

# **THE BASIS OF THE SOCIAL CONCEPT**

## INTRODUCTION

Adopted at the Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, this document sets forth the basic provisions of her teaching on church-state relations and a number of problems socially significant today. It also reflects the official position of Moscow Patriarchate on relations with state and secular society. In addition, it gives a number of guidelines to be applied in this field by the episcopate, clergy and laity.

The nature of the document is determined by the needs experienced by the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church during a long historical period both within and beyond the canonical territory of Moscow Patriarchate. Therefore, it deals primarily with fundamental theological and ecclesio-social issues, as well as those aspects of the life of state and society which were and are equally relevant for the whole Church in the end of the 20th century and in the nearest future.

## I. BASIC THEOLOGICAL PROVISIONS

**I. 1.** The Church is the assembly of believers in Christ, which He Himself calls every one to join. In her «all things heavenly and earthly» should be united in Christ, for He is the Head of «the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all» (Eph. 1:22-23). In the Church the creation is deified and God's original design for the world and man is fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is a result of both the redemptive feat performed by the Son Who was sent by the Father and the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit Who descended on the great day of Pentecost. According to St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Christ put Himself at the head of humanity, becoming the Head of renewed humanity as His body in which access is found to the source of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the unity of «the new humanity in Christ», «the unity of God's grace dwelling in the multitude of rational creatures who submit to grace» (A.S. Khomyakov). «Men, women, children, deeply divided as to race, nation, language, way of life, work, education, status, wealth... — all are restored by the Church in the Spirit... All receive from her one nature which is beyond corruption — the nature that is not affected by the numerous and profound differences by which people differ from one another... In her, no one is at all separated from the common, as everyone is as if dissolved in one another by the simple and indivisible power of faith» (St. Maxim the Confessor).

**I. 2.** The Church is a divine-human organism. Being the body of Christ, she unites in herself the two natures, divine and human, with their inherent actions and wills. The Church relates to the world through her human, created, nature. However, she interacts with it not as a purely earthly organism but in all her mysterious fullness. It is the divine-human nature of the Church that makes possible the grace-giving transformation and purification of the world accomplished in history in the creative co-work, «synergy», of the members and the Head of the church body.

The Church is not of this world, just as her Lord, Jesus, is not of this world. However, He came to the world He was to save and restore, «humbling» Himself to match its conditions. The Church should go through the process of historical kenosis, fulfilling her redemptive mission. Her goal is not only the salvation of people in this world, but also the salvation and restoration of the world itself. The Church is called to act in the world in the image of Christ, to bear witness to Him and His Kingdom. The members of the Church are called to share in Christ's mission, in His service of the world, which is possible for the Church only as a conciliar service so that «the world may believe» (Jn. 17:21). The Church is called to serve the salvation of the world, for even the Son of man Himself «came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many» (Mk. 10:45).

The Saviour said about Himself: «I am among you as he that serveth» (Lk. 22:27). Service for the salvation of the world and human beings cannot be limited to national and religious limits, as the Lord Himself states clearly in the parable of the merciful Samaritan. Moreover, the members of the Church encounter Christ as the One Who assumed all sins and suffering of the world when they welcome the hungry, homeless, sick or prisoners. Help to those who suffer is in the full sense help to Christ Himself, and the fulfilment of this commandment determines the eternal fate of every man (Mt. 25:31-41). Christ calls upon His disciples not to shun the world, but to be «the salt of the earth» and «the light of the world».

The Church, being the body of God-Man Christ, is divine-human. However, even if Christ is the perfect God-Man, the Church is not yet perfect in her divine humanity, for on earth she has to struggle with sin, and her humanity, though inherently united with the Godhead, is far from expressing Him and matching Him in everything.

**I. 3.** Life in the Church, to which every one is called, is continuous ministry to God and people. All the people of God are called to it. The members of the body of Christ, participating in common service, also fulfil their particular functions. Each is given a special gift to serve all. «As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God» (1 Pet. 4:10). «For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he wills» (1 Cor. 12:8-11). Gifts of the manifold grace of God are given to every one individually but for the common ministry of the people of God (also for the service of the world). And this represents the common service of the Church performed on the basis of not one but many various gifts. The variety of gifts creates various ministries; however, «there are difference of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all» (1 Cor. 12:5-6).

The Church also calls her faithful children to participation in the life of society, which should be based on the principles of Christian morality. In the High Priestly Prayer, the Lord Jesus interceded the Heavenly Father for His followers: «I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil... As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world» (Jn. 17:15, 18). It is inadmissible to shun the surrounding world in a Manichean way. Christian participation in it should be based on the awareness that the world, socium and state are objects of God's love, for they are to be transformed and purified on the

principles of God-commanded love. The Christian should view the world and society in the light of his ultimate destiny, in the eschatological light of the Kingdom of God.

The variety of gifts in the Church is manifested in a special way in her social ministry. The undivided church organism participates in the life of the world around it in its fullness, but the clergy, monastics and laity can realize this participation in different ways and degrees.

**I. 4.** Fulfilling the mission of the salvation of the human race, the Church performs it not only through direct preaching, but also through good works aimed to improve the spiritual-moral and material condition of the world around her. To this end, she enters into co-operation with the state, even if it is not Christian, as well as with various public associations and individuals, even if they do not identify themselves with the Christian faith. Without setting herself the direct task to have all converted to Orthodoxy as a condition for co-operation, the Church hopes that joint charity will lead its workers and people around them to the knowledge of the Truth, help them to preserve or restore faithfulness to the God-given moral norms and inspire them to seek peace, harmony and well-being — the conditions in which the Church can best fulfill her salvific work.

## II. CHURCH AND NATION

**II. 1.** The Old Testament people of Israel were the prototype of the peoples of God – the New Testament Church of Christ. The redemptive feat of Christ the Saviour initiated the being of the Church as new humanity, the spiritual posterity of the forefather Abraham. By His Blood Christ «hast redeemed us to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation» (Rev. 5:9). The Church by her very nature is universal and therefore supranational. In the Church «there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek» (Rom. 10:12). Just as God is not the God of the Jews alone but also of the Gentiles (Rom. 3:29), so the Church does not divide people on either national or class grounds: in her «there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all» (Col. 3:11).

In the contemporary world, the notion of «nation» is used in two meanings, as an ethnic community and the aggregate citizens of a particular state. Relationships between church and nation should be viewed in the context of both meanings of this word.

In the Old Testament, the terms *'am* and *goy* are used to denote «a people». In the Hebrew Bible, each term is given a quite concrete meaning, the former denoting God's chosen people of Israel, the latter in its plural form *goyim* the Gentiles. In the Greek Bible (Septuagint), the first term was rendered by the term *laos* (people) or *demos* (a nation as a political entity), while the second by the term *ethnos* (nation, in plural *ethne*, meaning «heathens»).

God's chosen people of Israel are opposed to other nations throughout the Old Testament books associated in one way or another with the history of Israel. The people of Israel were chosen not because they surpassed other nations in number or anything else, but because God chose and loved them (Deut. 7:6-8). The notion of a God's chosen people was a religious one in the Old Testament. The feeling of national community characteristic of the sons of Israel was rooted in the awareness of their belonging to God through a covenant made by the their fathers with the Lord. The people of Israel became God's people whose calling was to preserve the faith in one true God and to bear witness to this faith before other nations so that through Israel God-Man Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all people, may be revealed to the world.

In addition to their sharing one religion, the unity of the people of God was secured by their ethnic and linguistic community and their rootedness in a particular land, their fatherland.

The ethnic community of the Israelites was rooted in their origin from one forefather, Abraham. «We have Abraham to our father» (Mt. 3:9; Lk. 3:8), the ancient Jews would

say, emphasising their belonging to the posterity of the one who God ordained to become «a father of many nations» (Gen. 17:5). Great importance was attached to the preservation of the purity of the blood: marriages with strangers were not approved because in these marriages «the holy seed» was mingled with «the people of *those lands*» (Ezra 9:2).

God gave the people of Israel the Promised Land for livelihood. After they came out of Egypt, these people went to Canaan, the land of their predecessors, and by God's will conquered it. Since then the land of Canaan became the land of Israel, while its capital city, Jerusalem, became the principal spiritual and political centre of God's chosen people. The people of Israel spoke one language that was not only the language of everyday life, but also the language of prayer. Moreover, Hebrew was the language of Revelation, for it was in it that God Himself spoke to the people of Israel. In the era before the coming of Christ when the dwellers of Judea spoke Aramaic, Greek was elevated to the status of the national language, while Hebrew continued to be treated as a sacred language in which worship was conducted in the temple.

Being universal by nature, the Church is at the same time one organism, one body (1 Cor. 12:12). She is the community of the children of God, «a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people... which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God» (1 Pet. 2:9-10). The unity of these new people is secured not by its ethnic, cultural or linguistic community, but by their common faith in Christ and Baptism. The new people of God «have no continuing city here, but seek one to come» (Heb. 13:14). The spiritual homeland of all Christians is not earthly Jerusalem but Jerusalem «which is above» (Gal. 4:26). The gospel of Christ is preached not in the sacred language understandable to one people, but in all tongues (Acts. 2:3-11). The gospel is not preached for one chosen people to preserve the true faith, but so that «at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father» (Phil. 2:10-11).

**II. 2.** The universal nature of the Church, however, does not mean that Christians should have no right to national identity and national self-expressions. On the contrary, the Church unites in herself the universal with the national. Thus, the Orthodox Church, though universal, consists of many Autocephalous National Churches. Orthodox Christians, aware of being citizens of the heavenly homeland, should not forget about their earthly homeland. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Divine Founder of the Church, had no shelter on earth (Mt. 8:20) and pointed that the teaching He brought was not local or national in nature: «the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father» (Jn. 4:21). Nevertheless, He identified Himself with the people to whom He belonged by birth. Talking to the

Samaritan woman, He stressed His belonging to the Jewish nation: «Ye worship ye know what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews» (Jn. 4:22). Jesus was a loyal subject of the Roman Empire and paid taxes in favour of Caesar (Mt. 22-16-21). St. Paul, in his letters teaching on the supranational nature of the Church of Christ, did not forget that by birth he was «an Hebrew of the Hebrews» (Phil. 3:5), though a Roman by citizenship (Acts 22:25-29).

The cultural distinctions of particular nations are expressed in the liturgical and other church art, especially in the peculiarities of Christian order of life. All this creates national Christian cultures.

Among saints venerated by the Orthodox Church, many became famous for the love of their earthly homeland and faithfulness to it. Russian hagiographic sources praise the holy Prince Michael of Tver who «gave his life for his fatherland», comparing his feat to the martyrdom of the holy protomartyr Dimitrius of Thessaloniki: «The good lover of his fatherland said about his native city of Thessaloniki, 'O Lord, if you ruin this city, I will perish together with it, but if you save it, I will also be saved'».

In all times the Church has called upon her children to love their homeland on earth and not to spare their lives to protect it if it was threatened. The Russian Church on many occasions gave her blessing to the people for them to take part in liberation wars. Thus, in 1380, the venerable Sergius the abbot and miracle-maker of Radonezh blessed the Russian troops headed by the holy Prince Dimitry Donskoy before their battle with the Tartar-Mongol invaders. In 1612, St. Hermogen, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, gave blessing upon the irregulars in their struggle with the Polish invaders. In 1813, during the war with the French aggressors, St. Philaret of Moscow said to his flock: «If you avoid dying for the honour and freedom of the Fatherland, you will die a criminal or a slave; die for the faith and the Fatherland and you will be granted life and a crown in heaven».

The holy righteous John of Kronstadt wrote this about love of one's earthly homeland: «Love the earthly homeland... it has raised, distinguished, honoured and equipped you with everything; but have special love for the heavenly homeland... that homeland is incomparably more precious than this one, because it is holy, righteous and incorruptible. The priceless blood of the Son of God has earned that homeland for you. But in order to be members of that homeland, you should respect and love its laws, just as you are obliged to respect and really respect the laws of the earthly homeland».

**II. 3.** Christian patriotism may be expressed at the same time with regard to a nation as an ethnic community and as a community of its citizens. The Orthodox Christian is called to love his fatherland, which has a territorial dimension, and his brothers by blood who live everywhere in the world. This love is one of the ways of fulfilling God's



commandment of love to one's neighbour which includes love to one's family, fellow-tribesmen and fellow-citizens.

**The patriotism of the Orthodox Christian should be active. It is manifested when he defends his fatherland against an enemy, works for the good of the motherland, cares for the good order of people's life through, among other things, participation in the affairs of government. The Christian is called to preserve and develop national culture and people's self-awareness.**

When a nation, civil or ethnic, represents fully or predominantly a monoconfessional Orthodox community, it can in a certain sense be regarded as the one community of faith — an Orthodox nation.

**II. 4.** At the same time, national sentiments can cause such sinful phenomena as aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, national exclusiveness and inter-ethnic enmity. At their extremes, these phenomena often lead to the restriction of the rights of individuals and nations, wars and other manifestations of violence.

**It is contrary to Orthodox ethics to divide nations into the best and the worst and to belittle any ethnic or civic nation. Even more contrary to Orthodoxy are the teachings which put the nation in the place of God or reduce faith to one of the aspects of national self-awareness.**

Opposing these sinful phenomena, **the Orthodox Church carries out the mission of reconciliation between hostile nations and their representatives. Thus, in inter-ethnic conflicts, she does not identify herself with any side, except for cases when one of the sides commit evident aggression or injustice.**

### III. CHURCH AND STATE

**III. 1.** The Church as a divine-human organism has not only a mysterious nature not submissive to the elements of the world, but also a historical component which comes in touch with the outside world including state. The state, which exists for the purpose of ordering worldly life, also comes into contact with the Church. Relationships between state and the followers of genuine religion have continuously changed in the course of history.

The family represented the initial cell of human society. The holy history of the Old Testament shows that the state was not formed at once. The Old Testament people had no state before Joseph's brothers went to Egypt. State was gradually formed in the epoch of the Judges. As a result of a complex historical development guided by Divine Providence, the complication of social relations led to the emergence of the state.

In ancient Israel before the period of Kings, there was genuine theocracy, i. e. the rule of God, which proved to be unique in history. However, as society moved away from obedience to God as the organiser of worldly affairs, people began to think about the need to have a worldly ruler. The Lord, while accepting the people's choice and authorising the new form of government, regrets their rejection of divine rule. «And the Lord said unto Samuel. Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them... Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them» (1 Sam. 8:7, 9).

Thus, the emergence of the temporal state should not be understood as a reality originally established by God. It was rather God's granting human being an opportunity to order their social life by their own free will, so that this order as a response to the earthly reality distorted by sin, could help avoid a greater sin through opposing it by means of temporal power. At the same time, the Lord says clearly through Samuel's mouth that He expects this power to be faithful to His commandments and to do good works: «Now therefore behold the king ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye continue following the Lord our God. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers» (1 Sam. 12:13-15). When Saul violated the Lord's commandment, God rejected him (1 Sam. 16:1) and ordered him to anoint His other chosen one, David, a son of the commoner Jesse.

The Son of God Who reigns over heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18) through becoming man subjected Himself to the worldly order of things, obeying also the bearers of state power. To His crucifier, Pilate, the Roman procurator in Jerusalem, He said, «Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above» (Jn. 19:11). The Saviour gave this answer to the tempting question of a Pharisee about whether it is permissible to pay tribute to Caesar: «Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's» (Mt. 22:21).

Explaining the teaching of Christ on the right attitude to state power, St. Paul wrote: «Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou them not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour» (Rom. 13:1-7). The same idea was expressed by St. Peter: «Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as he servants of God» (1 Pet. 2:13-16). The apostles taught Christians to obey the authorities regardless of their attitude to the Church. In the apostolic era, the Church of Christ was persecuted both by the Jewish and Roman State authorities. This did not prevent the martyrs and other Christians of that time from praying for prosecutors and recognising their power.

**III. 2.** The fall of Adam brought to the world sins and vices which needed public opposition. The first of them was the murder of Cain by Abel (Gen. 4:1-16). Aware of this, people in all known societies began to establish laws restricting evil and supporting good. For the Old Testament people, God Himself was the Lawmaker Who gave rules to regulate not only religious life proper but also public life (Ex. 20-23).

God blesses the state as an essential element of life in the world distorted by sin, in which both the individual and society need to be protected from the dangerous manifestations of sin. At the same time, the need for the state aroused not because God willed it for the primitive Adam, but because of the fall and because the actions to restrict the dominion of sin over the world conformed to His will. **Holy Scriptures calls**

**upon powers that be to use the power of state for restricting evil and supporting good, in which it sees the moral meaning of the existence of state** (Rom. 13:3-4). It follows from the above that anarchy is the absence of proper order in a state and society, while calls to it and attempts to introduce it run contrary to the Christian outlook (Rom. 13:2).

**The Church not only prescribes for her children to obey state power regardless of the convictions and faith of its bearers, but also prays for it, «that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty» (1 Tim. 2:2). At the same time, Christians should avoid attempts to make it absolute and failure to recognise the limits of its purely earthly, temporal and transient value conditioned by the presence of sin in the world and the need to restrain it. According to the teaching of the Church, power itself has no right to make itself absolute by extending its limits up to complete autonomy from God and from the order of things established by Him. This can lead to the abuse of power and even to the deification of rulers. The state, just as other human institutions, even if aimed at the good, may tend to transform into a self-sufficing institute. Numerous historical examples of such a transformation show that in this case the state loses its true purpose.**

**III. 3.** In church-state relations, the difference in their natures should be taken into account. The Church has been founded by God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, while the God-instituted nature of state power is revealed in historical process only indirectly. The goal of the Church is the eternal salvation of people, while the goal of state is their well-being on earth.

«My kingdom is not of this world», says the Saviour (Jn. 18:36). «This world» is only partly obedient to God, but for the most part it seeks to become autonomous from its own Creator and Lord. To the extent the world disobeys God it obeys «the father of lie» and «lieth in wickedness» (Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 5:19). But the Church as «the body of Christ» (1 Cor. 12:27) and «the pillar and ground of the truth» (1 Tim. 3:15), in her mysterious essence can have no evil in herself, nor any shadow of darkness. Since state is part of «this world», it has no part in the Kingdom of God, for where there is Christ «all in all» (Col. 3:11) there is no room for coercion, nor is there opposition between the human and the divine, hence there is no state.

**In the contemporary world, state is normally secular and not bound by any religious commitments. Its co-operation with the Church is limited to several areas and based on mutual non-interference into each other's affairs.** However, the state is aware as a rule that earthly well-being is unthinkable without respect for certain moral norms — the norms which are also essential for the eternal salvation of man. Therefore, the tasks

and work of the Church and the state may coincide not only in seeking purely earthly welfare, but also in the fulfilment of the salvific mission of the Church.

The principle of the secular state cannot be understood as implying that religion should be radically forced out of all the spheres of the people's life, that religious associations should be debarred from decision-making on socially significant problems and deprived of the right to evaluate the actions of the authorities. This principle presupposes only a certain division of domains between church and state and their non-interference into each other's affairs.

**The Church should not assume the prerogatives of the state**, such as resistance to sin by force, use of temporal authoritative powers and assumption of the governmental functions which presuppose coercion or restriction. **At the same time, the Church may request or urge the government to exercise power in particular cases**, yet the decision rests with the state.

**The state should not interfere in the life of the Church or her government, doctrine, liturgical life, counselling, etc., or the work of canonical church institutions in general, except for those aspects where the Church is supposed to operate as a legal identity obliged to enter into certain relations with the state, its legislation and governmental agencies. The Church expects that the state will respect her canonical norms and other internal statutes.**

**III. 4.** Various models of relationships between the Orthodox Church and the state have developed in the course of history.

The Orthodox tradition has developed an explicit ideal of church-state relations. Since church-state relations are two-way traffic, the above-mentioned ideal could emerge in history only in a state that recognises the Orthodox Church as the greatest people's shrine, in other words, only in an Orthodox state.

Attempts to work out this form were undertaken in Byzantium, where the principles of church-state relations were expressed in the canons and the laws of the empire and were reflected in patristic writings. In their totality these principles were described as symphony between church and state. It is essentially co-operation, mutual support and mutual responsibility without one's side intruding into the exclusive domain of the other. The bishop obeys the government as a subject, not his episcopal power comes from a government official. Similarly, a government official obeys his bishop as a member of the Church, who seeks salvation in it, not because his power comes from the power of the bishop. The state in such symphonic relationships with the Church seeks her spiritual support, prayer for itself and blessing upon its work to achieve the goal of its citizens' welfare, while the Church enjoys support from the state in creating

conditions favourable for preaching and for the spiritual care of her children who are at the same time citizens of the state.

St. Justinian in his Sixth Novella formulates the principle lying in the basis of church-state symphony: «The greatest blessings granted to human beings by God's ultimate grace are priesthood and kingdom, the former (priesthood, church authority) taking care of divine affairs, while the latter (kingdom, government) guiding and taking care of human affairs, and both, come from the same source, embellishing human life. Therefore, nothing lies so heavy on the hearts of kings as the honour of priests, who on their part serve them, praying continuously for them to God. And if the priesthood is well ordered in everything and is pleasing to God, then there will be full harmony between them in every thing that serves the good and benefit of the human race. Therefore, we exert the greatest possible effort to guard the true dogmas of God and the honour of the priesthood, hoping to receive through it great blessings from God and to hold fast to the ones which we have». Guided by this norm, Emperor Justinian in his Novellas recognised the canons as having the power of state laws.

The classical Byzantine formula of relationships between state and church power is contained in the Epanagoge (later 9th century): «The temporal power and the priesthood relate to each other as body and soul; they are necessary for state order just as body and soul are necessary in a living man. It is in their linkage and harmony that the well-being of a state lies».

This symphony, however, did not exist in Byzantium in an absolutely pure form. In practice it was often violated and distorted. The Church was repeatedly subjected to caesarean-papist claims from the state authorities, which were essentially the demands that the head of the state, the emperor, should have the decisive say in ordering church affairs. Along with the sinful human love of power, these claims had also a historical reason. The Christian emperors of Byzantium were direct successors of the Roman pagan rulers who, among their numerous titles, had that of *pontifex maximus*, chief priest. The caesarean-papist tendency manifested itself most bluntly and dangerously for the Church in the policy of heretical emperors, especially in the iconoclastic era.

Unlike Byzantine *basileuses*, Russian tsars had a different legacy. For this and other historical reasons, relationship between the church and the state authorities was more harmonious in Russian antiquity. However, there were also deviations from the canonical norms (under Ivan the Terrible and in the confrontation between Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon).

