

## Ecumenism and The Harmony of Religions: Outlooks for The Millennium

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As a professional philosopher and a university teacher of the Catholic religion, but also as a person who is convinced in the exceptional importance of the mission of the Unification Movement and of its creator, inspirer and leader the Reverend Moon, in my report I analyse ecumenism as an idea, dialog and place on the road of achievement of unity not only of the Christians, but also of a universal harmony of religions.

In that context I find a number of aspects of the strategic line of ecumenical dialogue which is carried today by the Catholic Church, and by Pope John-Paul II in person, to be very close and similar to the beliefs and the approaches of the participants in the Unification Movement, who have rigorously committed themselves to such a great cause as the overcoming of the contradictions and the conflicts between the various religions and the establishments of true harmony between them which is absolutely possible.

I specifically emphasize on the intransient importance of the historic documents that were adopted by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) for the purpose of acceleration of the ecumenical movement, as well as on the ideas of the great British philosopher and historian Arnold Toynbee, who even before the Second Vatican Council pointed out the possibilities and the ways of harmonisation of the relationships among religions and of strengthening of the unification tendencies within themselves. Attention is paid to Toynbee's idea of establishment of a single and universal world religion, an idea that later on was abandoned by him.

The report definitely endorses the spirit of harmony among the

religions, which is so much typical of the Unification Movement.

As a professional philosopher and a university teacher who is actively involved in the area of philosophy of religion, and also as member of the catholic religion minority in Orthodox Bulgaria I have always been attracted by the almost boundless theme of the variety of religious beliefs and concepts of the modern world; whereas, much to the contrary of the very spirit and the designation of every true religion, such variety has quite frequently resulted and still results in acute contradictions, conflicts, tension and even wars, regretfully.

Being quite worried and embarrassed by such phenomena of the spiritual life of mankind I have asked myself: if undoubtedly God is one, then is it possible to harmonise the relationships between those religions which are infused with rich traditions, whether world-wide or local, and whether very ancient or completely new. I am convinced that the pluralism of religions and the mutual religious tolerance are an excellent prerequisite for a tolerant and very meaningful debate on the outlooks of a powerful unification tendency and unification movement, the purpose of which is to accelerate the original natural strive to unity of those, who believe and trust in God, and to reduce to a minimum level the religion-based conflicts.

The huge and incessant effort of the numerous rigorous participants in the Unification movement, who are expired by a supreme and noble goal, are directed to contribute to this fully possible and desirable development in the new century. I have already been part of several projects, carried out by organisations and institutes of the Unification movement and have always been fascinated by the sincerity, the finesse and the tenderness with which so many people devote themselves to such a humanitarian and great cause, as the cause of harmony of religions is. The cause of the Unification movement has become my personal cause, since I, a scientist who belongs to the Catholic Church, can see how close and similar the goals and the intentions of the Unification movement and of the Catholic Church are. The latter, for a long time now, by means of the ecumenical dialogue and movement is very insistent in encouraging the unification tendencies not only of the entire Christian community, but also in its relation to the non-Christian religions. I may even say that it is a duty of the true Catholic today to treat the mission of the Unification movement with due respect and, as much as he can, take part in their realisation.

So, the harmony between religions is a fully achievable goal of the Unification movement and is based on the proclaimed and proven by the Unification thought by means of its Theory of the original image

of the uniform as sole God, who has created the world, in order to establish a Kingdom of Heaven, which is a world of love, truth, goodness and beauty (see *Essentials of Unification Thought*, Tokyo, 1992, p.40). This is in marvelous harmony with the great Christian idea of ecumenism. We could say the ecumenism, if understood not only as a strive towards the restoration of the unity of the Christian world, but also as a strong tendency to religious tolerance and unification of all people who believe in God, is one of the routes to achievement of harmony of religions, which is the beloved dream and the most cherished aspiration of the Unification movement.

Both in the past and at present, religion has played an exceptional role in the life of Europe, which is a true centre and fruit of the Christian Culture and values. In this context ecumenism is an outstanding phenomena, which acquires better expressed outlines in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the very idea of ecumenism can be encountered yet in the Old Testament, where "ecumena orbis" means populated land, a world ruled by God; a church, which is spread all over the Earth.

