

FINAL DISCUSSION

CO-PRESIDENTS:

METROPOLITAN DAMASKINOS
OF SWITZERLAND AND
DR. GERHART RIEGNER

Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland: I recall from my memory, dear brothers, a prophetic saying which a German philosopher of religion, Rudolf Otto, included in his book *Das Heilige* many years ago:

A gigantic confrontation is preparing itself.... It will be the most solemn moment in the history of humanity when it will no longer be political systems or economic interests or social groups that rise up against each other, but the religions of humanity, and when ... the struggle finally acquires an elevated style, in which at last spirit meets with spirit, ideal with ideal, experience of life with experience of life, in which everyone must say without concealment whatever he has that is most profound, that is genuine, and whether he has anything.

This moment, this time seems to be coming into being today. We certainly have what is profound and genuine to convey. This was proven in our Third Academic Meeting as we discussed the topics of our agenda: "Scripture and Hermeneutics," "Memory and Responsibility," "Christian Orthodoxy and Judaism in the Modern World" and "Faithfulness to the Roots and Commitment toward the Future." The opportunity was given to us to know each other better and to remove misunderstandings of the past with the help of dialogue. It is certainly not possible to convey whatever we have that is profound and genuine without this cleansing of the historical past from misunderstandings,

and without going beyond simple tolerance, which is a temporary situation of spirit, as it was said by Goethe and which is a message for us: "Tolerance must be a temporary situation of the human spirit and must lead to total recognition of the Other." Simple tolerance means insult. I think our meeting included this reciprocal interchange of our traditions, in a certain manner incarnate in our communion of faith and love which we lived these days. With these few words, I wish to open the discussion on the noteworthiness of our meeting.

Prof. Vlassios Phidas: You personally recognize, Metropolitan Damaskinos, how many difficulties there were in organizing this meeting. In addition, you recognize that the spirit which was maintained here during all the sessions was one of a new reality, which can lead to so many programs which you declared for the need of drawing nearer, and collaboration not for the notion of passive tolerance but for active encounter. I have the impression that one of the aims of the discussion is to discuss whether we will meet again. Therefore my proposal is to examine during this session also the topic of our next meeting, whether it will take place very soon or after a fixed time, and how can it be prepared and what necessary contribution will be needed from each side. In this atmosphere, there is no better topic for discussion than that of confronting the longing to meet again.

Metropolitan Damaskinos: I want to thank very much Prof. Phidas, whom we all have to thank because he really contributed substantially in the preparation of this meeting, as my advisor. I wish to inform you that the chairmanship has already had an exchange of certain views on the topic which have been included in the Communiqué. We have reached the conclusion that it is good that we meet at least every three years. Of course this means that there will be continued collaboration and preliminary consultations during the period from the one to the other meeting. On the one hand the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and on the other the World Jewish Congress with Dr. Riegner and Prof. Halpérin, will be in continuous contact with each other to determine the further course in collaboration with their own advisers and specialists on the topic which will be developed next time. We haven't exchanged views on the topic, and I ask that you express your thoughts on this during this present meeting.

Bishop Irineu of Rimnic: Since it is the first time that I am participating in such a dialogue between Orthodoxy and Judaism, I would like to mention the importance of the mission of each participant to continue in it. Our mission includes recognizing and understanding one another and therefore providing a foundation on which we can reflect and look into the future with hope. However, this process requires repentance, or change of behavior and attitude toward one another, by

accepting each other, seeing that we are all God's people. Let us hope we can continue in this manner.

Prof. Jean Halpérin: Dear friends, I have a few feelings to share with you at this late hour. First of all, when I woke up this morning, I asked myself since when have we been working together? I realize that we met for the first time three evenings ago, but I don't know how and why I had the impression that many days and weeks have gone by since we started talking together, because so many ideas, feelings and stirrings have arisen in our hearts since we started looking, listening and talking to each other.

The second thought I would like to share with you is a kind of very modest postscript to the outstanding paper we heard from our friend Prof. Stylianopoulos. I was thinking since then about the fact that the key word of this encounter has been and will remain *emunah* in Hebrew, which means "faith," about which Prof. Stylianopoulos has written and said everything that had to be said on the subject. But I think we should go one step further with the help of the Hebrew semantics, because *emunah* means both faith and also faithfulness. It also means belief and in fact means trust, which would seem to indicate that if we take our faithfulness and our beliefs seriously, it should lead each of us to understand that we must trust each other and trust also the efforts which we are called upon to accomplish in order to justify this trust. But as you know, the Hebrew language is very rich and full of associations, and the same letters and the same root of the word *emunah* are to be found in another Hebrew word signifying art or craft, which is called *omanut*, which means that from the basis of faith and trust we are led to art, in a kind of craftsmanship. In other words, a dialogue and the joint efforts which we are undertaking here call for very refined tools and methods, and we should approach this task with, if we can, the sensibility and requirements of an artist.

