and *Conciliar* Tradition

As we can see another aspect from this Conciliar canon, in the perspective of the same analysis, is that the Church has nothing to be envious of the contemporary Declaration of Human Rights, nor of the more recent Declarations of Religious Freedom. Indeed, as early as the 8th century, i.e. over a Millennium ago, the Church took actions, especially during an Ecumenical Council, an extraordinary conciliar event reflecting the *unity* of the Church consciousness, *distinctively* (under the perspective of “otherness”), *subtly* (by merging, as we will see later on, into an ecumenical perspective any “form of otherness” or “distinction and contrast”) and *under the sense of human communion* (by preserving Creation’s “unity”).

Therefore, within the *Church Theology*, we can discern two steps which constitute an outline of the anticipated life on a common human level:

- a) Affirmation of the *otherness-alterity*, and
- b) Acceptance of the *otherness’ diversity* as an *a priori* condition for the *communion*.

At the same time, these two aspects constitute both the axes and possibly the criteria according to which we will consider our reflection on Human Rights and Religious freedom.

a) Affirmation of the *otherness*

As is the case with Trinitarian God, in order for *communion* to exist, we need to have different types of otherness, such as personal or collective. Communion does not necessarily coincide with “*co-identifying*” of the otherness, but rather *affirming* it. In other words, this affirmation con-

stitutes the beginning of communion for Theology or the beginning of Human Rights for Humanity. Affirmation of the otherness, either personal or collective, still remains a prerequisite as well as a presupposition in order for us to reach communion. “Una persona, nulla persona”, was a motto used by the early Christians, therefore, “*una persona, nulla communio*”. Communion goes through the otherness and is attained only along with the otherness. God would not be *communio*, as we will point out later, if He were not a Trinity of Persons. Therefore, the approach of the “other [Christian or non-Christian, believer or non-believer]” cannot be established, unless this is done on the grounds of a *communio with the otherness*.

b) The valorization of the otherness' [alterities'] diversity

The after-the-fall created exists bearing all the characteristics of susceptibility and [after-the-fall] contrasts. When all these types of diversity are objectified, then the distance between collective diversification/alterity becomes longer. This is the main characteristic of the fall and the divisions existing among Christians: each one adheres to their own beliefs and to their vested cultural gains of the second Millennium denominational-confessionalistic past. These are the “new [at first] and old [then]”⁹, that Christ through His appeal calls us to abandon, exactly because we have found “the valuable pearl”¹⁰. This dual movement, the “outcome”¹¹ of historical objectifications as well as the willing acceptance of the “valuable pearl”, becomes a starting point for this *valorization of the otherness' diversity*, something which proper testimony is called to take into consideration as an equally important methodological prerequisite in the perspective of the *catholic* (καθολική) communion.

In conclusion of this part, the distinction between the ontology of the Church and the sociology of the Society is obvious.

A. Levels of the Human Rights

1st Millennium: Ontology-Positive/Affirmative posture (Church)

- *Conciliar* “Human Rights” → *Love* for the others independently of their faith

⁹ Mt 13, 52.

¹⁰ Mt 13, 46.

¹¹ Cf. Mt 13, 52.

*Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIIth...*2nd Millennium: Sociology-Neutral posture (Society)

- *Sociological* Human Rights → *Respect* to the others independently of their faith

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Next to this distinctive historical paradigm and model of the attempted Conciliar “Human Rights”, let us mention a contemporary example as well, one that highlights the transcendence of otherness. In recent years, in the period of World War II and the Holocaust (1940-1945), the Archbishop of Athens of the Orthodox Church of Greece, Damaskinos Papandreou displayed a similar behavior. When, during the German occupation, he faced the possibility of the Jewish Community of Athens being persecuted and killed, he suggested, *out of pure love for them*, that they should just be ...“baptized” so as they could enroll as Christians on the official Church name catalogues [“Diptycs”] and thus be able to prove their innocence and be exempted. He was sincere towards them, bearing in mind his responsibility on such a historical moment, and cleared out that they would still remain Jewish in faith and practice their worship without being obliged to have any participation in the liturgical practices of the Church. Such a mutual understanding and sincerity was the main factor which made their secret plan successful and averted the danger of many Athenian Jewish people being killed.