In newer times ecumenism originally appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century among Protestants, who were the most separated Christian religion. At that time the idea of ecumenism suggested that the church be established exactly on the grounds of a mutual union of friendship among the peoples. Later on, and especially after the First World War a number of ecumenical meetings of university people and protest students were held in Sweden and in Switzerland, respectively in Stockholm and Lausanne. At the same time the ecumenical movement of the Protestants, which was already gathering pace, was joined by Orthodox people, too. The Russian Patriarch Tihon was the first one who showed himself opened and benevolent to the ecumenical movement. At that time 90 % of the participants in it were Protestants and 10 % were Orthodox. In 1948 in Amsterdam was established the Ecumenic council of churches, which embraces mostly the western Christian world. After the coming of Khrushchev to power in the Soviet Union in 1956 the ecumenical movement was joined by a number of Orthodox churches not only from Europe, but from the so-called third world as well. Geneva was established as the constant centre of the ecumenical movement. The Catholic Church is a specific problem in the history of the ecumenical movement and this church was absent from it at the beginning. It joined the ecumenical movement after when Pope Benedict XV expressed an opinion in support of the Protestant ecumenism and declared that the world war is a brother-killing war, and that Europe had become

an arena of barbarity. The inclusion of the Catholics to the ecumenical movement was accelerated after the decisive condemnation of nazism and communism by Pope Pius XI, which happened at the end of the 30's of this century. After the Second World War, when the fathers of contemporary Europe Adenauer, Schuman and Gasperi performed their epochal feat, it was energetically supported by Pope Pius XII, and thus the role of the Catholics and their church in Europe grew tremendously, which in spiritual aspect means upsurge of the ecumenical movement.

This is the place to also underline the exceptional role of Pope John XXIII, who lived and worked for 10 years as a nuncio of the Pope to Bulgaria. He was the initiator of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) which adopted the celebrated Decree of Ecumenism and other documents in support of this movement. In his encyclical "Pacem in Terris" (Peace on the Earth) Pope John XXIII endorsed the salvation ecumenical dialogue, which helped a lot in the overcoming of the resentment between Catholics and Protestants. It is known that the image of the Roman Pope was very bad in the eyes of the Protestants, while for the Catholics Luther was as mean as the devil.

The activity of Pope John XXIII and of his successor Pope Paul VI after 1963 contributed for a very substantial change in the relationships between the Christian confessions, which was equaled by some people even to the Copernican Revolution. A change, at which the Christians from various confessions look at each other with benevolence, and which alters the psychological background of the relationships among Catholics, Protestant and Orthodox people. The very history of Christianity was modified a 14-volume history of Christianity is being prepared in Paris now, where all confessions are represented benevolently and where the effort to understand the other side may be clearly seen.

As I am now elaborating on the history of Christianity, let me underline that this history was truly dramatic in the years between 1945 and 1989. The example with the almost complete destruction of the Russian Christianity is crucial in 1939 Russia was left with as little as one thousand Orthodox parishes against one hundred thousand before the revolution. The pursuit and destruction of Christianity is unmatched and unique in the whole history. Promptly after the war about 20,000 parishes were restored in Russia, however the "reformer" Khrushchev abolished two-thirds of these after coming to power.

Generally speaking, the principal policy of the communist countries after 1945 was to leave the churches, but keep them heavily

dependent on the authorities. The permit for preaching activities in the USSR was issued by the KGB, and almost every priest was a KGB agent. The Orthodox churches were the one that were most strongly dependent from the governments, but the situation, for example, of the Lutherans in Estonia, or the Catholics in Hungary, was not any better. The communist authority was extraordinary hostile to the Catholics in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary maybe the only exception was the attitude to Catholics and their church in Poland, where Cardinal Vishinsky was an unbending warrior of the freedom of beliefs and became a real symbol, who was feared even by the authorities.

