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Pan-Orthodox Commitment to Human Rights

Natallia Vasilevich

Because we continually proclaim the incarnation of God and the deification of the human being, we defend human rights for all persons and all peoples.¹

When it comes to the Orthodox teaching on human rights, the most referred to document is the Russian Orthodox declaration *Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights* (2008),² which provoked an intense discussion, particularly in the ecumenical arena. It received theological responses from the other churches,³ was the focus of the bilateral theological

1. “Contribution of the Orthodox Church in Realizing Peace, Justice, Freedom, Fraternity and Love between Peoples, and in the Removal of Racial and Other Discriminations,” in *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, <https://www.holycouncil.org/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world>.

2. HDFR: Основы учения Русской Православной Церкви о достоинстве, свободе и правах человека, приняты Архиерейским Собором [The Russian Orthodox Church’s Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights], adopted by the Bishop’s Council (Moscow, 2008), <https://old.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights>.

3. CPCE, “Human Rights and Morality: A Response of the Community of the Protestant Churches in Europe—Leuvenberg Fellowship—to the Principles of the Russian Orthodox Church on ‘Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights’” (Vienna, 2009).

dialogues of the Russian Orthodox Church with its partners,⁴ and was the focus of several ecumenical, academic, and political symposia dedicated to the topic of human rights in the ecumenical perspective and Orthodox social ethics.⁵

4. With the Protestant Church of Germany: Георгий Рябых, свящ. Православный подход к правам человека. Доклад, прочитанный на 24-х двухсторонних богословских переговорах между РПЦ и Евангелической Церковью в Германии, Бад-Урах V, 22-28 февраля, 2008 г., [Georgi Ryabikh, priest. Orthodox Approach to Human Rights, Input at 24th bilateral theological discussion between ROC and EKD, Bad Urach V, 22-28 February, 2008]. <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/atheism/?act=documents&div=731>; Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Sinappi XIII (2005): Communiqué and Summary of the 13th Theological Discussion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church; and Sankt-Petersburg XIV (2008): Communiqué and Abstract of the 14th Theological Discussion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, ed. T. Karttunen; Sinappi, Sankt-Petersburg and Siikaniemi., The 13th, 14th and 15th theological discussion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church (Helsinki: Church Council, 2013); Armenian Apostolic Church: Георгий Рябых, свящ. Богословский подход к правам человека. Доклад, прочитанный на 2-м богословском собеседовании РПЦ и Армянской Апостольской Церкви, Эчмиадзин, 5-6 февраля, 2008 г. [Georgi Ryabikh, priest. Theological Approach to Human Rights, Input at 2nd theological consultation between ROC and Armenian Apostolic Church, Etchmiadzin, 5-6 February, 2008], <https://bogoslav.ru/article/277428.html>.

5. “Opportunities and Limits: The Social Teaching of the Orthodox Church” and “Human Dignity–Human Rights: Orthodox Positions,” organized by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung respectively in Berlin, November 2008, and Bucharest, September 2009; conference on Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights, organized by the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen in February 2009, followed by a volume entitled *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*; International workshop “Orthodoxy and Human Rights,” 24-26 April 2013 at Louvain Catholic University at Louvain-la-Neuve; “The Christian Understanding of Human Rights: Difficult Questions – Dialogue of the Churches in Europe on the Occasion of the International Day of Human Rights,” 9-10 December 2011, Protestant Academy Bad Boll, organized by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches, where representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church were speakers at every panel; conference on “Churches Together for Human Rights” in Helsinki, 7-8 March 2013, organized by the CSC CEC, Finnish Ecumenical Council, Evangelical Lutheran and Orthodox churches of Finland.

These kinds of ideas had been developed earlier in the Russian Orthodox Church, particularly since the document *Basis of the Social Concept of Russian Orthodox Church* (2000).⁶

In 2019, the document *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, prepared by a theological team coordinated by the Greek-Orthodox Archdiocese of America, included human rights in the scope of its main topics.⁷

However, it was the pan-Orthodox document *The Contribution of the Orthodox Church in Realizing Peace, Justice, Freedom, Fraternity and Love between Peoples, and in the Removal of Racial and Other Discriminations*,⁸ produced by the Third Pre-Conciliar Conference (Chambésy, 1986), which for decades set a proper theological framework for the Orthodox approach for human rights.

Unfortunately, this document was not widely known, although it played a role as prototype of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church's document *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World* (Crete, 2016),⁹ and therefore needs more attention and study. There is a lack of even adequate translation of this document into English, and unfortunately it remains ignored by many scholars and theologians.

6. BSC: Основы социальной концепции Русской Православной Церкви [*The Basis of the Social Concept of Russian Orthodox Church*] (Moscow, 2000): <https://russianorthodoxchurch.ca/en/the-basis-of-the-social-concept-of-the-russian-orthodox-church/2408>.

7. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (2019), <https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos>

8. English translation by Natallia Vasilevich from the Greek and French official versions:

1) Greek: *Συνόδικα ΙΧ Γ΄ Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις*, 28 Οκτωβρίου – 9 Νοεμβρίου 198[6], *Συνόδικα, ΙΧ Σαμπεζή-Γενέυης*, 2014, 315-325; 2) French: *Synodica X, IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire, Chambésy, 28 octobre – 6 novembre 1986, Chambésy-Genève*, 2014, 307–17; on the basis of passages, phrases, and expressions of later official English translations: “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World” (Synaxis of Orthodox Primates, Chambésy, 21-28 January 2016; The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, 19-26 June 2016).

9. Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World” (Crete, 2016), <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/mission-orthodox-church-today-world>.