In this part, we mentioned two distinctive timeless examples (8th and 20th centuries respectively) that reveal an inclination to get into *somebody* [“neighbor”] else’s place, the same thing Christ succeeded through His Incarnation, by also taking the other person’s responsibilities, visions, reflections and perspectives and sharing them with the other, *whoever they may be*, especially when this action takes place within the Christian or Religious Ecumenical Movement, where such a vision is not only *commonly* shared but also *distinctively* Christian.

2. The centrifugal multi-ecclesiality of divided Christianity (2nd Millennium)

The Church of 2nd Millennium lost a plenty of theological ontological realities. Among these lost realities were the *Ecclesial unity* and the *Ontological*

vision of the creation. The lack of unbroken unity between the Churches prevents them from bearing the Christian testimony in public fully and effectively and leads them to permanent frictions. During the second Christian millennium especially, the three major Christian traditions – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox – have come to take distance from the territorial principle of Ecclesiology, according to which the Church must be one “in every place” (Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 1): Since the Crusades (1095-1204), the Roman Catholic Church had started to establish Latin Patriarchates as an alternative to the already existing Oriental Local ones and, thus, created the *Ecclesiological problem of Co-territoriality* (1099). Gradually, and especially since the introduction of “Uniatism” (1596), Roman Catholic ecclesiology came to allow Churches of different ritual traditions (*Ritualism*) to *co-exist* within a single territory (*co-territoriality*). This anti-ecclesiological and anti-canonical *conviventia* created a new epoch for the Church with various ecclesiastical frictions and religious wars, an epoch which is obviously *post-ecclesial*. Therefore, during the 16th century, Protestantism, emphasizing the “*confession* of the faith”, as the foundation of the Church, which created at the same time the Ecclesiological problem of *Confessionalism* (1517) and came to identically admit the *co-existence* (*co-territoriality-conviventia*) in a single place of Churches of different *confessions*. As for Orthodoxy, it did not consider the interruption of communion with the Western Church (1054) as a full *schism*, and did not, therefore, attempt to create anything resembling an alternate “Orthodox Patriarchate of Rome”, as a reaction to the multi-ecclesial co-territoriality. But, from the 19th century, the emigration of Orthodox Christians to regions outside the traditional territory of their respective *locally established* Churches (*Territorial Churches*), along with the growth of *Ethno-phyletism* (1872), led to the creation of multiple Orthodox dioceses (*co-territoriality-conviventia*), based exclusively on ethnic-national criteria (which provoke in a given place *Ecclesial multi-jurisdiction* and *Ecclesial co-territoriality*), in full communion, however, with each other. National Orthodox Churches sometimes go so far as to claim a kind of *extra-territoriality* which enables them to minister their compatriots abroad, although with *overlapping jurisdictions* (*extra-jurisdiction*) and with marked *co-existence* and *co-territoriality*.

So, this ecclesial reality of the second Christian Millennium is apparently characterized by biggest *ecclesio-canonical problem of co-ter-*

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

itoriality from the three major Christian Ecclesiologies of this Millennium: **1.** The *Ecclesiology of the Crusades* (13th century-*Ritualism*), **2.** The *Ecclesiology of the Reformation* (16th century-*Confessionalism*), and **3.** The *Ecclesiology of Ethno-Phyletism* (19th century-*Ethno-phyletism*). Finally, the first Millennium displays resolved *Christological* problems, while the second Millennium created unresolved *Ecclesiological* problems¹², which provoked major problems within the society, especially in Europe, and which have been passed on the third Millennium. However, when examining the causes and consequences of Church divisions account must be taken of the role played not only by *ecclesiastical* but also by *non-ecclesiastical* and *non-theological (culturalistic)* factors in addition to the questions of faith and human sensitivities, philosophical backgrounds and simple misunderstandings... But, this is another question, which goes beyond the borders of this study.

3. The assertive multi-ecclesiality [and multi-religiousness] as the operative event of Human Rights [and the necessity to implement them]

After all that we have so far discussed in the previous two parts of this paper, a new question arises. Which were, finally, the reasons for the Human Rights emergence and which is really the need for Human Rights Discourse and Institutionalization during the second Millennium?