As far as the Synodal period is concerned, the evident distortion of the symphonic norm for two centuries in church history is associated with the distinct impact that the Protestant doctrine of territory and established church (see below) made on the Russian

perception of law and order and political life. An attempt to assert the ideal of symphony in the new situation when the empire collapsed was made by the Local Council of 1917-1918. In the declaration that preceded the Action on Church-State Relations, the demand to separate church and state was likened to the wish that «the sun should not shine and fire should not warm up. The Church, by the internal law of her being, cannot renounce her calling to enlighten, to transform the whole human life, to imbue it with her rays». In the resolution of the Council on the legal status of the Orthodox Church of Russia, the state is called upon to accept, in particular, these provisions: «the Russian Orthodox Church, being part of the one Universal Church of Christ, shall have the pre-eminent public and legal status among other confessions in the Russian State, which befits her as the greatest shrine for the overwhelming majority of the population and a great historical force that built the Russian State... As soon as they are made public, decrees and statutes issued the Orthodox Church for herself in the order established by herself, as well as deeds of the church government and court shall be recognised by the State as legally valid and important unless they violate state laws... State laws concerning the Orthodox Church shall be issued only with the consent of the church authorities». Subsequent Local Councils were held in situations when history made it impossible to return to the pre-Revolutionary principles of church-state relations. Nevertheless, the Church asserted her traditional role in the life of society and expressed readiness to work in social field. Thus, the 1990 Local Council stated: «Throughout her millennium-long history the Russian Orthodox Church educated the faithful in the spirit of patriotism and love of peace. Patriotism is manifested in the concern for the historical heritage of the Fatherland, in active civil position by sharing the joys and hardships of her people, in zealous and conscientious work and in concern for the moral state of society and for the preservation of nature» (from the Message of the Council).

In the European medieval West, a doctrine of «two swords» was formed not without influence by the work of St. Augustine entitled «On the City of God». According to it, both church and state power, the former directly, the latter indirectly, go back to the Bishop of Rome. Popes were absolute monarchs ruling over the Papal States, a part of Italy, the remnant of which is what is the Vatican today. Many bishops, especially in feudally divided Germany were princes with state-like jurisdiction over their territories, with their own governments and armies of which they were leaders.

The Reformation left no ground for the popes and Catholic bishops to preserve their power in the territories of countries which became Protestant. In the 17th-19th centuries, the legal conditions in Catholic countries also changed so much that the Catholic Church was in fact removed from government. Along with the Vatican, however, the doctrine of «two swords» helped to retain the practice of concluding agreements in the

form of concordats between the Roman Curia and states in which there were Catholic communities. Due to this, the legal status of these communities was determined in many countries not only by internal laws, but also by the law regulating international relations, to which the Vatican State was subject.

In the countries where the Reformation triumphed and later in some Catholic countries, the territorial principle was established in church-state relations, giving to state full sovereignty over a territory and the religious communities found in it. This system of relations was expressed in the phrase *cujus est regio, illius est religio* (the religion of the sovereign is the religion of the country). If realised consistently, this system implies that those whose faith is different from that of the bearers of the highest state power should be banished from the state (a practice realised more than once). In real life, however, this principle gained a foothold in a softer form described as the established church. It gives to the majority religious community, to which the sovereign belongs and which he officially heads, the privileges of the state Church. A combination of this system of church-state relations with remnants of the traditional symphony inherited from Byzantium determined the peculiarity of the legal status of the Orthodox Church in the Synodal period in Russia.

In the United State of America where there have been a multiconfessional state from the outset, the principle of radical separation of Church and State has been established, whereby the power system is neutral to all confessions. However, absolute neutrality is hardly feasible at all. Every state has to reckon with the real religious composition of its population. No Christian denomination taken separately makes up a majority in the United States, yet the decisive majority of US people are precisely Christians. This reality is reflected, in particular, in the fact that the president takes the oath of office on the Bible, Sundays are official days off, etc.

The principle of church-state separation, however, also has another genealogy. In the European continent it has resulted from the anticlerical or outright anti-church struggle well known, in particular, from the history of the French Revolutions. In these cases, the Church is separated from State not because of the multiconfessionalism of the population, but because the State identifies itself with a particular anti-Christian or altogether anti-religious ideology, making it pointless to speak about its neutrality towards religion and even its purely secular nature. For the Church, it normally means restrictions, limited rights, discrimination or outright persecution. The history of the 20th century has given many examples of this attitude of State towards religion and Church in various countries of the world.

There is also a form of church-state relations, intermediate between the established church and the radical separation of Church from State whereby the Church has the



status of a private corporation. It is the status of the Church as a legal public corporation. In this case, the Church can have some privileges and obligations delegated to her by the state without being the Established Church in the proper sense of this word.

Today a number of countries, such as Great Britain, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Greece, still have Established Churches. Other states, which increasingly grow in number (USA, France), build their relations with religious communities on the basis of full separation. In Germany, the Catholic, Evangelical and some other Churches have the status of legal public corporations, while other religious communities are fully separated from state and regarded as private corporations. In practice, however, the real status of religious communities in most of these countries depend little on whether they are separated or not from the state. In some countries where Churches have retained the public status, it has been reduced to collecting taxes for their upkeep by the public fiscal administration and recognising church baptism and marriage records as valid legally as civil status certificates registered by public administrative bodies.

Today the Orthodox Church performs her service of God and people in various countries. In some of them she represents the nation-wide confession (Greece, Rumania, Bulgaria), while in others, which are multinational, the religion of the ethnic majority (Russia). In still other countries, those who belong to the Orthodox Church comprise a religious minority surrounded by either heterodox Christians (Finland, Poland, USA) or people of other religions (Japan, Syria, Turkey). In some small countries the Orthodox Church has the status of the state religion (Cyprus, Greece, Finland), while in other countries it is separated from state. There are also differences in the concrete legal and political contexts in which the Local Orthodox Churches live. They all, however, build both their internal order and relations with the government on the commandments of Christ, teaching of the apostles, holy canons and two-thousand-year-long historical experience and in many situations find an opportunity to pursue their God-commanded goals, thus revealing their other-worldly nature, their heavenly, divine, origin.

**III. 5. Given their different natures, Church and State use different means for attaining their goals. The state relies basically on material power including coercion and on respective secular ideological systems, whereas the Church has at her disposal religious and moral means to give spiritual guidance to the flock and to attract new children.**

The Church infallibly preaches the Truth of Christ and teaches moral commandments which came from God Himself. Therefore, she has no power to change anything in her teaching. **Nor has she the power to fall silent and to stop preaching the truth whatever other teachings may be prescribed or propagated by state bodies. In this**

**respect, the Church is absolutely free from the state.** For the sake of the unhindered and internally free preaching of the truth, the Church suffered persecution by the enemies of Christ not once on history. But the persecuted Church is also called to endure the persecution with patience, without refusing to be loyal to the state persecuting her.

Legal sovereignty in the territory of a state belongs to its authorities. Therefore, it is they who determine the legal status of a Local Church or her part, either giving her an opportunity for the unhampered fulfilment of church mission or restricting this opportunity. Thus, state power makes judgement on itself and eventually foretells its fate. **The Church remains loyal to the state, but God's commandment to fulfil the task of salvation in any situation and under any circumstances is above this loyalty.**

**If the authority forces Orthodox believers to apostatise from Christ and His Church and to commit sinful and spiritually harmful actions, the Church should refuse to obey the state.** The Christian, following the will of his conscience, can refuse to fulfil the commands of state forcing him into a grave sin. If the Church and her holy authorities find it impossible to obey state laws and orders, after a due consideration of the problem, they may take the following action: enter into direct dialogue with authority on the problem, call upon the people to use the democratic mechanisms to change the legislation or review the authority's decision, apply to international bodies and the world public opinion and appeal to her faithful for peaceful civil disobedience.

**III. 6.** The principle of the freedom of conscience, which emerged as a legal notion in the 18th-19th centuries, has become a fundamental principle of interpersonal relations only after World War I. It was confirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and included in the constitutions of most states. The emergence of this principle testifies that in the contemporary world, religion is turning from a «social» into a «private» affair of a person. This process in itself indicates that the spiritual value system has disintegrated and that most people in a society which affirms the freedom of conscience no longer aspire for salvation. If initially the state emerged as an instrument of asserting divine law in society, the freedom of conscience has ultimately turned state in an exclusively temporal institute with no religious commitments.

The adoption of the freedom of conscience as legal principle points to the fact that society has lost religious goals and values and become massively apostate and actually indifferent to the task of the Church and to the overcoming of sin. However, this principle has proved to be one of the means of the Church's existence in the non-religious world, enabling her to enjoy a legal status in secular state and independence from those in society who believe differently or do not believe at all.

The religio-ideological neutrality of the state does not contradict the Christian idea of the Church's calling in society. The Church, however, should point out to the state that it is inadmissible to propagate such convictions or actions which may result in total control over a person's life, convictions and relations with other people, as well as erosion in personal, family or public morality, insult of religious feelings, damage to the cultural and spiritual identity of the people and threats to the sacred gift of life. In implementing her social, charitable, educational and other socially significant projects, the Church may rely on the support and assistance of the state. She also has the right to expect that state, in building its relations with religious bodies, will take into account the number of their followers and the place they occupy in forming the historical, cultural and spiritual image of the people and their civic stand.

III. 7. The form and methods of government is conditioned in many ways by the spiritual and moral condition of society. Aware of this, the Church accepts the people's choice or does not resist it at least.

Under **the Judges' rule**, the public system described in the Book of Judges, power acted not through coercion, but authority, which was sanctioned by God. For this authority to be effective, the faith in society should be very strong. Under **monarchy**, power remains God-given, but for its exercise it uses not so much spiritual authority as coercion. The shift from the judges' rule to monarchy indicated the weakening faith — the fact that caused the need to replace the King Invisible by the king visible. Contemporary democracies, including those monarchic in form, do not seek the divine sanction of power. They represent the form of government in secular society that presupposes the right of every able-bodied citizen to express his will through elections.

**Any change in the form of government to that more religiously rooted, introduced without spiritualising society itself, will inevitably degenerate into falsehood and hypocrisy and make this form weak and valueless in the eyes of the people. However, one cannot altogether exclude the possibility of such a spiritual revival of society as to make natural a religiously higher form of government.** But under slavery one should follow St. Paul advice: «if thou mayest be free, use it rather» (1 Cor. 7:21). At the same time, the Church should give more attention not to the system of the outer organisation of state, but to the inner condition of her members' hearts. Therefore, the Church does not believe it possible for her to become an initiator of any change in the form of government. Along the same line, the 1994 Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church stressed the soundness of the attitude whereby «the Church does not give preference to any social system or any of the existing political doctrines».

III. 8. The state, including the secular state, is normally aware of its calling to build the life of the people on the principles of good and justice, taking care of both the material

and spiritual welfare of society. Therefore, the Church can cooperate with the state in affairs which benefit the Church herself, as well as the individual and society. For the Church this co-operation should be part of her salvific mission, which embraces comprehensively the concern for man. The Church is called to take part in building human life in all spheres where it is possible and, in doing so, to join efforts with representatives of the secular authority.

Church-state co-operation should be realised on the following conditions: the Church's participation in the work of the state is correspondent to her nature and calling; the state does exercise dictate in the Church's social work; and the Church is not involved in the spheres of public activity where her work is impossible for canonical and other reasons.

**The areas of church-state co-operation in the present historical period are as follows:**

- a) peacemaking on international, inter-ethnic and civic levels and promoting mutual understanding and co-operation among people, nations and states;
- b) concern for the preservation of morality in society;
- c) spiritual, cultural, moral and patriotic education and formation;
- d) charity and the development of joint social programs;
- e) preservation, restoration and development of the historical and cultural heritage, including concern for the preservation of historical and cultural monuments;
- f) dialogue with governmental bodies of all branches and levels on issues important for the Church and society, including the development of appropriate laws, by-laws, instructions and decisions;
- g) care of the military and law-enforcement workers and their spiritual and moral education;
- h) efforts to prevent crime and care of prisoners;
- i) science and research;
- j) healthcare;
- k) culture and arts;
- l) work of ecclesiastical and secular mass media;
- m) preservation of the environment;
- n) economic activity for the benefit of the Church, state and society;
- o) support for the institution of family, for motherhood and childhood;
- p) opposition to the work of pseudo-religious structures presenting a threat to the individual and society.

Church-state co-operation is also possible in some other areas if it contributes to the fulfilment of the tasks enumerated above.

At the same time, there are areas in which the clergy and canonical church structures cannot support the state or cooperate with it. They are as follows:

- a) political struggle, election agitation, campaigns in support of particular political parties and public and political leaders;
- b) waging civil war or aggressive external war;
- c) direct participation in intelligence and any other activity that demands secrecy by law even in making one's confession or reporting to the church authorities.

Among the traditional areas of the social efforts of the Orthodox Church is intercession with the government for the needs of the people, the rights and concerns of individual citizens or social groups. This intercession is a duty of the Church, realised through verbal or written interventions by appropriate church bodies with the governmental bodies of various branches and levels.

III. 9. In the contemporary state, power is normally divided into the legislative, executive and judicial branches and the national, regional and local levels. This determines the specificity of the Church's relations with the authorities of various branches and levels.

**Relations with the legislative power consist in dialogue between the Church and the legislators on the improvement of the national and local law pertaining to the life of the Church, church-state co-operation and the spheres of the Church's social concern.** This dialogue also concerns the resolutions and decisions of the legislative power which have no direct bearing on legislation.

**In contacts with the executive power, the Church should conduct dialogue on making decisions pertaining to the life of the Church, church-state co-operation and the spheres of the Church's social concern. To this end, the Church maintains contacts on the respective level with central and local executive power bodies,** including those responsible for solving practical problems in the life and work of religious associations and those responsible for monitoring the observance of law (organs of justice, prosecution, interior) by the above-mentioned bodies.

**The Church's relationships with the judiciary on various levels should be limited to the representation, if necessary, of her interest in court.** The Church does not interfere in the judicial authority's exercise of its functions and powers. **Except for absolute necessity, the interests of the Church are represented in court by lay people empowered by the church authorities on the respective level (Chalced. 9). Internal church disputes should not be brought out to secular court (Antioch.**

**12). Interconfessional conflicts and conflicts with schismatics which do not touch upon doctrinal matters can be brought to secular court (Carth. 59).**

**III. 10.** The holy canons forbid the clergy to approach the government without permission from the church superiors. Thus, Canon 11 of the Council of Sardica reads: «If any bishop or presbyter or generally any one of the clergy dare go to the ruler without permission and credentials from the bishop of the province and even more so from the bishop of the metropolis, let he be suspended and deprived of not only communion but also the dignity he enjoyed... If an urgent necessity makes one go to the ruler, let he do this with consideration and permission of the bishop of the metropolis and other bishops of that province and let he be sent with credentials from them».

**The Church's contacts and co-operation with the highest state authorities are carried out by the Patriarch and the Holy Synod directly or through representatives who have powers confirmed in writing. Her contacts and co-operation with the regional governments are carried out by diocesan bishops or through representatives who also have powers confirmed in writing. Her contacts and co-operation with the local authorities and self-government bodies are carried out by deaneries and parishes with the blessing of their diocesan bishops. The representatives of the church supreme authorities empowered to maintain contacts with the governmental bodies may be appointed both on the permanent and *ad hoc* basis.**

**If a matter considered previously on the local or regional level is referred to the highest governmental bodies, the diocesan bishop notifies the Patriarch and the Holy Synod about it and asks them to keep in contact with the state in further consideration of this matter. If a legal case is transferred from a local or regional to the highest level, the diocesan bishop should make a written report to the Patriarch and the Holy Synod about the earlier court examination. Those presiding over self-governed church districts and the administrators of dioceses in particular states have a special blessing from the Patriarch and the Holy Synod to maintain contacts with the leaders of these states.**

**III. 11.** To avoid any confusion of church and state affairs and to prevent the church authority from acquiring temporal nature, **the canons prohibit the clergy from participating in the affairs of state government.** Apostolic Canon 81 reads: «It does not befit a bishop or a presbyter to go into the affairs of the people's government, but to be always engaged in the affairs of the Church». Apostolic Canon 6 and Canon 10 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council speak of the same. In the contemporary context, these provisions apply not only to administration but also participation in the representative bodies of power (see, V. 2).

## IV. CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND SECULAR LAW

**IV. 1.** God is perfection, therefore the world created by Him is perfect and harmonious. Life is observance of the divine laws, as God Himself is life endless and abundant. Through the original fall, evil and sin entered the world. At the same time, fallen man has retained the freedom to choose the right way with God's help. In this effort, the observance of God-given commandments asserts life. But deviation from them leads inevitably to damage and death, as it is nothing else but deviation from God, hence, from being and life, which can be only in Him: «See, I have set thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes and his judgements, that thou mayest live... But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away... ye shall surely perish, and ye shall not prolong your days upon the land» (Deut. 30:15-18). In the earthly order of things, sin and retribution do not often follow each other immediately but may be intervened by many years and even generations: «For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments» (Deut. 5:9-10). This distance between crime and punishment keeps man free, on the one hand, and compels the reasonable and pious people to study the divine commandment with a special attention, on the other, in order to learn to distinguish between right and wrong, lawful and unlawful.

Among the oldest monuments of the written language are numerous collections of homilies and statutes. Undoubtedly, they go back to the even earlier, pre-alphabet, existence of humanity, since «the work of the law» is written by God in human hearts (Rom. 2:15). Law has been there in the human society from times immemorial. The first rules were given to man as far back as the paradise time (Gen. 2:16-17). After the fall, which is violation by man of the divine law, law becomes a boundary and trespassing against it threatens the destruction of both the human personality and human community.

**IV. 2.** The law is called to manifest the one divine law of the universe in social and political realms. At the same time, any legal system developed by the human community, being as it is a fruit of historical development, carries a seal of limitation and imperfection. Law is a special realm, different from the related ethical realm, as it does not qualify the inner conditions of the human heart, since God alone is its Reader.

Yet it is human behaviour and actions that is the subject of the legal regulation, which is the essence of legislation. The law also provides for coercive measures for making people obey it. The legislative sanctions to restore the trampled law and order make law

a reliable clamp of society unless, as it has often happened in history, the whole system of the enforced law capsizes. However, as no human community can exist without law, a new legislative system always emerges in place of the destroyed law and order.

**The law contains a certain minimum of moral standards compulsory for all members of society. The secular law has as its task not to turn the world lying in evil into the Kingdom of God, but to prevent it from turning into hell.** The fundamental principle of law is: «do not do to others what you would not want to be done to yourself». **If a person has committed a sinful action against another, the damage inflicted on the integrity of the divine law and order can be made up by the suffering of the offender or pardon whereby the moral consequences of a sinful action is assumed by the person (ruler, spiritual father, community, etc.) who issues pardon.** Suffering heals the soul affected by sin, while the voluntary suffering of the innocent for the sins of a criminal represents the highest form of redemption the ultimate of which is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Who took upon Himself the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

**IV. 3.** The understanding of where the «wounding edge» separating one person from another lies was different in various societies and in various periods. The more religious a human community the greater its awareness of the unity and integrity of the world. People in a religiously integral society are viewed in two perspectives, both as unique personalities, who either stand or fall before God (Rom. 14:4) and who cannot be judged by other people, and as members of the one public body in which the illness of one member leads to the sickness and even death of the whole body. In the latter case, every person can and must be judged by the whole community, since the actions of one make an impact on many. The seeking of the spirit of peace by one righteous man, according to St. Seraphim of Sarov, leads to the salvation of thousands around him, while a sin committed by one culprit may entail the death of many.

This attitude to sinful and criminal manifestations is firmly grounded in Holy Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. «By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked» (Prov. 11:11). St. Basil the Great taught the people of Caesarea in Cappadocia: «Because of a few, disasters come upon a whole people, and because of the evil deeds of one, many have to taste their fruits. Ahab committed sacrilege, and all the chariots were defeated; already Zimri committed whoredom with a Midianitish woman, and punished was Israel». St. Cyprian of Moscow writes about the same: «Do not you know that people's sin fall upon the prince, and the prince's sin fall upon the people?»

That is why old statute books also regulated those aspects of life which are outside regulation by today's law. For instance, by the legal provisions of the Pentateuch, adultery was punished by death (Lev. 20:10), whereas today it is not regarded as a legal



offence in most states. If the vision of the world in its integrity is lost, the field of legal regulation becomes reduced to the cases of the visible damage done, and the boundaries of the latter become more narrow with the erosion of public morality and secularisation of consciousness. For instance, today's law treats sorcery, which was a grave crime in ancient communities, as a imaginary action not to be punished.

The fallen nature of man that has distorted his awareness does not allow him to accept the divine law in all its fullness. In various periods, people have been aware of only part of this law. This is evident from the Gospel's talk of the Savoir about divorce. Moses permitted divorce «because of the hardness of our hearts», but it was not so «from the beginning» because in marriage a man becomes «one flesh» with his wife, making marriage indissoluble (Mt. 19:3-5).

However, in the cases **where the human law completely rejects the absolute divine norm, replacing it by an opposite one, it ceases to be law and becomes lawlessness, in whatever legal garments it may dress itself.** For instance, the Decalogue clearly states: «Honour thy father and thy mother» (Ex. 20:12). Any secular norm that contradicts this commandment indicts not its offender but the legislator himself. In other words, the human law has never contained the divine law in its fullness, but in order to remain law it is obliged to conform to the God-established principles, rather than to erode them.

**IV. 4.** Historically, both religious and secular laws originate from the same source. Moreover, for a long time they only represented two sides of one legal field. This idea of law is also characteristic of the Old Testament.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in calling those faithful to Him to the Kingdom that is not of this world, separated (Lk. 12:51-52) the Church as His body from the world lying in evil. In Christianity, the internal law of the Church is free from the spiritually-fallen state of the world and is even opposed to it (Mt. 5:21-47). This opposition, however, is not the violation but the fulfilment of the law of the divine Truth in its fullness, which humanity repudiated in the fall. Comparing the Old Testament norms with that of the Gospel, the Lord in His Sermon on the Mount calls people to seek the full identity of life with the absolute divine law, that is to deification: «Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect» (Mt. 5:48).

**IV. 5.** In the Church founded by the Lord Jesus, there is special law based on the Divine Revelation. It is the canon law. While other religious statutes are given to humanity as fallen away from God and can be essentially part of the civil law, the Christian law is fundamentally supra-social. It cannot be part of the civil law, though in Christian societies it can make a favourable influence on it as its moral foundation.

The Christian state normally used the modified law of the pagan times (for instance, the Roman law in the Codex of Justinian), since it included the norms consonant with the divine truth. However, any attempt to develop the civil, criminal and public law based on the Gospel alone cannot be efficient, for without the full churching of life, that is without complete victory over sin, the law of the Church cannot become the law of the world. This victory is possible, however, only in the eschatological perspective.

However, the experience of the Christianization of the legal system inherited from the pagan Rome under Emperor Justinian proved to be quite successful. It was so not in the least because the legislator, in developing the Codex, was fully aware of the dividing life between the order of this world, marked with the fall and sinful erosion even in the Christian era, and the statutes of the grace-giving body of Christ, the Church, even its members and the citizens of a Christian state are the same people. The Codex of Justinian determined for centuries the Byzantine legal system and made a considerable impact on the development of law in Russia and in some Western European countries both in the middle ages and the modern time.