Thirdly, I would like to echo what our friend Bishop Irineu from Romania has said. You may know that the Talmud, in the very first tractate Berakhot, starts by asking questions about what time in the day we are allowed to start praying. The Talmud teaches us that we can start putting the *tefillin* on our arm and on our forehead and start saying *Shema Israel* when light comes, when night is overtaken by dawn, at the very beginning of the day. One of my friends and teachers explained to me that this particular requirement of the Talmud means that we are only allowed to start praying to God and say *Shema Israel* when we are in a position of seeing the other and recognizing in him the face of a human being. This is a beginning where we can start acting responsibly, as soon as we can identify our partner. There is no other way for starting what we like to consider as a life devoted to the Lord.

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Finally, yesterday, I was also reminded of a teaching of Hillel whom I had quoted the day before yesterday. He gives us very good advice which, I think, we can take with us also for the future encounters. Never judge your friend, your neighbor, until you have been literally in his place. Now, we all know that it is almost impossible to put oneself exactly, identically, in the place of anyone else, because there are so many peculiarities which cannot just be taken for granted. So, we must be careful when we dialogue to remember that we should not too easily pass judgment on the other until we can put ourselves in his mind-set.

Prof. Ivan Dimitrov: I would like to address two topics. The first is with reference to the practical themes, the wish which was expressed and with which, I believe, all of us agree, that there should be meetings more often, every three years. I hope that not so many years will lapse between the present and the next meeting as has occurred in the past.

The second is with reference to a more general evaluation of our work, and at the same time a wish. I will mention, as a self-criticism, the fact that I didn't know personally the representative of the Jewish community of Bulgaria, my own country, before this present meeting. This leads me to the thought that we should reinforce the contacts and collaboration on a local level. Certainly the academic meetings are most useful, but also the contacts on the local level must be our concern. And this not only in countries, as in Russia where — as Prof. Borovoy stressed repeatedly — there are clearly efforts, for a certain number of patriotic reasons, supposedly, to turn against Judaism or foreigners, but in other countries, where the relations between the two communities have existed always in harmony. Therefore, collaboration on a local level is useful and necessary, and this is one of the results which I take with me from our academic meeting.

Rev. Prof. Theodore Stylianopoulos: I would like to express my deepest gratitude both to Metropolitan Damaskinos and to Dr. Riegner for your efforts in this ongoing dialogue which is a gradual great reversal of our relationship as Orthodox and Jewish communities toward the ideal that was expressed by citing Rudolf Otto at the beginning of this session. I, too, agree about prayer as referred earlier by two participants. It seems to me that without offending sensibilities on either side, we could use the prayer book *par excellence* for both traditions, namely the Book of Psalms, so that at each session we might begin reading a Psalm chosen by the presidium. In terms of the choice of topics whenever they occur, it seems to me that the prudent and effective way to make that choice and to have the dialogue move forward, must include consideration of three factors.

The first factor is the participants themselves and a certain continuity among the persons, at least in terms of a nucleus. For surely, new

people should also enter into the dialogue. The second factor is how we make our papers, our discussions, available to other scholars of both communities. We want to communicate, as most important in the next step, to scholars of our mutual faiths who are not here but would read the publications of the proceedings of the meetings.

And the third factor, most importantly, we must also consider our people on both sides. For we recognize the sensitivities of the people, and the kind of signals we send to them, either positive or negative, certainly can have an important impact upon them. So the choice of topic must take into account where our people are. I say this so that we do not forget, in our love and enthusiasm for each other, not to proceed too far ahead of where other scholars and leaders may be and certainly where our people may be.

Having said that, I would like to propose concretely several topics to the presidency in their thinking of what the next meeting should be, however they may formulate it. And I would highly recommend that our next meeting should deal with more specific topics. One topic could be the interrelationship between the Jewish and Christian covenants. The key word here would be "covenant."

A second topic might be the issue of polemics, the roots and nature and implications of polemics in our historical relationships and present times. Several participants spoke about the difference between self-criticism and using the critique of the prophets or of New Testament figures against people with whom we do not particularly identify, as the original presenters of those critiques did identify.

A third topic could be the dynamics of the ethical and religious elements in Orthodoxy and Judaism.

