

FROM RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE TO MUTUAL COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS

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SUMMARY: The author first discusses the problem of mutual religious tolerance and co-operation from the point of ethics and theology. The creation of the Kingdom of God, which has no alternative or surrogate in Christian axiology, is viewed as the ethical ideal that all religious people ought to strive for. However, this will not be possible until a basic theological consensus has been achieved. The belief in one God (for there cannot be any other) is, according to the author, the shortest route to closer ties among religious communities which will in turn enhance the necessary co-operation among them. The author additionally discusses the contribution of Orthodox Christianity to development of mutual religious tolerance and other issues.

The Latin word “tolerance” can be defined as willingness to grant other people the freedom of opinion and beliefs. In the Orthodox Christian world, tolerance has best been shown in the absence of religious fanaticism, anathema, and excommunication. The contribution of the Church, and other religious communities (Islam, Judaism) to tolerance depends primarily on their respective theologies, since life of religious communities is based on theology, not only in cognition of objective theological truths, but also in ethics and politics. It is hardly surprising, then, that in its policy towards other Christian churches as well as towards Islam and Judaism, the Orthodox Christian East has adhered to the principle of theological exactitude rather than that of tolerance (the principle of *oikonomia*, Luke, 16:2-4; I Cor, 9: 17). However, the problem of tolerance, as the history of the Church both in the East and the West has shown, depends on other issues as well. It depends on how the Church, i.e. her theology, interprets and explains certain points in the New Testament, as well as on how the Church understands and defines herself. In other words, it depends on

answers to the following questions: What is the Church, in addition to being an institution of our eternal salvation? What is it that composes her additional identity?

Although Christ's act of salvation is offered only within the Church, and the Church alone represents the stage upon which the drama of our salvation is performed, the Church also represents human society, a community. It is for this reason that we can talk about different models of the Church which have existed throughout our Christian history. Dynamics of religious tolerance has to a great extent depended on solutions to the above problems.

The identity of the Church in the Orthodox Christian East was (and still is) primarily based on dogma and liturgy, adversely affecting the full development of the ideas of tolerance, communion, theological and other communication with groups of a different theological thought and ensuing different ideas about the Church. This is the reason why there is still no ecumenical Christian prayer, no common Eucharist in the Orthodox Christian East (including the Balkans), and why dialogue is in crisis. This is why there is hypocrisy and formalism instead of honesty, spontaneity, etc.

From Apostasy To Intolerance

If we read certain parts of the Gospel According to St Mathew carefully (Matt, 12:31-32), and Plato's "Laws", the following shall, among other things, be revealed to us. In Plato's ideal state, as well as in the Kingdom of God—or unto our "ages of ages"—it is the tolerance towards the godless, the atheists that are absent in the first instance. Neither does Islam tolerate apostates (*Qur'an*, 2:217; 4: 115). In Plato, we read that the teaching of the godless turns reality upside down (*Ibid.* 891e). In Plato's *Utopia*, atheism is harmful firstly in its ontological aspect and then in every other aspect. For this reason, Plato prescribes punishment for atheists in his "Laws" ("Laws", Book X), and then goes on to point to the "theological basis of legislation." It seems that atheism is to blame for the unnatural and enforced order and harmony at the expense of common justice and humanity, and that this problem has persisted from antiquity to modern times. Conflict and intolerance have always been potentially or secretly present in faithless and totalitarian societies of all ages. Whenever these

societies, whose destiny reminds us of the prodigal son from Luke (Luke 15:11), exploded, intolerance would degenerate into an open conflict bringing terror, chaos, shame and misery.

Christianity, Islam and Judaism with their common system of values and common religious ethics could contribute to mutual tolerance. Belief in God, thus, is not only useful in ontological but also every other sense. The sin against the Holy Spirit (Matt, 12:31-32) which we here define as our or other people's "repulsion in error" (Benedict T. Vivano, OP) is thus sanctioned most severely. There is no mercy for this sin in either Bible, Qur'an or Platonism. However, atheism today seems to be rather a "slip away from than giving up the faith", and so does not represent our "evil decision against God" (Hans Kung, "Is there a God?" p 307, Napred, Zagreb). This makes our intolerance towards atheism unnecessary, which does not mean that we should feel indifference towards atheists. This situation puts the churches today in a precarious situation. The Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as any other church, can do little more than to call and witness that salvation does not exclude atheists and that atheists thus need a new perception of Truth (God).