Indeed, the situation of Church radically changed from the beginning of the 2nd Millennium. It is commonly known that Christians nowadays within History, the world and the society, do not represent an *ontological unity*, as it was the case during the first Millennium (Canon 8/VIIth [787] is the best example of “Human Rights” coming from the Church), and, therefore, do not represent a *single territorial Church* in a given place. The Ecclesial *pluralism* (in other words, *co-existence* not always pacific), this historic centrifugal *multi-ecclesiality* in one place in the second Mil-

¹² See more information about this existing until today thorny problem in our article “*In the Age of the Post-Ecclesiality* (The Emergence of Post-Ecclesiological Modernity)”, published in *Kanon*, vol. 19 (2006), p. 3-21, in *Istina*, t. 51, n° 1 (2006), p. 64-84, in *Irénikon* [Chevetogne-Belgium], t. 79, n° 4 (2006), p. 491-522 (in French), in *The Messenger* [London], n° 1 (2/2007), p. 26-47, and in *Inter* [Cluj-Napoca], t. II, n° 1-2 (2008), p. 40-54 (in English), in *Overdruk uit Collationes* [Belgium], vol. 37 (2007), p. 407-428 (in Flemish), and in *Usk ja Elu*, t. 3 (1/2007), p. 31-56 (in Estonian).

lennium gave birth to unilateral exclusivities, requests for Ecclesial unilateralism; it highlighted claims that resulted in the historical shrinkage of the Church and communal introspections, it caused rivalries that led to clashes, to ecclesio-communal conflicts and religious wars for centuries, facts and situations that have nothing to do with the Church of the first Millennium or with her *Ontological life*. When these very crucial events disrupted the Church, occurred within her context and were established, they also created the imperative need for safeguarding and ensuring both personal and collective (communal) choices of the *confessionalized Christians* [“we and the others”], who did not want to identify themselves *commonly-ecclesially*, according to the Ecclesiology of the first Millennium, but instead wished to identify themselves distinctly and separately, according to the new *Ecclesial Confessions-Denominations* that occurred, within the same place, the same state and the same society. As we all know, this caused tensions, frictions and religious wars firstly in Europe and then beyond its borders. This aberration on the level of new Ecclesial mentality inspired not only the Orthodox but, before them, the other Christian denominations as well. Such a climate highlighted the need for the *objective criteria* of elementary Human Rights.

If, finally, this is true, the confessionalisation of Christianity during the second Millennium constitutes the prime/underlying reason of the opposition to the Conciliar “Human Rights” and their abandonment and, at the same time, the identical reason for the birth of the contemporary Human Rights. Because of the oppositions between Christian Denominations, the contemporary Human Rights struggle is the rationalization of the different confessionalistic and religious traditions as a reaction to these historical oppositions, to this proliferation and to the negative effect of the contemporary *multi-ecclesiality* within the *Ritualistic (R/C)*, *Confessionalistic (P)* and *Ethno-phyletic (O)* Churches.

The conclusions stemming from these historical findings are numerous. Here we need only one on which we can establish the dialectical relationship between these two poles: The decline of the Christianity of the 1st Millennium and the increased *Ecclesial Confessiocracy* and monolithic *Ecclesial exclusivity* [irreducible *uniqueness* in particularity] in the 2nd Millennium produced the dire need for the emergence of Human Rights. Nowadays, people do not need the declined Christianity; they turn to Human Rights for their life, because of the non-solvency of contemporary Christianity (lack of justice, inability in a case of moot point to resolve

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIIth...

an internal ecclesiastical *litige* and doing recourse and resort to the [European] Court of Human Rights, etc.).

B. Levels of the Human Rights2nd Millennium: Confessiococracy and Ecclesial exclusivity (Church)

- Abolishment of *Conciliar* “Human Rights” → **Lack of Justice** vis-à-vis the others

2nd Millennium: Sociology (Society)

- *Sociological* Human Rights → **Respect** of the others independently of their faith

4. The existing *heterocentricity* of Christianity consolidates the *Eonism*¹³ of Human Rights and relativizes the realization of the Church within History

Contemporary Human Rights are inconceivable without a reference to Church Theology, because their principles also took place before their ex-