In its concluding part, this document includes the following commitments:

We, Orthodox Christians, because we understand the sense of salvation, have a duty to fight to relieve disease, misfortune, and suffering. Because we live the experience of peace, we cannot remain indifferent to its absence from today's society. Because we have benefited from God's justice, we are fighting for more perfect justice in the world and for the elimination of all oppression. Because we daily experience God's mercy, we are fighting against all fanaticism and intolerance between persons and peoples. Because we continually proclaim the incarnation of God and the deification of the human being, we defend human rights for all persons and all peoples. Because we live God's gift of freedom, through the redemptive work of Christ, we can more completely proclaim its universal value for every person and every people. Because we are nourished by the Body and Blood of our Lord in the holy Eucharist, we experience the need to share God's gifts with our brothers and sisters, and we have a better understanding of hunger and deprivation and fight for their extirpation. Because we are looking for a new earth and a new heaven, where absolute justice will reign, we fight here and now for the rebirth and renewal of the human being and society.¹⁰

“We, Orthodox Christians,” in the conclusion of the document, repeats a typical constitutional formula, from which many preambles of state constitutions start—a declaration on the main principles on which the whole architecture of the constitution is based. It sounded like a preamble for a provisional Orthodox constitution, and human rights played an integral role there.

The present chapter will present the way to this document and its approach to human rights.

10. English translation by Natallia Vasilevich from the Greek and French official versions: *Συνόδικα*, IX, 315–25; *Synodica* X, 307–17; on the basis of passages, phrases, and expressions of later official English translations: “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World” (Synaxis of Orthodox Primates, Chambésy, 21-28 January 2016; The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church 19-26 June 2016).

The First Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes, 1961, and the Beginning of the Human Rights Reflection

After the Second World War, renowned Patriarch Athenagoras (Spyrou) tried to launch a process of preparation for the Holy and Great Council of the

Orthodox Church, which in the inter-war time appeared to be unsuccessful. The future Patriarch and then Metropolitan of Corfu, Athenagoras participated in the last pre-conciliar event of the inter-war time, the Preliminary Committee of the Orthodox Churches at the Holy Mount, which took place in Vatopedi, Athos, 8-23 June 1930. In the 1930s, however, such issues as human rights were far from the agenda of the Orthodox churches and their theological reflections. Nevertheless, the future Patriarch Athenagoras spent the years between 1930 and 1940 in the United States, on the eve of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights being conceived at the United Nations.

After his election as Ecumenical Patriarch, Athenagoras started his pre-conciliar activities and finally managed to call the First Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes in 1961, which had to prepare an agenda for a future Holy and Great Council based on the issues discussed in the previous decades and new challenges faced by the Orthodox Church after the war. The preliminary catalogue of the topics, developed by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and sent to the local Orthodox churches, included chapters on *Orthodoxy in the World* as well as on *Social Issues*; however, neither of them included any topics related to the social doctrine of the church in general and human rights in particular.¹¹

In response to the preliminary catalogue of topics, which was communicated to the local churches by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Patriarch of Moscow Alexiy I (Simanski) proposed to add to the chapter “Orthodoxy and the World” the topic “Cooperation of the Orthodox Churches in the activities of realization of the Christian ideas of peace, brotherhood and love between peoples.”¹² In his address to the First Pan-Orthodox Conference, the Patriarch

11. Τὸ Σχέδιον Καταλόγου Θεμάτων, ἐνεκρίθη κατὰ τὴν Συνεδρίαν τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου τῆς 4ης Μαΐου 1961, ἩΗ Πρωτηᾶ Ἰ Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ΄ Σεπτεμβρίου - Αὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, 1967, 12-17.

12. Ἀλέξιος, Πατριάρχης Μόσχας καὶ Πάσης Ῥωσσίας, Ἐν Μόσχᾳ, τῇ 2ᾳ Σεπτεμβρίου 1961, Ἡ Α΄ Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ΄ Σεπτεμβρίου - Αὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, 1967, 23-24.

stressed that “because the stability of the holy churches of God (is) inextricably linked to the peace in the whole world, in fulfilment of their peace-building duty the holy churches at every place of their residence bring to their people and to the whole world the God-given ministry of reconciliation and unity of people.”¹³ He encouraged the Orthodox churches to use their authority on national and international levels to address “people with a call to seek peace in their relations, achieve it and live in it,” as well as “to seek the final eradication of the disgraceful colonial system.”¹⁴ However, the idea of human rights was not voiced.

When the catalogue of topics of the Holy and Great Council was composed during the First Pan-Orthodox Conference, it was the representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov), who insisted on the topic “Cooperation of the Local Orthodox Churches in Activities Directed to Realizing of Christian Ideas of Peace, Brotherhood and Love between Peoples,” highlighting precisely the “sacred mission of reconciliation among people” and the “anxiety in which today humanity exists,”¹⁵ among other concerns. According to Archbishop Nikodim, the “absence of such a topic in the list means that one of the most important sides of mission of the Orthodox Church is left without its reflection . . . This proposal is motivated for us by the awareness of the duty of the Church of Christ to bring to the world the holy mission of reconciliation among people.”¹⁶

Nikodim called for political and social involvement to be included in the concerns of the Orthodox Church and issues of pan-Orthodox elaborations. He describes these as such “pressing problems of humanity” as

13. Обращение Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Алексия к Совещанию Православных Церквей на о. Родосе, In: Сорокин, Владимир, проф.-прот. (сост.) Митрополит Никодим и всеправославное единство. Спб.: Изд-во Князь-Владимирского собора 2008, 15–17, at 16. Ὁμιλία τοῦ Σεβ. Ἀλεξίου, Πατριάρχης Μόσχας καὶ Πάσης Ῥωσσίας, Ἡ Πρῶτη Πανορθόδοξος Διασκεψίς, Ρόδος, ΚΔ Σεπτεμβρίου – Ἀὐγούστου, 1961. *Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριарχείου Ἡ Α΄ Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ Σεπτεμβρίου ἂ Ἀὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα – Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριарχείου, 1967, 114–15.*

14. Обращение Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Алексия к Совещанию Православных Церквей на о. Родосе, 114–15.

15. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, In: Сорокин, Владимир, проф.-прот. (сост.) Митрополит Никодим и всеправославное единство. Спб.: Изд-во Князь-Владимирского собора 2008, 19–31, 26.

16. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, 19–31, 26.

“the establishment and strengthening of peaceful relations between peoples, states, political systems, meeting the needs of the peoples in areas of rapid social change, the eradication of the remnants of the shameful colonial system, and the normalization of the racial issue.”¹⁷

And this political work was considered by the Russian Orthodox representative to be good and worthy for the church, to be part of its mission, in contrast with what Nikodim calls “politicking, infinitely alien from true tasks of the Church of Christ.”¹⁸ According to him, “some Orthodox figures” follow the latter approach, seeing unity with the other Christian churches in the form of “external alliance of no longer churchly like-minded people, which seek to intervene in the earthly affairs of humanity, which are not directly our competence as servants of the Word of God.”¹⁹ He also called “some Orthodox Churches of the East,” which are not members of the Prague Christian peaceful movement, to join the organization²⁰ and all the Orthodox churches to work for the relaxation of international tensions and to press for political agreements on disarmament and national sovereignty of colonized peoples.²¹

Such concerns about peace, racial discrimination, and decolonization while ignoring human rights and while contrasting with other social issues labelled as “politicking” was not a genuine ecclesiastic or theological concern but rather a Soviet-inspired agenda. This justified the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in pan-Orthodox and ecumenical organizations being instrumentalized by Soviet international policy²² as part of “religious

17. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, 19–31, 23.

18. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, 19–31, 22.

19. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, 19–31, 22.

20. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, 19–31, 31.

21. Заявление Главы делегации Русской Православной Церкви архиепископа Ярославского и Ростовского на Всеправославном совещании, 19–31, 28.

22. Livtsov V. “Use of Ecumenism as an Instrument of Soviet Foreign Policy in the Early 1960s,” in *Известия Российского Государственного Педагогического Университета им. А.И. Герцена*, 11 (66), СПб., 2008, 223–29, Ливцов В. РПЦ и экуменическая деятельность международных просоветских организаций, *Власть* 1 (2008), 79–82.

diplomacy” and “soft power” in the context of the Cold War.²³ In a certain sense, introduction of the topic of peace between people and of decolonialization was a shifting of the agenda from possible discussions on human rights, making peace-building and decolonization macro-political concerns and preventing human rights advocacy to be the focus of the Orthodox social doctrine. It was also an attempt to unite Orthodox churches around the agenda of the Moscow Patriarchate against “Anglo-American influence in the Orthodox world,”²⁴ to “neutralize a political and ideologically hostile course, which is usually implemented by the leadership of the Orthodox Churches of Greek nationality,”²⁵ and to “improve relations with the Ecumenical, Alexandrian and Jerusalem Patriarchates” on the basis of “issues of peace and friendship between people and development of anti-Vatican moods.”²⁶

This strategy was clear to the Orthodox from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Archbishop of America Iakovos (Coucouzes) later blamed such an instrumentalization of peace by the socialist camp, which made the definition of peace in effect to be “the people’s submission” to the will of political leaders.²⁷

23. Белякова Н. А., Пивоваров Н. Ю., “Религиозная дипломатия на службе советского государства в годы холодной войны (в период Н. С. Хрущева и Л. И. Брежнева), In: Контуры глобальных трансформаций: политика, экономика, право 11:4 (2018), 130–49.

24. Чумаченко Т. “В вопросу об объявлении в 1966 г. представителя Московского патриархата при Антиохийском патриархе епископа Владимира (Котлярова) *persona non grata*” In: Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом 1 (2017), 41–63, at 47, n. 24.

25. That is how Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) characterized tasks of the Moscow Patriarchate in inter-Orthodox relations. See Митрополит Никодим, В Совет по делам религий. 14 ноября 1966 г. // ГА РФ. Ф. Р6991. Оп. 6. Д.59. Л.197. Чумаченко Т. “В вопросу об объявлении в 1966 г. представителя Московского патриархата при Антиохийском патриархе епископа Владимира (Котлярова) *persona non grata*” In: Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом 1 (2017), 41–63, at 47, n. 26.

26. The note of the KGB dated from 1960, where peace-building activities of the Russian Church were considered in the context of anti-Vatican politics of the Soviet Union. See Пивоваров, Н. “Кого приглашали в СССР и кого отправляли за границу по религиозной линии (1943–1985),” in Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом 1 (2017), 185–215.

27. Iakovos’s Encyclical of 25 March 1978, quoted in Stanley S. Harakas, *Let Mercy Abound: Social Concern in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1983), 43.