A fourth topic could be the encounter of Orthodoxy and Judaism with modernity. And here I do not mean particularly the modern world, but the intellectual currents and especially the secularization that militates against both our faiths.

Another topic would be prayer and spirituality as a very positive one for both traditions.

And the same time, at some point we need to discuss the topic of Israel in Jewish and Orthodox Christian relations. I hope these suggestions might be helpful to the presidency as they consider the choice of topic and the particular formulation of it.

Metropolitan Damaskinos: I would like to thank Prof. Stylianopoulos for his concrete proposals, which really will be useful for the presidency to determine the next theme. I underline the most important one of the proposed themes without undervaluing the others: The encounter of Judaism and of Christianity with modernity. I would like to inform you as well — at least it was made clear during our present meeting and

during the discussions themselves — that the core, from the view of Orthodox participation, is you the participants in our academic meeting in collaboration with the Orthodox Center. The core, from the side of Judaism, is fixed and we will be in continuous collaboration, as we have been until now. Certainly, the proceedings of this meeting must circulate as extensively as possible. With respect to this specific topic, the presidency has adopted a proposal which Dr. Riegner will mention.

Dr. Gerhart M. Riegner: Yes, we have a proposal from the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, which involves all the Christian groups in Israel which are engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue, to publish our proceedings in their very fine publication *Immanuel*. We have accepted this proposal with gratefulness. We will certainly include all the major presentations which have been made here. We will see how we can summarize the discussions. This is a much more complicated and difficult issue. But in principle you should rest assured that this very important consultation, or academic meeting (it is really more than an academic meeting in some ways), will be presented in book form, and we hope this will come out within a year, so that we can all have this also as preparatory material for the next meeting.

Metropolitan Damaskinos: I want to thank Dr. Riegner very much. We accepted this undoubtedly most important proposal for the publication of the presentations and the proceedings, which has to be done as quickly as possible.

Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon: I should be brief since, incredibly, as I was listening to Prof. Stylianopoulos just now, I found that what he said was almost identical with the notes I have written down. But there are slight differences which I ask your permission to put before you. One is purely a practical suggestion, which is that working groups be set up on specific topics. Three years is quite a long time. One loses impetus and one comes back to a meeting in three years time, perhaps without the full working out which may have been taking place before. So I was going to suggest that working groups be set up on specific topics so that we can be well prepared.

My list of topics is very close indeed to that of Prof. Stylianopoulos. But I will nevertheless read it as it was. The first item was not on his list and that is: supersessionist theology. I think this has application on both the Orthodox and Jewish sides where traditionally we have types of theology which claim exclusive correctness in the knowledge of God. The second topic is that of modernism, which has already been well explained. The third is that of the use and abuse of memory. The fourth is informational, i.e., how are we to present correct information on Jews and Judaism or on Orthodoxy and Orthodox history and the history of Jews in Orthodox lands. How are we to present this information cor-

rectly. And my fifth topic may sound the same as one of his, but I am not sure whether it is, and it is the topic of Israel in the Middle East. But I certainly had in mind political dimensions of this topic because I feel to treat it merely as a theological issue would be inadequate to come to grips with the reality of the situation as it is on the ground. And I would hope that the conscientious preparation of these topics by specialist working groups would ultimately feed not only into a meeting in three years time, but into the educational systems within the churches and the Jewish world.

Metropolitan Damaskinos: The various proposals are gathered for the presidency, which will decide, in collaboration with you, the choice of theme of the next meeting and the necessity to create working groups for its preparation.

Archpriest Alexander Kozha: I agree with Rabbi Norman Solomon that the duration of three years will create a gap which we will not be in a position to complement with something else. The creation of working groups could be a possibility, but it is difficult to do something like this on a regular basis, since we are all busy with certain organizations or certain functions. Perhaps we should pursue another way. During these three years, we should dedicate each year to a certain theme. Perhaps we should separate the three years in different levels, to determine certain sub-themes and at the end of every year to make the necessary publications, which will also constitute the preparation for the meeting after three years.

In this way, we will be in a position to begin the meeting having in our hands some concrete results. It is difficult in such a short meeting to achieve something important. Our meeting has more of a human character than a theological one. At the end of the year we would be able to publish or send to the participants of the meetings the results of the researchers.

In addition, I would like to say that I support one of the topics which Prof. Stylianopoulos mentioned with respect to the dynamism of the religious and national elements. The problem appears in our country, Russia, since it looks to me that Judaism as a religion has not reached in our country its fullest rebirth. During a long period, there were no educational institutions or books, and for this reason when we try to organize something or speak of the dialogue, we often face national problems.

