



Working on the Return of the Personalist Concept of Human Rights: from the Universal Declaration to the Documents of the Russian Orthodox Church

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Abstract

The idea and concept of human rights is today one of the most controversial areas of research and practice, both in the domestic law of individual states and in international law and the practice of international courts. It emerged in the Western political tradition of the Renaissance and the modern era and had its first practical application with the godless French bourgeois revolution that proclaimed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This idea of abstract universal human rights, which supposedly belongs equally to every individual, was used from the start to systematically violate all possible rights of individuals who belonged to the nobility and clergy, but also of ordinary people who wanted to remain loyal to their religious tradition, as best witnessed by the massacres committed in the Vendée. This article explains Working on the Return of the Personalist Concept of Human Rights: from the Universal Declaration to the Documents of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Keywords: Human rights, Orthodox, UDHR, Russian church, Human.

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1. Introduction

The idea and concept of human rights is today one of the most controversial areas of research and practice, both in the domestic law of individual states and in international law and the practice of international courts. It emerged in the Western political tradition of the Renaissance and the modern era and had its first practical application with the godless French bourgeois revolution that proclaimed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This idea of abstract universal human rights, which supposedly belongs equally to every individual, was used from the start to systematically violate all possible rights of individuals who belonged to the nobility and clergy, but also of ordinary people who wanted to remain loyal to their religious tradition, as best witnessed by the massacres committed in the Vendée.

At the same time, however; the French bourgeoisie and the left-liberal political forces that led the revolution were also very restrictive in their treatment of a number of other political, social and economic rights, which they simply denied and prohibited to citizens. First, guilds, traditional craft associations, were banned, and then workers' rights to organize were restricted in every way. As a way of preserving their own privileged position, nineteenth-century liberals restricted the supposedly universal political rights to vote and be elected through property censuses. Believing that ordinary people were too traditionalist, they also restricted their rights to free expression (through censorship) and their rights to free assembly and organization. In intellectual terms, these dilemmas were expressed in the famous debate on human rights between Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke (Ryan, 2014). Around this time, Jeremy Bentham coined the expression about human rights as "nonsense upon stilts".

So from the very beginning of the proclamation of the idea of supposedly universal political rights, this concept carried a clear militant political dimension in Schmitt's sense, as a list of rights for friends and an instrument for suppressing enemies. Hence, from the very beginning of the concept, the Roman Catholic Church viewed this idea, just like the ideas of liberalism, democracy and socialism, as an offshoot of the Satanic, Enlightenment-Masonic tradition. This trend culminated in the encyclical *Syllabus errorum* of 1864. The French Revolution, for example, introduced civil marriage that does not have to be concluded in a church, made divorce possible, and equalized the position of children born in a legal marriage with children born from adventures and extramarital relationships, thus opening a gap for the complete destruction of the natural and traditional family in the twentieth century.

Especially after the Bolshevik Revolution.

Hence, the attempt to develop an alternative conception and model of human rights, which was launched in April 2025 under the name Eastern Understanding of Human Rights, is necessary and important. However, it is crucial to understand that the Western understanding of human rights is by no means unique and homogeneous. Moreover, in the West, in the academic community, constitutional-legal systems, and political and legal philosophy, there are also models that would be very interesting for the idea of the Eastern understanding. In my contribution, I wanted to offer the experience of the Russian Orthodox Church as an important attempt to develop an alternative understanding of human rights, which would avoid Western imperialist universalism, emphasize the importance of a particular civilization and the differences in individual models of human rights that come from different political theologies in the background.

