

DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS: HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AND PRINCIPAL FOUNDATIONS

1. Some Pages of History

Cultural consciousness of our times formed up by the age of Enlightenment considers relations of different religions and faiths as marked predominantly by discords, conflicts and wars. But inter-religious relations have always been one of the most important factors in civilization dynamics, and the need of their peaceful character has always been strong. Therefore attempts of contact and dialogue as well as the search for some strategy or model of harmonious relations between spiritual traditions and religions, in fact, have never ceased. Their systematic and more or less uninterrupted history begins approximately in the middle of the XIX century. In the earlier periods, in various cultural spaces we find scattered events that could be regarded as a prehistory of the contemporary inter-religious dialogue. Let us observe some of them.

In ancient times contacts between different religions were of course not dialogic in the present-day meaning of the word. They were phenomena of mutual influences and adoptions. In most cases, during the period of polytheism various religious cults were not yet delimited distinctly. Syncretism, assuming a high level of mutual tolerance and acceptance, was a wide-spread (and in the late antiquity – almost universal) trait of religiousness. But along with advancement of the world religions, religious consciousness was acquiring the attitudes of isolation and exceptionality of its own faith, its total incompatibility with all the rest. This is not an occasional aberration; the attitudes of the sort inevitably accompany a transition to more advanced stages of the religious consciousness. At these stages religious experience is conceived as a unique experience of contacts with the Absolute, that totally transforms the man; and within the religion there emerges a specific core – a spiritual tradition vested with the task of identical reproduction and undistorted transmission of the experience. In the next section of this article we are going to present the phenomenon of spiritual tradition in more detail. Our discussion will make it clear that spiritual traditions must not be mixed, or combined between them, because each of them should guard strictly the purity of its experience. Each spiritual tradition is a world that protects itself zealously from any admixtures, anything foreign to it. But due to this the dialogue of spiritual traditions and religions faces difficulties and becomes problematic.

The history of inter-religious relations abounds with vivid examples of such difficulties. During many centuries, the isolation of religious traditions, manifestations of their antagonism, and mutual intolerance are more of a rule than an exception. But at the same time the exceptions, i.e. efforts to support encounter and dialogue of religions, successful to some extent, are also multiple. Thus, one can recall an important phenomenon of a «unity of the three faiths» - Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism - in the medieval China that was especially strong during the Sung period (X-XIII cc.). There was a tradition of especially close relations of mutual influence and cooperation between Daoism and Ch'an-Buddhism; these relations could be easily called dialogic. Later the «unity of the three faiths» was adopted in Japan, with the autochthonic Japanese cult of Shintoism taking place of Daoism, while Buddhism was represented by Zen. Next, there was a very interesting episode in the XVIth-century India. Emperor Akbar of the Great Moguls was planning an ambitious religious reform, to which end he has erected a huge building outside of Deli and summoned to this building representatives of all Hindustani religions, including Christianity. Their regular meetings and discussions, starting in 1574, went on for not less than 4 years: it is known that Jesuits from Goa took part in them in 1578. On philosophical level, the views of Christian humanism included usually some or other form of the idea of universalism, i.e. the idea that all religions are essentially united in their spiritual roots, in Logos. An impressive utopia of such unity of religions was created

by the great Renaissance thinker Nicolas of Cusa in the dialogue “De Pace Fidei” (1453). The dialogue represents the discussion between exponents of all world religions, which takes place on Heavens in front of the Lord; and, helped by His edifications, all the faiths come to complete mutual accord, agreeing that all their divergences concern only their exterior side, their rites.

Since the middle of the XIX c. various initiatives in the field of the dialogue of religions as well as Christian confessions gradually become systematic. One of the early attempts were the joint meetings and conferences of the Old Catholics with the representatives of the Russian Church, that started right after the emergence of the Old Catholics Movement in 1870-es and then resumed repeatedly until very recent times. A number of large-scale multiparty meetings, events of encounter trace back to the end of XIX – beginning of XX cc.; its initiative and organizational work were mainly on the part of representatives of American Protestantism. One of the major events was the World Congress of Religions (also known as the «Parliament of Religions») that took place during Chicago World Exhibition in September 1893. Both at this congress and in other similar events of that period the general trend was to draw in clergy and believers of all the existing religions and faiths, cults, sects, groups, etc. As the ultimate, even though distant goal of all such work there was imagined the unification of all religious life within a Universal World Religion of all the mankind (at the congress some projects have been presented and discussed concerning the choice of the name for this religion and the place for its headquarters). Osip Mandelstam called the Nineteenth Century a «Golden Age», and these immense projects are strikingly marked by the spirit of the starry-eyed and superficial humanism and progressivism which reigned in the West in the decades preceding the First World War, but evaporated with its very first volleys. But nevertheless the Congress became an important landmark. An authoritative expert on intercultural dialogue Professor Joseph A. Camilleri writes: “In 1893 in Chicago the World Parliament of Religions gathered together representatives of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. Today this event is recognized as the official beginning of inter-religious dialogue in modern period of history. In honor of the centenary of the Parliament of 1893, the Council of the parliament of world religions has been created. In 1993 this parliament issued the document: “The Way to global Morality: An initial Declaration”. This is indeed a strong declaration, which formulates the foundations of morals common to all religious and spiritual traditions of the world”¹.