In the end, this peace strategy was completely overturned by an anonymous editor²⁸ who updated the topic proposed by Archbishop Nikodim by adding the notion of freedom to the Christian ideals which are to be implemented by the church in the world.²⁹ It was not yet a commitment to human rights, and this is quite legitimate at the beginning of 1960. At that time, even lawyers were sceptical about the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) due to the lack of institutional dimensions before the respective covenants were adopted, which also diminished its moral impact.³⁰ As Pamela Slotte admits, referring to Wolfgang Huber, it is only in the 1960s that work for human rights was developed within the world churches, and theologians developed more interest in it only in the 1970s, as a reaction to work and debates on the universality of human rights.³¹

However, for progressive Christians united around the emerging World Council of Churches, the human rights language found significance from the beginning of the adoption of the UDHR. The role of Christian theologians

28. In the minutes of the conference, it is not disclosed how this happened. In the report of the group that worked on the formulation of this concrete issue, elaboration on this topic was not included. The group included Metropolitan Ignatios (Horaikhe) of Epiphaneia (Patriarchate of Alexandria), Metropolitan Gennadios (Machairiotis) of Paphos (Church of Cyprus), Prof. Georgios Anastasiades (Ecumenical Patriarchate), Metropolitan Synesios (Laskarides) of Nubia, Archbishop Aristovoulos (Aristides) of Kyriakoupolis (Patriarchate of Jerusalem), Alexey Bouevsky (Patriarchate of Moscow), Bishop Emeljan (Piperkovi) of Timok (Serbian Church), archpriest Grigore Cernăianu (Romanian Church), archpriest Prof. Stefan Zankow (Bulgarian Church), Metropolitan Timotheos (Matthaiakes) of Maroneia (Church of Greece), and Metropolitan Stefan (Rudyk) of Białystok and Gdańsk (Church of Poland). See Ἐπιτροπή Β'. Περὶ Διοικήσεις καὶ Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Εὐταξία καὶ Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, Ἡ Πρῶτη Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ' Σεπτεμβρίου – Ἀὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου Ἡ Α' Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ' Σεπτεμβρίου – Ἀὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου, 1967, 118-120.

29. Ὁ Κατάλογος τῶν Θεμάτων τῆς μελλούσης Προσυνόδου, Ἡ Πρῶτη Πανορθόδοξος Διασκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ' Σεπτεμβρίου – Ἀὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου Ἡ Α' Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Ρόδος, ΚΔ' Σεπτεμβρίου – Ἀὐγούστου, 1961. Κείμενα - Πρακτικά, Ἐκ τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου, 1967, 128-33.

30. Jochen von Bernstorff, "The Changing Fortunes of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Genesis and Symbolic Dimensions of the Turn to Rights in International Law," *The European Journal of International Law* 19:5 (2008), 903-24.

31. Pamela Slotte, "Blessed are the Peacemakers': Christian Internationalism, Ecumenical Voices and the Quest for Human Rights," in *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights*, ed. Pamela Slotte and Miia Halme-Tuomisaari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 293-329, at 296, n. 12.

was prominent³² in introducing into the Charter of the United Nations the reference to human dignity and rights, which laid down the basis for post-war international order: “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”³³ A significant role was also played by Christian theologians in their contribution to drafting the UDHR.³⁴

One of the most prominent authors of the UDHR was the Lebanese Orthodox theologian and philosopher Charles Habib Malik, who in his 1949 article in *The Ecumenical Review* characterized the adoption of the declaration and related “international activity in the field of human rights” as “a spiritual reaction against the modern dissolution of the human soul” and as

32. See Canon John Nurser, “The ‘Ecumenical Movement’ Churches, ‘Global Order,’ and Human Rights: 1938–1948,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 2:4 (November 2003), 841–81. Nurser explains in details historical circumstances of introduction of human rights rhetoric and especially of the role played by Frederick Nolde, who directed the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). He also develops it in his further book, John S. Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

33. The Charter of the United Nations, 26 June 1945.

34. Among those were Orthodox theologian Charles Habib Malik, who was a president of the Economic and Social Council, founding member of the UN Human Rights Commission, member of the initial drafting group of UNHCR, chaired the Third Committee during the 1948 debates, and contributed much to the development of basic conceptual issues of the declaration (see Glenn Mitoma, “Charles H. Malik and Human Rights: Notes on a Biography,” *Personal Narrative and Political Discourse* 33:1 (winter 2010), 222–41, and David L. Johnston, “Charles Malik, the UN, and Human Rights” (26 June 2018), <http://www.humantrustees.org/blogs/religion-and-human-rights/item/170-charles-malik>); Protestant theologian Frederick Nolde, who contributed to the introduction and formulation of Article 18 on freedom of conscience (see Nurser, “‘Ecumenical Movement,’” 877•80; “Report of the General Secretary,” *Ecumenical Review* 2:1 (Autumn 1949), 57–70, at 68); Catholic theologian Jacques Maritain, who significantly contributed to the principle of minimal unity on practical grounds and the “open foundation” idea—see Johannes A. (Hans) van der Ven, “The Religious Scope of Human Rights,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*, ed. Alfons Brüning and Evert van der Zweerde (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 19–34, at 25–27, and Elena Pribytkova, “Natural Law and Natural Rights According to Vladimir Solovyov and Jacques Maritain,” in Brüning and van der Zweerde, *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*, 69–82, at 80–81, and Daniele Lorenzini, “Jacques Maritain on Anti-Semitism and Human Rights: A Conversation with Daniele Lorenzini,” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 10 (2018), 536–45.