Trying to summarize this controversial, polemical and multifaceted development of the concept of human rights, in the 2001 book *Order, Morality and Human Rights* (Đurković, 2001) I proposed three approaches to the concept of human rights, or rather three parts of the doctrine of human rights. First, normative analytics which deals with the normative foundation and enumeration of individual and collective rights. Then, hermeneutics, relates to the question of the interpretation and application of normative rights in specific constitutional and legal systems. And finally, the policy of human rights, which sees the idea of human rights as an instrument to be used against the enemy. There is a famous statement by Zbigniew Brzezinski, who in 1998 in Paris at the promotion of his book *The Grand Chessboard* stated that he had conceived the concept of human rights as an instrument for the destruction of the communist bloc. My country, Serbia, was bombed in 1999 by the NATO pact, without the approval of the UN Security Council, based on the claim that they were coming to defend the human rights of the Albanian minority, although the NATO countries had actually incited, armed and pushed the Albanians from Kosovo into rebellion. After 1999, they took control of that area and their companies took control of the mines and all the resources in an otherwise very rich area. The same approach was later used to bomb and occupy a number of other countries.

2. Defining the True Concept

There are many important problems in the general understanding of human rights, their legal and international legal definitions and especially their

implementation within individual legal, political and social systems. Many researchers perceive and posit human rights too abstractly and not sufficiently concretely. A good example is Dr. Zoran Devrnja, a professor at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, who received his doctorate on the problem of understanding human rights from the perspective of Christian churches and who advocates for their full respect (Devrnja, 2014). However, in his work, the author always treats human rights as a systematic, coherent, universally valid set of individual rights that Christian churches can incorporate into their worldview and value system without any major problems. Is this really so? We would say that it is not, and that only by entering into specific issues and exploring the scope of validity of specific individual rights do we open up a large space for the necessary casuistry and arrive at the key problem – the question of what to do when human rights develop in a distinctly anti-Christian direction and lead to direct violations of fundamental religious human rights.

Although it should be understood that the author's basic intention to generally demonstrate the coherence and compatibility of the idea of human rights with Christianity, it seems that the author, given the level of human rights research and the problems associated with their establishment and interpretation, had to find space for a more specific analysis of the complex practice of human rights. Let us list at least five moments that are missing here, and which well illustrate the problems in the contemporary understanding of human rights.

First of all, there is no contextualization of rights, that is, there is no showing how rights are related to certain specific traditions, cultures and heritages in which they only gain their true meaning and significance. Let us recall that the EU has long refused to adopt a Bill of Rights, or to ratify and adopt the European Convention on Human Rights and Freedoms. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU was adopted around 2000, but was ratified only in 2009 with the Lisbon Treaty. As is known, the common framework for the protection of human rights that is applied within the EU is interpreted as the result of the overall heritage of the legal systems of individual countries, since individual countries are very skeptical about the imposition of a generally applicable framework that would claim full universality independent of specific traditions. Roman Catholic countries such as Poland and Ireland are particularly sensitive about the issues of abortion and religious rights. Therefore, Poland still maintains an opt-out position, while Ireland and Denmark have since given up on it and have also ratified the document in its entirety.

Furthermore, the relationship between rights and duties has not been considered. Contrary to the old Enlightenment ideas that there are only rights, modern political philosophy insists on the fact that there are no rights without duties. Every holder of rights also has certain duties towards others and towards the community. This must be emphasized all the more from a Christian perspective in which a person has clear duties towards God, family, community or environment.

Related to this is the failure to consider the phenomenon of conflict of rights. Human rights in a society rarely represent a completely coherent whole. A large part of rights is the subject of serious disputes depending on how individual parts of society and political communities see, for example, life, family, marriage, education, etc. The so-called culture wars in the United States in particular are a good example of disputes over rights and the phenomenon of conflict of rights today. Let us take the issue of abortion and the right to so-called same-sex marriage. While Christians and other members of traditional religious communities insist on the right of the fetus to life from conception, leftists defend the mother's right to terminate the pregnancy or the life of the fetus through abortion. Also, most traditionalists defend the right to preserve traditional marriage between a man and a woman, while left-liberals, with the help of the political and especially judicial elite, insist on the legalization of so-called same-sex marriages in every way. Such conflicts are also encountered in various other areas, for example, the right to a clean environment conflict with the right of people to get a job in factories and companies that use dirty technologies, etc. Or let us mention the political issue of the conflict between the state's right to sovereignty and integrity and the people's right to self-determination. The majority of human rights issues today are related to conflicts between individual or collective rights of various interested actors.