**IV. 6. The idea of the inalienable rights of the individual has become one of the dominating principles in the contemporary sense of justice.** The idea of these rights is based on the biblical teaching on man as the image and likeness of God, as an ontologically free creature. «Examine what is around you», writes St. Anthony of Egypt, «and see that princes and masters have power over your body alone, not over your soul, and always keep this in mind. Why when they order, say, to kill or to do something else, inappropriate, unrighteous and harmful for the soul, it is not proper to obey them, even though they torture your body. God has created the soul free and self-ruled, and it is free to do as it wills, good or bad».

The Christian socio-public ethics demanded that a certain autonomous sphere should be reserved for man, in which his conscience might remain the «autocratic» master, for it is the free will that determines ultimately the salvation or death, the way to Christ or the way away from Christ. The right to believe, to live, to have family is what protects the inherent foundations of human freedom from the arbitrary rule of outer forces. These internal rights are complimented with and ensured by other, external ones, such as the right to free movement, information, property, to its possession and disposition.

**God keeps man free**, never forcing his will. Contrary to it, Satan seeks to possess the human will, to enslave it. If the law conforms to the divine truth revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, then it also stands guard over human freedom: «Where the Spirit is, there is liberty» (2 Cor. 3:17). Therefore, it guards the inalienable rights of the personality. Those traditions, however, which do not know of the principle of the freedom of Christ,

often seek to subject the human consciousness to the external will of a ruler or a collective.

**IV. 7. As secularism developed, the lofty principles of inalienable human rights turned into a notion of the rights of the individual outside his relations with God. In this process, the freedom of the personality transformed into the protection of self-will (as long as it is not detrimental to individuals) and into the demand that the state should guarantee a certain material living standard for the individual and family. In the contemporary systematic understanding of civil human rights, man is treated not as the image of God, but as a self-sufficient and self-sufficing subject. Outside God, however, there is only the fallen man, who is rather far from being the ideal of perfection aspired to by Christians and revealed in Christ («*Ecce homo!*»). For the Christian sense of justice, the idea of human freedom and rights is bound up with the idea of service. **The Christian needs rights so that in exercising them he may first of all fulfil in the best possible way his lofty calling to be «the likeness of God», as well as his duty before God and the Church, before other people, family, state, nation and other human communities.****

As a result of the secularisation in modern times, the theory of natural law prevailed, which in its constructions did not take into account the fallen humanity. This theory, however, did not lose links with Christian tradition, for it proceeded from the conviction that the notions of good and evil were inherent in humanity. Therefore, law grew up from life itself, based on conscience («the categorical moral imperative»). This theory was dominant in the European society up to the 19th century. Its practical consequences included, firstly, the principle of the historical continuity of the legal domain (law cannot be abolished as conscience cannot be abolished; it can only be improved and adjusted also legally to new situations and cases). Secondly, it gave rise to the principle of precedent (in conformity with conscience and the legal tradition, the court can pass a right sentence, that is a sentence consonant to the Divine Truth).

In the contemporary understanding of law, views apologetic towards the positive law in force have prevailed. Law is viewed as a human invention, a construction that is built by society to benefit itself and to fulfil tasks defined by itself. Hence, any changes to the law, if approved by society, are considered valid. The written law has no absolute legal basis whatsoever. This view gives validity to the revolution that rejects the laws of «the old world» and to the full rejection of the moral norm if this rejection is approved by society. Thus, if in contemporary society abortion is not believed to be murder, it is not such legally either. Apologists of the positive law believe that society can introduce very diverse standards, on the one hand, and consider any law in force to be legitimate by virtue of its very existence, on the other.

**IV. 8.** The law and order of a particular country is a special version of the common worldview law characteristic of a given nation. The national law expresses the fundamental principles of relations between persons, between power and society and between institutions in accordance with the peculiarities of a given nation moving in history. The national law is imperfect, for imperfect and sinful is any nation. However, it establishes a framework for the people's life if it translates God's absolute truths into and adjusts them to the concrete historical and national existence.

Thus, law and order in Russia gradually developed and grew ever more complex for a millennium as society itself developed and grew in its complexity. The conventional Slavic law, which had preserved the ancient common Aryan forms until the 10th, due to Christianization incorporated some elements of the Byzantine legislation. It did it through the Codex of Justinian tracing back to the classical Roman law and the church canon law, which at that time was fused with the civil law. From the 17th century, the Russia law drew intensively on the standards and legal logic of the Western European law, doing it in a fairly organic way, since the Roman legal tradition, basic for Europe, was borrowed by Russia from Constantinople together with Christianity as far back as the 10th-11th centuries. The Old Russian *Russkaya pravda* (Russian truth), princes' statutes and charters, legal documents and books, the Council of the Hundred Chapters and the 1497 Conciliar code, Petrine articles and decrees, legal actions by Catherine the Great and Alexander I, reforms of Alexander II and the 1906 Basic Law — all represented one legal fabric of the creative people's organism. Some standards became out of date, while other come replace them. Some legal novations failed as inconsonant with the order of people's life and ceased to be applied. The flow of the river of Russian national law whose sources were lost in distant history was stopped by the year 1917. On November 22 of that year, the Council of People's Commissars, in conformity with the spirit of the positive law, repealed the whole Russian legislation. After the collapse of the Soviet statehood in the early 90s, the legal system in the CIS and Baltic countries is still in the making. At its foundation are the ideas dominating in the contemporary secularised sense of justice.

**IV. 9. The Church of Christ, preserving her own autonomous law based on the holy canons and keeping within the church life proper, can exist in the framework of very diverse legal systems which she treats with respect. The Church invariably calls upon her flock to be law-abiding citizens of their earthly homeland.** At the same time, she has always underlined the unshakeable limits to which her faithful should obey the law.

In everything that concerns the exclusively earthly order of things, the Orthodox Christian is obliged to obey the law, regardless of how far it is imperfect and unfortunate. **However, when compliance with legal requirements threatens his**

eternal salvation and involves an apostasy or commitment of another doubtless sin before God and his neighbour, the Christian is called to perform the feat of confession for the sake of God's truth and the salvation of his soul for eternal life. He must speak out lawfully against an indisputable violation committed by society or state against the statutes and commandments of God. If this lawful action is impossible or ineffective, he must take up the position of civil disobedience (see, III. 5).

## V. CHURCH AND POLITICS

**V. 1.** In the contemporary state, citizens participate in the government of the country by voting. Most of them belong to political parties, movements, unions, blocs and other suchlike organisations based on various political doctrines and views. These organisations, seeking to order social life according to the political convictions of their members, have as one of their goals to hold or reform power in the state. Exercising powers given to them by popular vote during elections, political organisations can participate in the work of the legislative and executive power structures.

The presence in society of different, sometimes opposing political convictions and discordant interests generates political struggle which is waged by both legitimate and morally justified methods and methods sometimes contradicting the norms of public law and Christian and natural morality.

**V. 2.** The Church, according to God's commandment, has a task to show concern for the unity of her children and peace and harmony in society and the involvement of all her members in common creative efforts. The Church is called to preach and build peace with outer society: «If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men» (Rom. 12:19); «Follow peace with all men» (Heb. 12:14). It is even more important for her, however, to be internally united in faith and love: «I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind» (1 Cor. 1:10). For the Church the highest value is her unity as the mysterious body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) on which the eternal salvation of humanity depends. St. Ignatius the God-Bearer, addressing the members of the Church of Christ, writes: «You all make up as if one church of God, as if one altar, as if one Jesus».

**In face of political differences, contradictions and struggle, the Church preaches peace and co-operation among people holding various political views. She also acknowledges the presence of various political convictions among her episcopate, clergy and laity, except for such as to lead clearly to actions contradicting the faith and moral norms of the church Tradition.**

**It is impossible for the Church's Supreme Authorities and for the clergy, hence for the plenitude of the Church to participate in such activities of political organisations and election processes as public support for the running political organisations or particular candidates, election campaigns and so forth. The clergy are not allowed to be nominated for elections to any body of representative power at any level. At the same time, nothing should prevent bishops, clergy and laity from participation in the expression of the popular will by voting along with other citizens.**

In church history there were not a few cases when the whole Church gave support to various political doctrines, views, organisations and leaders. In some cases, this support was linked with the need for the Church to defend her fundamental interests in the extreme conditions of anti-religious persecution and the destructive and restrictive actions of the non-Orthodox and non-Christian power. In other cases, this support resulted from the pressure from the state or political structures and usually led to divisions and controversies within the Church and to the falling away of some of her people infirm in their faith.

In the 20th century, the clergy and hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church were members of some representative bodies of power, in particular, the State Duma of the Russian Empire and the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the Russian Federation, some local councils and legislative assemblies. In some cases, their participation in the work of governmental bodies was beneficial for the Church and society. However, it sometimes generated confusions and divisions. This happened especially when the clergy were permitted to run for elective offices without the blessing of the Church. The practice of this participation as a whole has shown that it is almost impossible without one's assuming responsibility for making decisions which are in the interests of only a part of the population and against those of others. This is a situation that seriously complicates the pastoral and missionary work of the clergy called to be, according to St. Paul, «all things to all men... that by all means some may be saved» (1 Cor. 9:22). At the same time, history has shown that the decision of the clergy to participate or not to participate in political activities was made and should be made depending on the needs of a particular period and the internal condition of the church organism and its place in the state. From the canonical point of view however, the answer to the question of whether a priest in a public office should work as a professional is unequivocally negative.

On October 8, 1919, St. Tikhon appealed to the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church not to interfere in the political struggle. He pointed out in particular that the servants of the Church «by virtue of their rank should be above and outside any political interests. They should remember the canonical rules of the Holy Church whereby she prohibits her servants from interfering in the political life of the country, joining any political parties and, what is more, from making the liturgical rites a tool of political demonstrations».

Prior to the elections of the USSR people's deputies, the Holy Synod resolved on December 27, 1988, that «in case of the nomination and election of representatives of our Church, blessing be given upon this activity in the conviction that it will benefit the faithful and our whole society». In addition to being elected as USSR people's deputies, some bishops and clerics occupied deputy's posts in republican, regional and local

soviets. The new situation in the political life compelled the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in October 1989 to pay more attention to the two questions: «Firstly, how far can the Church go in assuming responsibility for political decisions without casting doubt on their pastoral authority and, secondly, is it permissible for the Church to refuse participation in legislation and the opportunity to make a moral impact on the political process at a time when a particular decision determines as much as the fate of the country?» As a result of this discussion, the Bishops' Council recognised the Holy Synod decision of December 27, 1988, as valid only for the previous elections. It adopted the procedure for the future, whereby the Supreme Church Authorities, namely the Holy Synod (in case of bishops) and ruling bishops (in case of clergy under their jurisdiction), should decide beforehand in every particular case whether the participation of the clergy in an election campaign was desirable.

Notwithstanding, some representatives of the clergy did take part in the elections without obtaining the necessary blessing. The Holy Synod regretted to state on March 20, 1990 that «the Russian Orthodox Church declines the moral and religious responsibility for the participation of these persons in the elected offices». For the reasons of *oikonomia*, the Synod refrained from using appropriate sanctions against the violators, «stating that such a behaviour lies on their own conscience». On October 8, 1993, in view of the establishment of a professional parliament in Russia, the Holy Synod at its enlarged session decided to prescribe to the clergy to refrain from participating in the parliamentary elections in Russia as nominees to parliament. It resolved that the clergy who violated this decision should be defrocked. The 1994 Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church approved this resolution as «timely and wise» and resolved to apply it to «the future participation of the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church in any election to the representatives bodies of power in the CIS and Baltic countries on both national and local levels».

The same Bishops' Council, responding to the challenges of time in faithfulness to the holy canons, adopted a number of rules concerning the subject under discussion. Thus, in one of its resolutions, the Council decided: «to re-affirm the impossibility for the church Plenitude to give support, first of all in election campaigns, to any political party, movement, bloc, union or a similar organisation and to any of their leaders ... To consider it extremely undesirable for the clergy to join political parties, movements, unions, blocs and similar organisations which are intended primarily for pre-election struggle».

The Bishops' Council that took place in 1997 developed the principles of the Church's relations with political organisations and made even stronger one its previous resolution by refusing to give its blessing to the clergy for them to join political associations. It resolved, in particular, in its statement «On Relations with State and



Secular Society: «to welcome the Church's dialogue and contacts with political organisations if such contacts are not supportive politically; to consider it admissible to maintain co-operation with these organisations in tasks beneficial for the Church and the people unless this co-operation can be interpreted as political support... to consider inadmissible the participation of bishops and clergy in any election campaign or their memberships in political associations whose constitutions provide for the nomination of their candidate to elective offices on all levels».

**The fact that the Plenitude of the Church does not participate in political struggle, in the work of political parties and in election processes does not mean her refusal to express publicly her stand on socially significant issues and to present this stand to governmental bodies in any country and on any level. This position may be expressed only by Councils, the church authorities and those empowered to act for them. In any case, the right to express it cannot be delegated to public offices or political or other secular organisations.**

**V. 3. Nothing can prevent the Orthodox laity from participating in the work of legislative, executive and judicial bodies and political organisations.** This involvement took place under various political systems, such as autocracy, constitutional monarchy and various forms of the republican system. The participation of the Orthodox laity in civic and political processes was difficult only in the contexts of non-Christian rule and the regime of state atheism.

**In participating in government and political processes, the Orthodox laity are called to base their work on the norms of the gospel's morality, the unity of justice and mercy (Ps. 85:10), the concern for the spiritual and material welfare of people, the love of the fatherland and the desire to transform the surrounding world according to the word of Christ.**

At the same time, the Christian, a politician or a statesmen, should be well aware that in historical reality and, all the more so, in the context of today's divided and controversial society, most decisions adopted and political actions taken tend to benefit only a part of society, while restricting or infringing upon the interests and wishes of others. **Many such decisions and actions are stained with sin or connivance with sin. Precisely for this reason the Orthodox politician or statesman is required to be very sensitive spiritually and morally.**

**The Christian who works in the sphere of public and political building is called to seek the gift of special self-sacrifice and special self-denial. He needs to be utterly attentive to his own spiritual condition, so that his public or political work may not turn from service into an end in itself that nourishes pride, greed and other vices. It should be remembered that «principalities or powers, all things were created by him,**

and for him... and by him all things stand» (Col. 1:16-17). St. Gregory the Theologian, addressing the rulers, wrote: «It is with Christ that you command, with Christ that you govern, from Him that you have received the sword». St. John Chrysostom says: «A true king is he who conquers anger and jealousy and voluptuousness and subjects everything to the laws of God and does not allow the passion for pleasure to prevail in his soul. I would like to see such a man in command of the people, and the throne, and the cities and the provinces, and the troops, because he who subjected the physical passions to reason would easily govern people also according to the divine laws... But he who appears to command people but in fact accommodates himself to wrath and ambition and pleasure, ... will not know how to dispose of the power».

**V. 4.** The participation of the Orthodox laity in the work of governmental bodies and political processes may be both individual and corporate, within special Christian (Orthodox) political organisations or Christian (Orthodox) units of larger political associations. In both cases, the faithful have the right to choose and express their political convictions, to make decisions and to carry out appropriate work. At the same time, **lay people who participate in public or political activity individually or within various organisations do it independently, without identifying their political work with the stand of the Church Plenitude or any of the canonical church institutions or speaking for them. At the same time, the supreme church authority does not give special blessing upon the political activity of the laity.**

The 1994 Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church resolved that it is admissible for lay people to join political organisations and «to found such organisations, and if they describe themselves as Christian or Orthodox organisations, they are called to increase their interaction with the church authorities. It is also possible for the clergy, including those representing canonical church structures and the church authorities, to participate in particular activities of political organisations and maintain co-operation with them in tasks beneficial for the Church and society if this participation is not supportive of political organisations and contributes to building peace and accord among people and in the church community».

A similar resolution of the 1997 Bishops' Council reads in particular: «To believe it possible for lay people to participate in the work of political organisations and to found such organisation if the latter have no clergy among their members and conduct responsible consultations with the church authorities. To resolve that these organisations as participants in the political process cannot enjoy the blessing of the church authorities and speak for the Church. The Church's blessing cannot be given and, if given previously, will be denied to the church-public organisations involved in election campaigns and political agitation and claiming to express the Church's opinion, which is expressed before the state and society only by church Councils, His Holiness

the Patriarch and the Holy Synod. The same should be applied to the ecclesial and ecclesio-public mass media».

**The existence of Christian (Orthodox) political organisations and Christian (Orthodox) units in larger political associations is perceived by the Church as positive as it helps lay people to engage in common political and public work based on Christian spiritual and moral principles. These organisations, while being free in their activity, are called to consult the church authorities and to co-ordinate their actions in implementing the Church's position on public issues.**

**In relations between the Church Plenitude and Christian (Orthodox) political organisations, in which Orthodox lay people participate, and particular Orthodox politicians and statesmen, situations may arise where their statements or actions essentially differ from the Church's stand on public issues or impede the realisation of this stand. In such cases, the Church Authorities ascertains the fact of differing positions and states it publicly in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding among the faithful and society at large. The statement of such a difference should compel the Orthodox laity participating in political activity to think whether it is appropriate for them to continue their memberships in this political organisation.**

The organisations of Orthodox Christians should not have the nature of secret society presupposing one's total subjection to the leaders and conscious refusal to disclose their essence when consulting the Church Authorities and even making one's confession. The Church cannot approve of the participation of the Orthodox laity and, more so, clergy in the non-Orthodox societies of this kind, since by their very nature they divest a person of his total commitment to the Church of God and her canonical order.

## VI. LABOR AND ITS FRUITS

**VI. 1.** Labour is an organic element of human life. The Book of Genesis says that in the beginning «there was not a man to till the ground» (Gen. 2:5). Having created the Garden of Eden, God put man in it «to dress it and to keep it» (Gen. 2:15). Labour is the creative fulfilment of man who was called to be the co-creator and co-worker of the Lord by virtue of his original likeness of God. However, after man fell away from the Creator, the nature of his labour changed: «In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return into the ground» (Gen. 3:19). The creative component of labour weakened to become mostly a means of sustenance for the fallen man.

**VI. 2.** The word of God does not only draw people's attention to the need of daily labour, but also sets a special rhythm for it. The fourth commandment reads: «Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord the God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates» (Ex. 20:8-10). By this commandment of the Creator the human labour is compared to the divine creative work that made the beginning of the universe. Indeed, the commandment to observe the sabbath is substantiated by the fact that in the creation «God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made» (Gen. 2:3). This day should be dedicated to the Lord so that everyday chores may not divert man from the Creator. At the same time, the active manifestations of charity and selfless aid to one's labours are not violations of the commandment: «The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath» (Mk. 2:27). In Christian tradition, the first day of the week, the day of the Resurrection of Christ, has been a day of rest since the apostolic times.

**VI. 3.** **The improvement of the tools and methods of labour, its division into professions and move to more complex forms contributes to better material living standards. However, people's enticement with the achievements of the civilisation moves them away from the Creator and leads to an imaginary triumph of reason seeking to arrange earthly life without God. The realisation of these aspirations in human history has always ended in tragedy.**

Holy Scriptures relates that the first builders of the earthly civilisation were Cain's successors: Lamech and his children invented and made the first copper and iron tools, movable tents and various musical instruments; they were also the founders of many skills and arts (Gen. 4:22). However, they and many other people with them failed to avoid temptations: «all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth» (Gen. 6:12). Therefore, the Creator willed that the Cainite civilisation be ended with a flood. Among

the most vivid biblical images of the failure of the fallen humanity to «to make a name for itself» is the construction of the Tower of Babel «whose top may reach unto heaven». The Babel is presented as a symbol of people's joining efforts to achieve an ungodly goal. The Lord punishes the arrogant men: by confusing their tongues He makes understanding among them impossible and scattered them throughout the earth.

**VI. 4. From a Christian perspective, labour in itself is not an absolute value. It is blessed when it represents co-working with the Lord and contribution to the realisation of His design for the world and man.** However, labour is not something pleasing to God if it is intended to serve the egoistic interests of individual or human communities and to meet the sinful needs of the spirit and flesh.

**Holy Scriptures points to the two moral motives of labour: work to sustain oneself without being a burden for others and work to give to the needy.** The apostle writes: «Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth» (Eph. 4:28). Such labour cultivates the soul and strengthens the body and enables the Christian to express his faith in God-pleasing works of charity and love of his neighbours (Mt. 5:16; James 2:17). Everyone remembers the words of St. Paul: «If any would not work, neither should he eat» (2 Thes. 3:10).

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church continuously stressed the moral meaning of labour. Thus, St. Clement of Alexandria described it as «a school of social justice». St. Basil the Great argued that «a pious intention should not be a pretext for idleness and evasion from work, but rather an incentive for even more work». St. John Chrysostom insisted that «not labour but idleness should be regarded as «dishonour». Monks in many monasteries gave an example of laborious asceticism. Their economic activity was in many ways an example for emulation, while the founders of major monasteries were renowned not only as high spiritual authorities but also great toilers. Well known are such models of zealous work as the Venerable Theodoius of Pechery, Sergius of Radonezh, Cyril of White Lake, Joseph of Volotsk, Nil of Sora and other Russian ascetics.

**VI. 5. The Church blesses every work aimed to benefit people.** At the same time, she does not give preference to any form of human work if it conforms to Christian moral standards. In His parables, our Lord Jesus Christ keeps referring to various professions, without singling out any of them. He speaks of the work of a sower (Mk. 4:3-9), servants and the ruler of a household (Lk. 12:42-48), a merchant and fishermen (Mt. 13:45-48), the householder and labourers of a vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16). Modern times, however, have seen the emergence of a whole industry intended to propagate vice and sin and satisfy such baneful passions and addictions as drinking, drug-addiction, fornication and

adultery. The Church testifies to the sin of being involved in such activities as they corrupt not only workers, but also society as a whole.

**VI. 6.** A worker has the right to use the fruits of his labour: «Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?... He that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope» (1 Cor. 9:7, 10). The Church teaches that refusal to pay for honest work is not only a crime against man, but also a sin before God.

Holy Scriptures says: «Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant... At his day thou shalt give him his hire... lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee» (Deut. 24:14-15); «Woe unto him... that useth his neighbour's services without wages, and giveth him not for his work» (Jer. 22:13); «Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth» (James 5:4).

At the same time, **by God's commandment workers are ordered to take care of those who for various reasons cannot earn their living**, such as the weak, the sick, strangers (refugees), orphans and widows. The worker should share the fruits of his work with them, «that the Lord may bless thee in all the work of thine hands» (Deut. 24:19-22).