Ecumenism was present even at those hard times in the communist countries, and paradoxically, it was expressed in the strive for preservation of cultural identity. There were ecumenical groups in all confessions, which searched the authentic Christianity and denounced the domination of the state. For example, in Russia existed the so-called Church of the catacombs and one of its most outstanding leaders Father Alexander Men always underlined that Christianity was enduring the separation as an essential sin and crushing of the will of Christ. He was convinced that one day the separation would be overcome in the spirit of fraternal Christian love. At those difficult times similar ideas were supported, for example, by the illegal Catholic Church of the Czech Republic.

Today we have two tendencies of the common ecumenical movement of these countries. The source of the first is the fear which still exists and can be expressed in the following way: we are weak, we must protect ourselves by hiding in some kind of gethos. The second, and the stronger tendency incorporates the idea that Christianity is not only a dead letter, but also an appeal for service to the people and help them in the so-obtained ideological and moral vacuum. There are intimidations of expressions of nationalism with all of the three Christian confessions; and also of ugly incidents of the so-called religious fundamentalism. Such unfortunate stereotypes exist in Poland, where they say the Polish is a Catholic and solely Catholic. But what can we say then about the Lutheran Polish people. This is not a Christian approach. Because the fundamental ecumenism is not only a strive for overcoming of the differences among the Christians, it is also a process of opening of Christianity as a world-wide religion to the other religions, as well. For example, at present it is especially important that dialogues, and not conflicts and confrontation, decisively dominate the relationships between Christianity and Islam. This is also a very important dimension of

the spiritual aspect of the making of contemporary Europe and of a unified world

Are any of the contemporary world religions able to give a new spiritual image to the civilisation of the Earth? By logic, it must either prevail over the remaining ones, or imply their dignities in itself. A characteristic feature of the world-wide religions is evolution and synthesis. Christianity parted from Judaism, but the soil of its origination was Judaic sectarianism. Islam synthesised the ideas and the achievements of the preceding religions, and it is not by accident that the people who "were able to write", i.e. Judaists and Christians are given respect in the Koran. Maybe because it emerged after Buddhism and Christianity, Islam had the opportunity to absorb the cultural and the historic achievements of the paleo-Christian world, while its eclecticism allowed it to widen the territory of its conquests beyond the Christian world.

In cultural and political aspect we have, a small though, example with the Byzantine empire, which survived in the course of 10 centuries notwithstanding the conglomerate of languages and ethnic structures. However, the strength of Islam is to assimilate enormous masses of humans in spite of the various trends within it (and from here it is characterised as an aggressive religion). Contrary to Catholicism, which fell apart exactly at the time of the national state, the Islam preserved its priority over the secular. What also makes it strong is the relation between the Trust and the Reason, with the prevailing of the moral postulate.

There is one symptomatic document regarding the non-Christians which was published in 1970 by the Vatican Secretariat: "Orientation for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims". The appeal of the document is "to expose the injustice, which the West, brought up in the spirit of Christianity, had caused to the Muslims by re-evaluation of the Christian notions of Muslim fatalism, fanaticism and so on". The emphasis on the unity of the belief in God is not accidental, as this is the core of the worldwide religions, and the strive for tolerance between themselves. Because the future model of the world is dependent on today's and tomorrow's condition of the world religions, and not on the worldwide empires, the lifetime of which is incomparably shorter.

We can expect Islam to expand its influence in the future by its most piercing weapon: fundamentalism. Its activity will be equivalent to the activity of the super-powers, which are egoistically closing themselves from the needs of the human civilization and are trying to extract easy dividends from the world disorder. From the point of

view of the end result, during the inevitable collision it is without importance if the world will be destroyed or self-destructed as a consequence of the extensive model of the present civilization.

It is very important one to realise that there is a place for religion as universal spiritual system both today and tomorrow and that without it the civilization is doomed. The prosperity of Islam, where it not only shapes a giant nation, but also conquers an enormous spiritual area, including in the USA and Europe, indicates possibility of a future synthesis, however the aggressive component must be indispensably removed.