It is also necessary to point out the problems that the author's uncritical adoption of the limited concept of communitarian rights, which comes from the contemporary Protestant tradition, entails. On page 215 of this doctoral thesis, under communitarian rights are listed: "the rights of women, children, refugees, migrants, peoples to self-determination, indigenous peoples and indigenous peoples". It is noticeable that these are the so-called minority and separate rights in the tradition of contemporary multiculturalism of the Kymlicka type. The problem is that this leaves aside the most important communitarian rights, the rights of the majority people in a given area. It is always mistakenly believed that the majority is sufficiently protected by the

very fact that it is the majority, although in practice it often turns out that minority communities, due to better organization, focus and support from the global elite, defend their rights better than the unorganized majority population. Such a case is, for example, the suppression of the religious rights of the majority religious population in favor of the alleged universal and inalienable rights of the minority homosexual community.

Thus, it comes to what is the biggest problem with this topic and what represents the biggest challenge for Christians and Christian churches in the modern world. So, if we agree that the churches have accepted and incorporated the idea of basic human rights, the question arises of how to behave at a time when the evolution of new generations of rights is taking place in an explicitly anti-Christian and anti-clerical direction. The consequence of such their development and spread is the suppression of the rights of Christians, including their basic religious and human rights such as freedom of expression and representation of Christian values and worldviews in the public sphere. Here are a few concrete examples to illustrate the problem we are talking about.

Let's start with the problem of abortion. For Christians, it is completely clear that life begins from the moment of conception and that the fetus must have all the rights like any living being. Therefore, the permission of free abortion is absolutely unacceptable because it is murder. Not only have many countries legalized infanticide, for example, up to the third or even the sixth month of pregnancy, but the entire force of "liberal" public opinion is used to generalize the Christian worldview as some kind of violation of women's rights and as an unacceptable coercion on a female person who supposedly should freely, for herself, choose whether to keep the baby or not.

Another similar problem is the right to religious instruction and to educate children in a Christian spirit. Creationism has been banished from schools in Europe, even at the level of elementary information. Moreover, in mid-2014, the United Kingdom government banned the study of creationism in public schools in the country, and it is to be expected that other countries will follow suit. In America, however, creationism is still taught in a large number of public schools as a legitimate scientific theory alternative to evolution, because according to public opinion surveys, between 40 and 50% of the population believe that it is a relevant theory that children should be familiar with.

The issue of education is also related to the issue of homosexuality and its legal treatment. A practice that was criminalized in a large number of European countries until about thirty years ago, is now almost becoming the norm that

suppresses traditional heterosexual marriages. Through a series of laws – including amendments to family legislation – and especially through the introduction of so-called anti-discrimination laws, it has become forbidden and dangerous to express the Christian view of homosexuality as an unnatural and impermissible activity in the public sphere. Christian parents are not allowed to teach their children that such a practice is unnatural, even though the Holy Scriptures are very clear on the matter. Moreover, it goes a step further and in Scandinavia, starting from kindergarten, a new Orwellian vocabulary is being forcibly introduced that prohibits children from using the traditional names of their parents, father and mother, because this is allegedly discrimination against children who have same-sex, transgender, etc. “parents”.

This is also connected with the massive expulsion of religious, and primarily Christian, symbols from the public sphere and public institutions in the last few decades. Let us mention the ban on prayer in public schools, orders to remove crucifixes from public spaces and schools in Italy, the ban on children wearing crosses and other religious symbols in public schools in France, identical bans on public sector employees in the United Kingdom, etc. At the same time, anti-theism “contemporary art” is flourishing, often aiming precisely to mock Christian and religious symbols. Christians are powerless in such situations because courts and legislatures refuse to protect their sometimes constitutionally defined rights to express and protect what is sacred to them. There is currently a wave of bans (and legal prosecution) on Christian groups from praying in front of abortion clinics.