Continuing on earth the service of Christ Who identified Himself with the destitute, **the Church always comes out in defence of the voiceless and powerless. Therefore, she calls upon society to ensure the equitable distribution of the fruits of labour**, in which the rich support the poor, the healthy the sick, the able-bodied the elderly. The spiritual welfare and survival of society are possible only if the effort to ensure life, health and minimal welfare for all citizens becomes an indisputable priority in distributing the material resources.

## VII – PROPERTY

**VII. 1.** Property is commonly understood as a socially recognised form of people's relation to the fruits of labour and to natural resources. The basic powers of an owner normally include the right to own and use property, the right to control and collect income, the right to dispose of, lease, modify or liquidate property.

**The Church is not someone who defines the rights to property. However, the material side of human life is not outside her field of vision.** While calling to seek first «the kingdom of God and his righteousness» (Mt. 6:33), the Church does not forget about people's the need for «daily bread» (Mt. 6:11) and believes that **every one should have resources sufficient for life in dignity. At the same time, the Church warns against the extreme attraction to wealth, denouncing those who are carried away by «cares and riches and pleasures of this life»** (Lk. 8:14). The Church in her attitude to property does not ignore the material needs, nor does she praise the opposite extreme, the aspiration for wealth as the ultimate goal and value of life. The status of a person in itself cannot be seen as an indication as to whether God is pleased with him.

The attitude of Orthodox Christians to property should be based on the gospel's principle of love of one's neighbour, expressed in the words of the Saviour: «A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another» (Jn. 13:34). This commandment is the basis of Christian moral behaviour. For Christians and the Church believes for other people as well, it should be an imperative in regulating interpersonal relationships, including property relations.

**According to the teaching of the Church, people receive all the earthly blessings from God who is the One who holds the absolute right to possess them.** The Saviour repeatedly points to the relative nature of the right to property in His parables on a vineyard let out to be used (Mk. 12:1-9), on talents distributed among many (Mt. 25:14-30) and on an estate handed over for temporary management (Lk. 16:1-13). Expressing the idea inherent to the Church that God is the absolute owner of everything, St. Basil the Great asks: «Tell me, what do you have that is yours? Where from did you take it and bring to life?» The sinful attitude to property manifested in the conscious rejection of this spiritual principle generates division and alienation among people.

**VII. 2. Wealth cannot make man happy.** The Lord Jesus Christ warns: «Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth» (Lk. 12:15). The pursuit of wealth makes a baneful impact on the spiritual condition of a person and can lead him to complete degradation. St. Paul points out that «they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of

money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things» (1 Tim. 6:9-11). In a talk to a young man the Lord said: «If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me» (Mt. 19:21). Then He explained these words to His disciples: «A rich man shalt hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.» (Mt. 19:23-24). St. Mark clarifies that it is difficult to enter the Kingdom of God precisely for those who trust not in God but in wealth, who «trust in riches» (Mk. 10:24). Only those who «trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever» (Ps.125:1).

However, a rich man can be saved as well, for «the things which are impossible with men are possible with God» (Lk. 18:27). In Holy Scriptures there is no censure of richness as such. Abraham and the Old Testament patriarchs, the righteous Job, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were well-off people. An owner of a considerable wealth does not sin if he uses it in accordance with the will of God to Whom everything belongs and with the law of love; for the joy and fullness of life lie not in acquirement and possession but in giving and sacrifice. St. Paul calls people «to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive» (Acts 20:35). St. Basil the Great regards as thieves those who do not give away part of their property in donation to their neighbours. The same idea is stressed by St. John Chrysostom: «Failure to share one's property is also theft». **The Church urges Christians to see in property a God's gift given to be used for their own and their neighbours' benefit.**

At the same time, **Holy Scripture recognises the human right to property and deplors any encroachment on it.** In two out of its Ten Commandments, the Decalogue states clearly: «Thou shalt not steal... Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's» (Ex. 20:15, 17). In the New Testament, this attitude to property continues, acquiring a more profound ethical substantiation. The Gospel says: «Thou shalt not steal... Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself» (Rom. 13:9).

**VII. 3. The Church recognises the existence of various forms of ownership.** Public, corporate, private and mixed forms of property have taken different roots in the course of historical development in various countries. The Church does not give preference to any of these forms. Any of its forms can produce both sinful phenomena, such as theft, money-grubbing, unfair distribution of wealth, and the proper and morally justified use of wealth.



The intellectual property, such as scientific works and inventions, information technologies, works of art and other achievements of the creative thought acquires a growing significance. **The Church welcomes the creative work aimed at benefitting society, and deplors the violation of copyright.**

In general, **the Church cannot approve the alienation and re-distribution of property with violations of the rights of its legitimate owners.** An exception may be made only for the alienation of property based on the law, conditioned by the interest of the majority of people and accompanied by fair compensation. Russian history has shown that the violation of these principles has always resulted in social upheavals and people's suffering.

In Christian history, many communities would pool property, abandoning personal proprietary aspirations. This kind of property relations contributed to the consolidation of the spiritual unity of the faithful and in many cases proved rather effective economically, as in the case of Orthodox monasteries. **However, the repudiation of private property in the early apostolic community (Acts 4:32) and later in coenobite monasteries was exclusively a voluntary affair and a personal spiritual option.**

**VII. 4. The property of religious organisations is a special form of property.** It is acquired in various ways, but the primary component of its formation is the voluntary donation of believers. According to Holy Scriptures, donation is sacred, that is, it belongs directly to God as a donator gives to God, not to a priest (Lev. 27:30; Ez. 8:28). Donation is a voluntary action made by the faithful for religious purposes (Neh. 10:32). Donation is called to support not only the servants of the Church, but also the whole people of God (Phil. 4:14-18). Being consecrated to God, donation is immune, and any one who has stolen it must return more than has been stolen (Lev. 5:14-15). **Donation belongs to the basic commandments given by God to man (Sirach 7:30-34). As donation is a special case of economic and social relations, it should not be made automatically subject to the laws regulating finances and economy of a state, in particular, public taxation.** The Church declares that the income drawn through entrepreneurial activity can be taxed, but any encroachment on the donations of believers is a crime before people and God.

## VIII – WAR AND PEACE

**VIII. 1.** War is a physical manifestation of the latent illness of humanity, which is fratricidal hatred (Gen. 4:3-12). Wars have accompanied human history since the fall and, according to the Gospel, will continue to accompany it: «And when ye hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be» (Mk. 13:7). This is also testified by the Apocalypse in its story of the last battle between good and evil at Mount Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). Generated by pride and resistance to the will of God, earthly wars reflect in fact the heavenly battle. Corrupted by sin, man found himself involved in the turmoil of this battle. **War is evil. Just as the evil in man in general, war is caused by the sinful abuse of the God-given freedom;** «for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies» (Mt. 15:19).

Killing, without which wars cannot happen, was regarded as a grave crime before God as far back as the dawn of the holy history. «Thou shalt not kill», the Mosaic law reads (Ex. 20:13). In the Old Testament, just as in all ancient religions, blood is sacred, since blood is life (Lev. 17:11-14). «Blood defiles the land», says Holy Scriptures. But the same biblical text warns those who resort to violence: «The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it» (Num. 35:33).

**VIII. 2.** Bringing to people the good news of reconciliation (Rom, 10:15), but being in «this world» lying in evil (1 Jn. 5:19) and filled with violence, Christians involuntarily come to face the vital need to take part in various battles. **While recognising war as evil, the Church does not prohibit her children from participating in hostilities if at stake is the security of their neighbours and the restoration of trampled justice. Then war is considered to be necessary though undesirable but means.** In all times, Orthodoxy has had profound respect for soldiers who gave their lives to protect the life and security of their neighbours. The Holy Church has canonised many soldiers, taking into account their Christian virtues and applying to them Christ's world: «Greater love hath no man but this, that a man lay down his life for his friends» (Jn. 15:13).

When St. Cyril Equal-to-the-Apostles was sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople to preach the gospel among the Saracens, in their capital city he had to enter into a dispute about faith with Muhamaddan scholars. Among others, they asked him: «Your God is Christ. He commanded you to pray for enemies, to do good to those who hate and persecute you and to offer the other cheek to those who hit you, but what do you actually do? If anyone offends you, you sharpen your sword and go into battle and kill. Why do you not obey your Christ?» Having heard this, St. Cyril asked his fellow-polemists: «If there are two commandments written in one law, who will be its best respecter — the one who obeys only one commandment or the one who obeys both?»

When the Hagerenes said that the best respecter of law is the one who obeys both commandments, the holy preacher continued: «Christ is our God Who ordered us to pray for our offenders and to do good to them. He also said that no one of us can show greater love in life than he who gives his life for his friends (Jn. 15:3). That is why we generously endure offences caused us as private people. But in company we defend one another and give our lives in battle for our neighbours, so that you, having taken our fellows prisoners, could not imprison their souls together with their bodies by forcing them into renouncing their faith and into godless deeds. Our Christ-loving soldiers protect our Holy Church with arms in their hands. They safeguard the sovereign in whose sacred person they respect the image of the rule of the Heavenly King. They safeguard their land because with its fall the home authority will inevitably fall too and the evangelical faith will be shaken. These are precious pledges for which soldiers should fight to the last. And if they give their lives in battlefield, the Church will include them in the community of the holy martyrs and call them intercessors before God».

**VIII. 3.** «They that take the sword shall perish with the sword» (Mt. 26:52). These words of the Saviour justify the idea of just war. From the Christian perspective, **the conception of moral justice in international relations should be based on the following basic principles: love of one's neighbours, people and Fatherland; understanding of the needs of other nations; conviction that it is impossible to serve one's country by immoral means.** These three principles defined the ethical limits of war established by Christendom in the Middle Ages when, adjusting to reality, people tried to curb the elements of military violence. Already at that time, people believed that war should be waged according to certain rules and that a fighting man should not lose his morality, forgetting that his enemy is a human being too.

The development of high moral standards in international relations would have impossible without that moral impact which Christianity made on people's hearts and minds. The requirements of justice in war were often far from being complied with, but the very posing of the question of justice sometimes restrained warring people from extreme violence.

In defining just war, the Western Christian tradition, which goes back to St. Augustine, usually puts forward a number of conditions on which war in one's own or others' territory is admissible. They are as follows:

- ⊗ war is declared for the restoration of justice;
- ⊗ war is declared only by the legitimate authority;
- ⊗ force is used not by individuals or groups but by representatives of the civil authorities established from above;

- ⊗ war is declared only after all peaceful means have been used to negotiate with the opposite party and to restore the prior situation;
- ⊗ war is declared only if there are well-grounded expectations that the established goals will be achieved;
- ⊗ the planned military losses and destruction will correspond to the situation and the purposes of war (the principal of proportionate means);
- ⊗ during war civilians will be protected against direct hostilities;
- ⊗ war may be justified only by the desire to restore law and order.

In the present system of international relations, **it is sometimes difficult to distinguish an aggressive war from a defensive war.** The distinction between the two is especially subtle where one or two states or the world community initiate hostilities on the ground that it is necessary to protect the people who fell victim to an aggression (see XV. 1). In this regard, the **question** whether the Church should support or deplore the hostilities **needs to be given a special consideration every time they are initiated or threaten to begin.**

Among obvious signs pointing to the equity or inequity of a warring party are **its war methods** and attitude towards its war prisoners and the civilians of the opposite side, especially children, women and elderly. Even in the defence from an aggression, every kind of evil can be done, making one's spiritual and moral stand not superior to that of the aggressor. **War should be waged with righteous indignation, not maliciousness, greed and lust (1 Jn. 2:16) and other fruits of hell.** A war can be correctly assessed as a feat or a robbery only after an analysis is made of the moral state of the warring parties. «Rejoice not over thy greatest enemy being dead, but remember that we die all», Holy Scriptures says (Sirach 8:8). Christian humane attitude to the wounded and war prisoners is based on the words of St. Paul: «If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good» (Rom. 12:21-22).

**VIII. 4.** In the icons of St. George the Victor, the black dragon is trampled by the hoofs of a horse always painted brightly white. This vividly shows that evil and the struggle with it should be completely separated, for in struggling with sin it is important to avoid sharing in it. In all the vital situations where force needs to be used, the human heart should not be caught by bad feelings akin to evil spirits and their like. It is only the victory over evil in one's heart that enables one to use force in justice. This view asserting love in human relations resolutely rejects the idea of non-resistance to evil by force. The Christian moral law deplores not the struggle with sin, not the use of force towards its bearer and not even taking another's life in the last resort, but rather malice in the human heart and the desire to humiliate or destroy whosoever it may be.

In this regard, **the Church has a special concern for the military, trying to educate them for the faithfulness to lofty moral ideals.** The agreement concluded by the Russian Orthodox Church with the Armed Forces and law-enforcement agencies opens up considerable opportunities for overcoming the artificially created dividing walls, **for bringing the military back to the established Orthodox traditions of service to the fatherland.** Orthodox pastors, both those who perform special service in the army and those who serve in monasteries and parishes, are called to nourish the military strenuously, taking care of their moral condition.

**VIII. 5.** The Christian conception of peace is based on God's promises recorded in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. These promises giving history a true meaning began to come true in Jesus Christ. For His followers, peace is a beneficial gift of God, for which we pray and solicit God for our own sake and the sake of all people. The biblical understanding of peace is much broader than the political. St. Paul points out that «the peace of God... passeth all understanding» (Phil. 4:7). It surpasses by far the peace that people are able to create through their own efforts. The peace of man with God, with himself and with other people are inseparable.

The Old Testament prophets describe peace as a state that crowns history: «The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea» (Is. 11:6-9). This eschatological idea is associated from the revelation of the Messiah Whose name is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). War and violence will disappear from the earth: «And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more» (Is. 2:4). However, peace is not only a gift of the Lord, but also a human task. The Bible holds out hope that peace will be established with God's help already within the present earthly existence.

According to St. Isaiah, peace is a work of righteousness (Is. 32:17). Holy Scriptures also refers to the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man. Both are linked with the covenant that God made with the chosen people (Jer. 31:35). In this context, righteousness is understood as faithfulness to the covenant relations. To the same extent as people violate the covenant with God, that is, to the same extent as they are unrighteous, they are deprived of the fruit of righteousness, which is peace. At the same time, the Sinai law contains as one of its basic elements the requirement of justice towards one's neighbour. The commandments of the law were aimed not to restrict onerously the individual freedom, but to build social life on the basis of justice for achieving relative peace, order and tranquillity. For Israel it meant that peace in social life was not to come by itself through some natural laws, but was possible, first, as a gift of God's righteousness and, secondly, as a fruit of man's religious efforts, that is, his

faithfulness to God. Where people respond to God's justice with gratitude, there «mercy and truth are met together; righteous and peace have kissed each other» (Ps. 85:10). However, Old Testament history abounds in examples when the chosen people displayed unfaithfulness and sinful ingratitude. This gives the Prophet Jeremiah grounds to point to the reason for the absence of peace in Israel where people always said, «Peace, peace; when there is no peace» (Jer. 6:14). The prophetic call to repentance resounds as a song of faithfulness to the truth of God. Despite people's sins, God promises to make «a new covenant» with them (Jer. 31:31).

Peace in the New Testament, just as in the Old Testament, is viewed as a gift of God's love. It is identified with the eschatological salvation. The timelessness of peace proclaimed by the prophets is especially vivid in the Gospel According to John. While sorrow continues to prevail in history, those who believe in Christ have peace (Jn. 14:2; 16:33). Peace in the New Testament is a normal grace-filled condition of the human soul liberated from the slavery to sin. This is what the wishes of «grace and peace» suggest in the beginning of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. This peace is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:22). The state of reconciliation with God is the normal state of the creation, «for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace» (1 Cor. 14:33). Psychologically, this state is expressed in the inner order of the soul when joy and peace in believing (Rom. 15:13) become almost synonymous.

Peace by God's grace characterises the life of the Church in its both internal and external dimensions. Certainly, the grace-filled gift of peace also depends on the human effort. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifested only there where the human heart moves, coming the other way in the repentant desire of the truth of God. The gift of peace is revealed when Christians seek it, «remembering without ceasing... work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ» (1 Thes. 1:3). Aspirations for peace by every individual member of the body of Christ should be independent of the time and living conditions. Pleasing to God (Mt. 5:9), they bring fruit wherever and whenever they are there. **Peace as a gift of God, which transforms the inner man, should be also manifested outwardly.** It should be cherished and stirred up (2 Tim. 1:6). Therefore, peacemaking becomes a task of the Church of Christ: «if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men» (Rom. 12:18) and seek «to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace» (Eph. 4:3). The New Testament call to peacemaking is based on the personal example of the Saviour and on His teaching. If the commandments of non-resistance to evil (Mt. 5:39), love of one's enemies (Mt. 5:44) and forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-15) are addressed primarily to the individual, the commandment of peacemaking, «Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God», has the direct bearing on social ethics.

The Russian Orthodox Church seeks to carry out her peace service both on national and international scale, trying to help resolve various contradictions and bring nations, ethnic groups, governments and political forces to harmony. To this end, she makes appeals to the powers that be and other influential sections of society and takes efforts to organise negotiations between hostile parties and to give aid to those who suffer. The Church also opposes the propaganda of war and violence, as well as various manifestations of hatred capable of provoking fratricidal clashes.

## IX. CRIME, PUNISHMENT, REFORMATION

**IX. 1.** Christians are called to be law-abiding citizens of their homeland on earth, accepting that every soul should be «subject unto the higher powers» (Rom. 13:1) and at the same time remembering the commandment of Christ to render «unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's» (Lk. 20:25). The human sinfulness, however, generates crime, which is violation of the limits established by law. At the same time, the conception of sin established by the Orthodox moral norms is broader than the idea of crime expressed in the secular law.

**The primary cause of crime is the darkened state of the human heart:** «for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies» (Mt. 15:19). It should be also admitted that sometimes crime is provoked by economic and social conditions, as well as the weak government and the absence of lawful order. Criminal communities may penetrate public institutions and use them for their own purposes. Finally, the authority itself may become a criminal by committing illegal actions. Especially dangerous is crime disguised under political and pseudo-religious motives, such as terrorism and the like.

To keep crime in check, the state establishes law-enforcement bodies. Their aim is to prevent and investigate crimes and to punish and reform criminals. However, the task of eradicating crime and reforming those who took a false step should be undertaken not only by the state, but all the people, and it means by the Church, too.

**IX. 2. The prevention of crime is possible first of all through education and enlightenment aimed to assert in society the authentic spiritual and moral values. In this task the Orthodox Church is called to intensive co-operation with school, mass media and law-enforcement bodies. If the people lack a positive moral ideal, no measures of coercion, deterrence or punishment will be able to stop the evil will.** That is why the best form of preventing crime is the preaching of the honest and proper way of life, especially among children and youth. In this effort, **close attention should be given to the so-called risk-groups** or those who have already committed first offences. These people need a special pastoral and educational care. The Orthodox clergy and laity are called to take part in the efforts to overcome the social causes of crime, showing concern for the just order in society and economy and for the self-fulfilment of every member of society in his profession and life.

At the same time, **the Church insists on the need of humane attitude towards suspects, persons under investigation and those caught in criminal intent.** The crude and improper treatment of these people can either fortify them on the wrong track or push them on it. For this reason, those awaiting a verdict should not be disfranchised



even in custody. They should be guaranteed advocacy and impartial justice. **The Church condemns torture and indignities towards persons under investigation. The priest, even with a view to assist law-enforcement, cannot violate the secrecy of confession and other secrecy safeguarded by law** (for instance, the secrecy of adoption). **In their care of those who went astray and were convicted, pastors, on learning anything that was concealed from investigation and justice, shall be guided by the secrecy of confession.**

The norm providing for the secrecy of confession is included in the legislation of many states today, including the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Russia's Law on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations.

**The priest is called to show special pastoral sensitivity in case of a confession revealing a criminal intent. While keeping sacred the secrecy of confession without any exceptions and in any circumstances, the pastor is obliged to make all possible efforts to prevent a criminal intent from being realised.** First of all it concerns threats of homicide, especially the massacre possible in the acts of terrorism or execution of a criminal order during war. Remembering that the souls of a potential criminal and his intended victim have equal value, **the priest should call the penitent to make authentic repentance, that is, to abandon his evil intent. If this call is not effective, the pastor, keeping secret the penitent's name and other circumstances which can help identify him, may give a warning to those whose life is threatened. In difficult cases, the priest should apply to the diocesan bishop.**

**IX. 3.** Any crime committed and condemned by law presupposes a fair punishment. Its meaning is to reform an infringer, to protect society from a criminal and to stop his illegal activity. **The Church, without taking upon herself to judge an infringer, is called to take care of his soul. That is why she understands punishment not as revenge, but a means of the inner purification of a sinner.**

Establishing punishment for culprits, the Creator says to Israel: «Thou shalt put evil away from among you» (Deut. 21:21). Punishment for crime serves to teach people. Thus, establishing punishment for false prophesy, God says to Moses: «All Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you» (Deut. 13:11). We read in the Proverbs of Solomon: «Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge» (Prov. 19:25). The Old Testament tradition knows of several forms of punishment including the death penalty, banishment, restriction of freedom, corporal punishment and fine or order to make a donation for religious purposes.

Confinement, banishment (exile), reformatory labour and fines continue as punishments in the contemporary world. All these penalties are relevant not only in

protecting society from the evil will of a criminal, but are also called to help in reforming him. Thus, confinement or restriction of freedom gives a person who outlawed himself an opportunity to reflect on his life in order to come back to liberty internally purified. Labour helps educate a person for creativity and helps him to acquire useful skills. In the process of reformatory labour, the sinful element deep in the soul should give place to creative endeavour, order and spiritual peace. It is important at the same time to ensure that inmates are not subjected to inhumane treatment, that the conditions of confinement do not threaten their life and health and that their moral condition is not influenced by the pernicious example of other inmates. To this end the state is called to take care of convicts, while society and the Church to help them in it.

In Christianity, kindness towards prisoners for the sake of their reformation has deep roots. The Lord Jesus compares charity towards prisoners to the service of Himself: «I was in prison, and ye came unto me» (Mt. 25:36). History remembers many men of God who helped those in prisons. The Russian Orthodox tradition has implied charity toward those fallen from old times. St. Innocent, Archbishop of Kherson, addressed these words to inmates in a prison church in Vologda: «We have come here not to condemn you, but to give you consolation and edification. You can see for yourselves how the Holy Church has come to you with all her Sacraments. So you, too, move not away from her, but approach her with faith, repentance and your ways reformed... The Saviour is even now holding out his hands from the cross to all the repentant; so you, too, repent and you will come from death to life!»