When we discussed the topic "Memory and Responsibility," we did not separate the meanings of individual memory and the responsibility of collective memory. We see that in our religions the confrontation is different. The meaning of the people is broader in Judaism, while in Orthodoxy the meaning is personal. For this reason we should be prepared to confront these problems, for example in Russia, when such a

dialogue will be organized.

This vagueness also exists in the Russian Christian world. Recently I participated in a meeting of representatives of the Christian democratic parties of Russia. In this meeting, the participants demanded that the Russian Church give the people the transfiguration of Christ. I told them that they are 2000 years late! The mystery of communion of the Christian with the death and the resurrection of Christ exists almost for 2000 years. Now, during the period of the Great Fast, the faithful one has the possibility to die with Christ, to resurrect with him and to be transfigured. We can still see that among the Christian democrats of our country, there is a wrong understanding of the Church and religion.

Therefore, when we speak of the dialogue between Judaism and Orthodoxy we should be prepared to confront the problems which appear on the margin of the dialogue. In this way, when we prepare the themes of the dialogue we should clearly separate the political discussions.

Rabbi A. James Rudin: I wish to second the themes of Prof. Stylianopoulos and perhaps refine one of them a little bit more. Our experience in interreligious contacts in the United States and other parts of Europe have shown that a discussion of the city of Jerusalem in the Orthodox and in the Jewish religious traditions provides a robust and a very positive means of addressing the entire issue that he raised. I would suggest, as the presidency discuss its future themes, focusing on Jerusalem will allow us a richness of the religious and spiritual traditions of both of our faiths.

As a second topic, based on some experience, I would suggest that the presidency should consider self-studies of Jewish and Orthodox teaching materials — how do we teach about each other — following Rabbi Norman Solomon's point. I suspect that for both of our traditions, Orthodox and Jewish, the errors of omission about one another are perhaps as serious and grievous as errors of commission. It is an important task. What do we teach our children and our young people about not ourselves, but about one another? So I hope that the presidency would take into consideration self-studies. That is where Orthodox Christians look and study their own teaching materials vis-à-vis Jews and Judaism, and Jewish educators and Jewish scholars look at Jewish teaching materials about the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox tradition and Orthodox Christians.

And finally, I would hope that somewhere along the way we would also, following Prof. Werblowsky's call, look at liturgies. Not so much necessarily for change, we understand that, but liturgy is a powerful and majestic means of transmitting religious and spiritual ideals. What do we find in our liturgies vis-à-vis one another?

Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Peristerion: I don't know whether

an explanation of certain topics, such as faith, the meaning of covenant or the spirit of secularization which dominates the world, will give the necessary help to both religions and our peoples. The first consideration is whether there should not be minorities further than a certain point, and consequently these minorities have to little by little assimilate. The second, which is not understood, is the national and religious identity and physiognomy of a race or of a state. We live, therefore, with the means of a certain international forum for working toward an equality of races and of the faithful. And here I am referring mainly to the European nations. Consequently, since time is running on and the decisions of these various nations in the international forum react negatively upon the minorities and upon the states which project a national and religious identity, I consider it more practical to give attention to the ways and the methods of collaboration of both religions, locally as well as on the international level. The Slavonic-speaking and Greek-speaking Orthodoxy have two distinctive characteristic points: a) states with a national and religious identity, b) the diaspora. The same also holds for Israel. These two positive elements of Judaism and Orthodoxy must be developed and reinforced before it is too late. Europe already accepts on its territory, parallel with Christianity and Judaism, the existence of Islam to which it intends to concede the same rights, with the result of the existence of conflicts. These problems must be confronted on a local and international level after a careful preparation, in such a way that we can appear on the international forum with formulated ideas in order to support our national and religious identity, but also the identity of our diasporas.

Mr. Mikhail A. Tchlenov: I would like to add to what Prof. Dimitrov said with respect to what should happen during the period of three years. When we speak about the dialogue between Orthodoxy and Judaism, the importance of which was shown clearly from this meeting, we have views of certain phenomena on different levels. I believe that the dialogue and the contacts must be developed at the following levels: a) academic meetings, which help us understand one another on the level of basic principles; b) the level of "religious diplomacy," meetings of representatives of both sides, not necessarily on the level of our meeting, to discuss some concrete problems; c) the level of simple people where, in accordance with my observations, understanding is found on its lowest level.

It is with great pleasure that I declare that the Jewish communities of the three Slavic countries of the former U.S.S.R. are ready to support and develop these aspects. They would welcome as well a corresponding initiative from the Orthodox side.

I would propose in the final text of our meeting to include the pro-

posal for both sides to seek and materialize these specific aspects of collaboration on these three levels during the period of three years which will separate us from the next Academic Meeting.

