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## THE MORALITY OF PUBLIC LIFE AS A CONDITION OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

### THE POSITION OF PATRIARCH KIRILL (GUNDYAYEV) OF MOSCOW AT THE ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION IN ST. PETERSBURG IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH\*

**Abstract.** The article is an analysis of Patriarch Kirill's speech at the assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in St. Petersburg. It primarily discusses the demand for moral consensus, which is a condition for just laws and true peace. The article starts with a presentation of the specific political and religious context affecting the interpretation of both the IPU assembly in St. Petersburg and Patriarch Kirill's speech. Subsequently, the author presents the Patriarch's criticism of the liberal system of values and the conditions of genuine moral consensus; he also discusses the role of religion in reaching this consensus.

**Keywords:** Patriarch Kirill of Moscow; Russian Orthodox Church; Inter-Parliamentary Union; morality; public life.

## INTRODUCTION

On 15–18 October 2017, the 137<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. This organization sets itself the goal of supporting dialogue between member states' MPs. It is a global forum for the exchange of ideas between people actively

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participating in political life and responsible for shaping the legislation in their countries as well as for the directions in which international relations develop. The main thematic area of IPU's work is the defence and promotion of human rights, which are considered to be key issues for the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and for the true development of humankind.<sup>1</sup>

The assembly in St. Petersburg was also devoted to various aspects of the defence of human rights; in the context of the problems currently experienced in international relations, the focus was placed on inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue as a means of promoting cultural pluralism and peace, particularly in the face of challenges associated with religion-motivated terrorism and ethnic conflicts exacerbated in many regions of the world.<sup>2</sup> The final declaration of the assembly mentioned religion and ethnicity, alongside other domains of human life and particular people's individual characteristics (such as culture, race, colour, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, or political affiliation) as those dimensions of human life in which individuals and communities should enjoy full freedom.<sup>3</sup> The same document conveys an intention to undertake activities aimed at the protection of minority groups in order to build open, multicultural societies. With this aim in view, its authors even propose that a special global conference be held, devoted to inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue, with participants including heads of states, speakers of parliaments, and leaders of the world's religions.

In this situation, it seems understandable that one of the guests of the assembly in St. Petersburg was Patriarch Kirill (Gundyayev) of Moscow. On 16 October 2017, he delivered a speech to the participants in the assembly, devoted mainly to the need for moral principles in politics and legislation. The present paper is an attempt to analyse this speech, particularly the key recommendation of moral consensus articulated in it, which Patriarch Kirill considered a precondition of just laws and true peace in international relations. The point of departure for the reflections presented here is the specific

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union*, <http://archive.ipu.org/strct-e/statutes-new.htm#1> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "St. Petersburg Declaration on Promoting Cultural Pluralism and Peace through Interfaith and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue," <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/137/SPB-declaration.pdf> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>3</sup> "We underscored the fact that all individuals must be allowed the full enjoyment of their equal and inalienable rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights and humanitarian law treaties and standards, and that they should not be subject to discrimination on any grounds including culture, race, colour, language, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or political affiliation." Ibid.

political and religious context, influencing the interpretation of the IPU assembly in St. Petersburg and shedding light on Patriarch Kirill's address. This will be followed by a presentation of Patriarch Kirill's criticism of the liberal system of values, the conditions of genuine moral consensus, and the role of religion in reaching that consensus.