From Repentance and Forgiveness to Mutual Tolerance

There are many issues concerning tolerance, which seek theological answers, in addition to rational ones. Would it be possible to set up tolerant relations in those areas of the Balkans - or the world - where material gains have most of the time taken precedence over justice, and where evil still needs just punishment by God? Revenge would obviously not represent the right way to mutual tolerance, although it would nowadays be considered as a kind of justice. However, this would cause evil to further strengthen its roots, with tensions continuing to grow. Furthermore, is it possible to build tolerant relations in regions where evil has yet to be punished and where it still has a role to play?

From the viewpoint of a believer who sees himself and other humans as *Imago Dei* (Gen, 1:27), tolerance cannot exist without repentance (Matt, 3:2). Thus, Christians are time and again reminded that repentance is the only means to return to

our state prior to sin. Therefore, without repentance and forgiveness, from the theological point of view, we cannot bring about the state of mutual tolerance in the Balkans. In Christianity and Islam alike, penitence and forgiveness are valued above revenge and justice (Matt, 18:21-22; Luke, 6:37; Qur'an, 5:45, 2: 178) and for this reason the believers of both denominations should first forgive those who have wronged them. However, in order for evil to be permanently banished so as not to devalue good and virtues by its reappearance, it is necessary to ask repentance of perpetrators. Only through repentance can a perpetrator become aware and comprehend his inhuman entity. Mutual tolerance in the Balkans will be made possible only at that price, the fact that bears witness of a long history of evil and intolerance. Tolerance needs repentance as the evildoer's moral and religious act. Nowadays, the most immediate task would be to enhance our oneness with God because this oneness brings us to this act by requiring from us to voluntarily renounce many of our rights.

What Needs to Be Done

In order to establish tolerant relations among churches in the Balkans, it is necessary to dispense with two things: proselytism and unification should have no place in church policy, while evangelization must not be abused. Nowadays, the Serbian Orthodox Church accuses the Roman-Catholics in the first instance of proselytism ("The Serbian Orthodox Church And Politics—Catholicism And Abundance", an interview with Bishop Dr IGNATIUS (Midic) of Branicevo in *The Belgrade News*, 25 February 1998). The following should be emphasized concerning these accusations: they are not supported by sustainable arguments, they are unobjective and thus lack in seriousness. The policies of proselytism and unification have been condemned by the highest authorities in the Roman-Catholic Church and are now seen as tragic remnants of Christian history (Baldanian Document, Orthodox—Roman-Catholic Commission of 1993, *Ut Unum Sint* Encyclical).

From a Single Interpretation to Many Intolerant Actions

The above topic calls for a theological answer to the following questions. Is there a theological justification for using intolerant means in pursuit of idealistic goals of the Church? Is it justifiable to endanger our rational freedom (Sirah, 15:16) for the purpose of our temporary and eternal salvation? In a positive answer to these questions, many point to St Luke, 14:23. A grave misinterpretation of the words “compel them to come in” has inaugurated all ensuing intolerance within the Church. The principle of *compele intrare* was first used on heretics; the Protestant interpretation of these words (Luther, Calvin) gave legitimacy to the use of force in church politics. The moment this interpretation entered church legislature, all three Christian inquisitions were born.

From Methodism to the Second Vatican Council

An important condition for existence of tolerance in the world is the practice of tolerance among the faithful, because the Church is the “salt” and the “light” of the world. Whenever strict formulation of religious truths and confession of faith in form of certain church dogmas agreed upon in church councils prevailed over other aspects of the Church, the Church would cease to be an institution of tolerance. Perhaps this was the reason that the Second Vatican Council held in 1970’s did not formulate a single dogma. In order not to deepen the already existing differences and as a sign of new times, this Council did not bring any decisions that could revive intolerance in relations between the Roman-Catholic and other churches.

This is clearly shown in many documents of the Second Vatican Council. The attitude towards the Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians changed completely (*cf.* Dogmatic Constitution On Church “Lumen Gentium”, *Comments and Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, F.T.I., Druzba Isusova, Zagreb 1977, pp. 303-304). Excommunication and anathema were revoked while atheism and many other issues that had before been condemned, now ceased to be criticized (*cf.*: “Secretariat for Atheists, Dialogues With Atheists, Krscanska sadasnjust” 1968, Documents 22).