When speaking of the ecumenical movement as the major way for achievement of harmony among religions and when we, with full reason, outline the particular importance of the Second Vatican Council, which adopted a number of extremely important documents, among which is the outstanding Decree of Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), where under the "ecumenical movement" are understood the activities and the undertakings which are emerged and prepared according to the needs of the Church and of the expediency of times in order to encourage the unity of the Christians, we should not forget the contribution of some celebrated thinkers, who yet before the Second Vatican Council outlined the way of the cherished harmony of religions. One of these thinkers is the great English philosopher and historian Arnold Toynbee, whose ideas, when compared to the fundamental positions of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, are disclosing a very symptomatic thing. I will elaborate in more details on the ideas of Toynbee because of their modern appeal in the context of the mission of the Unification movement of harmonisation of religions.

In Toynbee's deeply respected philosophic and historical concept the problems of religion and its role for the progress of society occupy a prominent role. But there is something in excess: Toynbee perceives ecumenism not solely as an expression of the tendency of unification of Christianity, but it is also simultaneously a theory and a strive for the formation of a universal religion and of an ecumenical civilisation on such a solid base. Thus Toynbee's philosophy of religion, and also his overall philosophy of history grows beyond the limited, though, boundaries of the ecumenical movement, understood mostly as a sizable initiative of the Catholic Church for regaining of the unity of the Christians, where the chance that they meet united the two thousandth anniversary of Jesus Christ is not a small one.

In the face of such a realistic possibility one can explain the growing popularity of the ecumenical idea and in this sense the ideas and the

standpoints of respected thinkers such as Toynbee are able to substantially help the acceleration of the unification process. Moreover, it was Toynbee who some ten years before the Second Vatican Council, which successfully ended by adopting of a number of reformist documents, among which are the Decree of Ecumenism, the Declaration of the relationships of the Church with the non-Christian religions and the Pastoral Constitution "The Church in the Modern World", who deployed a philosophic program for the creation of a "universal religious ideological system" as a synthesis of the already existing present four "supreme religions": Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, as well of the creation of an "ecumenical church".

In the foundation of his thesis Toynbee outlined that without a positive reply to God's appeal to any human to act in this world as a partner to His holy labour, history could not be re-thought in its integrity, neither can the activity of each individual. (For more details see Toynbee A. J. *A study of history*. Abridgment by Somervell D.C. London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1956-1956, Vol. 1-2., volume 2, page 513). At that time the 50's of the century, Toynbee was a pronounced defender of the idea for the establishment of a worldwide "universal state", on the basis of which the unification of the four different "supreme religions" must be done in a single "militant church" (see the same source, PP. 118-119). I leave aside the utopicity of the idea of a worldwide state, but I accept that the other reasons of Toynbee for the establishment of a universal religion are quite justified. For example, he believes that neither of the four "supreme religions" can individually satisfy all of the spiritual necessities of man, but expresses the needs of a particular aspect of the human conscience: Hinduism — with thinking, Christianity — with feeling, Islam — with perceptions, and Buddhism with intuition. While the "heavenly music", as Toynbee says, which could satisfy each need of the soul, can be heard on the Earth, but it can never sound solo, it may sound only as a symphony. The various supreme religions ought to learn to play this role together with the others in order to be able to fulfill their common task: to allow each psychological type enter in communication with God, with the ultimate reality (See Toynbee A. J. *A study in history*. London, Oxford Univ. Press, Vol. 1-12, volume 7, p. 734).

If we compare these thoughts of Toynbee with some of the basic texts of the documents of the Second Vatican Council we can easily note a striking similarity in the evaluations of the specific features of each one of the worldwide religions. Here is a longer, but a very

typical quote of these documents: "Since ancient times until the present day the various people have a certain sensitivity to that hidden force which is present in the course of the matters and the events of human life, and which at some times comes to know the Supreme God or the Father. Sensitivity and knowledge, which mutually infiltrate and fill their life with a deep religious feeling.