The last segment that should be pointed out is the spread of anti-Christian bioethical practices. It started with abortion, and today it continues with surrogacy and euthanasia. Although both practices are absolutely unacceptable from the perspective of Christians and Christian churches, we are witnessing their gradual introduction into both legislation and practice. More and more countries are decriminalizing these practices for various reasons, and then gradually institutionalizing them and introducing them as a regular tool of medical practice. Huge potential and real problems are associated with both practices. Let us just mention that in India, surrogacy has become an industry that turns over around 400 million euros annually, because poor Indian women serve as incubators for raising children of Western infertile and homosexual couples for money.

For all this reason, at the Qom conference, we insisted on informing our hosts and colleagues, mostly Muslims, that in Western countries, which gladly define themselves as post-Christian, it is precisely Christians who

are most at risk of having their rights violated. In many Western countries, Christianophobia is even stronger and more widespread among the elite than Islamophobia.

3. Human Rights After the era of World War II

If we are talking about real human rights as they developed after World War II, we must go back to the 1930s. At that time, primarily in France, a very important philosophical, theological and sociological trend developed, based on the Christian tradition, called personalism. This thought emerged as an offshoot of the tradition of Christian democracy that began to develop with the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, which was published under the name *Rerum Novarum* or *New Things* in 1891 and which to this day forms the basis of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church.

A significant influence was also exerted by the Orthodox tradition of Russian exiles gathered around the Institute of Sergei Radonezhsky, where the names of Georgy Florovsky and Sergei Bulgakov stand out in particular. But the most important name in the Russian Christian academic community abroad was Nikolai Berdyaev. Starting from both traditions, a group of French Christian thinkers developed personalism as a distinct ethical, institutional, theological and political thought during the thirties (Čulo, 2023). The names of Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain, who played a key role in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, stand out in particular.

Samuel Moyn, the author of a series of excellent books on this issue (Moyn, 2015; 2018), shows how a new discourse spread through various personalists after the war, and the discourse about crimes against humanity was introduced at Nuremberg (this was the vocabulary of François de Menton, a student of Mounier who led the French prosecution team). Maritain spread his influence first at UNESCO, creating the philosophical basis for the UN Declaration of Human Rights, then as French ambassador to the Vatican, and finally as a professor at Princeton University. In addition to Maritain, great work was done in 1948 by Charles Malik, a Roman Catholic and personalist from Lebanon, who gave the text of the Declaration its essential identity, clearly starting from Christian, theological and natural law foundations. At that time, he was also the Secretary of the Commission on Human Rights and President of the UN Economic and Social Council. He was accompanied by René Cassan, a French Jew with strong sympathies for Christian democracy.

The personalist discourse also marked the period of the creation of the

European Community, when mainly Christian-democratic parties led the reconstruction of their states and at the same time created a single European space. Even the Belgian socialist Paul Henri Spaak was an offshoot of the personalist movement. The European Convention on Human Rights was written under this influence, once created as a sharp protest against materialistic civilization, and today used precisely to promote the hedonistic aspects of contemporary global ideology. The same manuscript can be seen in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949, where we can see how Protestants also accepted the personalist discourse of dignity and rights. Moyn demonstrates this phenomenon at length by presenting the work of Gerhard Ritter, who also insisted that this entire complex only makes sense if separated from abstract discourses of equality and the atomistic legacy of the earlier mercantile civilization.

As Moyn concludes, this period saw a fundamental shift from the individual to the person (*persona*), that is, the individual as a dignified, divine person deeply rooted and connected to God's natural law and the customs and moral norms of his (Christian) community. However, from the 1960s onwards, a radical turn began that led to the fact that today this original, communitarian, moral and theological basis of human rights has been almost completely supplanted and forgotten due to new interpretations and new generations of human rights.