### 1. THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Patriarch Kirill's address in St. Petersburg deserves analysis for several reasons. First of all, with the rise of political tension in the relations between Russian Federation and Western countries following Russian involvement in the Ukrainian conflict, the Russian Orthodox Church declared its intention to work for peace in Ukraine and Russian-Ukrainian agreement, thus taking a position on the conflict which presents difficulties from the perspective of the subject of the assembly in St. Petersburg.<sup>4</sup> Also the Patriarch's words concerning the civil war in Syria are ambivalent. On the one hand, he clearly emphasizes, also during the UIP assembly, that the Russian Orthodox Church joined humanitarian aid for Syria, not only for Christians but also for members of other communities. On the other hand, he seems to some extent to justify the military activities of the Russian army, whose victims in Aleppo included the civilian population.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g., "Рождественское интервью Святейшего Патриарха Кирилла телеканалу 'Россия'" [Rozhdestvenskoye interv'yu Svyateyshego Patriarkha Kirilla telekanalu 'Rossiya'], <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5095439.html> (accessed: 20.01.2018). In his St. Petersburg address, Patriarch Kirill strongly emphasizes that in the civil conflict in Ukraine the Russian Orthodox Church intends to commit itself to establishing peace, supporting national reconciliation as well as the abandonment of hostility and violence. On the other hand, he repudiates similar efforts made by other churches, believing that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is the only force capable of supporting the peaceful solution of the conflict. Finally, he strongly accuses Ukrainian authorities of discrimination against this Orthodox Church, or even of fighting against it. (cf. "Выступление Святейшего Патриарха Кирилла на 137-й Ассамблее Межпарламентского союза" [Vystupleniye Svyateyshego Patriarkha Kirilla na 137-y Assambleye Mezhparyamentskogo soyuza], <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5037851.html> (accessed: 20.01.2018) (further referred to as "Выступление" [Vystupleniye]). In his earlier speeches he blames fueling the conflict on "schismatics and uniates"—that is, on the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches not subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate ("non-canonical") and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (cf. "Святейший Патриарх Кирилл призвал предстоятелей поместных Церквей возвысить голос в защиту православных христиан востока Украины" [Svyateyshiy Patriarkh Kirill prizval predstoyateley pomestnykh Tserkvey vozvysit' golos v zashchitu pravoslavnykh khristian vostoka Ukrainy], <https://mospat.ru/ru/2014/08/14/news106782> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>5</sup> "Выступление" [Vystupleniye].

Moreover, in the outlook-related debates in Russia itself, which come down to distinguishing the country as one that has “spiritual foundations” (*духовные скрепы* [*dukhovnyye skrepy*]) from the morally collapsing West, the position of the Russian Orthodox Church on moral principles in public life and the admissible extent of individual liberties is unambiguous.<sup>6</sup> In this context, Patriarch Kirill’s stance voiced in his address to members of parliament becomes particularly significant, as it makes it possible to determine what the contemporary Russian Orthodox Church understands by morality and human rights and what kind of actions it demands in this domain from representatives of state authorities and other participants in political life.

## 2. CRITICISM OF THE WESTERN LIBERAL SYSTEM OF VALUES

Patriarch Kirill believes that in the contemporary world, torn apart by various conflicts, seeking moral consensus is a necessity.<sup>7</sup> In St. Petersburg the patriarch does not define morality (*мораль, нравственность* [*moral', npravstvennost'*]), but in a different speech, devoted to the same issues, he explains how he understands this concept: morality is the whole body of norms of conduct and relations with other people adopted in a particular social organism. This means moral norms are the outcome of people’s orientation towards humane (*гуманные* [*gumannyye*]), good, dignified, noble, and just relations—that is, to moral values.<sup>8</sup>

For the patriarch, moral consensus is also the only possible basis and the universal condition of the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and nations in the contemporary world. Without moral consensus, it is impossible to establish just peace. All attempts to declare this state of affairs, particularly after the end of the Cold War, proved to be empty words. In this context,

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<sup>6</sup> Патриарх Кирилл, “Впервые в истории законы на Западе пошли против нравственной природы человека” [Patriarkh Kirill: Vpervyye v istorii zakony na Zapade poshli protiv npravstvennoy prirody cheloveka], <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/98785.html> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>7</sup> “Выступление” [Vystupleniye].