Prof. John Karavidopoulos: I also thought about the academic or non-academic character of our meeting, and I consider that the academic character must be maintained. In this framework of thinking, I would like to ask the presidency to note two themes which I propose for the future: a) "God and history according to the Bible and its interpreters from the beginning until today" — in agreement with the thought expressed by Prof. Werblowsky — from both sides; b) "The meaning of the fatherhood of God, God the Father of man, of history and of all things, as Scripture presents it, in accordance with the interpreters from the beginning until today."

Permit me to make one comment concerning academic character: this does not mean that these meetings will be completely removed from the people of God. I believe this coupling with the body of the community must be done by every means with everyone offering something. For example, in Thessaloniki we are used to visiting the Jewish synagogue once a year with the postgraduate students of the Old and New Testament. We spend one afternoon in discussions which really create a human contact. Another simple way of contact and coupling the academic discussion with the rest of the body of the community is the writing of articles in various scientific and other journals. I consider it important that these meetings should be made known in these various periodicals. Finally, I would like to express my joy and thanks for the invitation to take part in this fine meeting between brothers.

Mrs. Elisheva Larissa Vafner: Of course, I do not wish to add anything to the great theological discussions that took place here these past few days. I have listened with great interest to all of the learned participants. But I would like to make one suggestion. I feel that bridges can be built more easily and in a much more pleasant way face to face (*panim el panim*) so that perhaps at your next meeting, at your next consultation together, you would have an oval table so that everyone would not only see the brains that are in the head of the person in front of them but also see the wonderful expressions of all of you good, intelligent people.

Rev. Prof. Vitaly Borovoy: I will be quick and mention only three proposals:

1) From the perspective of the usefulness of the dialogue between contemporary Orthodoxy and contemporary Judaism, especially in the former U.S.S.R., the most important theme is the historical memory and its abuse and the responsibility of all those who abused the historical memory.

2) Since we just began educating our people after an interruption of seventy years because of the revolution, we also need the material and the methods of this education. I am not referring to the material side. I am referring to the manner of education concerning the issues. For this reason it would be good if there was an Orthodox team, in which a Jewish representative would also participate, though according to the guidelines of the Orthodox team, which will shape correct methodological positions on how we should educate children and adults with respect to the Jews and the other religions or nationalities. For us, it is one of the most important issues.

3) When I was a representative to the World Council of Churches, it was my obligation to let the World Council of Churches know exactly what was happening domestically in our country with respect to Church and religion. Unofficially, of course, with every secretiveness, I was providing this information, and the World Council of Churches was in a position to help, to apply political pressures with the help of Western countries, as well as in other ways. And this activity has a big importance because today there is a new front struggle.

In the past the government fought for atheism; today it struggles for peaceful co-existence of the peoples of our country. I propose, therefore, to set up in Chambésy, completely unofficially, a center which will provide information for our struggle against antisemitism, nationalism and intolerance. In this way Metropolitan Damaskinos will know exactly what is happening, and will be in a position to communicate through the interecclesiastical channel, through the international organizations, with the purpose to maintain peace, the proper orientation of this struggle on this new front.

Of course, my proposal is impromptu, however the central idea is quite clear. I believe that not only the Church would benefit but the whole dialogue with modern Judaism as well.

Metropolitan Damaskinos: The importance of this proposal is not the formulation, but indeed the idea itself which we all understood. Prof. Borovoy knows that we are in Chambésy exactly entrusted to serve mainly the Orthodox churches in the framework of our responsibility as an Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and as Secretary for the preparation of the Holy and Great Council, which has the responsibility to follow all these developments and to serve the Orthodox, certainly, and the other churches. I thank him also for the proposal concerning the theme "Historical Memory and Its Abuse." I think that you wish in this way to underline the consequences which can lead to the dissociation of the historical memory from the responsibility which should characterize us. Certainly the other point, how we should teach today our children to know Judaism or other religions free from faults

and wrong evaluations of the past, is a creative proposal which will be taken into consideration by the presidency.

May I thank both you and everyone else who contributed to this discussion. Now I kindly ask that Dr. Riegner read the English text of the Communiqué.... (See Communiqué below.)

Metropolitan Damaskinos: I would like to thank the members of the drafting committee who took part in drafting the Communiqué, especially Prof. Oikonomou and Prof. Karavidopoulos. If you have any comments on the text, please express them. Does the Communiqué express the spirit of the work of our meeting and that which essentially we wish to pass on to those whom we address?

(All accepted the Communiqué.)

IMMANUEL 26/27