It is those churches that have held the least to clearly formulated religious truths but lived their faith according to religious principles that are the most tolerant

of all. Even to date, Baptism has not yet formulated their Christian dogma; whereas Methodism has never adhered to exact and elaborate theological formulae which have been the main cause of rupture between Roman-Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Tolerance that is at the heart of ethical Methodism is the result of a sincere and truthful belief, which is what is required from us by Christ and the Gospel. With more emphasis on ethical and preaching components of their beliefs rather than on formalistic and liturgical, Methodism has contributed to sparing England many social evils. Perhaps it is Methodism itself, as many claim, that spared England revolutions of the kind experienced by the French, and later the Russians, with all the atrocities, guillotine and arbitrary mass executions. Baptist churches have put forth the question of human rights before anyone else, whereas Russian Christian Orthodoxy has never officially condemned the atrocities committed by the Russian totalitarian regime. Hugo Grotius (XVII century) was probably the first great man of his time who discussed the issue of tolerance among the faithful. He wrote a book on the topic, "On The Truth Of The Christian Faith" (1627), and two tractates: "Towards Peace Within the Church", and "A Voice For Peace in the Church."

We First Need to Define a Common Goal

In order to establish a tolerant relationship among believers of all three monotheistic religions - Christianity, Islam and Judaism - we need to define a common goal first. This common goal in our circumstances is primarily the common "good" that Aristotle wrote about in his "Ethics." Aristotle claims that any creation, work or decision have a tendency towards "good," however it cannot be attained without mutual tolerance and reliance on one another. In our communities, the tendency towards "good" will show in our common effort to build the Kingdom of God amidst ourselves. Of course, mutual tolerance will first create conditions for actions that will be undertaken for the glory of God (Rom, 9:23), so that we can later continue further on this road with our own willpower, based on our own conscience. We shall first exercise tolerance due to our religious call and mission and, secondly, because we are rational, ethical and political beings.

It is only through creation of the Kingdom of God and for the glory of God, that a religious person can change and improve the world. For this reason, a religious person cannot approve of and give a green light to things that are contrary to the will of God. The same principle can be applied to questions of inter-religious and other tolerance. Evil and sin cannot be accepted or justified in the name of tolerance. A call to witness of one's faith cannot be replaced by any other call. This is the reason why we cannot draw a straight line between tolerant and intolerant behavior without first clearly defining the "other," who they are, what they are in relation to ourselves. Jesus banishes from the temple those doing trade under its vaults precisely because He has no illusions as to who and what they are (Matt, 21:12-14). St Paul the Apostle is very determined when putting forth his arguments.

We Need to Arrive at a Consensus

In order to establish tolerance in inter-religious communication, we first have to agree upon basic common theological premises. We need to realize that Islam and Christianity, for example, cannot be theologically and rationally explained without the Old Testament (Matt, 15:24; Rom, 9:5; Qur'an, 2:135-136) and Judaism. Although Jews and Muslims, for example, may not agree with our Christian (Orthodox, or Roman-Catholic) interpretation of the New Testament, they most certainly will not question the relevance of our Christian ethics. The religious and moral principles of the Old Testament possess "universal value and relevance" (Al Baoara, 135-136; see T.H. Robinson, *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, Edinburgh, pp. 149, 151; also: Fahro Romic, "Neke natuknice o jedinstvu objave i teoloskom pluralizmu" in *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog staresinstva*, 1/87, Sarajevo). Furthermore, we need to be aware at all times that our witness as believers involves more than our witness in the role of theologians. We are called to tolerance as believers in the first instance.

In addition, the plan that God has created for the other person and me cannot be carried out without this other person or without me. For this reason God counts on my tolerant behavior so that He can carry out His plan that involves me. Finally,

through the paradigm of Jesus Christ, God shows His utmost tolerance towards us, He forgives us our sins, at the same time exposing His only Son to the intolerance of evil and sin.

Although there is one Holy Bible and one Qur'an, the contents of these Holy Scriptures have contributed to both better understanding and divisions between the two religions (Qur'an, 5: 51; 3:28; 5:82; 5:2; 4:157; 4:171; As Saff, 6; John, 12:44; 10:30). Taking some statements in Qur'an as a starting point, we could conclude that Islam stands in no theological opposition to Judaism (Qur'an, 2:163- 164; Isa, 37:16; 45:22). Thus it seems that all three monotheistic religions represent but a different path towards God, - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exod, 3 :6) - who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom, 10:9; Matt, 7:21). Although our revelations may differ and our respective economies of salvation may seem to be in opposition, we still share the same eschatology with both the Qur'an and the Gospel emphasizing the eschatological dimension of Jesus Christ (All Imran, 45) and His eschatological role and importance (John, 5:26-30). All this clearly shows that none of the above religions should strive for a privileged position above the others, or claim a monopoly on the Truth, the Knowledge of God.