<sup>8</sup> “Доклад Святейшего Патриарха Кирилла на открытии XXVI Международных Рождественских образовательных чтений” [Doklad Svyateyshego Patriarkha Kirilla na otkrytii XXVI Mezhdunarodnykh Rozhdestvenskikh obrazovatel'nykh chteniy], <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5136032.html> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

Patriarch Kirill recalls the prophecy voiced by Francis Fukuyama,<sup>9</sup> in whose opinion the fall of the communist bloc meant the end of history and at the same time the beginning of lasting peace ensuring the world's stable and predictable development, with international relations founded on universal, unquestioned values that Fukuyama himself and many other representatives of Western intellectual circles consider liberal values to be.<sup>10</sup>

Catchy and widely propagated though it was, the “end of history” prophecy turned out to be totally wrong. Patriarch Kirill's position on this issue is one frequently found in contemporary Russian conservative thought. The mistake of the political utopia proposed by Fukuyama and other similar thinkers was the arbitrary decision that Western liberal values were indeed universal and that, consequently, propagating them and imposing them on non-Western societies and cultures may result in the moral consensus which is the precondition of lasting peace and stable development.<sup>11</sup> In reality, this kind of perspective, absolutizing the Western model of liberal democracy and the related conception of the absolute primacy of the individual in social life and of free market in economic life, has failed. As Patriarch Kirill observes, “the last decade of the 20th century and the ending second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have shown that the values which have been asserted as basic, universal and the only possible source of humanity's happiness have not [stood] the test of time.”<sup>12</sup> They have not guaranteed peace, stability, or true justice to the world.

Patriarch Kirill's position is consistent with the criticism—widespread in Russia—of the West's cultural expansion, particularly in axiological terms. Not without reason, this criticism points out that the liberal values which the contemporary West promotes or imposes on the world, using its political and economic advantage, are by no means universal or unquestionable.<sup>13</sup> Even in

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<sup>9</sup> See: Francis FUKUYAMA, *Koniec historii*, trans. Tomasz Bieroń and Marek Wichrowski (Cracow: Znak, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> “Выступление” [Vystupleniye].

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Александр Г. ДУГИН, *Международные отношения* (Москва: Академический проект, 2014) [A.G. DUGIN, *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya* (Moskva: Akademicheskij proyek, 2014)], 308.

<sup>12</sup> “Последнее десятилетие XX века и подходящее к концу второе десятилетие века XXI показали, что те ценности, которые утверждались в качестве базисных, универсальных, в качестве единственно возможного источника счастья человечества, не выдержали проверки временем”. “Выступление” [Vystupleniye], English text cited from: “Patriarch Kirill's address to 137<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union,” <https://mospat.ru/en/2017/10/16/news151396/> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Александр Г. ДУГИН, *Война континентов. Современный мир в геополитической системе координат* (Москва: Академический проект, 2015) [A.G. DUGIN, *Voyna kontinentov. Sovremennuyu mir v geopoliticheskoy sisteme koordinat* (Moskva: Akademicheskij proyek, 2015)], 16.

the Western culture some of them are neither undisputed nor equally strong across national cultures and national legal systems. This refers particularly to values such as the primacy of the individual over the community, the expansion of the scope of human rights to include further “rights” consistent with the ideological evolution of Western liberal democracies, the absolutization of the rules of free market by putting it over true human good, or the marginalization of religion by removing it from the sphere of socio-political and economic life and restricting it to a person’s individual life. This makes it more problematic to impose these values as universal on other societies and cultures, including those in which social life is based on the primacy of the community and in which the religious factor still plays a great role—not only in individual human life but also in the social political, and economic domains. Some representatives of Russian conservatism consider this axiological conflict, manifesting itself in Western values being imposed as universal, to be the cause of the most difficult phenomena afflicting the contemporary world, such as ethnic or religious conflicts and, above all, terrorism.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. GENUINE MORAL CONSENSUS

In this context, the question of what genuine moral consensus is supposed to be like becomes urgent—a consensus that would not consist in imposing one’s values and rules of conduct as universal and thus deprecating other ethical systems. According to Patriarch Kirill, moral consensus leading to justice and peace must include a debate on values fundamental for the development of the world and man.<sup>15</sup>

From the Christian point of view, justice must not be limited merely to literal adherence to man-made legal norms. Patriarch Kirill refers to the Old Greek concept of Δικαιοσύνη [*Dikaiosynē*], which means justice and righteousness and thus attests to the strict, organic link between justice and morality. What is more, true justice is impossible between without relying on God’s Truth.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Александр Г. Дугин, *Русская война* (Москва: Алгоритм 2015 [A.G. DUGIN, *Russkaya voyna* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2015), 114–119.