How developed, subtle and almost scholastic the philosophical basis of this discourse appears can be seen in the fourth chapter of Jacques Maritain's book *Man and the State*, which deals with human rights. Although in the introduction the author defends and advocates the pragmatist approach that prevailed when the Universal Declaration was adopted, the most important contribution is actually his insistence that the natural law from which rights originate should be understood completely objectively and realistically in the best Thomistic tradition, directly against any nominalist, Ockhamian tradition from which pragmatism originates. Namely, he explains that for the purposes of adopting the Declaration, it was necessary for strategic reasons to find a pragmatic minimum between humanity professing different religions, cultures and worldviews. That is, for everyone to give up the need to impose their own interpretation and foundation of human rights, in order to list and accept a common minimum of rights, binding on all. But this does not prevent him from saying in the next step that we in Western culture need a clear understanding, but also a (metaphysical) explanation of the concept, and according to him, this is found in the tradition of natural law that must

be renewed. Maritain clearly refutes Condorcet's Enlightenment ideas of universal laws that can be copied from nature, he also rejects deism, and calls for a true theory of natural law to be renewed in the footsteps of Suarez and Vittoria. The fact that there is a natural law that man can approach and slowly discover does not mean that it can be copied, easily discovered and adopted by reason. Moreover, Maritain claims that it is not perceived by reason, but by inclination, that is, intuition, and that reason clarifies, explains and builds its representation.

Natural law, he claims, is at the same time clearly ontological and ideal in nature (p. 94). The main principles are of course announced in the Decalogue, and its content is primarily moral. Every positive law can gain its legitimacy only on the basis of this natural law. Values for Maritain clearly, realistically exist in nature, and their foundation in natural law is metaphysical (p. 101).

Of course, due to the limited human cognitive apparatus, flexibility is necessary in their interpretation, construction, gradual discovery and development. These rights are inalienable, but in a *prima facie* sense. Both substantially and absolutely inalienable rights can in reality be temporarily alienated, because due to the potential harm from their unlimited exercise, the state and society have the right to partially suspend them, postpone their realization, etc.

Here, the pure communitarian basis and the dependence of human rights on the state of the community are clearly visible. At the end of the text, Maritain speaks of three types of societies: liberal-individualistic, communist and personalistic, based on natural law, for which he advocates. (p. 110). So although natural law is an immutable, ontological law, it is also relative in terms of man's awareness of that law, and progress in knowledge is achieved. That is why people actually argue about the measure of law in practice.

Here, Maritain finds it very important to reconcile old and new rights, of which he particularly singles out family rights (he says that they are older than political and positive rights), as well as labor rights. He claims that international law also draws its strength from natural law (despite advocating a pragmatic basis) and on p. 104 he lists the basic human rights as he sees them.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights remained the most important monument of this personalistic, theological foundation of human rights after World War II. However, since the 1960s, a complete change in the metaphysical, moral and substantive nature of this idea has begun. The evolution of human rights today has gone in a direction completely opposed to these personalistic sources. Western denominations, however, have continued

to unreservedly defend the universality of human rights and natural law, although today secularist, anti-Christian fundamentalism and very dangerous concepts are often pushed under this guise. Therefore, in the last part of the text, we must show how the Eastern Christian Church today deals with the necessary differentiation and dialecticization of this important concept.

4. The New Idea of Human Rights

The modern Western concept of human rights over the last thirty years, with the support of the UN and its agencies (UNESCO; UNICEF), has transformed into an extremist, radical feminist, fundamentalist environmentalist and LGBT ideology. This ideology is seen by most traditionalist societies and communities in the world as a serious threat to their demographic and civilizational survival. Finally, to the preservation of their sovereignty, since during the Hillary Clinton era, the US State Department proclaimed a doctrine according to which the violation of the rights of LGBT persons is a sufficient reason for US political and potentially military intervention. Hence, non-Western societies, threatened by these efforts, but also aware of the need to define some basic package of individual and collective rights, began the search for their own concepts of human rights. And we see this conference as a noble and commendable attempt to explore and develop such concepts.

Therefore, the last segment of this paper will be devoted to the attempt of the Russian Church to define its own teaching on dignity and human rights. Compared to the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, but also of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (For the Life of the World, published in 2024), the social teaching of the Russian Church is far less universalistically colored and more insistent on the context in which norms are defined and implemented. Hence, the attitude towards human rights is less universally set and much more related to the importance of duties and obligations. At the beginning of the document, it is clearly insisted that every culture and civilization, which differ from each other, carry its own concept of human rights and that this must be respected in any meaningful discussion about the search for some universal common minimum of rights that everyone can accept.