From the Holy Bible to the Holy Qur'an

Looking from a standpoint of axiology and logic, only the principle of equality could lead us to the principle of tolerance, for there can be no tolerance where there is no equality. At the same time, however, we must also reconcile to the idea that there is certain specificity to all three of God's holy religions. Since in Christian ontology, for instance, only Jesus represents the path of Truth (God), theologically our knowledge of Truth will always be different from that of Judaism or Islam. In Christianity, the Word that has become flesh will always guide the path to Truth, whereas the path of Islam and Judaism are forever different. We have to come to terms with this idea, as it has always been so. It is exactly because Christians in the past could not reconcile themselves to this idea of difference that has led to polarization between Christianity and other religions.

On the other hand, if we carefully read our holy books, we shall find many points in favor of our mutual tolerance. The religious history of our respective religions has, to a great extent, been one of mutual hatred exactly because this common ground has never been sufficiently emphasized. Many a mosque and Christian church has been razed to the ground, converted or despoiled in the Balkans in the course of our history. Thus, for example, in the Holy Qur'an, we find the following quotation: "Assuredly, you will find that the closest friends of the faithful are those who say: we are Christians" (Qur'an, Al Maida, 82). Some of the verses in Qur'an lead us to believe that in Islam, religion is a private matter (2:256), and that it is not compulsory; an authentic Muslim, thus, only calls to the faithful (Qur'an, 3:20). The fact that things have been different throughout the history, can only speak of the evil within us.

It was this religious tolerance, previously unknown in the Orthodox East that helped Islam conquer the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire, with a predominant Nestorian and Monophysite Christian populations. For many of these people, Islamic conquest came as a kind of liberation from Byzantine pressure and Orthodox Christianity. The Byzantine Emperor, himself an Orthodox Christian, had no interest in defending the eastern provinces populated with heretics, so he delivered them onto the hands of Islamists. In order for mutual tolerance to exist, ideologies must not prevail at the expense of moral ideals, the usage of ideas must always take justice into account. St Augustine compares states without justice (and without justice there can be no tolerance) with "huge bands of cut-throats and thieves" in his "State" (IV,...). The Christians will always be inspired to strive for tolerance and humane treatment of others by Christ's "golden rule" (Matt, 7:12), which, in its axiological value, stands above the "silver rule" (Tobit, 4:15).

Tolerance as Our Necessity

The peoples in the Balkans are still closest to one another despite wars and mutually inflicted injustice. The experience of co-existence ranges from mixed marriages to everyday contacts in the street or shops. This is why the issues of mutual

tolerance, dialogue and co-operation represent an existential corpus of questions for the people in this region. The contents and direction our collective destiny will take depends on answers to these questions. Current traumatic experiences can be worked out through a number of mechanisms. One of them is mutual co-operation in different areas. After this latest traumatic experience, we are compelled to find an answer to the question of re-integration into processes of co-operation for those individuals or groups who have suffered through no fault of their own and whose pain is now seeking revenge from God. How can we win those people over for these new processes? We feel that it is essential to realize first that co-operation, dialogue and tolerance have no alternative. For this reason, we must endure in our willingness to practice mutual tolerance.

From Justice to Mutual Tolerance

Our tolerant attitude primarily depends on what sort of behavior we are willing to accept or approve of in view of our everyday goals and objectives. Our primary concern would be to act in such a manner so as not to infringe upon freedoms and rights of our fellow humans, but also to ask the same treatment from our fellow humans. This is why there can be no mutual tolerance where there is no justice. Experience has shown that whenever there is a lack of balance in justice or just division of gains, there can be neither mutual tolerance nor co-operation. Only the principle of balance can ensure the principle of tolerance. Peace, tolerance and tranquility can only exist hand in hand with a sense of equality among members of a society. Both communist and nationalist regimes have proved to be among the least tolerant and humane ideologies and societies in history because of the huge rational imbalance of diverse interests in those societies, which led to polarization to those groups that are compelled to be “givers” because they were not communists/nationalists, and “takers” that take whatever they could because their position as communists/nationalists allowed them to do so.

In What Way Should Contemporary Religious Communities Develop Tolerance and a Sense of Justice? How to Live Up to These Principles?

Religious people of today can practice their tolerance and a sense of justice primarily through their living faith. The only way they can change the world is through relying on the grace that is given to them (Rom, 12:8-12). Although they will not always receive approval or permission for such witness for a host of reasons, they must not give up because perseverance on this path proves nothing less but their obedience to Christ and brothers, which they are called to. However, all this should be less a matter of their freedom (Sirah, 15:16) than a consequence of the teaching of the Holy Spirit (John, 14:26). That is how their “jump forward” will occur the soonest. Our witness of tolerance, justice and humanism nowadays should be focused primarily on those who have suffered the most from lack of these principles. The victims who have experienced the bitterness of refugee life and loneliness, due to the absence of justice need justice and tolerance the most.