Religions, however, being related with the progress of culture, make efforts to respond to these questions with refined terms and in a more elevated language. Thus, in Hinduism people attempt to come to know the heavenly mystery and express it with an abundance of myths and penetrating philosophic experiments. With Hinduism, according to its various schools, the radical deficiency of this material world is recognised and the road by which the people who have a pious and trusting heart may reach a condition of full liberation or come to a supreme insight by means of their efforts and with help that comes from above, is pointed. In a similar way the remaining religions, which may be found throughout the world, make efforts to overcome by various ways the worries of the human heart by suggesting of ways, i.e. of doctrines, lifestyle instructions and sacred rituals (See *Dialogue of Salvation*, "Nov Den" publishing house, Sofia, 1995, pp. 59-60).

Both Toynbee and the creators of the programs of the Second Vatican Council are very positive in the matter of the mutual respect among the world-wide religions, for the mutual recognition of their equivalent rights, which is an essential point of the authentic ecumenism. "The Catholic Church — as we read in the releases of the Second Vatican Council — does not denounce anything which is true and holy in these religions. With due respect it appreciates these styles of action and living, those instructions and those studies, which, although in many points being different from its beliefs and suggestions, do sometimes reflect some of the rays of the Truth which lights on all the people" (See the same source, p 60).

The issue of the essence of the authentic ecumenism has another aspect, which is added to the pluralism and the equality of religions. This aspect is disclosed by Toynbee in his fundamental work "A study of History", where he justifies his idea of the leading role of Christianity and more specifically, of its Western version, in the process of the creation of a universal world-wide religion. Writes Toynbee: "The best and the most valuable instruments of the orchestra of the religions must be those, who play the music of love and from the point of view of the order as established by these criteria, Christianity must be placed at the beginning of the list, since the

Christian feeling is the dominating ability" (See Toynbee, Op.cit., volume 7, p. 735).

This attitude of Toynbee's is in full harmony with the subsequent position, as expressed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, where it is said that the Catholic Church "declares and must declare, that Christ, who is "way, and truth, and life" (John, 14,6) is the one, with who people must find the integrity of the religious life and by whom God reconciled the world with Himself (See "The Dialogue of Salvation", P. 60). Today, 35 years of the Council, we have all reasons to affirm that the road to unity of mankind passes precisely through the growing role of the Christian religion and of the moral and the spiritual values which are based on it.

Toynbee postulates that in spite of the desperate attempts of the eastern component of history, all major processes of development of the contemporary world, which ultimately lead to the establishment of a uniform ecumenical civilization, are determined by the very that occidental spiritual evolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Here is an example how this outstanding philosopher and historian summarises the fundamental matters of the contents of the American revolution: "The impulse, which underlines the American revolution, is the spirit of Christianity, the sound of God's voice, which is heard not only throughout Christianity, but throughout all historic religions, which have preached their gospel world-wide and have reached almost the whole of mankind" (See Toynbee A.J., *America and the World Revolution and other lectures*. New York, London, Oxford University Press, 1962. p. 77).

By emphasising the enormous importance of the American revolution, which is also a spiritual one, that proclaimed the era of the revolution throughout the European Continent, then in Latin America and finally in Asia and Africa, Toynbee stressed on its universality and on its open opposition to the nationalists ideology, which is the principal rival of the universal ecumenical religious ideology. According to Toynbee the religious progress at the earlier stages of the historical development was very soon replaced by a stagnation or by an explicitly opposite movement. It is already one millennium and a half that a new supreme religion has not appeared and on its turn Christianity has been losing positions and to a considerable extent is being pushed out by post-Christian ideologies like nationalism, individualism and communism. However, for Toynbee this setback is a temporary phenomenon and since the two post-Christian dangerous ideologies which are nationalism and communism, have again subordinated the individual soul to the

slavery of human society, the supreme religions, though not in the near future, having changed their traditional forms, shall be able to regain their lost domination.

The restoration of the due impact of religions in life of man and of mankind, for which it is the ecumenical movement that strives for, can be effected, according to Toynbee by complying to several concrete practical requirements. On the first place he puts the strengthening of love and co-operation between religions, which in practice is done by means of the ecumenical movements of the confessions. The second recommendation of Toynbee to the religious movements is that they should face the critical problems of reality. And his third advice is that the religions get rid of the insignificant layers as the astronomy of Aristotle, the immaculate conception, the resurrection, as well as other Christian and Buddhist dogmas.