**In her ministry in penitentiaries, the Church should arrange churches and prayer rooms in them, administer Sacraments and celebrate, hold pastoral talks with inmates and distribute religious literature. Especially important is the personal contact with inmates including visiting them in cells. Every encouragement should be given to correspondence with convicts and collection and distribution of clothes, medicines and other necessities. These efforts should be aimed not only to relieve the heavy lot of prisoners, but also to help in the moral healing of their crippled souls. Their pain is the pain of the whole Mother Church who rejoices with heavenly joy when even «one sinner repenteth» (Lk. 15:10). The revival of the care for prisoners has become an important field of pastoral and missionary work, which needs to be supported and developed.**

**The death penalty as a special punishment was recognised in the Old Testament. There are no indications to the need to abolish it in the New Testament or in the Tradition or in the historical legacy of the Orthodox Church either. At the same time, the Church has often assumed the duty of interceding before the secular authority for those condemned to death, asking it show mercy for them and commute their punishment. Moreover, under Christian moral influence, the negative attitude**

**to the death penalty has been cultivated in people's consciousness.** Thus, in the period from the mid-18th century to the 1905 Revolution in Russia, it was applied on very rare occasions. For the Orthodox church consciousness, the life of a person does not end with his bodily death, therefore the Church continues her care for those condemned to capital punishment.

**The abolition of death penalty would give more opportunities for pastoral work with those who have stumbled and for the latter to repent. It is also evident that punishment by death cannot be reformatory; it also makes misjudgement irreparable and provokes ambiguous feelings among people. Today many states have either abolished the death penalty by law or stopped practicing it. Keeping in mind that mercy toward a fallen man is always more preferable than revenge, the Church welcomes these steps by state authorities. At the same time, she believes that the decision to abolish or not to apply death penalty should be made by society freely, considering the rate of crime and the state of law-enforcement and judiciary, and even more so, the need to protect the life of its well-intentioned members.**

**IX. 4. Seeking to help overcome crime, the Church enters into co-operation with law-enforcement agencies. Respecting the efforts of their workers,** aimed to protect the citizens and the country from criminal designs and to reform those who have stumbled, **the Church lends them a helping hand.** This assistance may be realised in various joint educational efforts for preventing offences, in scientific and cultural work and in the pastoral care of the law-enforcers themselves. Co-operation between the Church and the law-enforcement is based on the church statutes and special agreements concluded with the leadership of law-enforcement departments.

**However, it is the pastoral care of the Church, given especially in the Sacrament of Repentance, that is called to be the most effective means in overcoming crime.** To any repentant of an offence **the priest should resolutely offer to abandon in the Face of God any attempt to continue his criminal activity as an indispensable condition for the absolution from his sin. Only in this way a person will be compelled to abandon the way of lawlessness and to return to the life of virtue.**

## X. PERSONAL, FAMILY AND PUBLIC MORALITY

**X. 1.** The difference between the sexes is a special gift of the Creator to human beings He created. «So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he man; male and female created he them» (Gen. 1:27). As equal bearers of the divine image and human dignity, man and woman are created to be completely united in love: «Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh» (Gen. 2:24). Fulfilling the Lord's original will for the creation, the marital union becomes a means of continuing and multiplying the human race: «And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it» (Gen. 1:28). The sexual distinctions are not limited to the difference in constitution. Man and woman are two different modes of existence in one humanity. They need communication and complementation. However, in the fallen world, relationships between the sexes can be perverted, ceasing to be an expression of God-given love and degenerating into the sinful passion of the fallen man for his ego.

**While appreciating deeply the feat of voluntary virginal celibacy assumed for the sake of Christ and the Gospel and recognising the special role of monasticism in the past and the present, the Church has never disparaged marriage, but denounced those who abased matrimonial relations out of wrongly understood purity.**

St. Paul, who personally chose celibacy and called people to emulate him in it (1 Cor. 7:8), still denounces those who speak «lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry» (1 Tim. 4:2-3). Apostolic Canon 51 reads: «If... any one... abstains from marriage... not by way of religious restraint, but as abhorring them, forgetting that God made all things very good, and that he made man male and female, and blaspheming the work of creation, let him be corrected, or else be deposed, and cast out of the Church». This rule is developed in Canons 1, 9 and 10 of the Council of Gangra: «If any one shall condemn marriage, or abominate and condemn a woman who is a believer and devout, and sleeps with her own husband, as though she could not enter the Kingdom [of heaven], let him be anathema. If any one shall remain virgin, or observe continence, abstaining from marriage because he abhors it, and not on account of the beauty and holiness of virginity itself, let him be anathema. If any one of those who are living a virgin life for the Lord's sake shall treat arrogantly the married, let him be anathema». Referring to these Canons, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in its decision of December 28, 1998, pointed to «the inadmissibility of the negative or arrogant attitude to marriage».

**X. 2.** According to the Roman law, which was put in the basis of the civil codes in most of the contemporary states, marriage is an agreement between two parties free in their

choice. The Church has accepted this definition, interpreting it on the basis of testimonies found in Holy Scriptures.

The Roman jurist Modestinus gave this definition to marriage: «Marriage is the union of man and woman, communion of life, participation together in the divine and human law». Almost unchanged, this definition was included in the canonical books of the Orthodox Church, such as the *Nomocanon* by Patriarch Photius (9th century), the *Syntagma* by Matthew Vlastar (14th century) and the *Prochiron* by Basil the Macedonian (9th century) included in the Slavonic *Kormchaya Kniga*. The early Christian fathers and teachers of the Church also leaned on the Roman idea of marriage. Thus, Athenagoras in his *Apology* addressed to Emperor Marcus Aurelius (2nd century) writes: «Every one of us considers the woman he married by law to be his wife». *The Apostolic Constitutions*, a monument of the 4th century, exhorts Christians to «to contract marriage by law».

Christianity replenished the heathen and Old Testament ideas of marriage with the sublime union of Christ and the Church: «Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband» (Eph. 5:22-33).

For Christians, marriage has become not simply a legal contract, a means of reproduction and satisfaction of temporal natural needs, but, according to St. John Chrysostom, «a mystery of love», an eternal union of spouses in Christ. From the beginning, Christians sealed marriage through the Church's blessing and sharing in the Eucharist, which was the oldest form of the administration of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

«Those who marry should ally themselves with the consent of a bishop, so that the marriage might be in the Lord, not for lust», wrote the Protomartyr Ignatius the God-

Bearer. According to Tertullian, marriage «sealed by the Church and confirmed by sacrifice (the Eucharist) is stamped by blessing and recorded by the angels in heaven». St. John Chrysostom said, «Priests should be urged to confirm spouses in common life by prayers and blessings, so that... spouses may lead their life in joy, united by God's help». St. Ambrose of Milan pointed out that «marriage should be sanctified by the priestly intercession and blessing».

In the period of the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, marriage continued to be validated by civil registration. Consecrating matrimonial unions by prayer and blessing, the Church still recognised a common-law marriage as valid in cases where the church marriage was impossible and did not subject the spouses thus married to canonical prohibitions. Today the Russian Orthodox Church upholds the same practice. In doing so, she cannot approve and bless the matrimonial unions which, while being concluded in accordance with the existing law, violate the canonical prescriptions, such as a fourth and subsequent marriages, marriages in the inadmissible degrees of blood or spiritual affinity.

According to the 74th Novella of Justinian (538), a lawful marriage could be sealed by either an *ecdicus* (a church notary) or a priest. This rule was included in the eclogue of Emperor Leo III and his son Constantine (740), and in the legislation of Basil I (879). Mutual agreement between man and woman, confirmed before witnesses, was an important condition of marriage. The Church did not protest against this practice. Only in 893, by Novella 89 of Emperor Leo VI, free citizens were obliged to marry in church. In 1095, Emperor Alexis Comninus extended this rule to slaves. The introduction of obligatory church marriage (9th-11th centuries) meant that the authority transferred the entire legal regulation of matrimonial relations to the jurisdiction of the Church. However, the universal introduction of this practice should not be seen as the institution of the Sacrament of Matrimony, which had existed in the Church from times immemorial.

The order established in Byzantium was also assimilated in Russia with regard to the people of Orthodox confession. By the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State (1918), church marriage was rendered invalid; formally the faithful were given the right to accept a church blessing after registering a marriage with state. In fact, throughout the long period of the persecution of religion by the state, the celebration of marriage in church remained difficult and dangerous.

On December 28, 1998, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church regretted to state that «some spiritual fathers tend to declare common-law marriage invalid or demand that spouses, who have lived together for many years but were not married in church for this or that reason, should divorce... Some spiritual fathers do not allow

persons who live in «unwed» marriage to communicate, identifying such a marriage with fornication». The decision adopted by the Synod points out that «while insisting on the necessity of church marriage, the Synod reminds pastors that the Orthodox Church also respects common-law marriage».

**The common faith of spouses who are members of the body of Christ is an essential condition for truly Christian and church marriage.** It is only the family that has one faith that can become «the church in the house» (Rom. 16:5; Phil. 1:2), in which husband and wife together with their children grow in spiritual perfection and knowledge of God. The lack of like-mindedness presents a serious threat to the integrity of a matrimonial union. That is why the Church considers it her duty to urge the faithful to marry «only in the Lord» (1 Cor. 7:39), that to marry only those who share their Christian convictions.

The above-mentioned resolution of the Holy Synod also speaks of the Church's respect for «the marriage in which only one of the parties belongs to the Orthodox faith. For, according to St. Paul, «the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband» (1 Cor. 7:14)». The fathers of the Council in Trullo also referred to this scriptural text when recognised as valid the union between those who «up to this time being unbelievers and not yet numbered in the flock of the orthodox have contracted lawful marriage», if later one of the spouses embraced the faith. In the same canon, however, just as in other canonical decrees (IV Ecum. Council 14; Laodic. 10, 31), and works of early Christian authors and church fathers (Tertullian, St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Theodoret and St. Augustine), it is prohibited to contract marriages with followers of other religious traditions.

**In accordance with ancient canonical prescriptions, today, too, the Church does not sanctifies marriages contracted between the Orthodox and non-Christians, while recognising them as lawful and not regarding those who live in such a marriage as living in sinful co-habitation. Proceeding from considerations of pastoral *oikonomia*, the Russian Orthodox Church has deemed it possible, both in the past and present, to celebrate marriages between Orthodox Christians and Catholics, members of the Oriental Churches and Protestants who confess the faith in the Triune God, provided the marriage is blessed in the Orthodox Church and the children are raised in the Orthodox faith. Most of the Orthodox Churches have followed the same practice for the past centuries.**

By its decree of June 23, 1721, the Sacred Synod permitted to celebrate marriages on the above-mentioned conditions between Swedish captives held in Siberia and Orthodox brides. On August 18 of the same year, this Synodal decision was give a thorough biblical and theological substantiation in a special Synodal Letter. This Letter was also

used as reference subsequently when the Holy Synod had to make a decision on mixed marriages in provinces annexed from Poland and Finland (the Holy Synod Decrees of 1803 and 1811). In these provinces, however, it was permitted to choose freely the confessional affiliation of children (this practice was applied for some time in the Baltic provinces as well). Finally, the rules concerning mixed marriages for the whole Russian Empire were sealed in the Statute of the Religious Consistories (1883). Many dynastic marriages were mixed, and for their celebration it was not required of the non-Orthodox party to embrace Orthodoxy (with the exception of the marriage of an heir to the Russian throne). Thus, the Protomartyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, was married to Prince Sergiy Alexandrovich and only later embraced Orthodox by her own will.

**X. 3. The Church insists that spouses should remain faithful for life and that Orthodox marriage is indissoluble** on the basis of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: «What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder... Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery» (Mt. 19:6, 9). Divorce is denounced by the Church as sin, for it brings great spiritual suffering to spouses (at least to one of them), especially to children. Today's situation in which a considerable number of marriages are dissolved, especially among young people, causes an extreme concern. This situation has become a real tragedy both for the individual and the people.

The Lord pointed to adultery as the only permissible ground for divorce, for it defiles the sanctity of marriage and breaks the bond of matrimonial faithfulness. In cases where spouses suffer from all kinds of conflict, the Church sees it as her pastoral task to use all the means appropriate for her, (such as exhortation, prayer, participation in the Sacraments) to safeguard the integrity of a marriage and to prevent divorce. The clergy are also called to talk to those who wish to marry, explaining to them the importance of the intended step.

Unfortunately, sometimes spouses prove unable to preserve the gift of grace they received in the Sacrament of Matrimony and to keep the unity of the family because of their sinful imperfection. In her desire to save the sinners, the Church gives them an opportunity to reform and is ready to re-admit them to the Sacraments after they make repentance.

The Byzantine laws, which were established by Christian emperors and met with no objection of the Church, admitted of various grounds for divorce. In the Russian Empire, the dissolution of lawful marriages was effected in the ecclesiastical court.

**In 1918, in its Decision on the Grounds for the Dissolution of the Marriage Sanctified by the Church, the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, recognised as**



valid, besides adultery and a new marriage of one of the party, such grounds as a spouse's falling away from Orthodoxy, perversion, impotence which had set in before marriage or was self-inflicted, contraction of leper or syphilis, prolonged disappearance, conviction with disfranchisement, encroachment on the life or health of the spouse, love affair with a daughter in law, profiting from marriage, profiting by the spouse's indecencies, incurable mental disease and malevolent abandonment of the spouse. At present, added to this list of the grounds for divorce are chronic alcoholism or drug-addiction and abortion without the husband's consent.

For the spiritual education of those contracting a marriage and consolidation of marital bonds, the clergy are urged before celebrating a Marriage to explain in detail to the bridegroom and bride that a marital union concluded in church is indissoluble. They should emphasise that divorce as the last resort can be sought only if spouses committed actions defined by the Church as causes for divorce. Consent to the dissolution of a marriage cannot be given to satisfy a whim or to «confirm» a common-law divorce. However, if a divorce is an accomplished fact, especially when spouses live separately, the restoration of the family is considered impossible and a church divorce may be given if the pastor deigns to concede the request. **The Church does not at all approve of a second marriage. Nevertheless, according to the canon law, after a legitimate church divorce, a second marriage is allowed to the innocent spouse. Those whose first marriage was dissolved through their own fault a second marriage is allowed only after repentance and penance imposed in accordance with the canons.** According to the rules of St. Basil the Great, in exceptional cases where a third marriage is allowed, the duration of the penance shall be prolonged.

In its Decision of December 28, 1998, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church denounced the actions of those spiritual fathers who «prohibit their spiritual children from contracting a second marriage on the grounds that second marriage is allegedly denounced by the Church and who prohibit married couples from divorce if their family life becomes impossible for this or that reason». At the same time, the Holy Synod resolved that «pastors should be reminded that in her attitude to the second marriage the Orthodox Church is guided by the words of St. Paul: 'Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned... the wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord' (1 Cor. 7:27-28, 39)».

**X. 6.** A special inner closeness between the family and the Church is evident already from the fact that in Holy Scriptures Christ describes Himself as a bridegroom (Mt. 9:15; 25:1-13; Lk. 12:35-36), while the Church is presented as His wife and bride (Eph. 5:24; Rev. 21:9). Similarly, St. Clement of Alexandria describes the family as a church and a

house of God, while St. John Chrysostom calls the family «a lesser church». «I shall also say», writes the holy father, «that marriage is a mysterious transformation of the Church». A man and a woman who love each other, united in marriage and aspiring for Christ form a domestic church. Children become fruits of their love and communion, and their birth and upbringing belong, according to the Orthodox teaching, to one of the most important goals of marriage.

«Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward», exclaims the Psalmist (Ps. 127:3). St. Paul taught the saving nature of childbirth (1 Tim. 2:13). He also urged fathers: «Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord» (Eph. 6:4). «Children are not an occasional acquirement; we are responsible for their salvation... The negligence of children is the greatest of all sins as it leads to extreme impiety... There is no excuse for us if our children are corrupt», St. John Chrysostom exhorts. St. Ephrem the Syrian teaches: «Blessed are those who bring up their children in piety». «A true father is not the one who has begotten children but the one who has brought them up and taught them well», writes St. Tikhon Zadonsky. «Parents are responsible first of all for the upbringing of their children and cannot ascribe blame for their bad education to anyone but themselves», preached the Holy Martyr Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev. «Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land», reads the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12). In the Old Testament, disrespect for parents is regarded as the greatest transgression (Ex. 21:15, 17; Prov. 20:20; 30:17). The New Testament teaches children to obey their parents with love: «Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord» (Col. 3:20).

The family as a domestic church is a single organism whose members live and build their relations on the basis of the law of love. The experience of family relations teaches a person to overcome sinful egoism and lays the foundations for his sense of civil duty. It is in the family as a school of devotion that the right attitude to one's neighbours and therefore to one's people and society as a whole is formed. The living continuity of generations, beginning in family, is continued in the love of the forefathers and fatherland, in the feeling of participation in history. This is why it is so dangerous to distort the traditional parents-child relationship, which, unfortunately, have been in many ways endangered by the contemporary way of life. The diminished social significance of motherhood and fatherhood compared to the progress made by men and women in the professional field leads to the treatment of children as an unnecessary burden, contributing also to the development of alienation and antagonism between generations. **The role of family in the formation of the personality is exceptional; no other social institution can replace it. The erosion of family relations inevitably**

**entails the deformation of the normal development of children and leaves a long, and to a certain extent indelible trace in them for life.**

Children who have parents who have abandoned them have become a lamentable disaster of society today. Thousands of abandoned children who fill orphanages and sometimes find themselves in streets point to a profound illness of society. Giving these children spiritual and material help and seeing to it that they are involved in religious and social life, the Church at the same time considers it one of her most important duties to raise parents' awareness of their calling, which would exclude the tragedy of the abandoned child.

**X. 5.** In the pre-Christian world, it was common to think of woman as inferior to man. The Church of Christ has revealed the dignity and calling of woman in all its fullness, giving them solid religious grounds the ultimate of which is the veneration of the Most Holy Mother of God. According to Orthodox teaching, most favoured Mary, who was blessed among women (Lk. 1:21), showed the highest degree of moral purity, spiritual perfection and holiness to which humanity could raise and which surpasses the virtue of the angelic ranks. In Her face, motherhood is sanctified and the significance of the female principle is asserted. The mystery of the Incarnation is accomplished with the participation of the Mother of God, thus making Her a participant in the cause of the human salvation and re-birth. The Church deeply venerates the myrrh-bearing women and numerous communities of Christian women glorified by the feats of martyrdom, confession and righteousness. From the very beginning of the church community, woman has taken an active part in its building, liturgical life, mission, preaching, education and charity.

**While appreciating the social role of women and welcoming their political, cultural and social equality with men, the Church opposes the tendency to diminish the role of woman as wife and mother. The fundamental equality of the sexes does not annihilate the natural distinction between them, nor does it imply the identity of their callings in family and society.** In particular, the Church cannot misconstrue the words of St. Paul about the special responsibility of husband who is called to be «the head of the wife» who loves her as Christ loves His Church, and about the calling of the wife to obey the husband as the Church obeys Christ (Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18). These words are not of course about the despotism of husband or the slavery of wife, but about supremacy in responsibility, care and love. It should not be forgotten either that all Christians are called to «submit themselves to one another in the fear of God» (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, «neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God» (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

Representatives of some social movements tend to diminish and sometimes even deny the importance of marriage and the institution of family, focusing primarily on the socially significant activities of women including those incompatible or little compatible with the woman's nature (such as hard manual labour). Demands are often heard that men and women should be made artificially equal in every field of human activity. The Church, however, sees the calling of woman not in the mere emulation of man or competition with him, but in the development of all her God-given abilities, including those peculiar only to her nature. Without focusing on the distribution of social functions alone, Christian anthropology appropriates to woman a higher place than she is given in the contemporary irreligious beliefs. **The desire to remove or minimise the natural differences in social field is alien to the church mind. Sexual, just as social and ethnic, distinctions do not obstruct the way to salvation given by Christ to all people.** «There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus» (Gal. 3:28). This soteriological assertion, however, does not imply an attempt to water down the human diversity artificially, nor should it be mechanically extended to any social relations.

**X. 6. The virtue of chastity** preached by the Church is **the basis of the inner unity of the human personality**, which should always be in the state of harmony between its mental and bodily powers. Fornication inevitably ruins the harmony and integrity of one's life, damaging heavily one's spiritual health. Libertinism dulls the spiritual vision and hardens the heart, making it incapable of true love. **The happiness of full-blooded family life becomes unattainable for the fornicator. Sins against chastity also lead to negative social consequences.** In the situation of a spiritual crisis of the human society, the mass media and the products of the so-called mass culture sometimes become instruments of moral corruption by praising sexual laxity, all kinds of sexual perversion and other sinful passions. **Pornography, which is the exploitation of the sexual drive for commercial, political or ideological purposes, contributes to the suppression of the spiritual and moral principles, thus reducing man to an animal motivated by instinct alone.**

**The propaganda of vice is especially harmful for the still infirm souls of children and youth.** Through books, films and other video products, as well as the mass media and some educational curricula, teenagers are often taught an idea of sexual relations extremely humiliating for the human dignity, since it gives no room to such notions as chastity, marital faithfulness and selfless love. Intimate relations between man and woman are not only exposed for show, offending the natural feeling of prudence, but also presented as an act of purely corporal gratification without any association with inner communion or any moral obligations. The Church urges the faithful to struggle, in co-operation with all morally healthy forces, against the propagation of this

diabolical temptation, which, by destroying the family, undermines the foundations of society.

«Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart», the Lord Jesus Christ says in his Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:28). «When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death» St. James warns (Jam. 1:15). «Neither fornicators... shall inherit the kingdom of God» (1 Cor. 9-10). These words can be fully applied to the consumers and even more so the manufacturers of pornographic production. The latter can also fall under these words of Christ: «Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea... Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh» (Mt. 18:6-7). «Fornication is poison mortifying the soul... Whoever fornicates rejects Christ», St. Tikhon Zadonsky wrote. St. Dimitry of Rostov wrote that «the body of each Christian is not his, but Christ's, according to the words of Scripture: 'Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular' (1 Cor. 12-27). And it does not behove you to defile the body of Christ by carnal and voluptuous actions, except lawful conjugality. For you are a house of Christ, according to the word of the Apostle: 'for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are' (1 Cor. 3:17)». The Early Church, in the writings of her fathers and doctors, such as Clement of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom, invariably renounced obscene drama scenes and presentations. Under the threat of excommunication, the 100th Canon of the Council in Trullo prohibits making «representations corrupting the mind and provoking inflammations of impure pleasures».