We Are Called to Exercise Tolerance

Since we are, according to St Paul “members of one another” (Eph, 4:25-27), our co-operation and tolerant behavior towards one another are essential; without these, the “good” that Aristotle writes about in his “Ethics”, and which is more important than tolerance, would not exist. God will not disregard the very act of our humanity and tolerance. If we look at the current situation in the Balkans in view of its three dimensions - truth (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1051b), knowledge and interest - we notice that throughout the history of Balkan peoples, mutual tolerance or intolerance depended predominantly on the dimension of interest and less on either knowledge or truth. This shows that people in the Balkans value their interest more than justice, they put personal security in life above their freedom, and false and comforting misinterpretations are more precious than the truth.

From Church Dogma to Mutual Intolerance

We have learned through experience that as soon as dogma and church theology come in between the Word of God and our everyday life, things started to change for the worse. The first to change was the mutual love; next, the notion of unity based on the faith in one God started to cool. The early Church, who lived according to the Word of God, possessing no precise theological formulations, did not know interreligious tensions or intolerance. We need only recall the relationship between the Church and Synagogue. The Acts of the Apostles records a good and fair relationship (Acts, 3:1; 2:46-47). There were no religious tensions and intolerance in the early Church; these appeared only later in many Eastern and Western Church Fathers, changing the liturgical mind of both Churches. In the West, anti-Semitism was forever removed at the Second Vatican Council (Nostra Aetate, no.4). In the East, however, it lives on, and can be best felt through liturgical readings prior to Good Friday (the Lent Triodion, Antiphone: a book used in Orthodox Church in service and liturgy).

Thus it seems that life according to dogma depends entirely on the perception of our mind. In dogma, everything depends on our power; whereas in faith, everything is subordinate to His grace. For this reason, dogma always sets us apart and creates tensions, whereas faith has other goals to achieve with us. Faith develops mutual love and a spirit of tolerance. Due to mutual love, tolerance will never overstep its bounds to endanger the interest of faith. In connection with this issue, we should bear in mind the consequences that followed an oversimplified and biased misinterpretation of dogma concerning the infallibility of the Pope (Justin Popovi_, “The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism,” Thessaloniki 1974), as proclaimed at the First Vatican Council in 1867. Discussions concerning purgatory, epiclesis, and supremacy, held at Church Councils in Florence and Ferrara [1439], managed only to increase the rift and tensions. As tensions were the greatest between Rome and Constantinople, and not between Rome and Antioch, or Alexandria, it is easy to conclude that what lay behind these tensions was not only church politics, but also that of the state.

Why Was There No Tolerance in the Beginning? Do We First Have to Learn How to Get to the Truth?

There have been many reasons that caused a crisis of tolerance in the Balkans. Religious tolerance as well as tolerance regarding a number of other issues, have been in short supply for several reasons. First of all, everyone in this region - be it a political party (in power currently or in opposition), the academy, the Church, a political or religious leader - holds a belief that they are absolutely right, and act accordingly. Here in the Balkans as in no other region do we have an example of how knowledge, when not critically examined, can cause tremendous sorrow and tragedies. Due to a myth, we have not been able to examine rationally our victories and failures, which has led to continual repetition of same mistakes. If we are at all concerned about co-operation and mutual dependence, we first have to do away with misconceptions about others.

Our common destiny has been shaped by myth, media and everyday rumors, tearing our inner being. The media in this region have often played an important part in creating intolerance; they not only impinged upon our freedom of thought, but also sowed the seeds of incomprehensible hysteria and hatred. Because of the above, we have been confronted with many truths, although the truth is only one, for it is impossible to say yes and no at the same time, yet it has been happening all the time. The Balkans has thus been a region with many truths, and ensuing rights, interests and political destinies. Mutual tolerance will only have a chance when we succeed in drawing a firm line between mythical and rational knowledge, when we finally realize what the truth is and what its opposite. In his numerous dialogs with Lahtes, Eutriphones, Gorgia, and others, Socrates has left us certain guidelines on how to reach the truth. In his intellectual war with the Sophists (*Protagoras...*), Socrates has shown us a path to historic and objective truth.

What Is the Most Important Question for Us Nowadays? What Is the Most Valuable Answer?