We could hardly disagree with Toynbee when he expresses his firm concept, that in order to continue to efficiently act, religions ought to make more flexible, then have been so far, their dogmatic constructions and ecclesiastical organisations. What is needed is adaptation to the scientific discoveries and the social experience, while an ecclesiastical structure which is based on the Rome hierarchy and has an authoritarian nature ought to be replaced by the religious "Community of brothers", which should adopt its decisions not by majority of votes, but with an informal common consensus.

These views and recommendations of Toynbee were expressed in 1966 (for more details see Toynbee A.J., *Change and Habit*. London, Oxford University Press, 1966), i.e. that was already after the Second Vatican Council and its reformist decisions. We may assume, that from one side Toynbee had accepted many of the essential elements of these decisions and most of all the line of the Council for the preservation of the freedom of choice of religions and the basic denouncement of the idea of the total mechanical unification of the world-wide religions in a uniform religious ideological system — the Second Vatican Council supports the opinion that the eventual merging of the existing religions, of the philosophic and of the ideological teachings may lead to the "fall of mankind in a state of dogmatic spiritual paralyses" (see the same source, page 194). However from the other side it seems that in 1966 Toynbee was not satisfied with the decisions adopted by the Second Vatican Council regarding the changes of the structure of the ecclesiastical organisation, because of their narrowness and inconsistency, and of the rigorous preservation of those dogmatic principles, which Toynbee had already opposed.

I certainly do not wish to stress on Toynbee's displeasure with the insufficiency, according to some people, of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council I would rather underline the coincidence between the understandings of Toynbee and the new style of the Church, which was imposed by the Council. As the very Pope John-Paul II stresses, the Council has denounced the defensive style and the condemnation formulae by adopting of a truly ecumenical style, an openness without remorse to a dialogue, which has to be a "dialogue of salvation", as per the marvelous expression of Pope Paul VI. According to Pope John-Paul II the originality of the Second Vatican Council is in the very circumstance that the dialogue is not confined solely to the Christian confession, and is opened for the non-Christian religions, for the world of culture and civilization, and for the world of non-believers. Because "truth does not accept to be closed in some boundaries, it is destined for all and for everyone. And when such truth is made from charity and benefaction, then such truth becomes universally appropriate" (For more details see John-Paul II. *Entrez dans L'Espérance*, Paris, 1994, p.242).

It is this universal appropriateness of the values which are preached by the world-wide religions, it is this powerful tendency for universalisation of the truths of the separate religions, that may lead to the natural, and not to the enforced and mechanical creation of a uniform religious concept for the unique and over-filled with love to all humans God. This is what in my opinion Toynbee had in mind, when he gave as an example the activities of the Jesuits in proliferation of Christianity in China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. "The approach of the Jesuits to the proliferation of Christianity is so multi-fasceted and promising, and it is so close to our contemporary times, that any of our discussions of the inter-action of the Asian peoples with the west would be incomplete if we do not take into account what was commenced by the Jesuits in China and in India. The valuable aspects of the experience of the Jesuits is that they presented Christianity to the Hindus and to the Chinese not as the local religion of the West but rather as a universal religion, which face the entire mankind, and by respectively dressing it in Indian and Chinese intellectual and literature outfit in order not to disturb the feelings of the Asians with the "occidental ornaments" (See Toynbee A.J., *The World and the West*, London, Oxford University Press, 1953, p.64).

The ecumenical background of the philosophic and the historical concept of Toynbee, which is a deep and original religious interpretation of history, and the ecumenical essence of the decisions

of the Second Vatican Council in our days find their obvious realisation notwithstanding the resistance of the most backward Russian-Orthodox ecclesiastical circles. The recent visit of the Universal Patriarch Vartolomei I to Pope John-Paul II and their common service in the "Saint Peter's" Cathedral is a strong evidence of such realisation. Similar outstanding and symptomatic phenomena prove the scale and the power of the elevation of humans to the level of the intransient and universal Christian values, which is equivalent to a bold defense and freedom. Because the ideal of the Christian is the eternal human, which would mean the free human — since freedom is nothing else than obedience to the Truth of God and of man.