The human body is a wondrous creation of God and is ordained to become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). **Condemning pornography and fornication, the Church does not at all call to abhor the body or sexual intimacy as such. For the physical relations between man and woman are blessed by God in marriage in which they express chaste love, complete communion and the «harmony of the minds and bodies» of the spouses, for which the Church prays in the celebration of wedding. What actually should be denounced is the tendency to turn these chaste and appropriate relations as God has designed them and the human body itself into an object of humiliating exploitation and trade to derive egoistic, impersonal, loveless and perverted pleasure. For this reason, the Church invariably denounces prostitution and the preaching of the so-called free love in which physical intimacy is completely divorced from personal and spiritual communion, selflessness and all-round responsibility for each other, which are possible only in the lifetime conjugal faithfulness.**

Aware of the need for the school, along with the family, to give children and adolescents the knowledge of sexuality and the physical human nature, the Church cannot support those programs of «sexual education» in which premarital intercourse and, all the more so, various perversions are recognised as the norm. It is absolutely unacceptable to impose such programs upon schoolchildren. School is called to oppose vice which erodes the integrity of the personality, to educate children for chastity and prepare them for creating solid families based on faithfulness and purity.

## XI. PERSONAL AND NATIONAL HEALTH

**XI. 1.** At all times the Church has been concerned for the human health, both spiritual and physical. From the Orthodox perspective, however, the physical health divorced from spiritual is not an absolute value. Preaching by word and deed, the Lord Jesus Christ healed people, taking care not only of their bodies, but above all of their souls, and as a result of the integrity of the personality. According to the Saviour Himself, he healed «a man every whit whole» (Jn. 7:23). The preaching of the gospel was accompanied with healing as a sign of the power of the Lord to forgive sins. Healing was an integral part of the apostolic preaching as well. The Church of Christ, endowed by her Divine Founder with every gift of the Holy Spirit, was from the beginning a community of healing, and today too, in her rite of confession she reminds her children that they have come into an infirmary to come out healed.

The biblical attitude to medicine is expressed most fully in the Book of Jesus the Son of Sirach: «Honour a physician with the honour due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him: for the Lord hath created him... For of the most High cometh healing The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth; and he that is wise will not abhor them. And he hath given men skill, that he might be honoured in his marvellous works. With such doth he heal [men,] and taketh away their pains. Of such doth the apothecary make a confection; and of his works there is no end; and from him is peace over all the earth, My son, in thy sickness be not negligent: but pray unto the Lord, and he will make thee whole. Leave off from sin, and order thine hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all wickedness...Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success. For they shall also pray unto the Lord, that he would prosper that, which they give for ease and remedy to prolong life.» (Sir. 38:1-2, 4, 6-10, 12-14). The best representatives of the ancient medicine, included in the community of saints, gave a special example of holiness — the holiness of disinterested and miracle-working people. They were glorified not only because they often suffered martyrdom, but also because they accepted the medical calling as Christian duty of mercy.

The Orthodox Church has always treated the medical work with high respect as it is based on the service of love aimed to prevent and relieve people's suffering. The recovery of the human nature distorted by illness appears as the fulfilment of God's design for man. «May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ» (1 Thes. 5:23). **The body, free from slavery to sinful passions and illnesses as their consequences, should serve the soul, while the spiritual powers and abilities, transformed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, should aspire for the ultimate goal and calling of man which is deification. Every authentic healing is called to be part of this**

**miracle of healing accomplished in the Church of Christ.** At the same time, it is necessary to distinguish the healing power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, given in the faith in One Lord Jesus Christ through participation in the church Sacraments, from conjuration, incantation and other magic manipulations and prejudices.

Many illnesses are still incurable and cause suffering and death. In the face of such illnesses, the Orthodox Christian is called to rely on the all-good will of God, remembering that the meaning of life is not limited to earthly life which is essentially the preparation for eternity. Suffering is a consequence of not only personal sins, but also the general distortion and limitation of the human nature and as such should be endured with patience and hope. The Lord voluntarily accepts suffering so that the human race may be saved: «with his stripes we are healed» (Is. 53:5). This means that God was pleased to make suffering a means of salvation and purification, possible for every one who endures it with humbleness and trust in the all-good will of God. According to St. John Chrysostom, «whoever has learnt to thank God for his illnesses is not far from being holy». This does not mean that a doctor or a patient should not struggle with illness. However, **when human resources are exhausted, the Christian should remember that God's strength is made perfect in weakness and that in the depths of suffering he can meet Christ Who took upon Himself our infirmities and afflictions** (Is. 53:4).

**XI. 2. The Church calls upon both pastors and her faithful to bear Christian witness to health workers. It is very important that medical teachers and students should be introduced to the bases of the Orthodox teaching and Orthodox-oriented biomedical ethics.** (see, XII). The Church's spiritual care in the sphere of healthcare lies essentially in the proclamation of the word of God and the offer of the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who suffer and those who take care of them. Central to it are **the participation of patients in the salvific Sacraments, creation of an atmosphere of prayer in clinics and the comprehensive charitable support of their patients.** The church mission in the medical sphere is a duty not only for the clergy, but also for the Orthodox medical workers called to create all the conditions for religious consolation to be given to the patients who ask for it either directly or indirectly. A believing medical worker should understand that a person who needs his help expects from him not only appropriate treatment, but also spiritual support, especially if he upholds a worldview revealing the mystery of suffering and death. **The duty of every Orthodox medical worker is to be for the patient the merciful Samaritan from the Gospel parable.**

**The Church gives her blessing upon the Orthodox brotherhoods and sisterhoods working in clinics and other healthcare institutions and helping to found hospital churches, as well as church and monastery hospitals, so that medical aid in all stages**



of treatment may be combined with pastoral care. The Church urges the laity to give all possible support to the sick to relieve human suffering with gentle love and care.

**XI. 3.** For the Church, the problem of personal and national health is not an external and purely social, because it has a direct bearing on her mission in the world damaged by sin and infirmities. **The Church is called to participate, in collaboration with state structures and concerned public circles, in the development of such a conception of national healthcare whereby every person would exercise his right to spiritual, physical and mental health and social welfare under maximum life expectancy.**

The doctor-patient relationships should be built on respect for the integrity, free choice and dignity of the personality. It is inadmissible to manipulate him even for the best purposes. The Church cannot but welcomes the development of doctor-patient dialogue taking place in medicine today. This approach is definitely rooted in the Christian tradition, though there is a temptation to reduce it to a purely contractual level. At the same time, it should be admitted that the traditional «paternalistic» model of doctor-patient relations, rightly criticised for frequent attempts to justify the doctor's arbitrariness, can also offer a truly paternal approach to the patient, determined by the morality of the doctor.

**Without giving preference to any organisational model of medical aid, the Church believes that this aid should be maximum effective and accessible to all members of society, regardless of their financial means and social status,** also in the situation of limited medical resources. To make the distribution of these resources truly equitable, the criterion of «vital needs» should prevail over that of «market relations». The doctor should not link the measure of his responsibility for giving medical aid exclusively with the financial reward and its amount, turning his profession into a source of enrichment. At the same time, worthy payment for the work of medical workers appears to be an important task for society and state.

While acknowledging the benefit of medicine becoming more oriented to prognosis and prevention and welcoming the integral conception of health and illness, the Church warns against attempts to make a particular medical theory absolute, reminding of the importance of keeping the spiritual priorities in the human life. On the basis of her age-old experience, the Church also warns of the danger that may be brought by attempt to introduce the occult-magic practice under the guise of «alternative medicine», as this practice subjects the will and consciousness of people to the power of demonic forces. Every person should have the right and a real opportunity to reject those methods of influencing his organism which contradict his religious convictions.

The Church reminds the faithful that physical health is not self-sufficient, since it is only one of the aspects in the integral human being. It should be admitted, however, that in

order to maintain the personal and national health it is important to take preventive measures and to create real conditions for people to engage themselves in physical culture and sports. Competition is natural for sports. Its extreme commercialisation, however, and the ensuing cult of pride, ruinous drug-taking and, all the more so, the contests in which severe injuries are purposefully inflicted cannot be approved.

**XI. 4.** The Russian Orthodox Church has to state with deep concern that the peoples she has traditionally nourished are in the state of demographical crisis today. The birth rate and the average life expectancy have sharply decreased, with the population continually decreasing in number. Life is threatened by epidemics, growing cardiovascular, mental, venereal and other diseases, as well as drug-addiction and alcoholism. Children's illnesses, including imbecility, have also grown. The demographical problems lead to deformation in the social structure and decrease in the creative potential of the people and become one of the causes of the weakening family. The primary causes of the depopulation and health crisis of these peoples in the 20th century are wars, revolution, hunger and massive repression the consequences of which have aggravated the social crisis at the end of the century.

The Church has been continually occupied with demographic problems. She is called to follow closely the legislative and administrative processes in order to prevent decisions aggravating the situation. It is necessary to conduct continuous dialogue with the government and the mass media to interpret the Church's stand on the demographic and healthcare policy. The fight with depopulation should be included in the effective support of medical research and social programs intended to protect motherhood and childhood, the embryo and the newborn. The state is called to support the birth and proper upbringing of children.

**XI. 5. The Church regards mental diseases as manifestations of the general sinful distortion of the human nature.** Singling out the spiritual, mental and bodily levels in the structure of the personality, the holy fathers drew a distinction between the diseases which developed «from nature» and the infirmities caused by the diabolic impact or enslaving human passions. In accordance with this distinction, **it is equally unjustifiable to reduce all mental diseases to manifestations of obsession – the conception ensuing in the unjustifiable exorcism of evil spirits, and to treat any mental disorder exclusively by medical means.** More fruitful in psychotherapy is the combination of the pastoral and the medical aid with due delimitation made between the jurisdictions of the doctor and the priest.

No mental disease diminishes the dignity of a person. The Church testifies that a mentally ill person, too, is a bearer of the image of God, remaining our brother who needs compassion and support. Morally inadmissible are the psychotherapeutic

approaches based on the suppression of a patient's personality and the humiliation of his dignity. Occult methods of influencing the psyche, sometimes disguised as scientific psychotherapy, are categorically unacceptable for Orthodoxy. In special cases, the treatment of the mentally ill requires both isolation and other forms of coercion. **However, in choosing the form of medical intervention, the principle of the least restriction of a patient's freedom should be observed.**

**XI. 6.** The Bible says that «wine maketh glad the heart of man» (Ps. 104:15) and «it is good... if it be drunk moderately» (Sir. 31:27). But we repeatedly find both in Holy Scriptures and the writings of the holy fathers **the strong denunciation of the vice of drinking**, which, beginning unnoticeably, leads to many other ruinous sins. Very often drinking causes the disintegration of family, bringing enormous suffering to both the victim of this sinful infirmity and his relatives, especially children.

«Drinking is animosity against God... Drinking is a voluntarily courted devil... Drinking drives the Holy Spirit away», St. Basil the Great writes. «Drinking is the root of all evils... The drunkard is a living corpse... Drinking in itself can serve as punishment, filling as it is the soul with confusion, filling the mind with darkness, making a drunk prisoner, subjecting one to innumerable diseases, internal and external... Drinking is a many-sided and many-headed beast... Here it gives rise to fornication, there to anger, here to the dullness of the mind and the heart, there to impure love... Nobody obeys the ill will of the devil as faithfully as a drunkard does», St. John Chrysostom exhorted. «A drunk man is capable of every evil and prone to every temptation... Drinking renders its adherent incapable of any task», St. Tikhon Zadonsky testifies.

Even more destructive is ever increasing drug-addiction — the passion that makes a person enslaved by it extremely vulnerable to the impact of dark forces. With every year this terrible infirmity engulfs more and more people, taking away great many a life. The fact that the most liable to it are young people makes it a special threat to society. The selfish interests of the drug business help to promote, especially among youth, the development of a special «drug» pseudo-culture. It imposes on immature people the stereotypes of behaviour in which the use of drugs is seen as a «normal» and even indispensable attribute of relations.

**The principal reason for the desire of many of our contemporaries to escape into a realm of alcoholic or narcotic illusions is spiritual emptiness, loss of the meaning of life and blurred moral guiding lines.** Drug-addiction and alcoholism point to the spiritual disease that has affected not only the individual, but also society as a whole. This is a retribution for the ideology of consumerism, for the cult of material prosperity, for the lack of spirituality and the loss of authentic ideals. In her pastoral compassion

for the victims of alcoholism and drug-addiction, the Church offers them spiritual support in overcoming the vice. **Without denying the need of medical aid to be given at the critical stages of drug-addiction, the Church pays special attention to the prevention and rehabilitation which are the most effective when those suffering participate consciously in the eucharistic and communal life.**

## **XII. THE PROBLEMS WITH BIOETHICS**

**XII. 1.** The rapid development of biomedical technologies, which have invaded the life of modern man from birth to death, and the impossibility of responding to the ensuing ethical challenges within the traditional medical ethics have caused serious concern in society. The attempts of human beings to put themselves in the place of God by changing and «improving» His creation at their will may bring to humanity new burdens and suffering. The development of biomedical technologies has outstripped by far the awareness of possible spiritual-moral and social consequences of their uncontrolled application. This cannot but cause a profound pastoral concern in the Church. In formulating her attitude to the problems of bioethics so widely debated in the world today, especially those involved in the direct impact on the human being, the Church proceeds from the ideas of life based on the Divine Revelation. It asserts life as a precious gift of God. It also asserts the inalienable freedom and God-like dignity of man called to be «the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ» (Phil. 3:14), to be as perfect as the Heavenly Father (Mt. 5:48) and to be deified, that is, to become partaker in the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

**XII. 2. Since the ancient time the Church has viewed deliberate abortion as a grave sin. The canons equate abortion with murder.** This assessment is based on the conviction that the conception of a human being is a gift of God. Therefore, from the moment of conception any encroachment on the life of a future human being is criminal.

The Psalmist describes the development of the foetus in a mother's womb as God's creative action: «thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb... My substance was not hid from thee, them I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance» (Ps. 139:13, 15-16). Job testifies to the same in the words addressed to God: «thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about... Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved by spirit... Thou brought me forth out of the womb» (Job 10:8-12, 18). «I formed thee in the belly... and before thou comest out of the womb I sanctified thee», says the Lord to the Prophet Jeremiah. «Thou shalt not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide» — this order is placed among the most important commandments of God in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, one of the oldest Christian manuscripts. «A woman who brought on abortion is a murderer and will give an account to God», wrote Athenagoras, an apologist of the 2nd century. «One who will be man is already man», argued Tertullian at the turn of the 3d century. «She who purposely destroys the foetus,

shall suffer the punishment of murder... Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the foetus, are subjected to the same penalty as murder», read the 2nd and 8th rules of St. Basil the Great, included in the Book of Statutes of the Orthodox Church and confirmed by Canon 91 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. At the same time, St. Basil clarifies: «And we pay no attention to the subtle distinction as to whether the foetus was formed or unformed». St. John Chrysostom described those who perform abortion as «being worse than murderers».

The Church sees the widely spread and justified abortion in contemporary society as a threat to the future of humanity and a clear sign of its moral degradation. It is incompatible to be faithful to the biblical and patristic teaching that human life is sacred and precious from its origin and to recognise woman's «free choice» in disposing of the fate of the foetus. In addition, abortion present a serious threat to the physical and spiritual health of a mother. The Church has always considered it her duty to protect the most vulnerable and dependent human beings, namely, unborn children. Under no circumstances the Orthodox Church can bless abortion. Without rejecting the women who had an abortion, the Church calls upon them to repent and to overcome the destructive consequences of the sin through prayer and penance followed by participation in the salvific Sacraments. **In case of a direct threat to the life of a mother if her pregnancy continues, especially if she has other children, it is recommended to be lenient in the pastoral practice. The woman who interrupted pregnancy in this situation shall not be excluded from the Eucharistic communion with the Church provided that she has fulfilled the canon of Penance assigned by the priest who takes her confession.** The struggle with abortion, to which women sometimes have to resort because of abject poverty and helplessness, demands that the Church and society work out effective measures to protect motherhood and to create conditions for the adoption of the children whose mothers cannot raise them on their own for some reason.

Responsibility for the sin of the murder of the unborn child should be borne, along with the mother, by the father if he gave his consent to the abortion. If a wife had an abortion without the consent of her husband, it may be grounds for divorce (see X. 3). Sin also lies with the doctor who performed the abortion. The Church calls upon the state to recognise the right of medics to refuse to procure abortion for the reasons of conscience. The situation cannot be considered normal where the legal responsibility of a doctor for the death of a mother is made incomparably higher than the responsibility for the destruction of the foetus — the situation that provokes medics and through them patients, too, to do abortions. The doctor should be utterly responsible in establishing a diagnosis that can prompt a woman to interrupt her pregnancy. In doing so, a believing medic should carefully correlate the clinic indications with the dictates of his Christian conscience.

**XII. 3.** Among the problems which need a religious and moral assessment is that of **contraception**. Some contraceptives have an abortive effect, interrupting artificially the life of the embryo on the very first stages of his life. Therefore, the same judgements are applicable to the use of them as to abortion. But other means, which do not involve interrupting an already conceived life, cannot be equated with abortion in the least. In defining their attitude to the non-abortive contraceptives, Christian spouses should remember that human reproduction is one of the principal purposes of the divinely established marital union (see, X. 4). The deliberate refusal of childbirth on egoistic grounds devalues marriage and is a definite sin.

At the same time, spouses are responsible before God for the comprehensive upbringing of their children. **One of the ways to be responsible for their birth is to restrain themselves from sexual relations for a time.** However, Christian spouses should remember the words of St. Paul addressed to them: «Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency» (1 Cor. 7:5). Clearly, spouses should make such decisions mutually on the counsel of their spiritual father. The latter should take into account, with pastoral prudence, the concrete living conditions of the couple, their age, health, degree of spiritual maturity and many other circumstances. In doing so, he should distinguish those who can *hold* the high demands of continence from those to whom it is not *given* (Mt. 19:11), taking care above all of the preservation and consolidation of the family.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in its Decision of December 28, 1998, instructed the clergy serving as spiritual guides that «it is inadmissible to coerce or induce the flock to... refuse conjugal relations in marriage». It also reminded the pastors of the need «to show special chastity and special pastoral prudence in discussing with the flock the questions involved in particular aspects of their family life».

**XII. 4.** **New biomedical methods make it possible in many cases to overcome the infirmity of infertility.** At the same time, the growing technological interference in the conception of human life presents a threat to the spiritual integrity and physical health of a person. A threat comes also for interpersonal relations on which the community has been built from of old. **The development of the above-mentioned technologies has brought about the ideology of the so-called reproductive rights,** widely propagated today on both national and international levels. This ideological system assumes that the sexual and social self-fulfilment of a person has a priority over concern for the future of a child, the spiritual and physical health of society and its moral sustainability. There is a growing attitude to the human life as a product which can be chosen according to one's own inclinations and which can be disposed of along with material goods.

In the prayers of the marriage celebration, the Orthodox Church expresses the hope that childbirth, while being a desired fruit of lawful marriage, is not its only purpose. Along with «a fruit of the womb to profit», the Church asks for the gift of enduring love, chastity and «the harmony of the souls and bodies». Therefore, **the Church cannot regard as morally justified the ways to childbirth disagreeable with the design of the Creator of life. If a husband or a wife is sterile and the therapeutic and surgical methods of infertility treatment do not help the spouses, they should humbly accept childlessness as a special calling in life. In these cases, pastoral counsel should consider the adoption of a child by the spouses' mutual consent. Among the admissible means of medical aid may be an artificial insemination by the husband's germ cells, since it does not violate the integrity of the marital union and does not differ basically from the natural conception and takes place in the context of marital relations.**

**However, manipulations involved in the donation of germ cells do violate the integrity of a person and the unique nature of marital relations by allowing of a third party to interfere.** In addition, this practice encourages the irresponsible fatherhood or motherhood, admittedly free from any commitment to those who are «flesh of the flesh» of anonymous donors. The use of donor material undermines the foundations of family relationships, since it presupposes that a child has, in addition to the «social» parents, the so-called biological ones. **«Surrogate motherhood», that is, the bearing of a fertilised ovule by a woman who after the delivery returns the child to the «customers», is unnatural and morally inadmissible** even in those cases where it is realised on a non-commercial basis. This method involves the violation of the profound emotional and spiritual intimacy that is established between mother and child already during the pregnancy. «Surrogate motherhood» traumatises both the bearing woman, whose mother's feelings are trampled upon, and the child who may subsequently experience an identity crisis. **Morally inadmissible from the Orthodox point of view are also all kinds of extracorporeal fertilisation involving the production, conservation and purposeful destruction of «spare» embryos. It is on the recognition of the human dignity even in an embryo that the moral assessment of abortion by the Church is based** (see, XII. 2).

The insemination of single women with the use of donor germ cells or the realisation of the «reproductive rights» of single men and persons with the so-called non-standard sexual orientation deprive the future child of the right to have mother and father. The use of reproductive methods outside the context of the God-blessed family has become a form of theomachism carried out under the pretext of the protection of the individual's autonomy and wrongly-understood individual freedom.



**XII. 5.** Hereditary diseases comprise a considerable part of the totality of human infirmities. The development of the medical genetic methods of diagnostics and treatment can contribute the prevention of these diseases and the alleviation of the suffering of many people. It is important to remember, however, that genetic disorders often stem from the disregard of moral principles and the vicious way of life, which result in the suffering of the posterity. The sinful erosion of the human nature is overcome by spiritual effort; but if vice dominates in life from generation to generation with growing power, the words of Holy Scripture come true: «Horrible is the end of the unrighteous generation» (Wis. 3:19). And the reverse: «Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed» (Ps. 112:1-2). Thus, genetic research only confirms the spiritual laws revealed to humanity in the word of God many centuries ago.

**While drawing people's attention to the moral causes of infirmities, the Church welcomes the efforts of medics aimed to heal hereditary diseases. The aim of genetic interference, however, should not be to «improve» artificially the human race or to interfere in God's design for humanity. Therefore, genetic engineering may be realised only with the consent of a patient or his legitimate representatives and only on the grounds of medical indications. The genetic therapy of germ cells is extremely dangerous, for it involves a change of the genome (the set of hereditary characteristics) in the line of generations, which can lead to unpredictable consequences in the form of new mutations and destabilise the balance between the human community and the environment.**

The progress made in the deciphering of the genetic code have created real pre-conditions for **comprehensive genetic testing** with the aim to discover information on the natural uniqueness of every human being and his susceptibility to particular illnesses. **Genetic screening**, provided the information obtained is used reasonably, could help to rectify timely the development of illnesses to which a particular person is prone. However, there is a real danger that genetic information will be abused for various forms of discrimination. In addition, the possession of information on one's genetic susceptibility to severe illnesses may become for one a spiritual burden beyond one's strength. Therefore, **genetic information and genetic testing may be possible only with respect for the freedom of the individual.**

**Ambiguous are also the methods of prenatal diagnostics** making it possible to identify a genetic illness on the early stages of the intrauterine development. **Some of these methods may present a threat to the life and integrity of the embryo or foetus under test.** The detection of an incurable or severe genetic illness sometimes compels parents to interrupt the life conceived; there have been cases of pressure brought to bear upon

them to this end. **Prenatal diagnostics may be viewed as morally justifiable if its aim is to treat an illness detected on an earliest possible stage and to prepare parents for taking special care of a sick child.** Every person has the right to life, love, and care, whatever illnesses he may have. According to Holy Scriptures, God Himself is «a God of the afflicted» (Judith 9:11). St. Paul teaches «to support the weak» (Acts 20:35; 1 Thes. 5:14). Likening the Church to the human body, he points out that «much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary», while those less perfect need «more abundant honour» (1 Cor. 12:22, 24). It is absolutely inadmissible to use methods of prenatal diagnostics with the aim to choose a more desirable gender of a future child.