Due to our alienation from God, there are many things nowadays which have lost their human face. Thus, the most important issue for both Church and the state is

the answer to the following question: Who is my neighbor? (Luke, 10:29). Who, in fact, is man in the first place? If the other (man) is not viewed as our neighbor, our relationship will be cold and not strong enough. There will be no communication between us, and our need for mutual tolerance and co-operation will barely exist. Politics as well as different ideologies have offered different answers to this question. Jesus surprised the world with His answer. His answer to this question sets Christian humanism apart from other forms of humanism; this difference, furthermore, “exhausts our anthropological problem.” It seems that mutual exclusiveness of churches and religious communities, nations and countries has been for the most part caused by a variety of answers to the above question. In our communication with members of groups different from our own, we would identify them as heretics or sectarians, and would act accordingly. Mutual tolerance, dialogue, and cooperation were banished; excommunication, anathema and alienation prevailed.

Orthodoxy and Tolerance - Unity at the Expense of a Right

Even nowadays we often hear a question about the contribution of the Orthodox Christian East towards the development of tolerance. Before we attempt to give an answer to this question, we have to point at the following fact. For centuries in Byzantium, there existed in judicial minds a notion about a singular common world order (G. Ostrogorsky, “On Beliefs and Notions of the Byzantines,” *Prosveta*, Belgrade, p238). The empire and clergy had close ties. What the Church preached, the Empire defended with all the might of its authority. In a sense, theology was not only an ideology of the Church, but also of the state. In contrast to the development of Catholicism in the West, where the medieval Church, with the development of papal theocracy, acquired attributes of a state, which it would subsequently lose, Christianity in the East took a different road.

In the Orthodox East, the tendency has always been towards the ecclesiasticism of the state, which can be perceived best in the political theology of Eusebius of Caesarea (Daniel Stringer, “The Political Theology of Eusebius Pomphilus, the Bishop of Caesarea” in *Theological Viewpoint*, 1-4/96, Belgrade). By

hailing the emperor to heavens and viewing him as “equal to Logos Christ”, this theology is partially responsible for the emergence of an ideology of “caesaro-papism” which effectively eliminated ideas about religious or any other tolerance in the Orthodox Church and state. The notion about a single world order that endured for centuries in the Byzantine legal mind excluded any possibility of pluralism. Pluralism was non-existent in either theological or political sense. The same rule was applied to both the Byzantine state (theocracy) and the Orthodox Christian Church; the monopoly on truth lived in both. In a Christian world, within the hierarchy of Christian states, there could not co-exist two world orders, there could not co-exist two Christian emperors. The Byzantine Empire and the Orthodox Emperor headed the hierarchy of Christian states. Orthodox Christianity was the only acknowledged religion, protected by legislation, and administrative borders of the Church “is at all times adapted to the administrative and political borders within the Empire “ (Canon XVII of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451). All subjects of the Empire were compelled to confess the faith of the emperor.

All ideas that were in discord with Byzantine Christianity and its understanding of “Orthodoxy,” risked not only anathema on the part of the Church but also persecution on the part of the state. Radical Arians, Monophysites, and Nestorians in early Byzantium as well as so-called “Latin heresy” (Roman-Catholics) in medieval Serbia and Orthodox Russia, experienced much suffering precisely for this reason (*cf.*: *The Codex of Emperor Dusan*, p 44; Dr I. Markovic, *Slavs and Popes*, Zagreb, 1903, pp. 177-178). Whatever was a rule in the political sphere also applied in the sphere of theology. Hierarchical relationships existed not only within the world order but also within the Christian ecumenical community. The relationship between the Orthodox Church in Byzantium and other Autocephalous Orthodox Churches was based on the principle of “mother” and “daughter” churches (Dr. Dimitrije Bogdanovic, “The Reconciliation of Serbian and Byzantine Church”, in *Pravoslavna misao*, pp. 64, XXI, 1974; N. Milas, “Orthodox Ecclesiastic Law”). “Mother” Church (Byzantine Church) could even punish a “daughter” Church if the “daughter” Church did not adhere to canons and her policies. In the XIV century, the mother Byzantine

Church sanctioned the Serbian Orthodox Church (in this case, a daughter Church). The sanctions that followed included an interruption of ecumenical service and intercommunion until their subsequent reconciliation. The above facts bear witness that what was not tolerated in the Patriarchate in Constantinople could not be tolerated in the Patriarchate in Pe_ (Serbian). Orthodoxy and heterodoxy could not live side by side. This is the main reason for the absence of theological pluralism or another institutionalized church, and ensuing absence of religious tolerance. There is no opposition in a theological sense so the principle of co-existence has no prominence.