In his work, Professor Devrnja devotes adequate attention and space to the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church to create such a teaching. As many as twenty-five pages of text are devoted to presenting the views of Patriarch Kirill and analyzing adequate documents of the Russian Orthodox Church. In his final assessment, Devrnja acknowledges this effort as a great step forward for the Orthodox world and concludes with a rather critical note: “As

a proposal, it may contain certain weaknesses that we can locate in the insufficient theological basis of the document, in the overemphasis on morality as a unifying value model for all people and nations without their ecclesial contextualization, in the emphasis on the West-East dichotomy, in the idealization of one's own historical and social position, in the uncritical review of one's own tradition, etc." (p. 290)

My position on this teaching is largely different from Devrnja's assessment. This refers primarily to the emphasis on the role of morality and the importance of highlighting the East-West dichotomy. I will try to show this and defend it in a brief presentation of the motives and ideas that seem to me to legitimize and justify the Russian Orthodox Church's initiative based on this principle.

The teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church on human dignity and rights stems from its overall concept of social teaching, the foundations of which were laid in 2000. And then the document explained that it did not claim to be a comprehensive and rounded teaching, but rather the beginning of the construction of such a concept, which would continue through dialogue with the state, society, other religious communities and other actors present in the public sphere. This indeed happened, and special documents were published, for example, on work and the economy (2004) and this one on human dignity and rights (2008). It is also worth mentioning the short Declaration on the Rights and Dignity of Man from 2006, which was adopted by the World Russian People's Assembly under the guidance of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The general social teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church is a reflection of the time in which it was created and the goals that were set by it. After the collapse of communism, the Church, on the one hand, gained freedom of action and expression, but on the other hand, the society and the state in which it operates fell into an even greater level of decay than that brought about by communism. The specificity of the Russian situation is best illustrated by the fact that the new constitution was written in the American embassy in Moscow and that it still contains such humiliating provisions as the ban on ideologies.

What primarily defined the social framework of the 1990s was the complete breakdown of elementary morality in society. There was a drastic reduction in life expectancy, not only due to the collapse of the healthcare system, but primarily due to the alarming increase in alcoholism and drug addiction. This was accompanied by an increase in the number of abortions to the extent that Russia became by far the first country in Europe in terms of the number of

abortions per capita. In such a situation, when the educational system was also collapsing, and the media, due to the penetration of market fundamentalism, became carriers of immorality, the Russian church emphatically saw its function in the restoration and protection of the moral foundations of social life. Hence this emphasized moralism and the ubiquitous insistence that without strong moral foundations, no legal, political or security doctrine will have any foundation and strength. Therefore, even human dignity is defined as a “religious-moral” category.

The emphasis on the East-West dichotomy and the introduction of a civilizational and cultural basis for specific concepts of social teaching and especially human rights, is also a reflection of the defensive position in which the Russian people and the Russian state find themselves. The Roman Catholic Church emphasizes universality much more in its teaching and sees globalization as a process that opens the door for it to expand its influence and even for a kind of proselytism. Hence the less reserved attitude towards human rights and the advocacy of their universality even in a partially liberal form. The Russian Orthodox Church, however, incorporates into its teaching the experience of the Russian people against whom globalization and fundamentalist human rights have already been used as weapons. Hence, at the very beginning of the document, the insistence on the fact that every culture and civilization, which otherwise deeply differ from each other, carries its own concept of human rights and that this must be respected as the starting point for any meaningful discussion in the search for a common minimum of human rights protection. Krasnov draws attention to the fact that the document explicitly states that human rights are not a divine product but a creation of the secular world.