**XII. 6. The cloning** (production of genetic copies) of animals, realised by scientists, raises the question of the admissibility and possible consequences of **the cloning of the human being**. The realisation of this idea, protested against by many people, can become destructive for society. Cloning opens up an even greater opportunity than some reproductive technologies do for manipulations with the genetic component of the personality and contributes to its further devaluation. Man has no right to claim the role of the creator of his likes or to choose their genetic prototypes, thus determining their personal characteristics at his discretion. **The conception of cloning is a definite challenge to the very nature of the human being and to the image of God inherent in him, the integral part of which are the freedom and uniqueness of the personality.** The «printing» of people with specified parameters can appear welcome only to adherents of totalitarian ideologies.

The cloning of human beings can corrupt the natural foundations of childbirth, consanguinity, motherhood and fatherhood. A child can become a sister to her mother, a brother to his father or a daughter to his or her grandfather. The psychological consequences of cloning are also extremely dangerous. A human being, who came to being as a result of this procedure, can feel not like an independent person but only «a copy» of someone who live or lived before. It should be also considered that experiments with human cloning will inevitably produce as «by-products» numerous unfulfilled lives and, most probably, the emergence of a numerous unsustainable posterity. **At the same time, the cloning of isolated organic cells and tissues is not an encroachment on the dignity of the personality and in a number of cases has proved helpful in the biological and medical practice.**

**XII. 7.** The modern transplantology (the theory and practice of the transplantation of organs and tissues) makes it possible to give effective aid to many patients who were earlier doomed to death or severe disability. At the same time, the development of this sphere of medicine, increasing the need for necessary organs, generates certain ethical problems and can present a threat to society. Thus, the unscrupulous propaganda of

donoring and the commercialisation of transplanting create prerequisites for trade in parts of the human body, thus threatening the life and health of people. **The Church believes that human organs cannot be viewed as objects of purchase and sale. The transplantation of organs from a living donor can be based only on the voluntary self-sacrifice for the sake of another's life. In this case, the consent to explantation (removal of an organ) becomes a manifestation of love and compassion. However, a potential donor should be fully informed about possible consequences of the explantation of his organ for his health. The explantation that presents an immediate threat to the life of a donor is morally inadmissible.** The most common of all is the practice of taking organs from people who have just died. In these cases, any uncertainty as to the moment of death should be excluded. **It is unacceptable to shorten the life of one, also by refusing him the life-supporting treatment, in order to prolong the life of another.**

The Church confesses, on the basis of Divine Revelation, the faith in the bodily resurrection of the dead (Is. 26:19; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 52-54; Phil. 3:21). In the Christian burial, the Church expressed the reverence that befits the body of a dead. However, the posthumous giving of organs and tissues can be a manifestation of love spreading also to the other side of death. Such donation or will cannot be considered a duty. Therefore, the voluntary consent of a donor in his lifetime is the condition on which explantation can be legitimate and ethically acceptable. If doctors do not know the will of a potential donor, they should, if necessary, find it out the will of a dying or dead person from his relatives. The so-called presumptive consent of a potential donor to the removal of his organs and tissues, sealed in the legislation of some countries, is considered by the Church to be an inadmissible violation of human freedom.

A recipient assimilates donor organs and tissues entering his personal spiritual and physical integrity. Therefore, in no circumstances **moral justification can be given to the transplantation that threatens the identity of a recipient, affecting his uniqueness as personality and representative of a species.** It is especially important to remember this condition in solving problems involved in the transplantation of animal organs and tissues.

**The Church believes it to be definitely inadmissible to use the methods of so-called foetal therapy,** in which the human foetus on various stages of its development is aborted and used in attempts to treat various diseases and to «rejuvenate» an organism. Denouncing abortion as a cardinal sin, the Church cannot find any justification for it either even if someone may possibly benefit from the destruction of a conceived human life. Contributing inevitably to ever wider spread and commercialisation of abortion, this practice (even if its still hypothetical effectiveness could be proved scientifically) presents an example of glaring immorality and is criminal.

**XII. 8.** The practice of the removal of human organs suitable for transplantation and the development of intensive care therapy has posed the problem of the verification of the moment of death. Earlier the criterion for it was the irreversible stop of breathing and blood circulation. Thanks to the improvement of intensive care technologies, however, these vital functions can be artificially supported for a long time. Death is thus turned into dying dependent on the doctor's decision, which places a qualitatively new responsibility on contemporary medicine.

**Holy Scriptures treats death as the separation of the soul from the body** (Ps. 146:4; Lk. 12:20). **Thus it is possible to speak about a continuing life as long as an organism functions as a whole.** The prolongation of life by artificial means, in which in fact only some organs continue to function, cannot be viewed as obligatory and in any case desirable task of medicine. Attempts to delay death will sometimes prolong a patient's agony, thus depriving him of the right to «honourable and peaceful» death, for which the Orthodox Christian solicit the Lord during the liturgy. When intensive care becomes impossible, its place should be taken by palliative aid (anaesthetisation, nursing and social and psychological support) and pastoral care. All this is aimed to ensure the true humane end of life couched in by mercy and love.

The Orthodox understanding of an honourable death includes preparation for the mortal end, which is considered to be a spiritually significant stage in the life of a person. A patient surrounded with Christian care can experience in the last days of his life on earth a grace-giving change brought about by a new reflection on his journey and penitent anticipation of eternity. For the relatives of a dying man and for medical workers, an opportunity to nurse him becomes an opportunity to serve the Lord Himself. For according to the Saviour's word, «inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me» (Mt. 25:40). The attempt to conceal from a patient the information about the gravity of his condition under the pretext of preserving his spiritual comfort often deprives a dying person of an opportunity to be consciously prepared for death and to find spiritual consolation in participation in the Sacraments of the Church. It also darkens his relations with relatives and doctors with distrust.

**Death throes cannot be always effectively alleviated with anaesthetics.** Aware of this, the Church in these cases turns to God with the prayer: «Give Thy servant dispensation from this unendurable suffering and its bitter infirmities and give him consolation, O Soul of the righteous» (Service Book. Prayer for the Long Suffering). The Lord alone is the Master of life and death (1 Sam. 2:6). «In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind» (Job 12:10). Therefore, **the Church**, while remaining faithful to God's commandment «thou shalt not kill» (Ex. 20:13), **cannot recognise as morally acceptable the widely-spread attempt to legalise the so-called euthanasia,**

**that is, the purposeful destruction of hopelessly ill patients (also by their own will).** The request of a patient to speed up his death is sometimes conditioned by depression preventing him from assessing his condition correctly. Legalised euthanasia would lead to the devaluation of the dignity and the corruption of the professional duty of the doctor called to preserve rather than end life. **«The right to death» can easily become a threat to the life of patients whose treatment is hampered by lack of funds.**

Therefore, **euthanasia is a form of homicide or suicide**, depending on whether a patient participates in it or not. If he does, euthanasia comes under the canons whereby both the purposeful suicide and assistance in it are viewed as a grave sin. **A perpetrator of calculated suicide**, who «did it out of human resentment or other incident of faintheartedness» **shall not be granted Christian burial or liturgical commemoration** (Timothy of Alexandria, Canon 14). If a suicide is committed «out of mind», that is, in a fit of a mental disease, the church prayer for the perpetrator is allowed after the case is investigated by the ruling bishop. **At the same time, it should be remembered that more often than not the blame for a suicide lies also with the people around the perpetrator who proved incapable of effective compassion and mercy.** Together with St. Paul the Church calls us: «Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ» (Gal. 6:2).

**XII. 9. Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Church unequivocally deplore homosexual relations**, seeing in them a vicious distortion of the God-created human nature.

«If a man lies with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination» (Lev. 20:13). The Bible relates a story about a heavy punishment to which God subjected the people of Sodom (Gen. 19:1-19) precisely for the sin of sodomy. St. Paul, describing the moral condition of the Gentiles, names homosexual relations among the most «vile affections» and «fornications» defiling the human body: «Their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise the men, leaving the natural use of women, burned in their lust one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet» (Rom. 1:26-27). «Be not deceived: neither effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind... shall inherit the kingdom of God», wrote the apostle to the people of corrupted Corinth (1 Cor. 6:9-10). The patristic tradition equally clearly and definitely denounces any manifestation of homosexuality. *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the works of Sts Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and Blessed Augustine and the canon of St. John the Faster — all express the unchangeable teaching of the Church that homosexual relations are sinful and should be condemned. People involved in them have not right to be members of the clergy (Gregory the Great, Canon 7; Gregory of Nyssa, Canon 4; John

the Faster, Canon 30). Addressing those who stained themselves with the sin of sodomy, the St. Maxim the Greek made this appeal: «See at yourselves, damned ones, what a foul pleasure you indulge in! Try to give up as soon as possible this most nasty and stinking pleasure of yours, to hate it and to fulminate eternally those who argue that it is innocent as enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and corrupters of His teaching. Cleanse yourselves of this blight by repentance, ardent tears, alms-giving as much as you can and pure prayer... Hate this unrighteousness with all your heart, so that you may not be sons of damnation and eternal death».

The debate on the status of the so-called sexual minorities in contemporary society tends to recognise homosexuality not as a sexual perversion but only one of the «sexual orientations» which have the equal right to public manifestation and respect. It is also argued that the homosexual drive is caused by the individual inborn predisposition. The Orthodox Church proceeds from the invariable conviction that the divinely established marital union of man and woman cannot be compared to the perverted manifestations of sexuality. She believes homosexuality to be a sinful distortion of human nature, which is overcome by spiritual effort leading to the healing and personal growth of the individual. Homosexual desires, just as other passions torturing fallen man, are healed by the Sacraments, prayer, fasting, repentance, reading of Holy Scriptures and patristic writings, as well as Christian fellowship with believers who are ready to give spiritual support.

**While treating people with homosexual inclinations with pastoral responsibility, the Church is resolutely against the attempts to present this sinful tendency as a «norm» and even something to be proud of and emulate.** This is why the Church denounces any propaganda of homosexuality. Without denying anybody the fundamental rights to life, respect for personal dignity and participation in public affairs, the Church, however, believes that those who propagate the homosexual way of life should not be admitted to educational and other work with children and youth, nor to occupy superior posts in the army and reformatories.

Sometimes perverted human sexuality is manifested in the form of **the painful feeling of one's belonging to the opposite sex**, resulting in an attempt to change one's sex (**transsexuality**). One's desire to refuse the sex that has been given him or her by the Creator can have pernicious consequences for one's further development. «The change of sex» through hormonal impact and surgical operation has led in many cases not to the solution of psychological problems, but to their aggravation, causing a deep inner crisis. The Church cannot approve of such a «rebellion against the Creator» and recognise as valid the artificially changed sexual affiliation. If «a change of sex» happened in a person before his or her Baptism, he or she can be admitted to this Sacrament as any other sinner, but the Church will baptise him or her as belonging to

his or her sex by birth. The ordination of such a person and his or her marriage in church are inadmissible.

Transsexuality should be distinguished from the wrong identification of the sex in one's infancy as a result of doctors' mistake caused by a pathological development of sexual characteristics. The surgical correction in this case is not a change of sex.

### **XIII. THE CHURCH AND ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS**

**XIII. 1.** The Orthodox Church, aware of her responsibility for the fate of the world, is deeply concerned for the problems generated by the contemporary civilisation. Ecological problems occupy a considerable place among them. Today the face of the Earth has been distorted on a global scale. Damaged are its bowels, soil, water, air and fauna and flora. Nature around us has been almost fully involved in the life support of man who is no longer satisfied with its diverse gifts, but exploits without restraint whole ecosystems. Human activity, which has reached the level of biospheric processes, constantly grows due to the accelerated development of science and technology. The pollution of the environment by industrial wastes everywhere, bad agricultural technology, the destruction of forests and top-soil – all result in the suppressed biological activity and the steady shrinking of the genetic diversity of life. The irreplaceable mineral resources are being exhausted; the drinking water reserves are being reduced. Great many harmful substances have appeared, not included in the circulation and accumulated in biosphere. The ecological balance has been violated; man has to face the emergence of pernicious processes in nature, including the failure of its natural reproductive power.

All this happens against the background of an unprecedented and unjustified growth of public consumption in highly developed countries, where the search for wealth and luxury has become a norm of life. This situation has obstructed the fair distribution of natural resources, which are common human property. The consequences of the ecological crisis have proved painful not only for nature, but also for man as organically integral to it. As a result, the Earth has found itself on the verge of a global ecological disaster.

**XIII. 2.** Relations between man and nature were broken in pre-historic times because of the fall of man and his alienation from God. Sin that was born in the soul of man damaged not only him himself, but also the entire world around him. «For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason, of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now» (Rom. 8:0-22). The first human crime was reflected in nature like in a mirror. The seed of sin, having produced an effect in the human heart, gave rise to «thorns and thistles», as Holy Scripture testifies (Gen. 3:18). The full organic unity that existed between man and the world around him before the fall (Gen. 2: 19-20) was made impossible. In their now consumer relations with nature, human beings began to be more often guided by egoistic motives. They began to forget that the only Lord of the Universe is God (Ps. 23:1), to Whom



belong «the heaven... and the earth also, with all that therein is» (Deut. 10:14), while man, as St. John Chrysostom put it, is only a «housekeeper» entrusted with the riches of the earth. These riches, namely, «the air, sun, water, land, heaven, sea, light, stars», as the same saint remarks, God «divided among all in equal measure as if among brothers». «Dominion» over nature and «subjection» of the earth (Gen. 1:28), to which man is called, do not mean all-permissiveness in God's design. It only means that man is the bearer of the image of the heavenly Housekeeper and as such should express, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, his royal dignity not in dominion over the world around him or violence towards it, but in «dressing» and «keeping» the magnificent kingdom of nature for which he is responsible before God.

**XIII. 3. The ecological crisis compels us to review our relations with the environment.** Today the conception of man's dominion over nature and the consumer attitude to it has been increasingly criticised. The awareness that contemporary society pays too high a price for the blessings of the civilisation has provoked opposition to economic egoism. Thus, attempts are made to identify the activities that damage the natural environment. At the same time, a system of its protection is being developed; the present economic methods are being reviewed; efforts are made to create power-saving technologies and wasteless plants which can be fit at the same time into the natural circulation. The ecological ethics is being developed. The public consciousness guided by it speaks against the consumer way of life, demanding that the moral and legal responsibility for the damage inflicted on nature be enhanced. It also proposes to introduce ecological education and training and calls for joined efforts in protecting the environment on the basis of broad international co-operation.

**XIII. 4.** The Orthodox Church appreciates the efforts for overcoming the ecological crisis and calls people to intensive co-operation in actions aimed to protect God's creation. At the same time, she notes that these efforts will be more fruitful if the basis on which man's relations with nature are built will be not purely humanistic but also Christian. One of the main principles of the Church's stand on ecological issues is the unity and integrity of the world created by God. Orthodoxy does not view nature around us as an isolated and self-closed structure. The plant, animal and human worlds are interconnected. From the Christian point of view, nature is not a repository of resources intended for egoistic and irresponsible consumption, but a house in which man is not the master, but the housekeeper, and a temple in which he is the priest serving not nature, but the one Creator. The conception of nature as temple is based on the idea of theocentrism: God Who gives to all «life, and breath, and all things» (Acts 17:25) is the Source of being. Therefore, life itself in its various manifestations is sacred, being a gift of God. Any encroachment on it is a challenge not only to God's creation, but also to the Lord Himself.

**XIII. 5. The ecological problems are essentially anthropological as they are generated by man, not nature.** Therefore, answers to many questions raised by the environmental crisis are to be found in the human heart, not in the spheres of economy, biology, technology or politics. Nature is transformed or dies not by itself, but under the impact of man. His spiritual condition plays the decisive role here, for it affects the environment both with and without such an impact. The church history knows of many examples when the love of Christian ascetics for nature, their prayer for the world around them, their compassion for all creatures made a beneficial impact on living things.

**Relationships between anthropology and ecology are revealed with utter clarity in our days when the world is experiencing two concurrent crises: spiritual and ecological.** In contemporary society, man often loses the awareness of life as a gift of God and sometimes the very meaning of life, reducing it sometimes to the physical being alone. With this attitude to life, nature around him is no longer perceived as home and all the more so as temple, becoming only a «habitat». The spiritually degrading personality leads nature to degradation as well, for it is unable to make a transforming impact on the world. The colossal technological resources cannot help humanity blinded by sin, for, being indifferent to the meaning, mystery and wonder of life, they cannot be really beneficial and sometimes become even detrimental. In a spiritually disorientated man, the technological power would beget utopic reliance on the boundless resources of the human mind and the power of progress.

**It is impossible to overcome the ecological crisis in the situation of a spiritual crisis.** This does not at all mean that the Church calls to curtail the preservation activity, but in her hope for a positive change in the man-nature relationships, she relies rather on society's aspiration for spiritual revival. The anthropogenic background of ecological problems shows that we tend to change the world around us in accordance with our own inner world; therefore, the transformation of nature should begin with the transformation of the soul. According to St. Maxim the Confessor, man can turn the earth into paradise only if he carried paradise in himself.

## XIV. SECULAR, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

XIV. 1. Christianity, having overcome heathen prejudice, demythologised nature, thus contributing to the development of natural science. With time, **science, both natural and humanitarian, became one of the most important components of culture.** By the end of the 20th century, science and technology have achieved such results and influence on all aspects of life as to become in fact the decisive factors in the life of the civilisation. At the same time, despite Christianity's initial impact on the formation of scientific activity, **the development of science and technology under the influence of secular ideologies has led to consequences arousing serious fears.** The ecological and other crises, which have hit the modern world, have increasingly challenged the way chosen. The scientific and technological level of the civilisation is such that the criminal actions of a small group of people can cause, in principle within a few hours, a global disaster in which all the highest forms of life will perish irrevocably.

**From the Christian perspective, such consequences have arisen because of the false principle lying in the basis of the contemporary scientific and technological development.** This principle stipulates *a priori* that this development should not be restricted by any ethical, philosophical or religious requirements. With this «freedom» however, the scientific and technological development finds itself at the mercy of human passions, first of all vanity, pride and thirst for the greatest possible comfort, which frustrates the spiritual harmony of life with all the ensuing negative developments. **Therefore, to ensure normal human life it is necessary today as never before to restore the lost link of scientific knowledge with the religious spiritual and moral values.**

The need for this link is also conditioned by the fact that a considerable number of people still believe in the omnipotence of the scientific knowledge. It is partly due to this belief that some atheistically-minded thinkers of the 18th century resolutely opposed science against religion. At the same time, it is commonly accepted that in all times, including the present, many outstanding scientists were and are religious people. It would be impossible if there were fundamental contradictions between religion and science. The scientific and the religious types of knowledge are completely different. They have different points of departure and different goals, tasks and methodologies. These spheres can come in touch and overlap, but cannot oppose each other, because the natural science contains no atheistic or religious theories, but more or less authentic theories, whereas religion does not deal with matter.

Mikhailo Lomonosov rightly wrote that science and religion «cannot come into conflict... unless some one excites strife in them out of conceit and desire to show off one's ingenuity». St. Philaret of Moscow expressed a similar idea: «The faith in Christ is

not in conflict with the true knowledge, because it is not in union with ignorance». Noteworthy also is the incorrectness of opposing religion to the so-called scientific worldview.

Only religion and philosophy by their very nature can fulfil the function of worldview, which no specific science or concrete scientific knowledge as a whole can assume. A reflection on scientific achievements and on their inclusion in an ideological system, however, can take place in a wide framework beginning from religious to openly atheistic.

Though science may be one of the ways to know God (Rom. 1:19-20), **Orthodoxy sees in it also a natural instrument for building life on earth, which is to be used very prudently. The Church warns man against the temptation to view science as a realm completely independent of moral principles.** Today's achievements in various areas, including the physics of fundamental particles, chemistry and microbiology, show that they are essentially a double-edged sword that can both benefit man and take away his life. The evangelical norms of life make it possible to educate a person in such a way that the knowledge and abilities obtained could not be abused. This is why the Church and secular science are called to co-operation for the sake of life and its proper order. Their interaction contributes to the healthy creative climate in the spiritual and intellectual sphere, thus helping to create the best conditions for the development of scientific research.

Prominence should be given to **social sciences** which by their nature are inevitably linked with theology, church history and canon law. While welcoming the works of secular scientists in this area and recognising the importance of humanitarian studies, the Church does not consider the rational picture of the world, sometimes formed by these studies, to be complete and comprehensive. The religious worldview cannot be rejected as a source of the ideas of truth and the understanding of history, ethics and many other humanitarian sciences which have the reason and right to be present in the system of secular education and formation and in the building of social life. It is only the combination of spiritual experience and scientific knowledge that ensures the fullness of cognisance. **No social system can be described as harmonious as long as it gives monopoly to the secular worldview in making socially significant judgements.** Unfortunately, there is still a danger of ideologised science for which the nations have paid too high a price in the 20th century. This **ideologisation is especially dangerous in the area of social studies which are laid in the bases of state programs and political projects. While opposing attempt to substitute ideology for science, the Church supports the especially important dialogue with humanitarian scholars.**

Man as the image and likeness of the Incomprehensible Creator is free in his mysterious depths. The Church warns against the attempts to use the scientific and technological progress for establishing control over the inner world of the personality, for creating any technologies making it possible to infuse and manipulate the human consciousness or sub-consciousness.

**XIV. 2.** The Latin word *cultura* meaning cultivation, breeding, education, development is derived from *cultus* meaning veneration, worship, cult. This points to the religious roots of culture. Having created man, God put him in paradise and ordered him to cultivate and keep His creation (Gen. 2:15). Culture as the preservation of the world around man and care of it is a God-commanded duty of man. After the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, human beings had to face the need to struggle for survival. They began producing instruments of labour, to build cities, to develop agriculture and arts. The church fathers and doctors emphasised the divine origin of culture. Clement of Alexandria, in particular perceived it as a fruit of the human creative work under the guidance of the Logos. He said that «Scripture gives the common name of wisdom to all the earthly sciences and arts generally, everything that the human mind can achieve... for every art and every knowledge comes from God». St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: «Just as in subtle musical harmony every string produces a different sound, one high, another low, so also the Artist and Creator-Word, having installed different inventors for various occupations and arts, has given everything in the possession of all those who wish in order to tie us by the bonds of fellowship and love of man and make our life more civilised».