Since there has always been a tendency towards ecclesiation in the Orthodox East, certain political categories (nation, state) have gained a theological and ecclesiastic connotation. As a result, we now have Serbian, Russian and other Orthodoxy and with it the Serbian, Russian and other churches. From a theological point of view primarily, this is in contradiction with the theology of the New Testament, which regards the church and state as two separate entities. This is a reason why so many things in the Orthodox East have gained political and national implications as proved on many occasions throughout our history. Whenever Orthodox states have had disputes with each other, their churches have taken part in these disputes. Dostoevsky displayed such maximalistic ideas in some of his works. According to Dostoevsky, Russians only are a vessel of God, and they alone hold “the keys of life and new word” (“Evil Spirits”) through the Orthodox knowledge (theology). He further developed a thesis about “Russian Christ.” Thus, his thought represents an example of intolerance towards everything non-Russian and non-Orthodox, especially in his attitude towards Catholics and Jews, but he was not any kinder to Serbs either (Dostoevsky, *The Author’s Diary, Idiot, Brothers Karamazov*: the legend about the Great Inquisitor).

From Heresy to Religious Intolerance

The word “heresy” holds an association to something terrible, abhorred not only by the mother church (the Patriarchate of Constantinople), but also the daughter

churches (Autocephalous Orthodox Churches). Although heretics are second closest to the church after the Orthodox Christians, it by no means follows that the latter (Orthodox Christians) will enter the Kingdom of God before the former (heretics). St Augustine is attributed as saying that those the church now has, God will not have, and those God will have, the Church has not got. Mere membership with the Church, as someone has once said, does not give a hundred percent guarantee of membership in the Kingdom of God. Eutychus, who lived in the early era of the Byzantine Church, became a heretic attracting the anger and intolerance of Orthodox Byzantium, on the ground of a single, slightly different theological formulation that he expostulated in the course of his theological thinking (let us briefly remember that the fiercest enemies of Monophysites were Byzantine Orthodox Emperors Justin and Justinian in the VI century). And that is how, theologically speaking, the Monophysite Church was born, forever sundered from the Byzantine Church and Orthodox Christianity. What was unimaginable in Greece during Socrates' time became everyday reality in Justinian's Byzantium, namely a complete absence of tolerance.

Although the first schism in canonical order in the Christian world occurred in 1054, the concept of heresy has gained other implications and dimensions in the course of history. Western Christianity (the Roman Church) was accused of "heresy," and this act would introduce the most tragic period in relations between the Church in the East and the West. Mutual and religious tolerance would fade away and this situation would continue until the Second Vatican Council. Historically, the Greeks would apply the word "Orthodoxy" - "a true belief" only to their own Church. In an attempt to show theological and other differences - that actually never existed - between the Eastern and Western Christianity, the Greeks first justified their future policies with theological reasons. Later on, especially during the time of Hesychasts (Palamas, Synaite, Kalistas, XIV century), the word "orthodoxy" was given a different meaning and connotation; it was used to denote a theological and ecclesiastic identity of the Orthodox Christian and no other Church. Ioannis Prodrom, a Greek, was the first to number the Catholics as heretics, introducing the most

intolerant period in the history of Christ's Church. What Prodorm actually did was transfer something that had been within the sphere of church policy into the sphere of doctrine and faith; he wanted to justify the policy of intolerance not only with law and canon but also with dogma and theology. Behind it all, most probably, stood Photius' repulsion, almost hatred, towards Rome, which would be confirmed in his "Nomocanon" (XII) in appropriate legal terminology (J.B. Pitra, "Iuris eccl. graecorum historiae et monumenta," vol. II, 608, Roma, 1868). Let us remember that before the Great Schism and immediately afterwards (which is a short time for history) the word "orthodoxy" denoted not only Eastern but also Western Christianity, whoever adhered to the Nicean Creed was considered to be orthodox. Orthodox beliefs were thus all those that were in accordance with the teachings of the first seven Ecumenical Councils; heterodoxy was everything that was in opposition to orthodoxy (M. Jugie, "Theol. dogm. IV", Paris, 1931, p 213). For this reason we can now pose the following question: What sort of beliefs belong to heterodoxy in the Middle Ages? Can we nowadays justify our intolerance towards others with dogma and canons?