Undoubtedly the prosperity of man, which was marked in the years that followed Toynbee and the Second Vatican Council, notwithstanding the devastations and the outburst of violence, notwithstanding the attempts to cease the evangelisation process or to hinder its noble expansion, is due to a large extent to the line of dialogue, which was adopted by the Church with the due decisiveness, as well as the wisdom and the penetration of Toynbee whose bequeath to ourselves was: "The brotherhood of men is an ideal, which will never become reality until they do not act on the basis of the salvation belief in the common Paternity of God, and the unconditional justice will not occur unless the human social problems are resolved solely by means of their elevation from the social to the religious level, and this is a truth in our 20<sup>th</sup> century, and so it has been at all times and places where the transformation of humanoids in Men has been taking place" (See Toynbee A.J., *A Study of History*, London, Oxford University Press, Vol. 1-12, volume 9, page 594).

And this transformation of the humanoid individuals, who have not yet become Men, is impossible without the holy deed of Religion. And this is the bequeath and the suggestion of Toynbee to the coming generations!

Thirty seven years have passed from the Second Vatican Council. Not only the Church, but also the peoples have changed a lot since that time. In 1989 collapsed communism the "empire of evil". What is the aftermath of those 35 years? How can we now evaluate the importance of the Second Vatican Council?

In his book "Let Us Step Over the Threshold of Hope" which is in fact an aggregate of deeply penetrating answers of Pope John-Paul II to the intelligently placed questions of the Italian journalist Vittorio Messori, the Pope also committed himself to an opinion what is left from the council today and how can it be compared to the Nikea

Council held in 325 and with the First Vatican Council in 1869. Underlying the fact that the Second Vatican Council was not summoned to oppose of a partial schism, which was indispensable in the first millennium, the Pope outlined that the Council had one major objective: to unite a bipolar process, on the one side and to liberate Christianity of the accumulated divisions during the millennium which is passing away, and from the other side, to launch as strongly as it can, the evangelistic mission of the Church in the eve of the third millennium. By revealing the renewing nature of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John-Paul II stressed on the fact that it is exactly after the Council that we can speak not of regression in the life of the Church, neither of quantitative changes, but most of all for novelties which are of deeply qualitative nature. While the older Catholic organisations were mostly committed to social issues and were oriented towards the trans-formation of society, and to the principles of social justice, whereas they were frequently so much distracted with their discussions with Marxism, that some of them lost their Catholic identity, nowadays the new movements are oriented to the renewal of the very personality of the human. This shift of the emphasis from the society to the individual indicates such a marvelous transition from the sociological to the anthropological and attributes a sophisticated philosophic character to the changes in the Church, which were inspired by the Second Vatican Council. And again expressing himself as a philosopher and a theologian at the same time, Pope John-Paul II stressed withstands not only his personal anthropological creed, but also his tendency to anthropologisation in the best sense of the word of the activity of the Church. Here is a very typical quotation from his book: "Man is the main actor at all social and historical transformations, but in order to be able to create in this sense he must prepare himself in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. This re-orientation is rather promising for the Church. "The Catholic Church is strong today also with its philosophic and anthropological and theological concept, which was worked out at the Second Vatican Council and was set out in the preliminary part of the Pastoral Constitution. The Church is strong with the new statute of man as suggested in the definitions in that new fundamental document. This new statute of man is related both with the emphasising on the importance of earthy life and on the achievement of well-being here, on the Earth, in compliance with the principles of moral justice and the moral of the Christian, with the necessity of deep respect and of everyday defense of the family, which is defined as the "sanctuary of life", and with the denunciation of

communism in ideological, ethical and practical plan as the greatest danger for contemporary man and for mankind as a whole. This must be necessarily stressed, because quite often the social doctrine of Catholicism, which was bequeathed to us by the Second Vatican Council, definitely committed to the idea of social justice, is unfairly and speculatively represented as almost a justification of communism, as far as the very idea of social justice is unilaterally and primitively associated with the communist idea.