The Church has assimilated much from what has been created by humanity in art and culture, re-melting the fruits of creative work in the furnace of religious experience in the desire to cleanse them of spiritually pernicious elements and then to offer them to people. She sanctifies various aspects of culture and gives much for its development. The Orthodox icon-painter, poet, philosopher, musician, architect, artist and writer — all use the means of art to express the experience of spiritual renewal they have found in themselves and wish to offer to others. **The Church makes it possible to see man, his inner world and the meaning of his life in a new light. As a result, the human creativity in its churching returns to its original religious roots. The Church helps culture to cross the boundaries of a purely earthly pursuit. Offering it a way to cleanse the heart and unite with the Creator she makes it open for co-work with God.**

**The secular culture can be a bearer of the good news.** It is especially important in those cases when Christian influence in society weakens or when the secular authorities enter in an open struggle with the Church. Thus, in the years of state atheism, the Russian classic literature, poetry, painting and music became for many almost the only sources of religious knowledge. Cultural traditions help to preserve and enrich the spiritual

heritage in a rapidly changing world. This is true for various kinds of creativity, such as literature, representational arts, music, architecture, drama and cinematography. For the preaching of Christ any creative style is suitable if the artist is sincerely pious in his intentions and if he keeps faithful to the Lord.

The Church has always made this appeal to the people of culture: «Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God» (Rom. 12:2). At the same time, the Church gives this warning: «Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God» (1 Jn. 4:1). Man has not always been spiritually sharp-sighted enough to distinguish between genuine divine inspiration and ecstatic «inspiration» behind which stand dark forces making a destructive impact on man. The latter happens, in particular, when people come in touch with the world of magic and sorcery or take up drugs. The church education helps a person to find the spiritual sight enabling him to distinguish between good and bad and between the divine and the demonic.

The encounter between the Church and culture does not at all always mean just co-operation and mutual enrichment. «The True Word, when it came, showed that not every opinion and every teachings is good, but some are good, while others are bad» (St. Justin the Philosopher). **Recognising every man's right to give a moral assessment to cultural developments, the Church reserves the same right to herself too.** Moreover, she sees in it her direct obligation. Without insisting that the church evaluation system should be the only one accepted in secular society and state, the Church is convinced of the ultimate truth and salvific nature of the way revealed to her in the Gospel. **If a creative work contributes to the moral and spiritual transformation of the personality, the Church gives her blessing upon it. But if culture puts itself in opposition to God, becoming anti-religious and anti-humane and turning into anti-culture, the Church opposes it.** However, this opposition is not a struggle against the bearers of this culture, for «we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but our struggle is spiritual, aimed to deliver people from the pernicious impact made on their souls by dark forces, «spiritual wickedness in high places» (Eph. 6:12).

The eschatological aspiration of the Christian does not allow him to identify his life fully with the world of culture, «for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come» (Heb. 13:14). The Christian can live and work in this world, but he should not be fully absorbed in the earthly activity. **The Church reminds the people of culture that their calling is to cultivate people's souls, including their own, seeking to restore in them the image of God distorted by sin.**

**Preaching the eternal Truth of Christ to people living in changing historical situations, the Church does it through cultural forms peculiar to the time, nation and**

**various social groups.** What has been experienced by some peoples and generations has to be sometimes interpreted anew to others in a way familiar and understandable for them. No culture can be regarded as the only one acceptable for the expression of the Christian spiritual message. **The verbal and graphic language of preaching, its ways and means, are changed naturally in the course of history and vary depending on the national and other contexts. At the same time, the changeable moods of the world cannot be the grounds for rejecting the worthy heritage of the past centuries and all the more so for consigning the church Tradition to oblivion.**

**XIV. 3. Christian tradition has always respected the secular education.** Many church fathers studied in secular schools and academies and considered the disciplines taught in them to be necessary for a believing man. St. Basil the Great wrote that «external sciences are not without use» for a Christian who should borrow from them everything that contributes to his moral improvement and intellectual growth. According to St. Gregory the Theologian, «every one who has an intellect recognises scholarship (*paideusin*) as a primary blessing for us. And not only this noble scholarship of our own, which... has as its subject only salvation and the beauty of what is contemplated by the mind, but also the external scholarship which many Christians abhor out of ignorance as unreliable, dangerous and diverting from God».

**From the Orthodox perspective, it is desirable that the entire educational system should be built on religious principles and based on Christian values. Nevertheless, the Church, following the age-old tradition, respects the secular school and is willing to build relations with it on the basis of human freedom. At the same time, the Church considers it inadmissible to impose on students anti-religious and anti-Christian ideas and to assert the monopoly of the materialistic worldview (see XIV. 1).** The situation typical of many countries in the 20th century when state-run schools were made instruments of militant atheistic education should not be repeated. The Church calls to remove the consequences of atheistic control over the system of public education.

**Unfortunately, the role of religion as forming the spiritual self-awareness of peoples is underestimated in many curricula on history to this day.** The Church keeps reminding people of the contribution Christianity has made to the treasury of the world and national cultures. **The Orthodox believers regret the attempts to borrow uncritically the educational standards, principles and curricula of the organisations known for their negative attitude to Christianity in general and to Orthodoxy in particular. The danger of occult and neo-heathen influences and destructive sects penetrating into the secular school should not be ignored either, as under their impact a child can be lost for himself, for his family and for society.**

**The Church believes it beneficial and necessary to conduct optional classes on Christian faith in secular schools, at the request of children or parents, and in higher educational institutions.** The church authorities should conduct dialogue with the government aimed to seal in the legislation and practice the internationally accepted right of believing families to the religious education and upbringing of their children. To this end, the Church has also established Orthodox institutions of general education and expects that they will be supported by the state.

School is a mediator that hands over to new generations the moral values accumulated in the previous centuries. School and the Church are called to co-operation in this task. Education, especially that of children and adolescents, is called not only to convey information. To warm up in young hearts the aspiration for the Truth, authentic morality, love of their neighbours and homeland and its history and culture is a school's task no smaller but perhaps even greater than that of giving knowledge. **The Church is called and seeks to help school in its educational mission, for it is the spirituality and morality of a person that determines his eternal salvation, as well as the future of individual nations and the entire human race.**



## XV. CHURCH AND MASS MEDIA

**XV. 1.** The mass media play an ever-increasing role in the contemporary world. The Church respects the work of journalists called to provide the public at large with information about the world developments, helping people to orient themselves in today's complex reality. It is important to remember at the same time that **the information of the spectator, listener and reader should be based not only on the firm commitment to the truth, but also concern for the moral state of the individual and society.** This involves the interpretation of positive ideals as well as the struggle with the spreading of evil, sin and vice. **The propaganda of violence, enmity and hatred and ethnic, social and religious discord and the sinful exploitation of human instincts, including for commercial purposes, are inadmissible.** The mass media, which have an enormous influence on the audience, bear a great responsibility for the education of people, especially the younger generation. Journalists and mass media executives should never forget about this responsibility.

**XV. 2.** **The educational, tutorial and social and peacemaking mission of the Church compels her to maintain co-operation with the secular mass media** capable of bringing her message to various sections of society. St. Peter calls Christians: «Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear» (1 Pet. 3:15). Any clergyman or lay person is called to be duly attentive to contacts with the secular mass media with the view of carrying out their pastoral and educational work and awakening the interest of secular society in various aspects of church life and Christian culture. In doing so, **it is necessary to show wisdom, responsibility and prudence with regard to the stand of a particular mass medium on faith and the Church, its moral orientation and relationships with the church authorities.** The Orthodox laity may be employed by the mass media and in their work they are called to be preachers and implementers of Christian moral ideals. **Journalists who publish materials corrupting human souls should be subjected to canonical interdictions if they belong to the Orthodox Church.**

**The Church has her own media means, blessed by the church authorities,** within each of the specific mass media types (printing, radio-electronic, computer). She is present there either through official institutions or private initiatives of the clergy and laity. **At the same time, the Church interacts with the secular mass media through her institutions and empowered representatives.** This interaction is carried out both through creating special forms of church presence in the secular mass media, such as special supplements to newspapers and magazines, special page, TV and radio series and rubrics, and participating in various forms of public dialogues and debates. The Church also gives consultative assistance to journalists, distributes reports prepared

specially for them, provides them reference materials as well as audio and video aids, such as films, recordings and reproductions.

**The co-operation of the Church and the mass media presupposes mutual responsibility. The information given to a journalist to be conveyed to an audience should be reliable. Opinions of the clergy or other representatives of the Church, reported through the mass media, should conform to her teaching and stand on public issues.** If a purely private opinion is expressed, it should be clearly stated both by the person who speaks through the mass media and those responsible for communicating it. The co-operation of clergy and church institutions with the mass media should be carried out under the guidance of the church authorities if the coverage concerns church-wide activities and the guidance of the diocesan authorities in reporting the life of a diocese on the regional level.

**XV. 3. As the Church and the mass media develop their relations, complications and even serious conflicts may arise.** Problems may arise, in particular, because of inaccurate or distorted information about church life, putting her in an inappropriate context, confusing the personal stand of a reporter or a person cited with the stand of the whole Church. Relationships between the Church and the mass media are often darkened also through the fault of clergy and laity themselves, for instance, when they refuse without justification to give journalists access to information or react oversensitively to correct and proper criticism. Such problems should be resolved in the spirit of peaceful dialogue with the aim to remove misunderstandings and to continue co-operation.

**At the same time, more profound and principled conflicts have been seen to emerge in relations between the Church and the secular mass media. This happens whenever the name of God is blasphemed, other blasphemies are pronounced, the information about church life is systematically distorted consciously and the Church and her servants are deliberately slandered.** In case of such conflicts, the supreme church authorities (with regard to the national mass media) or the diocesan bishop (with regard to the regional and local mass media) **after issuing an appropriate warning and at least one attempt to enter into negotiations, may take the following steps: to rupture relations with the mass medium or journalist concerned; to call upon the faithful to boycott the given mass medium; to apply to the governmental bodies help settle the conflict; to subject those guilty of sinful actions to canonical prohibitions if they are Orthodox Christians.** The above-mentioned actions should be documented and made known to the flock and society as a whole.

## XVI. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**XVI. 1.** Nations and states enter into economic, political, military and other relations with one another. As a result, states emerge or disappear, change their borders, unite or break up, create or abolish various unions. In Holy Scriptures, there is much historical evidence about the building of international relations.

One of the first example of an inter-tribal treaty concluded between a master of a land, Abemelech, and a stranger, Abraham, is given in the Book of Genesis: «Abemelech... spake into Abraham, saying: Now swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear... and both of them made a covenant» (Gen. 21:22-24, 27). Treaties reduced the danger of war and confrontation (Gen. 26:26-31; Jos. 9:3-27). Sometimes negotiations and demonstrations of good will prevented bloodshed (1 Sam. 25:18-35; 2 Sam. 21:15-22). Treaties ended wars (1 King 20:26-34). The Bible mentions military unions (Gen. 14:13; Judg. 3:12-13; 1 Kings 22:2-29; Jer. 37:5-7). Sometimes the military aid was bought for money or other material goods (2 Kings 16:7-9; 1 Kings 15:17-20). The agreement between Hiram and Solomon was actually an economic union: «My servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians... and they two made a league together» (1 Kings 5:6, 12). Negotiations through envoys was used to settle such matters as the passing of armed people through others' land (Num. 20:14-17; 21:21-22) and territorial disputes (Judg. 11:12-28). Treaties could include the transfer of a land from one people to another (1 Kings 9:10-12; 1 Kings 20:34).

The Bible also contains descriptions of diplomatic ruses resorted to in order to be protected from a powerful enemy (Jos. 9:3-27; 2 Sam. 15:32-37; 16:16-19; 17:1-16). Sometimes peace was bought (2 Kings 12:18) or paid for by tribute. Certainly, one of the means for settling disputes and conflicts was war and the Old Testament books abound in references to it. However, in Holy Scriptures there are examples of negotiations aimed to avoid war immediately before it threatens to begin (2 Kings 14:9-10). The practice of reaching agreement in the Old Testament times was based on religious and moral principles. Thus, even a treaty with the Gibeonites, who used deception to reach it, was recognised as valid by virtue of its sacred formula: «We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them» (Jos. 9:19). The Bible contains a prohibition on concluding union with vicious pagan tribes (Ex. 34:15). However, the Hebrews occasionally swerved from this commandment. Various treaties and unions were also often broken.

The Christian ideal of a nation's and government's behaviour in international relations lies in the Golden Rule: «All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them» (Mt. 7:12). Applying this principle not only to personal but also social life, Orthodox Christians should remember that «God is not in power but in truth». At the same time, if justice is violated, restrictive and even forceful actions are often needed towards other nations and states to rectify it. The human nature being distorted by sin, nations and states inevitably have differing interests dictated by the desire to possess land, to enjoy political and military dominion, to derive maximum possible profit from production and trade. Arising for this reason, **the need to defend fellow countrymen places certain restrictions on the readiness of the individual to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of other people. Nevertheless, Orthodox Christians and their communities are called to strive for such international relations which would promote in the greatest possible degree the welfare and legitimate interests of their own people, neighbouring nations and the entire human family.**

Relationships among nations and states should be directed to peace, mutual aid and co-operation. St. Paul enjoins the Christians: «If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men» (Rom. 12:18). St. Philaret of Moscow, in his speech on the occasion of the 1856 peace treaty, says: «Let us remember the law and fulfil the will of the Divine Prince of Peace not to remember evil, to forgive offences and to be in peace even with 'him that hateth peace' (Ps. 120:6), and the more so with those who offer an end of enmity and a hand of peace». Conscious that international disputes and contradictions are inevitable in a fallen world, **the Church calls the powers that be to settle any conflicts through search for mutually acceptable decision. She identifies with the victims of aggression and illegitimate and morally unjustifiable political pressure from outside. The use of military force is believed by the Church to be the last resort in defence against armed aggression from other states.** This defence can also be carried out on the basis of assistance by a state which is not an immediate object of attack at the one attacked.

States base their relations with the outside world on the principles of **sovereignty and territorial integrity. These principles are viewed by the Church as basic for the defence by a people of their legitimate interests and as the corner stone of international treaties and, therefore, of entire international law. At the same time, it is evident to the Christian consciousness that any human ordinance, including the sovereign power of a state, is relative before Almighty God.** History has shown that the life, borders and forms of states are changeable as created not only on the territorial and ethnic, but also economic, political, military and other suchlike grounds. Without denying the historical significance of the mono-ethnic state, the Orthodox Church at the

same time welcomes the voluntary unification of nations into one entity and the creation of multinational states if the rights of any people are not violated in them. At the same time, it should be admitted that **in today's world there is a certain contradiction between the universally accepted principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity on the one hand, and the search by a people or part of them for state independence, on the other.** Disputes and conflicts arising from this contradiction should be settled by peaceful means, on the basis of dialogue, with the greatest possible agreement between the parties. Remembering that unity is good and disunity is bad, the Church welcomes the tendencies for unification of countries and nations, especially those with common history and culture, provided that this unification is not directed against a third party. The Church grieves when with the division of a multiethnic state the historical community of people is destroyed, their rights are violated and suffering comes to their life. The division of a multinational state can be justified only if one of the peoples is clearly oppressed or the majority of a country do not show a definite will to preserve unity.

Recent history has shown that the separation of several states in Eurasia has brought an artificial rupture between peoples, families and business communities and led to the forced resettling and ousting of various ethnic, religious and social groups, in which they have also lost their shrines. The attempt to create mono-national states on the ruins of unions have led to bloody inter-ethnic conflicts which shook Eastern Europe.

In view of the above-mentioned, it is necessary to recognise **the benefit of inter-state unions** which have as their goals to unite efforts in political and economic spheres, to create common defence against external threats and to help the victims of aggression. The inter-state co-operation in economy and trade should fall under the same ethical rules as the individual economic and entrepreneurial activity. Interaction of nations and states in this field should be based on honesty, justice and desire to make the fruits of common labour acceptable to all participants in it (see XVI. 3). International co-operation in cultural, scientific, educational and informational fields is welcome if it is built on the basis of equability and mutual respect and is aimed to enrich the experience, knowledge and creativity of every participating nation.

**XVI. 2.** In the 20th century, multilateral inter-state agreements resulted in the establishment of a comprehensive system of international law obligatory for signatories of its conventions. There are also international organisations whose resolutions are obligatory for their member states. Some of these organisations have powers delegated to them by governments to be exercised in economic, political and military activities and applied not only in international relations but also the internal life of nations. **Legal and political regionalisation and globalisation are becoming a reality.**

On the one hand, the development of inter-state relations in this direction helps to intensify commercial, industrial, military, political and other co-operation — the necessity dictated by the natural intensification of international relations and the need for a common response to the global challenges of time. In the history of Orthodoxy, there are examples of the positive influence made by the Church on the development of regional inter-state relations. International organisations help to settle various disputes and conflicts. On the other hand, the danger of differences that may emerge between people's will and international organisations' decisions should not be underestimated. These organisations may become instruments for the unfair domination of strong over weak countries, rich over poor, the technologically and informationally developed over the rest. They also may practice double standards by applying international law in the interests of more influential states.

**All this compels the Orthodox Church to take a critical and careful approach to the legal and political internalisation, calling the powers that be, both on national and international levels, to utter responsibility. Any decision involved in concluding a fateful international treaty and defining the country's stand within an international organisation should be made in accordance of the will of the people fully and objectively informed of the nature and consequences of the decisions planned. In implementing a policy obligatory by an international agreement or action of an international organisation, governments should maintain the spiritual, cultural and other identity of their countries and nations and the legitimate interests of their states. Within international organisations themselves, it is necessary to ensure the equality of sovereign states in access to decision-making and in the right of casting vote, especially in defining basic international standards. Conflict situations and disputes should be resolved only with the participation and consent of all the parties whose vital interests are involved in every particular case. The adoption of compulsory decisions without consent of a state to be directly affected appears possible only in case of an aggression or massacre within this country.**

Keeping in mind the need to exert spiritual and moral influence on the actions of political leaders, to co-operate with them, to show concern for the needs of people and individuals, the Church enters into dialogue and co-operation with international organisations. Within this process, she invariably shows her conviction in the absolute importance of faith and spirituality for human work, decisions and laws.

**XVI. 3. The globalisation has not only political and legal, but also economic and cultural-informational dimensions.** In economy, it is manifested in the emergence of transnational corporations which have accumulated considerable material and financial resources and have employed an enormous number of people in various countries. Those standing at the head of international economic and financial structures have

concentrated in their hands a great power beyond the control of nations and even governments and beyond any limit, be it a national border, an ethnic and cultural identity or the need for ecological and demographical sustainability. Sometimes they refuse to reckon with the customs and religious traditions of the nations involved in the implementation of their plans. The Church cannot but be concerned also for the practice of financial speculations obliterating the dependence of income on the effort spent. Among various forms of this speculation are «financial pyramids» the collapse of which causes large-scale upheaval. In general, such changes in economy result in the loss of priority that labour and man have over capital and means of production.

In the field of culture and information, the globalisation has been conditioned by the development of technologies facilitating the movement of people and objects and the acquisition and distribution of information. Societies, which were separated earlier by distances and borders and therefore predominantly homogeneous, now come in touch easily and become multicultural. This process, however, has been accompanied by attempts to establish the dominion of the rich elite over the rest of the people and of some cultures and worldviews over others, which is especially intolerable in the religious field. As a result, there is a tendency to present as the only possible a universal culture devoid of any spirituality and based on the freedom of the fallen man unrestricted in anything as the absolute value and measure-stick of the truth. The globalisation developing in this way is compared by many in Christendom to the construction of the Tower of Babel.

**While recognising the globalisation as inevitable and natural and in many ways facilitating people's communication, dissemination of information and more effective production and enterprise, the Church points to the internal contradictions of these process and to their threats.** Firstly, the globalisation begins to change, along with the conventional ways of organising production, the conventional ways of organise society and exercising power. Secondly, many positive fruits of the globalisation are available only to nations comprising a smaller part of humanity, but having a similar economic and political system. Other nations to whom five sixths of the global population belong have found themselves on the margins of the world civilisation. They have been caught in debt dependence on financiers in a few industrial countries and cannot create dignified living conditions for themselves. Discontent and disillusionment are growing among them.

**The Church raises the question concerning the need to establish comprehensive control over transnational corporations and the processes taking place in the financial sector of economy.** This control, aimed to subject any entrepreneurial and financial activity to the interests of man and people, should be exercised through all mechanisms available in society and state.

**The spiritual and cultural expansion fraught with total unification should be opposed through the joint efforts of the Church, state structures, civil society and international organisations for the sake of asserting in the world a truly equitable and mutually enriching cultural and informational exchange combined with efforts to protect the identity of nations and other human communities.** One of the ways to do it is to ensure for countries and nations an access to basic technological resources which will enable them to disseminate and receive information on the global scale. The Church reminds that many national cultures have Christian roots. The followers of Christ therefore are called to promote the interconnectedness of the faith and the cultural heritage of nations, opposing resolutely any manifestations of anti-culture and commercialisation of the space allocated to information and arts.

Generally, the challenge of globalisation demands that contemporary society should give an appropriate response based on concern for the peaceful and dignified life for all people and combined with efforts for their spiritual perfection. In addition, efforts should be made to achieve such a world order which would be based on the principles of justice and the equality of people before God and exclude any suppression of their will by the centres of political, economic and informational influence.

**XVI. 4. The contemporary international legal system is based on the priority given to the interests of the earthly life of man and human communities over religious values** (especially in those cases when the former and the latter come into conflict). This priority is sealed in the national legislation of many countries. It is often built in the principles regulating various activities of the governmental bodies, public educational system, etc. Many influential public mechanisms use the same principle in their open confrontation with faith and the Church, aimed to oust them from public life. These manifestations create a general picture of **the secularisation of public and social life.**

**While respecting the worldview of non-religious people and their right to influence social processes, the Church cannot favour a world order that puts in the centre of everything the human personality darkened by sin.** This is why, invariably open to co-operation with people of non-religious convictions, **the Church seeks to assert Christian values in the process of decision-making on the most important public issues both on national and international levels. She strives for the recognition of the legality of religious worldview as a basis for socially significant action** (including those taken by state) and as an essential factor which should influence the development (amendment) of international law and the work of international organisations.

The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church are called to serve as a guide for the Synodal institutions, dioceses, monasteries, parishes and other canonical church institutions in their relations with various secular bodies and organisations and



the non-church mass media. This document shall be used by the church authorities to make decisions on various issues relevant within particular states or a narrow period of time, as well as very particular subject matters. The document shall be included in the curriculum of the theological schools of Moscow Patriarchate. As changes take place in public and social life and new problems significant for the Church emerge in this area, the bases of the Church's social concept may be developed and improved. The results of this process shall be adopted by the Holy Synod, the Local or Bishops' Councils.

*Present Texts of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church provided by the  
Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate*

*Official Hyperlink can be found [HERE](#)*