<sup>15</sup> “Выступление” [Vystupleniye].

<sup>16</sup> In the Patriarch’s speech the concept of Δικαιοσύνη [*Dikaiosynē*] is presented as complementing the insufficient Western category of *iustitia* by adding the necessary moral dimension: “У греков и римлян это понятие олицетворяла богиня Фемида или Юстиция соответственно. И сейчас

It follows from this that moral consensus must have an anthropological dimension. It should be based on the truth about human nature itself, which is so important to religion. On the one hand, this means that society needs shared moral values, necessary for a person to live in peace and happiness.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the anchoring of these values in the truth about man, whose ultimate source is God, implies that there is no human freedom—as a true value—without responsibility before God.<sup>18</sup>

Patriarch Kirill stresses that, despite the diversity of cultures and traditions, all people have a moral sense manifesting itself in the voice of conscience. This common moral sense constitutes the basis of consensus as a universal property of human nature. Thus, whereas attempts to artificially create “genuine universal values” as negotiable and therefore changeable man-made principles and then to impose them on others have proved to be ineffective, the discovery of the universal nature of the moral sense—of conscience, which was made part of human nature by its Creator—can be a kind of anchorage for moral consensus. Therefore, Patriarch Kirill firmly asserts: “The value of human personality is universal not because an individual is an abstraction and there are norms of negotiated rational morality. No. In the ethical teaching of different religious traditions we see a coincidence, an appeal to human conscience, which we as Christians call God’s voice in our hearts.”<sup>19</sup>

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справедливость, английское «justice», воспринимается нередко исключительно как буквальное следование нормативно-правовым нормам, в том числе в рамках суда. Но существует также древнегреческое понятие *Δικαιοσύνη* [...], которое также означает «справедливость», «праведность». И это очень важная трактовка, которая еще и еще раз свидетельствует об органической связи между справедливостью и нравственностью, праведностью” [“For the Greek[s] and Romans this notion was personified in goddesses [Themis] and Justicia, respectively. And today, justice in English is often seen exclusively as literary observance of standard legal norms to be observed also in court. However, there is also an Old Greek notion of *Δικαιοσύνη*, which also means ‘justice,’ ‘righteousness.’ And it is a very important interpretation pointing again and again to the organic relationship between justice and morality, [and] righteousness”]. As regards truth, the patriarch refers to the etymology of the Russian (or, more accurately, Slavic) term *spravedlivost* (justice): “Этимология русского слова «справедливость» также отсылает нас к понятию божественной Правды” [“The etymology of the Russian word *spravedliv[ost]* also refers to the notion of divine Truth”]. English version cited from: <https://mospat.ru/en/2017/10/16/news151396/>. Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. “Доклад Святейшего Патриарха Кирилла на VI Рождественских парламентских встречах” [Doklad Svyateyshego Patriarkha Kirilla na VI Rozhdestvenskikh parlamentskikh vstrechakh], <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5136936.html> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>18</sup> “Выступление” [Vystupleniye].

<sup>19</sup> “Ценность человеческой личности универсальна не потому, что человек—абстракция и существуют нормы договорной рациональной морали. Нет. В нравственном учении

## 4. THE ROLE OF RELIGION

As Patriarch Kirill observes, from the Christian point of view, it is necessary to assume that all legislation, regardless of the changing circumstances, should be based on the moral principles that the Creator himself grafted in human nature. It is precisely for the sake of the consistency of laws made by human institutions with human nature and calling that breaking the link between man-made law and Divine law must not be accepted.<sup>20</sup>

The belief that moral consensus must be based on the truth about man revealed by God the Creator rather than on negotiable ideologically determined values is, first of all, the point of departure for the criticism of some tendencies present in the contemporary—particularly Western—world from the religious perspective. According to the patriarch, unless they are based on human nature, law and the values associated with it are not only useless but also destructive, since they may protect human vices and errors and eventually lead to the moral degradation of society. In this context, the patriarch refers to the Soviet attempt to create a “new man,” motivated by Marxist ideology and removing traditional moral norms in favour of the ideas of progress and the improvement of humanity. Similar ideologically driven attempts continue, however. According to Patriarch Kirill, detaching law and the proposed values from morality based on truth about man results in that which was traditionally considered to be a violation of moral principles being regarded as the norm.<sup>21</sup> In this way, ideology supplants truth, trying to change man himself.