¹³ Or *Aeonism*. See an analytic development of this theological question in *Épiscopesis*, t. 41, n° 712 (30-04-2010), p. 29-32 and 26-28 (bilingual: in Greek and in French respectively), and in *Big Orthodox Christian Encyclopaedia* (MOXE), t. 2, Athens, ed. Strategical Publisher House, 2011, p. 22 [col. a, b, g, d]-23 [col. a] (in Greek). This theological neologism denotes the mentality of people who certainly believe in God, but are unable (Ephesians 2:2) to make God *Almighty*, that is, the “centre of their lives” (Abbot Dorotheos). This fact (Matthew 13: 22; Mark 4: 19) leads to the consequence of an “*heterocentric* perspective” (rejection of God in the transcendence and in “what is to come” [Acts 26:22]), which takes (2 Cor 4: 4) man away from God “for having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4: 9) and traps him by placing him (Luke 20:34) in the dimension of “this world” (John 18: 36-37). This is a category and a “*intra-creational*” perspective, i.e. of containment and introversion to what is (now fallen) created, forgetting its *eschatological orientation* (Ephesians 1: 21, Hebrew 6: 5 and 11: 20; 1 Tim. 4: 8; Tit. 2: 12), which is based on the standard (Romans 12: 2) [*civitas terrena*] “this present world” (worldly eschatology), or giving a dominant lead in this century (“this Century”, “this present world”) against the future century (the “future century” [Ephesians 1:21]). In other words, Aeonism is above all an *ontological entrapment and restriction of man in the world, history and nature*, placing him on an *aeonistic* course without any eschatological substance. It is an aeonistic way of existence, as a way of life at the expense of the eschatological perspective of man.

istence in Theology. So, the theological dimension is essential for them, and is something which cannot be ignored. However, nowadays, the question is not raised for contemporary Human Rights, but for contemporary Church life. Because of the above mentioned reasons, we have a regression of this ontological posture of the Church of the first Millennium.

Let us examine, though, this envisaged *ontological posture* on a more practical ecumenical level. During the 20th century, even since the Ecumenical Movement was clearly and theological systematized, two main axes of ecumenical practices have been consolidated and were followed by two main methodologies wherever these methodologies had to be applied:

1. Every Christian denomination displays *Church exclusivity*; therefore, every *other* denomination-confession is treated as existing *outside* this Church. This approach means that the “other” exists *outside* of our own ecclesial collective existence.

2. Church is considered as one body; therefore, every *other* denomination is treated as existing *inside* the Church. This approach means that the “other” exists *inside* our own ecclesial collective existence.

So, as we can see, we can speak about two parallel stances with *different* and sometimes with *opposite* consequences.

- The first methodology presupposes the existence of a *schism* among Churches (since 1054), which means that we deal with clearly set and defined boundaries which exclude the Christians that are not considered members of this Church.

- The second methodology is based upon the *disruption of communion*¹⁴ (since 1054) among the Churches, along with openness and an inclination to developing dialectic relationships and communion within the unique Church.

The *first practice* is dated back to the Council Vatican II (1962-1965) and is a distinctive perception characterizing Roman Catholic theology as

¹⁴ Cf. Archim. Grig. D. Papatomas, “Au temps de la post-ecclésialité. La naissance de la modernité post-ecclesiologique: de l’Église une aux nombreuses Églises, de la dispersion de l’Église à l’anéantissement du Corps du Christ”, in *Kanon* [Vienna], vol.19 (2006), p. 3-21, *Istina* [Paris], vol. 51, issue 1 (2006), p. 64-84, *Irénikon* [Chevetogne-Belgium], vol.79, issue 4 (2006), p. 491-522 (in French), in *Overdruk uit Collationes* [Belgium] vol. 37 (2007), p. 407-428 (in Flemish), in *The Messenger* [London], vol. 1 (2/2007), p. 26-47, *Derecho y Religión* [Madrid], vol III (2008), p. 133-150, *Inter* [Cluj-Napoca], vol. II, issue. 1-2 (2008), p. 40-54 (in English), in *Usk ja Elu*, vol 3 (1/2007), p. 31-56 (in Estonian and Russian), and in *Мѣтров-Mira* [Lviv], issue 5-6 (2009), p. 63-88 (in Ukrainian).

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIIth...

well as Orthodox theology, which could be considered as a methodological follower in many steps the first one takes. The post-Vatican period has significantly changed the way of approach; still, the fundamental values remain the same, especially on an Ecclesiological level.

The *second practice*, which dictates the corresponding methodology, is based upon the ecclesio-canonical notion of *disruption of communion*, which deals with *denominational diversification* as an event within the Church, therefore contact takes place on a *dialectic level of communion* among brothers, within a *communion "in Christ"*, even if due to the *disruption of communion*, they have not [yet] come to *communion in "body of Christ"*. Christ Himself makes a similar distinction, addressing it to every Christian when He says: "I have *other* sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must also bring them together, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd"¹⁵. However, this is precisely what becomes a communion model, the *Christic* approach of "the *other* sheep", "the *other* children" of the same Father, the "*other* Christians" of the one and the same Church of Christ.