“an attempt at restoring the sense of responsible, authentic, personal dignity to the individual human being.”³⁵

At the Evanston assembly in 1954, the political debates in the Christian circles on peace versus freedom were already provisioned and the following formula was proposed: “the struggle for the essential freedoms of man as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the struggle for peace.”³⁶

Between Rhodes and Chambésy: Development of the Anthropological Focus and Seeking Balance

The issues of peace and decolonization were strongly promoted by the Soviet-bloc Orthodox delegations during the 1960s and 1970s. However, to avoid polarization between the Orthodox or instrumentalization to a certain political agenda, the pan-Orthodox assemblies didn't touch on any social or political topics, to the great disappointment of the Russian delegation. It is not clear if it was a conscious boycott or intentional strategy from the side of the Orthodox churches outside the communist area, but Metropolitan Nikodim, the promoter of the peace agenda, was constantly drawing attention to this issue and encouraged pan-Orthodox statements concerning peace:

Isn't the silence often kept by the Orthodox pleroma in relation to the problems of international peace, oblivion of one of the main divine commandments—the commandment of love and peace (Jn 14, 15, 21, 27 and other)? Isn't this silence a neglect of witness in the world, in the presence of which the Orthodox Church could only increase the glory of God? Our fraternal pan-Orthodox meetings should not be isolated from these problems.³⁷

Meanwhile, the same silence concerning human rights and freedom existed, despite the growth of human rights concerns and the human rights movement in Orthodoxy. Archbishop Iakovos (Coucouzes) of America could

35. Charles Malik, “Human Rights and Religious Liberty,” *Ecumenical Review* 1:4 (Summer 1949), 404–409, at 404.

36. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954* (Geneva: WCC, 1954), 140, para. V.45.

37. Metropolitan Nikodim speaking at the Third Pan-Orthodox Conference, Rhodes 1966. See “Выступление главы делегации Московского Патриархата Митрополита Ленинградского и Ладожского Никодима на III Всеправославном Совещании на о. Родос по вопросам повестки дня.”

be seen as the most remarkable personality in this movement in the West.

Iakovos cherished freedom:

Our greatest and most precious inheritance from Christianity and Hellenism [is] freedom; freedom that honours the unfettered mind; freedom that rejects all compromise with political, social, or religious untruth; freedom that steadfastly wills spiritual, moral, political, social, and religious growth and improvement, under the watchful eye of God.³⁸

There is nothing more valuable in the world as freedom . . . Let us raise ourselves to our true Hellenic-Christian stature . . . let us vow to support to the best of our ability the human rights of all.³⁹

Serving as the first Orthodox representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the World Council of Churches from 1955, before taking his office as Archbishop of America, Iakovos first avoided an unequivocal and clear stance against racial segregation and support of the civil rights movement in the US, as it could endanger his own and his religious community's position in American society. However, during 1960s, he developed a position of standing on the side of the discriminated and in solidarity with the oppressed.⁴⁰ He also encouraged and inspired the pan-Orthodox Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops to promote equal rights and their guarantees.⁴¹ When 10 December was designated as a UN Human Rights Day, he urged the annual observation of this day with prayers "for those whose human rights are being denied or violated."⁴² Stanley S. Harakas, who analyzed Iakovos's encyclicals, comes to the conclusion that they often refer to human rights as "the rights people enjoy by virtue of their creaturehood as children of God"⁴³ and freedom.⁴⁴

38. From Archbishop Iakovos's encyclical on 25 March 1968. Quoted according to Michael Varlamos, "A Quest for Human Rights and Civil Rights: Archbishop Iakovos and The Greek Orthodox Church," PhD diss., Wayne State University, 2018, 199. https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations/2079.

39. Varlamos, "Quest for Human Rights," 242.

40. Varlamos, "Quest for Human Rights," 152–94.

41. Varlamos, "Quest for Human Rights," 161.

42. Varlamos, "Quest for Human Rights," 242.

43. Harakas, *Let Mercy Abound*, 39.

44. Harakas, *Let Mercy Abound*, 41–43.

The American Clergy–Laity Congresses also actively addressed the issues of the civil rights, human rights, and human dignity in 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1978, and 1980,⁴⁵ supporting Archbishop Iakovos in his human rights causes. The Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) also addressed the issue of the human rights, stating that “a new awareness and a renewed dedication and commitment to human rights, as the God-given inalienable rights for all His people” is needed.⁴⁶

For Orthodox theologians in America, human rights was a self-evident value. They found the source of human rights in human dignity, supported human rights as a concept, criticized violations of human rights, and expressed the need to defend human rights. Freedom, human dignity, and human rights were not problematic concepts for them. Their approach is summarized by American Orthodox ethicist Stanley S. Harakas:

Human rights are so fundamental to our human condition that they are not abrogated even when it is accepted that we are all imperfect and sinful as persons and as social groups. Human rights reside in us as witnesses to the irreducible dignity which we have as creatures created in the image and likeness of God. . . .

Consequently, our Church clearly speaks in defense of genuine human rights, which are applicable to all people.⁴⁷

During the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, social topics were avoided in the pan-Orthodox process. This was partly because these topics were not in the theological focus of Orthodoxy⁴⁸ and partly because of political reasons which were divisive and not uniting for the Orthodox Church. These topics were able to disturb the very idea of the council, while the different local churches literally belonged “to different civilisations, often opposed”⁴⁹;

45. Harakas, *Let Mercy Abound*, 108.

46. 1978 SCOBA Human Rights statement, quoted from Stanley S. Harakas, *Contemporary Moral Issues Facing the Orthodox Christian* (Minneapolis, 1982), 136.

47. Stanley S. Harakas, “Human Rights, Equal Rights,” in *Contemporary Moral Issues Facing the Orthodox Christian*, ed. Stanley S. Harakas (Minneapolis, 1982), 130–41, at 131.

48. Metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou) does a review of discussions of these times. See “Rapport de S.E. Metropolitte Damaskinos de Tranoupolis sur la preparation du Grand Concile,” *Synodica* №3, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1979, 123–52.

49. Olivier Clément, “Tous, préparons ensemble le Concile,” *Synodica* №1, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1976, 105–25, at 120.

to “different social systems.”⁵⁰ In addition, the scope of the topics was broad, and the social topics were scattered in several chapters of several thematic areas.

The Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Committee of the Holy and Great Synod decided in 1971 to reduce the number of topics,⁵¹ and Orthodox theologians were invited in a meeting on 26-31 December 1972 in Chambésy to propose their approach to revise the catalogue of topics. They focused on anthropology as the main thematic area of the future council: to treat “a human being in the image of Christ,” including the issue of the mission of Christianity in the world under this thematic area, formulating it as “social justice, racism, peace.”⁵²

Finally, the First Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference in 1976 adopted the list of ten topics. The social-political issues were merged in the tenth topic: “The Contribution of the Orthodox Church in Realizing of the Christian Ideals of Peace, Freedom, Fraternity and Love between Peoples, and in the Removal of Racial and Other Discriminations.”⁵³ In his homily at the opening service, Metropolitan Meliton of Chalcedon laid down a foundation of a new approach to all theological topics: the human being as placed in the centre of attention.⁵⁴

The famous Orthodox ethicist from the US, Stanley Harakas, in his evaluation on such a formulation of the social topic, admitted “the wisdom and balance with which it was formulated, especially as it appealed to the social concern interests shown by the First, Second and Third Worlds.” He saw peace to be “the favorite popular cause in the socialist nations, who accuse the Western democracies of promoting war,” while “the favorite popular cause in the capitalist countries, in contrast, is the issue of personal freedom,”

50. Olivier Clément and Paul Evdokimov, “Appeal to the Churches,” summarized in “Rapport de S.E. Metropolitte Damaskinos de Tranoupolis sur la preparation du Grand Concile,” *Synodica* №3, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1979, 123–52, at 136–137.

51. Première Conférence Panorthodoxe Préconciliaire (21-28 Novembre 1976), *Synodica* №3, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1979, 7–10, at 7.

52. “Rapport de S.E. Metropolitte Damaskinos de Tranoupolis sur la preparation du Grand Concile,” *Synodica* №3, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1979, 123–52, at 133.

53. Decision №1 (A.1.j.) of the First Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Conference, Chambésy, 1976. *Synodica* №3, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1979, 113–17, at 114.

54. Ouverture de la Conférence, Premier jour d’ouverture officielle des travaux (Dimanche 21 Novembre 1976), *Synodica* №3, ed. Vlassios J. Pheidas, Chambésy-Genève, 1979, 25–28, at 27.

by which “the West charges the Eastern bloc nations with a suppression of freedom”; finally, the third world find itself “particularly resonant with the issues raised . . . under the rubrics of brotherhood and the struggle against racism.”⁵⁵

In the 1970s, especially after the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference was concluded, and in the beginning of 1980s, the Orthodox churches in Europe become more and more interested in human rights and more involved in discussions on this topic under the influence of the ecumenical movement. A specific approach to human rights started to develop in the framework of Orthodoxy theology, based on the opposition of the Orthodox anthropology of a “person” to the Western Christian anthropological concept of a “human being” or the Enlightenment concept of the “individual.”

Christos Yannaras, one of the most influential Greek philosophers and theologians, is an exemplary thinker. Based on the idea of Vladimir Lossky, who saw the “person” and the “individual” to be opposite concepts,⁵⁶ he affirmed in his book *The Freedom of Morality*⁵⁷:

The individual is the denial or neglect of distinctiveness of the person, the attempt to define human existence using the objective properties of man’s common nature, and quantitative comparisons and analogies . . . We try to achieve some rationalistic arrangement for the ‘rights of the individual’, or an ‘objective’ implementation of social justice which makes all individual beings alike and denies them personal distinctiveness.⁵⁸

Yannaras attributes the “personalist approach” to the Eastern Orthodox vision and the “individualistic approach” to Western rationalism, be it in the form of religion or secularism.⁵⁹ Kristina Stoeckl summarizes the views of Yannaras as criticizing the Western anthropological focus on human

55. Fr Stanley S. Harakas, “The Teaching on Peace in the Fathers,” in *Un regard Orthodoxe sur la Paix* (Geneva: Éditions du Centre Orthodoxe de Patriarcat oecuménique, 1986), 32–47, at 32–33.

56. Originally published in French: Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l’Église d’Orient* (Aubier, 1944). Here, Лосский, Владимир, Очерки мистического богословия Восточной Церкви. Догматическое богословие./ Пер. с фр. мон. Магдалины (В. А. Рещиковой), 2-е изд., испр. и перераб (СТСЛ, 2012), 177.

57. First published in 1979: Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

58. Yannaras, *Freedom of Morality*, 22.

59. Yannaras, *Freedom of Morality*, 24.

nature, while Eastern Orthodox traditions highlight the human person as a transcendence of human nature.⁶⁰ According to Stoeckl, Yannaras insists that individual human rights are an “imperfect solution to an already faulty situation.”⁶¹ Stoeckl argues that Yannaras’ concept of “we, [the] Orthodox people” is based on the idea of belonging to a *polis* who can promote and continue a historical experience or heritage, which serves as a foundation for the Eastern Orthodox tradition to promote “a collective and political conception of human rights and not an individual and natural rights conception.”⁶² She concludes that this concept tends to be interpreted as “a pre-modern argument against Western liberal Human Rights discourse.”⁶³

When the Orthodox churches and theologians started to participate in the human rights debates in the European space, it was this specific approach, rather than the American one, which started to develop. Among such involvements, it is worth mentioning the participation in the Conference of European Churches’ Human Rights Programme on the implementation of the ten principles of the Helsinki Act.⁶⁴ Among the theologians who contributed in this period to the development of human rights ideas were Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos),⁶⁵ Metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou),⁶⁶ and Stanley S. Harakas.