Yet, religion has an answer to this kind of phenomena, which are negative and ultimately destructive for humanity. In this context, the patriarch speaks of the need to invoke human conscience. On the one hand, acknowledging the primacy of conscience over arbitrarily established values protects social life from becoming ideologized and politicized; on the other, it prevents radical solutions, thus leading to dialogue, including inter-religious dialogue. And anyway, the diversity of religions, which is the most conspicuous on the dogmatic level, becomes less marked on the most elementary moral level,

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различных религиозных традиций мы видим совпадение, апелляцию к совести человека, которую мы, христиане, называем голосом Божиим в наших сердцах”; *ibid.* English text cited from: <https://mospat.ru/en/2017/10/16/news151396/> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. “Доклад Святейшего Патриарха Кирилла на VI Рождественских парламентских встречах” [Doklad Svyateyshego Patriarkha Kirilla na VI Rozhdestvenskikh parlamentar-skikh vstrechakh].

where the necessary conditions of peaceful interpersonal coexistence are discussed. In this context, the patriarch invokes Christ's instruction: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31), also referred to as the "golden rule" of morality.<sup>22</sup> This profound concurrence of various religions can serve as a stable basis for mankind's genuine moral consensus.

According to Patriarch Kirill, seeking moral consensus, and thereby ensuring a lasting and just peace for mankind, cannot take place without religion. He notes that an increase in the role of traditional religions in the social and cultural space can be observed in many countries. This increase stems, in the first place, from the very nature of religion, which is a fundamental phenomenon in human life, related to its every aspect as well as giving it direction and meaning. Moreover, the failure of areligious attempts at building peace and justice is precisely what enhances many people's striving to preserve the moral foundation of social life that is linked to religion.<sup>23</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Patriarch Kirill strongly stresses that recognizing the truth about man and the deepest and the most universal moral principles is not limited to the plane of individual human life. It is also reflected in the life of society and the state as well as in international relations. The actual value of man-made laws is measured by the extent to which they are rooted in human nature. In this sense, the speech at the IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg can be regarded as the patriarch's opposition to the attempt to separate public life, including international politics, from morality and as a call for respect for conscience in all aspects of human activity. What is more, the patriarch's address emanates a belief that genuine morality in individual and social life must be based on the truth about the human being, which means that, ultimately, it must be rooted in God.

Patriarch Kirill's speech, however, is not free from certain difficulties, whose source lies not so much in the words uttered as in their political and religious context. His opposition to the socio-cultural changes taking place in the world is marked by anti-Occidentalism, characteristic of a large part of contemporary Russian public discourse. A particularly conspicuous element of this anti-Western tendency is the attention drawn to the axiological expansion

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<sup>22</sup> "Выступление" [Vystupleniye].

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

of the West, manifesting itself in regarding the system of values characteristic of liberal democracy as the best one possible, or even as universal, and in attempts to impose it on other countries and nations. Even though these statements stem from a strong belief in the impossibility of constructing a system of values in isolation from God's truth, the fact remains that the presented line of thinking is consistent with the religious and political discourse applied by the authorities of the Russian Federation,<sup>24</sup> aimed at presenting Russia's current conflict with the West mainly as a conflict over fundamental issues, in which traditional values and the related norms of individual and social life are at stake.

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<sup>24</sup> Vladimir Putin addressed this issue in his speech opening the UIP Assembly, pointing out that there must not be uniform, template-based models of development in the world because each country has the natural and unquestionable right to determine its own fate. Attempts to interfere in the life of sovereign states without taking their national specificity into account lead to nothing but chaos. "Открытие Ассамблеи Межпарламентского союза" [Otkrytiye Assamblei Mezhparyamentskogo soyuza], <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/speeches/55838> (accessed: 20.01.2018).

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