Additionally,

- The first methodology functions apologetically, under exclusive uniqueness, obvious, or not so obvious polemics, distinctive disdain of the otherness, due to the fact that Church ecclesiology has been distorted. This Ecclesiology of the Church has indeed been distorted during the second Millennium. Its fundamental feature is a *prismatic ecclesiality under a denominational mentality*, or, in other simple words, the *confessional multi-ecclesiality* in a specific place. That is why we speak of Ecclesiology in plural or *plural Ecclesiologies*. Therefore, during the second Millennium, most of the partial ecclesiologies are marked by the history of fragmentation, their ontological autonomy and isolation. This is exactly why, during this period, the Churches have clearly defined and endorsed their identity on the basis of their *denominational differences*. This is what brought about *Ecclesial confessionalism* ("*denomination-archy*") of the second Millennium along with its corresponding Ecclesiology. Under this new and newly looking perspective, any occurring Ecclesial confession-denomination, which was self defined as [*aggressive-denominational*] *Church*, did not acknowledge any other Church outside its own *confession-ecclesial communion* and described the "other" Churches as schismatic or even occasionally heretic, following the well-known scholastic western methodology of dividing the "other" Churches in concentric circles around one

¹⁵ John 10: 16.

single center. This adopted anti-ecclesiological gradation is what caused friction and conflict among these denominational Churches for some centuries. These are still ongoing conflicts, even nowadays, and they have created the theologically objectionable configuration “we are on one side, and on the other side, there are the *others*, the *heterodox* [Christians]”.

- The second methodology follows more appropriate mode; it makes an effort to take double consecutive actions (*démarches*), before opening a broader common educational field. The *first* action involves the distinctive emergence of their otherness, as it was above mentioned and analyzed, so that their ontological boundaries along with their hypostatic features are made clear, and their dialectic counterparts from their common theological educational field – along with the ones that are actively participating in it – are aware of the presuppositions. At the same time, through these presuppositions they will become aware of their common or variant points as well as of their convergences or divergences. At this point, we should point to Fr. George Florovsky’s well-known quote, that whoever is not familiar with history, cannot do [or be taught] Theology. The *second* action involves the identity of these different types of otherness, their ontological content, the knowledgeable completeness of their content, as well as the methodology they apply.

Therefore, let us also examine in the same perspective another question linked to our main subject and research.

In the Orthodox world, we have a very dominant confessional mentality of the *Orthodox National Church*, the influence of which alienates the Ecclesial mentality and Theology. Among other parameters, especially this mentality nurtures a possessive and dominant position vis-à-vis the *others*, the non-Orthodox and the non-Christians within the society of the National State. The example of the Constitution of Greece is very helpful in our understanding of this typical mentality of the Orthodox citizens’ majority.

The Constitution of Greece-1975

“In the Name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Invisible Trinity.

Part One/Basic Provisions

Article 3

1. The *dominant* religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ. [...]”¹⁶.

¹⁶ *The Constitution of Greece of 1975*, Athens, ed. by Ant. N. Sakkoulas, 2001, p. 17-18.

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

According to the Greek Constitution, the Orthodox Christian Church exists within the Hellenic legal order as a *civil religion*. Furthermore, this official Constitutional document ensured from its very beginning that God was and is an effective basic norm of the State and its legal order. In fact, this is a continuation of the political praxis in Byzantium. But, the Byzantine experience of civil religion is a result of the premises of the premodern State. On the contrary, the modern State is by its very nature secular, which means that civil religion, even if it is *State religion*, functions differently than in the premodern condition. The modern secular State is a historical product of political conditions, which followed the Western European reformations of the sixteenth century and beyond. At the same time, the concept of the modern State functions also in a way, this is comparable to how the concept of God functioned in the premodern condition. According to this, the Orthodox Church in Greece is an *established Church*, a constitutionally and institutionally recognized Church as, more or less, civil religion as well.

Therefore, the Greek State adopted from its historical beginning (1821/1830) and developed, certainly with the collaboration of the Orthodox Church, actually becoming *confessionalistic*, a kind of civil religion, as an Ethnic religious Monopoly. The consequences are obvious and visible already from the Constitution of Greece. This “Greek civil religion” features a high degree of intolerance forward what does not fit the “credos” of the civil religion. It threatens both the normativity of the Christian tradition (namely the Canon 8/VIIth, etc.) in Greece and the reality (*principles*) of the religious pluralism. In this case, the Church is under threat of social alienation, where people become really alienated towards their own Church!... Certainly, we have also other States that live in the same or similar institutional context, such as Russia, Romania, and others, because of their common historical background, political conceptions and National visions.