Tolerance As a Problem of Our Conscience

Although Western (Roman-Catholicism and Protestantism) and Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity understand conscience as our path to God, an Orthodox Christian travels along this path primarily in repentance, whereas in the West, Christians travel in love and work towards the Glory of God. Thus in Eastern Christianity, individual ethics has been predominant, whereas in the West it has been social ethics. Furthermore, in the Orthodox Church, ethics is consequential to the Orthodox theology itself, which has exclusively been faithful to Christ's eschatological message. It is for this reason that we cannot talk about social engagement of the Orthodox Church in the name of Evangelical ideals. This also is the reason for the absence of rational cooperation between the Church and the world in building the Kingdom of God in our society. If altruism represents a single measure of our morality (Matt., 18:15), it is now clear, theologically as well as

ethically, why we are continually confronted with crises of humanism in this region, and along with it many other crises. Paramount experience of the Holy has been based primarily on asceticism and liturgy. Dostoevsky seems to be right when claiming that Orthodox Christianity can be understood in rational terms only by one who has succeeded in comprehending the soul of the Orthodox monk. Without the monastic ascetic ideal, Orthodox Christianity cannot be explained.

Western Christianity and its ethics could never produce a crisis of humanism. Conscience in Western Christianity has been “an organ of love” first and foremost, whereas in the Orthodox ethics it has been “an organ of repentance.” However, in both these ethics, conscience represents our ability to differentiate good from evil (Aristotle, “Politics”). Since the rational balance between repentance and love, concern for oneself and concern for others, has been violated in the Orthodox East, more so due to our theological (ecclesiastic) perceptions than due to our freedom (Sirah, 15,16), we could not have avoided the crisis of humanism and with it, the crisis of a social virtue. Theological and ethical assumptions for development of religious tolerance and co-operation with those of different thinking and different theological perceptions and beliefs, have been lacking in the Orthodox East.

For, if a church (in this case, our Orthodox Christian Church) holds a belief that her teaching is the only true and orthodox teaching, then what logically and ontologically follows is that any teaching differing from her own can only be in opposition to her teaching, because nothing can be orthodox and heterodox at the same token. Thus we have that a teaching has led to religious intolerance.

Indifference As Our Way of Avoiding Criticism

There are many signs of religious indifference in this region presently. The words of St. John’s Revelation seem to be most appropriate for our current religious circumstances. Thus it would be appropriate to describe the majority of Serbs when religion is concerned as neither “hot” nor “cold,” but “tepid.” There are a lot of layers in our beliefs that are neither biblical nor Christian. Due to the crisis of our theological and evangelical knowledge, we lack a rational courage to draw a firm line

between things in our religious beliefs that are in accord with God's Word and those that are in discord with God's Word. This makes us firstly religious ignorants, and secondly religious cowards.

The vocabulary our Church hierarchy uses is more of a narrative and descriptive kind than of argumentative kind, so that their communication with others takes on a polemical form rather than that of a Christian dialogue. Here and now, a vast majority of our Orthodox intelligentsia believe that Protestants are primarily a religious community rather than "church," and many of our monks (the majority, in fact) still view Roman-Catholics as heretics (cf.: "The Appeal to the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church," signed by brotherhoods of some of our monastic communities in 1977). This situation is even more polarized by the lack of official reactions and attitudes of our Church. Everyday life further leads to a conclusion that there is an absence of tolerance in these communities. Heresy and Orthodoxy are thus much more present in actions than in theological arguments. It follows that mutual religious tolerance and co-operation here will depend primarily on our love. Because of them we currently need to feel our Church more as *caritas* than as *orthodoxy*.

Conclusions

In view of the contemporary sign of the time, it seems that our primary task nowadays is to begin to witness our faith through realization of ethical ideals in a rational and humane manner. The church institutions have to be filled with the spirit of Gospel if the Balkans are to accept tolerance. The spirit of democracy has to enter the Church, so to speak. Only if we feel the Church as a community of little ones (Matt, 10:42) in which the one who serves all others is the greatest (Matt, 18: 15), can we also view her as an institution of tolerance. Only then will we be in position to answer the call of moral values, which is the stuff tolerance is primarily made of. The past and present experiences alike confirm that interreligious cooperation and tolerance are at the highest level in those countries that are religiously neutral, where the church is separated from the state. In the Balkans, a lay and democratic state, not a theocratic, national, and totalitarian, can best serve the practice of interreligious

tolerance and cooperation. Tolerance is essential because the world around us is pluralistic. It is quite clear that the notion of tolerance and cooperation cannot be borne out of our plundered and devaluated present. For this reason, the need for and dependence on the Grace of God has never been greater in our history.