Seminar on Peace, Chambésy, 1985: The Promotion of the Concept of Human Dignity as a Basis for Social Teaching

This anthropological and human dignity–based concept was developed further in the work of a new secretary for the preparation of the Holy and Great Council, Metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou), who organized the Sixth pre-conciliar theological seminar, *Orthodox View on Peace*, and whose

60. K. Stoeckl, “The ‘We’ in Normative Political Philosophical Debates: The Position of Christos Yannaras on Human Rights,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*, ed. Alfons Brüning and Evert van der Zweerde (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 189.

61. Stoeckl, “‘We’ in Normative,” 190.

62. Stoeckl, “‘We’ in Normative,” 191.

63. Stoeckl, “‘We’ in Normative,” 198.

64. Todor Sabev, “The Contribution of the Local Orthodox Churches to the Realization of Peace,” in *Un regard orthodoxe sur la paix*, Série: Études Théologique de Chambésy, ed. Damaskinos Papandreou, #7 (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat oecuménique, 1986) 119–33, at 127.

65. Anastasios (Yannoulatos), “Eastern Orthodoxy and Human Rights,” *International Review of Mission* 72:292 (October 1984), 454–56.

66. Damaskinos, Métropolitte de Suisse, “L’Église orthodoxe et les droits de l’homme,” *Episkepsis* 336 (1985), 11–15.

keynote speech there finally became the basis for the future pan-Orthodox document, and was partly incorporated in it.⁶⁷

Although the speech was concerned with peace and seemed to be in the framework of the Soviet peace agenda, Papandreou proposed a new approach to peace “based on dignity of [the] human person.”⁶⁸ In a certain sense, this was a paraphrase of the first sentence of the Preamble of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which stated that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,”⁶⁹ the idea on which all the architecture of the UDHR was based.

These ideas were also in line with another paper at this seminar, presented by another important Orthodox and ecumenically involved theologian, Nikos Nissiotis. Addressing the issue of peace, Nissiotis stated that it can be spoken about “only as the result of man’s restored relationship with God by the concrete conformity to his rule regarding human personality and the respect of human dignity.”⁷⁰ Having been involved in the ecumenical discussion for decades, Nissiotis could observe the hypocrisy of peace talks; for him, it was essential to differentiate between a right and a wrong concept of peace, being critical both to capitalist and socialist interpretations thereof:

the Christian attitude to peace today should not ignore or “cover-up” by peace-making efforts the status quo either of injustice and exploitation, under the pretext of freedom or free economy, or of a refusal of human rights and personal freedom under pretext of establishing social justice. . . . Christian peace-making . . . has to insist on biblical grounds for the respect of both the prerequisites of peace: justice and genuine freedom as its constituent sine qua non elements.⁷¹

67. This took place in Chambésy, 4-27 May 1985. Materials are published in *Un regard orthodoxe sur la paix*, Série: Études Théologique de Chambésy, ed. Damaskinos Papandreou, #7 (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat oecuménique, 1986).

68. Damaskinos (Papandreou), Metropolitan of Switzerland, “Réflexions sur la question de la paix,” in *Un regard orthodoxe sur la paix*, Série: Études Théologique de Chambésy, ed. Damaskinos Papandreou, #7 (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat oecuménique, 1986), 22.

69. UDHR, Preamble, §1.

70. Nikos Nissiotis, “Religion, Christian Faith and Peace,” in *Un regard orthodoxe sur la paix*, Série: Études Théologique de Chambésy, ed. Damaskinos Papandreou, #7 (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat oecuménique, 1986), 90–105, at 97.

71. Nissiotis, “Religion,” 90–105, at 98.

Papandreou proposed some extended reflections on human rights, in which he both embraced human rights and approached them in a critical way.

On the one hand, he insisted on the universality (catholicity) of human rights, which, in his view, has Christian roots and is based on what he calls “theocentric anthropology.”⁷² According to this, the “human [being] is a recapitulation of all creation and image of God in the world” and therefore is the basis for the understanding of the catholicity and unity of humankind.⁷³ Each human being can be traced back to “the primary couple” and an understanding of the eternal value of each human being,⁷⁴ which is based on the sacredness and dignity of every human person derived from the divine origin.⁷⁵ Therefore, it demands both catholicity⁷⁶ and equality⁷⁷ of human rights, rights he compares with the ones enlisted by declarations of international organizations which work for their protection.⁷⁸ He also sees a necessity for the church not only to argue generally for the catholicity of human rights on a theoretical level but to be involved in the realization and protection of them.⁷⁹

At the same time, his critique concerns the approach to human rights of secular international human rights institutions and movements. In his view, this is based on the “autonomous anthropocentrism of the philosophers of the Enlightenment of Western Europe” and “anthropocentric rationalism.”⁸⁰ Papandreou sees in this anthropocentric approach several problems. First, according to him, such an approach presupposes that the human is not a person but is reduced to a mere individual as a member of certain physiological, political, and professional groups.⁸¹ This damages an understanding of the universality of the human, causing human rights little by little to become “just social guarantees determining . . . the place of the individual in the given social system” as a member of social group.⁸² In support of his argument, he refers to the texts of the Universal Declaration of Human

72. Damaskinos, “Réflexions”, 23.

73. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 23.

74. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 23.

75. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 24.

76. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 23.

77. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 24.

78. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 24.

79. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 24.

80. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 24.

81. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 24.

82. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 25.

Rights (1948) and the Helsinki Final Act (1975), as well as to the fact that modern human rights instruments—such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women—that refer simply to certain groups of people based on gender, race, or age or to a certain domain of rights, be it political, cultural, or economic.⁸³ This discussion on the opposition between the concept of a “person,” which is considered to be possible only in the framework of Eastern Orthodox theology, with its ontology of *imago Dei*, and the concept of an “individual” as a deficient Western concept without solid ontological basis is typical of Orthodox theology since the 1980s.

Second, Papandreou lamented that the “human—subject of his rights”⁸⁴ was being transformed “in[to] the object of the same rights,”⁸⁵ which he imagines as “a dogmatic arbitrary and unilateral synthesis”⁸⁶ because human rights are applied not by the human himself, but by states and by governmental and inter-governmental organizations.⁸⁷

Therefore, Papandreou states the opposition between the Orthodox Christian understanding of human rights based on a theocentric approach, which considers human as a subject, and the secular understanding based on an anthropocentric approach, in which the human being is treated as an object. In the end, this discourse and argumentation is not about freedom, human dignity, or human rights as such but on their basis, what is promoted as their basis (and the only basis). The main concern in the hierarchy of concerns is the protection of this basis; the whole discussion is around a symbolic opposition to a secular concept of human rights.

Third, while in a theocentric approach the human being is treated as *imago Dei*, which serves as an ontological presupposition of dignity, in “autonomous humanism,”⁸⁸ a human being is treated in isolation from God and in the absence of a “sacred foundation” and therefore loses these ontological guarantees: “by rejection of any notion of transcendence, a human being becomes the same as the one who creates oneself and the one who applies

83. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 25.

84. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

85. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

86. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

87. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

88. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 25.

to oneself all forms of truth.”⁸⁹ The death of God, therefore, results in the death of the human “as a being with personal identity and individual existence.”⁹⁰ As a result, the human being is not only alienated from God but also alienated from their own self. This leads to a situation in which a human being is arbitrarily defined by itself and, on the other hand, is interpreted in completely deterministic ways, like is the case in structuralism, which insists that it is purely a system of structures which determines the consciousness and actions of individuals and groups.⁹¹ Based on this, Papandreou sees that the task of the Orthodox Church is to bring back the constitutive foundation of human rights, the recognition of the human person as an image of God, which can serve as the only basis for human rights.⁹²

In a sense, the focus is not on what is to be promoted but under what conditions and on what basis. Papandreou does not argue that there is a basis to embrace human freedom and human rights there in the Orthodox Church, but that human freedom and human rights should be promoted only on the Orthodox basis. That is how the idea of human dignity can serve not only as being supportive to human rights but as a more perfect alternative.

However, despite this critique, the focus on human rights was embodied and cherished in the theology since the late 1980s. Later in the pre-conciliar process, the issue of human rights was touched upon by 11th international theological seminar Religion and Society in 1990,⁹³ at which Vlassios Phidas developed the ideas of Papandreou. Phidas went as far as to proclaim that “the interest for the dignity of [the] person and its fundamental rights, which derives directly from Christian anthropology, always remains in the centre of the social mission of the Church in the world.”⁹⁴ He said that despite all the deficiencies of human rights, the church includes in her mission the protection of fundamental rights, recognizes all international documents on human rights as useful instruments, and recognizes that “human rights became an essential element of Christian anthropology.”⁹⁵ He also argued

89. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

90. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

91. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

92. Damaskinos, “Réflexions,” 26.

93. This took place in Chambésy, 30 April–5 May 1990.

94. Vlassios Phidas, “L’Église et les droits de l’homme dans l’expérience contemporaine,” *Religion et société*. Serie: Études Théologique de Chambésy, ed. Damaskinos Papandreou, #12 (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat oecuménique, 1998), 245–57, at 253.

95. Phidas, “L’Église et les droits,” 254.

that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights as “enriched, livened and renewed by the divine grace became a complementary element of ecclesial experience”⁹⁶ and that “activities in the world for the service of human rights are considered”⁹⁷ to be no less a spiritual experience than an internal life of the church as the body of Christ.⁹⁸

The Contribution Document, 1986

The Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference finally developed the ideas of Damaskinos Papandreou and reduced his critique. It produced the document *The Contribution of the Orthodox Church in Realizing Peace, Justice, Freedom, Fraternity and Love between Peoples, and in the Removal of Racial and Other Discriminations*, which throughout the decades remained the basic text on the Orthodox social doctrine. The idea of the dignity of human person, which was referenced in the very title of the first chapter, “The Dignity of the Human Person, the Foundation of Peace,” played a key role in the social doctrine as a whole. As was stated in the previous section of this chapter, such a formulation clearly echoed the formula in the first sentence of the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but with the reduction to dignity only with omission of “equal and inalienable rights” and with clear domination of the idea of peace over freedom and justice. However, the very notion of justice was also included in the document as the least of the Christian ideals.⁹⁹

The 1986 *Contribution* also insisted on the “absolute and universal” character of the dignity of the human person and considered it as “an ontological background.”

96. Phidas, “L’Église et les droits,” 256.

97. Phidas, “L’Église et les droits,” 256.

98. Phidas, “L’Église et les droits,” 256.

99. Synodica X (1986), 266.