Another line of tension is connected with the struggle for *dominance* in the traditional Greek Orthodoxy between the official Church and the other Religious affiliations. Indeed, the notion of *dominance* is visible, constituting a traditional *majority* and putting at the same the Orthodox Church in a privileged position to seek practically cultural dominance through state power, in despite of the fact that the interpretative viewpoint is further enhanced by the fact that all political wings of Parliament, dur-

ing the relevant parliamentary deliberations of 1975, agreed that the term “*dominant* religion”, which certainly referred to the Orthodox Church, was of a *descriptive* – and not of a *normative* – character: namely, that is merely referred to the religion of the overwhelming *majority* of the Greek people, because the very large proportion (more than 95%) of the Greek population is Orthodox¹⁷. Therefore, there are laws that are voted by the Hellenic Parliament in full session regulating issues pertaining to the Orthodox Church¹⁸ and have by establishment practice, come to be named “Charters”, as well as the Law 590/1977 “On the Charter of the Church of Greece”. Certainly this is not at all the case for the other Churches and Religious Communities of the religious *minorities* in Greece. It is about one legislative and legal “discrimination”, which is dictated by the existence of an overwhelming *majority* throughout the last three centuries. Throughout, the Orthodox Church of Greece, because of her shaded engagement vis-à-vis the Greek State, sought to ingratiate herself with whatever political regime was in power, seeking, in many cases, privileges for herself, often not available to religious minorities. So, there is still a long way to cover.

This fact “of the *dominant* religion in Greece”¹⁹, among others, can probably justify and legitimate the existence of the cross on the National flag. However, here, an obvious question arises: How this flag with the main typical characteristic of Christianity, the cross, can be a *symbol of unity* for the entire people of the state, when, among them, we have non-Christians, Jews, Muslims, persons without religion and others? Therefore, this fact does not only concern Greek reality, but also all European countries of mainly Protestant tradition: Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, England, Faroe Islands, but also Georgia, Malta, and so on, while outside Europe there are not more than three or four around the world. Who is responsible for this fact from a Human Rights point of view: Christianity or the State? From the same point of view someone could tell the Europeans that, when you have a Christian symbol on the flag, you cannot support that you have kept intact Human Rights in your society!... But, that can be considered as a question for public reflection and dialogue within the European society.

¹⁷ See Sp. Troianos, “La situation juridique de la ‘religion *dominante*’ en Grèce”, in *L’Année canonique* [Paris], vol. 45 (2003), p. 127-132.

¹⁸ Cf. article 72, §§ 1 and 3, of the *Constitution* of Greece.

¹⁹ *The Constitution of Greece of 1975*, *op. cit.*, p. 17-18.

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

This mentality also really influences, although indirectly the attribution of justice within the Ecclesiastical area. Indeed, European Court of Human Rights' pursuit regarding cases with mainly or relevantly ecclesiastical character necessitates all the more a responsible approach of Ecclesiastical/Church justice, especially its organization as well as administration domains. Especially, in regard with our issue under examination, Human Rights are directly affiliated with the distinctive nature of serving Church justice, since it entails certain structural frailties when it comes to it being served, or – putting it more explicitly – there is a lack of Ecclesiastical/Church justice. Indeed, trying to be a bit more specific and narrow down this broad issue to our research field, in Orthodox Church justice the prevalent trend seems to be an analogous application of common Civil Law provisions in the cases where there is a regulatory void in Ecclesiastical/Church legal processes. There are several cases when a “symbiotic relationship” (mutually dependent) between Ecclesiastical/Church and penal litigations is imperative. It is something which can be explicitly observed when an act constitutes both a criminal offence and an ecclesiastical one. Therefore, there are cases when common civil law interventions are so intense that can actually lead to a minister's/priest's immediate deposing without even a proper Ecclesiastical/Church trial. That is the case when a cleric/priest is irrevocably sentenced according to common civil court and its current valid, although outdated, Greek Law 5383/1932. Due to this Ecclesiastical/Church justice void, we are lead to wonder whether these external interventions are inevitable or not. Especially when these interventions lead to unconstitutional incidents, such as a cleric's/priest's deposing without offering him the opportunity of a proper self-defense or apology before the Superior Authority or during an Ecclesiastical/Church trial. We can also add to these types of intervention the cases when the accused cleric or monk is deprived of his right to a complete and substantial defense by the appointment of proper counsel before the ecclesiastical/church court, as well as the lack of complete publicity regarding the court meeting's minutes, despite the provision of the Greek Constitution's article 93, § 2 (“The sittings of all Courts shall be public”), and so on. Taking all these, as well as many other instances, into consideration we are faced with the need of “abandoning” Ecclesiastical/Church justice and resorting to a National or even a European Court of *Human Rights*. That is due to the fact that today's Church has become oblivious of God's ontological

command: “The ones residing this earth you should learn about justice”²⁰ as well as “You are invited to be more faithful than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires”²¹.