The document itself is divided into five parts and Devrnja quite adequately presents its basic elements. What is noticeable is the almost scholastic description of unacceptable lifestyles (life according to the laws of the flesh, life in sin, abortion, suicide, debauchery, the destruction of the family, etc.), and the insistence on the concept of responsibility as closely related to rights and freedoms. It is argued that freedom of choice is not an absolute and final value. It has meaning only if it goes with freedom from sin. Human rights are not an absolute value but an excellent instrument if they are brought into harmony with Christian values. Therefore, there is an awareness that they can also develop in an anti-Christian direction and that it is therefore necessary to establish a Christian and adequate moral framework.

The third section of the text is very important and courageous, in which it is

clearly stated that for Christians those types of human rights, especially when legally established, are unacceptable, which directly go against the values of Christianity and the family: sexual promiscuity and the cult of violence that can be legally imposed are particularly emphasized, similar to euthanasia, embryo manipulation or abortion.

In section 3.4. a political moment is introduced when it is claimed that human rights that go against patriotism and love for the homeland and neighbor are unacceptable. The Russian Orthodox Church explicitly defends the right to the uniqueness of the culture and interests of each people. This is actually about the right of states to defend themselves from external instrumentalization of individual and minority human rights in the direction of destabilizing sovereign countries according to the model used in the case of the bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, but also a number of Islamic countries.

It is interesting that it explicitly leaves the right of each culture to determine itself on the issue of the death penalty, but it is said that it is the duty of the church to pray for the life and soul of the convicted. This is followed by detailed considerations of the relationship to freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of creativity (with the emphasis that desecration of sacred places must not pass under the guise of such freedom), the right to education, civil and political freedoms, socioeconomic rights (where the task is to prevent confrontational stratification in society on a material basis) and collective rights (where the traditional family with a husband and wife, who must have the right to educate their children and pass on their religious and national cultural heritage to them, is again at the center).

Finally, it is pointed out that today human rights and dignity are violated not only by state authorities, but also by a whole range of new non-governmental, social and economic factors such as transnational structures, economic corporations, pseudo-religious groups (sects), terrorist and other criminal groups. Then, a list of about ten basic tasks that the Russian Orthodox Church sees ahead of it in the field of protecting human dignity and rights is presented. This includes, for example, the fight against “gambling addiction” (addiction to games, computers, etc.) and defines the task of legal expertise over legislative proposals that touch on this area, as well as the task of monitoring the implementation of such laws and the struggle for better development of church-state relations. The document ends by advocating for the introduction of the practice of the church's ombudsman, where it would appear as a legal and social protector of those who are unable to protect their social and

religious rights on their own, as well as by announcing openness to dialogue with other confessions and other social groups on these issues. The church does not deny anyone the right to participate in a public dialogue on the problem of determining and protecting rights, but it also demands it for itself.

Devrnja is right when he claims that despite the advocacy for the harmonization of individual and collective rights, the emphasis is still placed on the binding framework of collective rights and duties (p. 289). The reason for this, however, is the constant exposure to attacks both from within and without by ideologies and actors who deny any right to collective identity and their own tradition and order, trying by all means to return Russia to the 1990s, a period when all the foundations of society, state, economy and legal system were destroyed under the guise of inalienable individual rights. Today, Russia is struggling to restore some elementary foundations of order and collective system that were completely destroyed during Yeltsin's rule. Hence the strong emphasis of the Church on the need to restore a framework in which only individual rights have meaning and can be protected. We should not forget the still valid dictum that a sovereign state is still the best guarantor and guardian of the greatest number of individual rights.

This is precisely where we come to one of the biggest problems that has arisen with the evolution of, above all, Western Christian denominations. The Orthodox churches are either quite uninterested in social action and the cultural wars that are largely waged both in their countries and against the peoples in which they operate, or they are very weak and suppressed. The Protestant churches have unfortunately gone so far in their modernization and acceptance of deeply anti-Christian practices (contraception, gay marriage, women priests, all forms of fashionable rights) that it is quite relevant to ask the question of what is really left of Christianity among them. Finally, the most politically influential denomination, the Roman Catholic Church, although it still has serious reservations about modern tendencies (especially when it comes to bioethical problems), is terribly burdened with the struggle for its place in the world of wider social and political action, and in certain segments (such as the issue of immigration and the rights of non-European immigrants) it takes positions that are directly opposed to traditionalists and Christians in European countries.