After the First World War the attempts to advance inter-religious contacts were resumed. They were initiated mainly in the same Protestant circles, but in the new period of modern history, they were reframed. Now, their principal form was the Ecumenic movement limited by the area of Christianity. General attitudes and aspirations of the initiators, their ideas about the mechanisms of the contacts were basically the same (we are going to describe them below), but the withdrawal of the utopian goals and the restriction of heterogeneity of the contacts made for a more realistic character of the movement. Effective institutes were established (the main of them being the World Council of Churches), and also the timeline of meetings on various levels as well as concrete mechanisms of decision-making have been worked out. This efficient structure helped the Ecumenic movement to stay an important and powerful factor for the relations of different Christian confessions for several decades of the past century. Today its activity still goes on, but inner tensions and divergences that were gradually accumulating (and some of them touch upon very nature and basic principles of inter-religious communication) brought forward its crisis. Thus it is not clear nowadays whether the movement will be able to keep its role as an important instrument of inter-religious relations in the future.

After the Second World War, contacts between world religions begin to grow steadily, being an integral part of developing globalization processes. The problem of the dialogue of religions becomes more and more topical. One of the first thinkers who paid serious attention to this problem

¹ J.A. Camilleri. Globalizatsiya nezashchishchennosti i dialog tsivilizatsiy (J.A. Camilleri. Globalization of defencelessness and the dialogue of civilizations) // Vestnik Mirovogo Obshchestvennogo Foruma “Dialog Tsivilizatsiy”. 2006, N 1. P.41-42.

was prominent protestant theologian Paul Tillich who moved to the USA from Germany in the thirties and was stricken by the scale and activity of inter-religious contacts and cross-religious influences in the American society. It was Tillich who produced the first monograph devoted to the dialogue of religions, "Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions" (1962). Here, in particular, the system of basic principles of such dialogue is formulated, and this influential "Tillich's platform" is worth quoting. "The dialogue between exponents of different religions is based on a number of postulates. First, it is supposed that both partners recognize the value of religious standings of the other side... so that both of them agree on the importance of the dialogue. Secondly, it is supposed that each partner is capable to uphold his religious views with due competence so that the dialogue represents a serious comparison of opinions. Thirdly, it is supposed that a certain common ground is present, on which both dialogue and confrontation are possible. Fourthly, both sides are supposed to be open to criticism of their religious foundations. If all these conditions are met (which was the case in the dialogue that took place between myself and Buddhist priests and theologians in Japan), such encounter of two or several religions might be very fruitful and if the dialogue goes on, it might even bring forth historical consequences"².

In recent decades, the dialogue of religions has turned into a vast sphere of life of the global community with permanent and intense activity. We have mentioned already the creation of the Council of Parliament of world religions. Among other significant events, one should mention the First (2003), and Second (2006) Congresses of leaders of world and traditional religions that took place in Astana (Kazakhstan). One of participants of these events writes about their results: "The main achievement of the First Congress was the fact that we succeeded for the first time in institutionalizing the process of inter-religious dialogue, by means of establishing the permanent Secretariat and determining periodicity of meetings of our Forum"³. Of great importance was the conference "Reinforcement of inter-confessional dialogue and collaboration for peace in the XXI century" organized by the UN in New-York in June 2005. Alongside with these events, some new traits of dialogical processes arise that should be taken into account.

Emerging new architecture of the global society is now approaching a next stage in its formation. Due to the complex and integral character of the globalization processes, the trend will surely develop, which will try to integrate and absorb inter-religious contacts as well as bodies (organizations and institutes) administering these contacts into universal scenarios and mechanisms of globalization, in order to transform eventually all the religious sphere into the «religious dimension» of globalization. In such process, these contacts will have to be correlated and coordinated with the leading dimensions, i.e. economical and political, and will inevitably be forced to be subordinated to them to some extent. Among other things, this implies the next trend: obeying the needs of globalization, the mainstream of inter-religious dialogue has crossed the boundaries of the Christian world to include all of the major world religions. Today both trends can be fully seen at work in the construction of the unified Europe. Inter-religious contacts, «meetings of religious leaders», corresponding agreements become to be included, as a necessary part, into the standard set of measures taken for launching various global projects and processes, for solving certain global problems. And this auxiliary role of the religious dimension within the framework of fully secularized machine of globalization will surely affect the essence of the contacts, depriving them of genuine religious depth and lowering their spiritual value.