C. Levels (*evolution*) of the Ecclesiastical “Human Rights”

1st Millennium: *Ontology* (Church)

- *Conciliar* “Human Rights” → ***Love*** of the others independently of their faith

2nd Millennium: *Confessio*cracy and *Ecclesial exclusivity* (Church)

- Abolishment of *Conciliar* “Human Rights” → ***Lack of Justice*** vis-à-vis the others

Remarks

- According to our main theme “The Christian and the Other”, we can distinguish, in another way, three levels of this perspective and, there, we are invited to analyze and try to give some answers to all the questions and parameters about this “Other”:

- 1) The *Inter-Orthodox* level, the level of the *hetero-national* Orthodox Christians, the faithful of *other* Orthodox National Churches,

- 2) The *Inter-Christian* level, the level of the *heterodox* Christians, the faithful of *other* Christian Confessions-denominations,

- 3) The *Inter-Religious* level, the level of the *hetero-religious* believers, the faithful of *other* Religions (or the persons of *other* convictions).

On these three *Christological levels*, the position and behavior of an Orthodox vis-à-vis the “Other” has to be *identic*. If this is not the case, according to the Conciliar Theology of the first Millennium, we have, before the others, a central *Christological* problem. In the same perspective, if one also says that we have accomplished the previsions of two levels and we stay indifferent for the third one, this central *Christological* problem remains sustained. In other words, if one *Christological* level capsizes, according to the Church Theology, the other two levels, are automatically capsized too. This is a theological criterion according to which we are enabled to understand the background of every Orthodox Theology or, in generally, of every Christian Theology. How can an Orthodox maintain

²⁰ See Is 26, 9 [and 10].

²¹ Mt 5: 20.

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIth...

that the Orthodox Church claims to offer the truth and the salvation of all Humankind, as the Fathers of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council *in Trullo* (691) stated, “having due regard for the salvation and safety of peoples and for their better advancement with a view to avoiding any likelihood of giving anyone cause to blame the [Church] polity. [...]”²², and, at the same time, not to accord to a non-Orthodox the liberty to belong to another Christian confession and to practice it, as well as to individual persons the freedom to choose their Religion or no Religion at all?

- Human Rights principally mean the *positive affirmation of the otherness*. Certainly, this is the ontological experience of the Church Ecumenical Councils, namely the IVth of Chalcedon (451), the Quinisexte *in Trullo* (691) and the VIIth of Nicaea II (787-canon 8). And this is also the contribution of Church Theology through the subsequent centuries to the posterior emergence and formation of the contemporary Human Rights.

- However, besides *theological* history, of which the Bible is considered as an integrated part, Ecclesiology constitutes another theological dimension. *Conciliar* “Human Rights” (Canon 8/VIIth) are a highly important matter for Christian theology, both for the Church body and its universal and ecumenical perspective as well as for the entire Humanity. Human Rights cannot be detached or separated by Church’s testimony and mission within History and all over the world. In other words, Church’s most important testimony is that Humanity can exist as *one*, according to the Sunday’s vision of “being one with each other”²³, and that, according to this consideration, which should also be an integral part of the conciliar experience, this specific *theological* Human Right aims, by extension, at an *ontological transcendence* of the after-the-fall divergences and to an *ontological unity*.

²² Canon 12; see in P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IVe-IXe siècles). Les Canons des Conciles œcuméniques (IIe-IXe siècles)*, édition critique du texte grec, version latine et traduction française, [Pontificia Commissione per la Redazione del Codice di Diritto Canonico Orientale], Fonti fascicolo IX, t. I, 1, Grottaferrata (Rome), Tipografia Italo-Orientale «S. Nilo», 1962, p. 139 (trilingual), and in *THE RUDDER [PEDALION] of the Orthodox Catholic Church* [translated into English from the Greek by D. Cummings], Chicago, ed. The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, ¹1957; New York, ²1983, p. 303. See also in G. Rhallis-M. Potlis, *Syntagma of the Holy and Sacred Canons*, Athens 1852, p. 330-333, and in *PEDALION*, Leipzig 1800, p. 227-229.