All of this raises the question of to what extent these churches are willing and able, above all, to defend the rights of Christians to the basic survival of their faith, environment, culture, and state. Are the fashionable so-called individual rights of the third and fourth generations becoming more important

to these churches than the most fundamental rights of their flock, to profess Christianity and lead a truly Christian life?

This concept arose largely as a reaction to the anarchist concept of human rights that has dominated the Western world in recent decades. It is precisely the promotion of children's rights at the expense of parental rights that directly undermines discipline and a sense of responsibility, encouraging anarchy and rebellion as a fundamental value. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Russia, in the last amendment to the Constitution, restored the obligation to listen to elders. In the Western history of the development of the concept of human rights, this subversive anti-Christian image began to develop in the late 1960s, promoting unnatural and so-called minority identities, completely suppressing the original personalist concept of human rights as developed after World War II with the UN Universal Declaration of 1948.

The adoption of the Universal Declaration as a religiously inspired document is the result of the era of totalitarian regimes that deprived man of dignity and rights and reduced him to biomass. In response, under the influence of the teachings of the personalist philosopher Jacques Maritain, the ideas of human dignity and man as the image of God, a person founded in community, the collective and above all the natural family, were brought back to the center, as stated in Article 16 of the Declaration.

However, after 2000, a trend of restoring the personalist concept slowly began in academic circles. Mary Ann Glendon, who published one of the first such studies in 2001 (Glandon, 2001), was appointed in 2019 to head a special State Department Commission that advocated a return to the original view in its document.

The Trump administration is expected to continue promoting such tendencies, since on the first day of taking office it abolished federal funding for abortion and eliminated all talk about transgender and gender. Let us recall that in 2022 the US Supreme Court, for which he secured a conservative majority with his appointments, overturned the *Roe v. Wade* ruling after half a century, which outlawed abortion in the US in 1973.

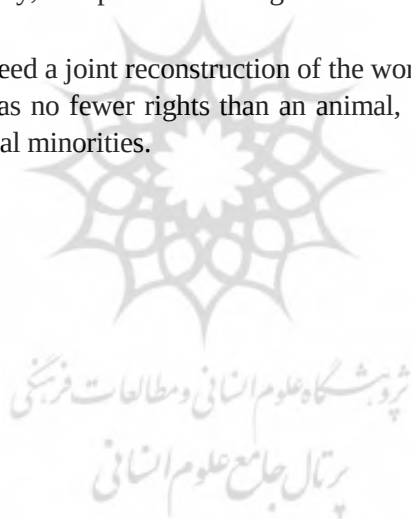
It is also important for us to recall that the original conception that Jacques Maritain developed was largely inspired by Berdyaev and other Russian Orthodox personalist thinkers. Thus, a bridge can be restored to non-anarchist, spiritually and even theologically based ideas of human rights about man connected to the community and God. This is a model that was also accepted by Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and other cultures after World War II, and therefore it is possible to reopen a dialogue about the renewal of such an idea

in all these cultures that are threatened by anarchist and unnatural, anti-human and atheistic conceptions of human rights.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it seems that traditionalists from all religions and civilizations can quite easily agree on some basic postulates and a list of basic rights, which, in addition to basic humanitarian rights, would certainly include the protection of the right to a natural family, the right to raise children in their own tradition, the protection of traditional morality and the rights of believers, the freedom of scientific research limited by human dignity, the protection of children on the Internet, the right to preserve one's own culture, religion and nation, as well as a list of rights from bioethics such as the right to life in the sense of preventing euthanasia, the right to parenthood, in the sense of suppressing surrogacy, the prevention of genetic manipulation and cloning, etc.

In any case, we need a joint reconstruction of the world in which a person, a parent, a believer has no fewer rights than an animal, a tree and members of non-traditional sexual minorities.



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