While emphasising the strong accent upon the earthy life by new concept of man, we must at the same time point out the fact that according to the documentation of the Council it would be an error to go to the other extreme, i.e. that the Christians commence to think that super-natural life is useless since on the Earth they are doing fully human tasks. In this sense the Council stressed also on the existing crisis of the religious practice, on the necessity of a struggle in order that we avoid the coming of a day when the Church becomes an institution which has lost its identity and dedicated itself mostly to the well-being of man on the Earth. By the words of a number of prominent participants in the debates of the Second Vatican Council, the Church should not allow the broad proliferation of the concept that religion justifies its existence mostly by philanthropy. In its apostle and pastoral activity the Church ought to avoid two real intimidations: the danger of naturalistic vitalism and the danger of abstract super-natural distraction.

The most secure way to avoid those two dangers is that the Church and its officials underline the fundamental meaning of suffering and sinfulness as the eternal and the true problems of man, and the persistent defense of the standpoint that all earthy deeds in the aftermath are marked by the heavenly designation of man. The notion of suffering and sin, and of the secret of death in the philosophic and anthropological concept of the Second Vatican Council are related to this very heavenly designation of man by means of a constant appeal to the example left to us by the His Son Jesus Christ. "As long as in Him the human nature was not just absorbed, but fully expressed — says the Pastoral Constitution — yet by this fact the said nature has been drawn in us with unmatched dignity. Because by his reincarnation the Son of God adhered to every human being. He worked together with the hands of people, He thought together with man's reason, He acted together with his will, He loved with the heart of a human". And in order to announce his kind message, Jesus chose to lead the life of a craftsman at his time and at his vicinity. When viewed from this point, Jesus Christ is

presented as a program and model of a global removal of the alienation, as a teacher on the road of the personal, but widened to collective horizons, salvation. (See 11973, pp. 241-242).

If we try to summarise the concept of man as suggested by the Pastoral Constitution, which was also prompted by the challenges of atheism, the largest one of which is the "universal absence of any wish of afterlife", by the words of an outstanding theologian, we could say that this concept, even with the elements of concreteness and sociality, is in fact a concept of the authentic man, i.e. of the "eternal man" our thoughts must also be directed to the world beyond, which by its dignities prevails on the real history and continues to be the transcendental source of the unchanging knowledge, the safeguard of the moral and of the social models which preserve their place (see *Op. Cit.*, p. 244). And this durability of theirs is caused on our relation to God, which is now strongly up-dated thanks to the "mediation" of Jesus and to the significant "growth of Man in Christ".

As a philosopher of the Catholic confession, but also a person who is deeply convinced in the extraordinary importance of the mission of the Unification movement, and of its founder, inspirer and leader the Reverend Moon, I would like to finish my discourse with a very typical quote and the encyclic of Pope John-Paul II "let All Be Together" (*Ut unum sint*), which was proclaimed on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1995 and was entirely dedicated to the ecumenical dialogue, to its fruits and to the way yet to be gone, which leads to the unity and harmony of religions. In his short appeal, which is wreath to that wonderful encyclic, the Holy Father with wisdom and penetration says: "I recall the words with which St. Kiprian commented "Padre Nostro", the prayer of each Christian: "God does not accept the sacrifice of him, who lives in misunderstanding. Even more, he orders him to step away from the altar, and make peace with his brother. It is only in this way that our prayers will be inspired for peace and God will acknowledge them. The biggest sacrifice that we can bring to God is our peace, our brotherly understanding; our sacrifice are the people, linked through the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (De Dominica Oratione, 23).

In the dawn of the new millennium can we afford not to plea to God, with renewed zeal and with a more mature conscience, for the blessing that all of us be predisposed for this sacrifice to the unity". (See John-Paul II, *Let All Be Together (Ut unum sint)*, Sofia, 1996, p. 114-115).