²³ Cf. John 17, 21 and 23.

- In accordance with the experience of Canon 8/VIIth, Theology in its various fields has never been rigid, but has indeed remained alive and in constant development, because it is in constant dialogue with contemporary problems and deeply rooted in the historical context. The historical method thus allows discernment and ensures the scientific honesty of theology. For this reason, the study of Church Theology must be conducted on the basis of a historical method. Each theological text as well as Canon 8/VIIth, must be placed in context, distinct from its interpretation or its further commentaries, because theology has never attempted to formulate a system for itself, as it is the case of modern Human Rights..., but has always responded to the challenges of the time, and this is why it has always been a reflection of History. Church and theology inevitably have to deal with the *ontological truth*, with the mystery of divine revelation in its historical forms of expression. To ignore the history of Theology would mean to lose one's bearings and to risk arriving to erroneous reasoning or assertions. Research into the history of the Church and theology can lead to a new view of *other* Churches and, by addition, Religions, and to fruitful changes in relation with them.

- Putting it in a different way, the one who exists vis-à-vis the "other [Christians or non-Christians]" is called to put himself in the place of the other/others in order to understand their hypostatic otherness, i.e. to receptively participate in the different or in the *opposite otherness*, always under the criterion of communion's perspective. This means perspective allows us to symbolically enter in the "itinerary of Incarnation" of Christ: "Reception-Integration-Communion". This is exactly what Christ through His word-*lapis Lydius* gives meaning to, when He says "Treat *others* just as you want to be treated"²⁴.

- Church historical research must not succumb to the temptation of justifying the history of its own Church in retrospect. Historical Theological investigation must be rather concerned about how to better understand *other* Christian traditions or *other* Religions or *other* Convictions. This is also the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ. This dimension of understanding helps us decide whether the points of divergences are so humans of men-in-fall. When examining the causes and consequences of Humans and Church confessional divergences and divisions, account must be taken

²⁴ Lk 6, 31; cf. Mt 7, 12.

Christianity and Human Rights before and after the Canon 8/VIIIth...

of the role played not only by Church theology, but also by historical and social factors, in one word, by *culturalistic* factors. While it is impossible to re-create the past, the first Millennium is rich with historical data that can we can draw upon in the creation of new perspectives of collaboration and communion between Christians and non-Christians, between Orthodox (or Roman Catholics or Protestants) and the “other”.

In conclusion, Church *Theology* is not a disembodied philosophy or sociology. It primarily reflects the communion of Trinitarian God, the ontological reciprocity of the Three Divine Persons. This Triune God is only revealed, but also embodied in History and gives us a relational *modus vivendi*. This is, among other things, what is implied in the phrase of Maximus the Confessor (7th century) about Christ: «Θεολογίαν γάρ διδάσκει σαρκούμενος ο του Θεού Λόγος», “by His becoming flesh the Word teaches Theo-logy”²⁵, i.e. that the Word through *His Incarnation* talks to us about God (Θεο-λογία), shows us about “God’s being”, how God, the Trinitarian-Three Persons God, is described by the Johannine expression as “love”²⁶, which here means “communion”, precisely because He is *communion*. It is therefore important for some implications relevant to our research, our approach and discussion to see this *Theology* by placing its currents, its eschatological visions in the appropriate historical context, thus allowing a better understanding and an accurate assessment. So, one would get involved in personal relationship inclined to put it into practice within a *dialectic*, as well as an *exchangeable*, approach between “himself” and the “other” (“to offer and receive”), within the frame of solid dialogue, due to the fact that positive dialogues do not result in victors and defeated. It is something like the Socratic method of *maieutic*, only in this case it is not shaped under the *cognitive perspective*, but under the *communional perspective* where *knowledge* and *love* are actually identified. The more you get to know the *others*, the more you get to *love* them, eventually the more you get to love them the more you get to know them. Anyway!... This is what living dialectics and exchangeability should be on an *Ontological* level.

²⁵ Maximus the Confessor, “Εις την Προσευχήν του “Πάτερ ημών”...” [“On the Pray ‘Our Father’”], in *P.G.*, vol. 90, vers. 876D; our own highlighting.

²⁶ 1 John 4, 8 and 16.