Thereupon a general remark should be made, that guides us right into the further discussion of the models of inter-religious dialogue. The fact is that all the history of such dialogue is accompanied with persistent doubts in its spiritual justification and value. Today it is conventional to regard intolerance and bigotry as the main obstacles for the dialogue of religions. It is right, of

² P.Tillich. Khristianstvo i vstrecha mirovykh religiy (P.Tillich. Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions) // On zhe. Teologiya kulturey. Moscow, 1995. P.425.

³ A.Kyrabaev. Privetstvie (A.Kyrabaev. Greetings) // Vestnik Mirovogo Obshchestvennogo Foruma "Dialog Tsivilizatsiy". 2006, N 1. P.104.

course, and yet the problem lies deeper. Such spiritual traits as religious zeal, as ardent religious faith were also very often in conflict with the dialogue of religions. Fervent faith is traditionally suspicious of a dialogue with different and alien faiths. It tends to reject it, seeing in it the threat of apostasy, heresy, distortion of faith. The openness to dialogue is regarded by it as a sign of indifference towards one's own faith, the lack of care for its fate. And this is a real problem. It is easy to condemn intolerance and fanaticism as negative things that ought to be overcome; but it is hardly possible not to admit that the religious zeal and fervent faith are just and proper traits of a genuine and profound religious belief. Their manifestations and role are very much varied in different confessions and religions. In general, this role is not too significant, when the type of religiousness is more rationalistic, but it can be very considerable, when the type of religiousness is marked by a strong emotional and existential intensity. The type of the Protestant religiousness is one of the most rationalistic, and it is not accidental, that the greater part of initiatives in the field of the dialogue of religions emerged invariably on the ground of Protestantism, while, say, participation of the Orthodox Christianity in these initiatives is marked by constant doubts and impulses of rejection. But what is important to note: there exists a type of inter-religious contacts and dialogue that can be fairly compatible with religious zeal. This type corresponds to the second of the two models that we introduce and analyze below.

2. Two Principles and Two Models of a Dialogue of Religions

Virtually all modern initiatives in the field of inter-religious dialogue followed basically the same model or strategy. Its main principle can be quite adequately formulated by means of an arithmetical notion: the ground or space for encounter and dialogue is chosen to be the «biggest common divisor» of all the participants, i.e. the sum of everything they have in common, all the principles and regulations that they both accept and obey. The formula “search for a common denominator” is permanently heard in speeches and seen in texts devoted to the problems of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. Clearly, such model is absolutely universal, and applicable to encounters of all kinds. In our case, principles and regulations in question are religious principles and norms, elements of religious doctrines, subjects of faith. The role of initiators of the dialogue is here the role of moderators, in modern terms, and their task is to help the participants to discover in themselves all the possible contents, all the elements of their positions that are common for all of them and hence are included into the «biggest common divisor». As for the task of the meeting itself, of all the dialogical process, it is to display and accentuate these common elements, bring them to the forefront, discuss them comprehensively and draw the maximum of available conclusions. The first and the main outcome of the process is expected to be the agreement between all the participants that it is the common elements, the «biggest common divisor» that should determine their mutual relations. Hopefully, such agreement will secure the harmonious character of those relations.

To estimate the virtues and potential of this model, we must, first of all, consider the opposite side of the principle described. Obviously, it also means that all specific distinctions of the participants, all elements of the positions of each of them, which are not shared by all the others, are *a priori* excluded from the space of the dialogue. Thus this space is created according to the principles of restriction and minimization. The participants lose their individual traits, acting as averaged, formalized subjects. Clearly, such a dialogue conceals in itself a real danger of reduction and primitivization of the topic discussed as well as all the sphere of religious life. This danger has been always felt keenly by the representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity when they got in touch with this model. In the field of inter-confessional contacts of Christians, the principle of this model had the name «interconfessionalism». Having first become acquainted with it at the First congress of the Russian Student Christian Movement, the well-known congress in Psherov, Czechoslovakia, in 1923, Nicolay Berdyaev immediately put it to sharp criticism. As a memoirist writes, Berdyaev «very briefly and clearly demonstrated in his talk, that when contacts of Christians

are based on the interconfessionalism, they follow the line of minimalism, which brings forth the reduction of our ecclesiastic consciousness to a minimum»⁴.

Evading thoroughly the depths of the spiritual experience, its concrete and specific features – for their separating character! – this type of dialogue takes the risk to fall into total superficiality, triviality and even vulgarity: for example, the discussions of the projects of «Universal Religion» at the Chicago congress all too often bordered on parody and caricature. As we remember, the “Tillich’s platform” formulated as early as 1962 demanded the “openness for criticism of one’s own religious foundations”; but in practice such criticism is not expected and not greeted at all in the events organized. There is also another danger of practical character: if the space of dialogue is narrowed to the extreme and its subjects are restricted to the set of the most general theses or even platitudes, the achievements of such dialogue cannot be rich. Such a dialogue can hardly generate any stable rapprochement between the participants or lead to important positive conclusions and implications. Producing not many changes and placing the parties under not many commitments, this kind of a dialogue cannot have any profound influence on the situation. However, it is still capable of abating the worst trends of mutual intolerance and aggression, arousing and supporting doubts about the rightness of these extremist tendencies and reducing their popularity.

The definitive assessment of this model and its prospects depends mostly on whether some alternatives to it, i.e. different models of inter-religious dialogue can be found.

In what follows we shall discuss briefly one of possible alternatives, which is based on the spiritual experience of Eastern Christianity. Its key feature is that it is rooted in the paradigm of personal communication, obeying its specific laws. It is obvious that the model discussed above does not correspond to this paradigm at all. It represents the participants of the dialogue by their positions, and each position is presented in the form of a list of certain statements so that the dialogical process turns out to be basically just the process of comparing these lists, which is, in IT terms, the *communication of protocols*. Such formalizable process has many practical advantages, being easy to organize and monitor; but it cardinally differs from face-to-face communication of living persons, who possess their own personal and spiritual experience. There is plenty of differences, but now we point out only the most relevant ones for our subject.

The following fact is of the key importance for the issue of communication and dialogue: in the «communication of protocols», in the impersonal formalized contact, any *difference* amounts to *division*, being considered as a dividing and separating factor. It is exactly the reason, why the model described banishes all the differences from the space of dialogue. But in the personal communication it is profoundly wrong! There is no general law that determines, which role in the dialogue is played by this or that difference of dialogical partners; but in any case it is indisputable that personal communication and rapprochement are not based on identical, coinciding features only. Of course, the differences can provoke estrangement, repulsion, enmity, but in the personal face-to-face communication they are perfectly able to produce the opposite effect too, arousing mutual interest, sympathies and even active attraction. Next, a very important feature of the personal being is that it is endowed with specific structures of identity. The very constitution of personal identity makes it radically different from the identity of an object: the identity of a person is constituted by its distinctions from all the others, and all these distinctions taken together impart to the person its originality and uniqueness. This feature is relevant directly to communication: it implies that any contact, which ignores, excludes from its sphere specific distinctions of persons involved, is of impersonal character, reducing radically the persons in questions: they cannot realize their identity, their specific individual nature in such a contact.

But has the mechanism of personal communication any connection with the field of inter-religious dialogue?

⁴ Zenkovskiy V.V. Zarozhdenie RSChD v emigratsii (Iz istorii russkikh religioznykh techeniy v emigratsii) (Zenkovskiy V.V. Emergence of Russian Student Christian Movement in emigration (From the history of Russian religious movements in emigration)) // Vestnik RChD (Parizh), № 168. 1993. P.24.

The link between them is provided by *spiritual practices*. In these practices a person realizes an integral and strictly directional step-by-step transformation of the self, while the self is considered in its energetic projection, being treated as the configuration of its energies of all different kinds, spiritual, psychic and physical. This transformation of the «energetic man» is directed to his actual ontological transformation (transcensus), thus representing not only an anthropological, but also meta-anthropological strategy. Every spiritual practice is a subtle anthropological work, which develops not only psychological and somatic, but also certain intellectual techniques. It demands from a man an incessant precise monitoring of his inner world, as well as abilities of identification of and control over the states of his consciousness in their permanent change.

There exist certain mediating mechanisms, owing to which the experience of spiritual practice, its principles and attitudes are transferred into other and wider spheres of reality. The first and foremost of them is *spiritual tradition*. By its very definition, spiritual practice is an individual phenomenon, a practice realized by an individual person and restricted to this person; but its necessary premise is the existence of a certain community, within which it only can be practiced. The premise is rooted in ontological and meta-anthropological nature of spiritual practice. This practice does not aim any empiric goal, it is oriented towards the limits of the horizon of the human experience and existence, towards ontological transcending. That is why it cannot be a purely individual activity. The goal of spiritual practice is the most specific “object”, which is absent in empiric reality. Thus for the advancement to this goal this practice should have a special instruction, a method or, more precisely, an *organon*, which provides the complete set of rules for organization, verification and interpretation of its experience. But an individual person can neither create such an organon nor even exploit it fully. In all known spiritual practices the creation of the complete organon of their experience was taking several centuries.

The example of the organon of the hesychast practice of the Eastern-Orthodox Christianity reconstructed by us⁵ shows clearly that the experience of spiritual practice is obtained, verified and interpreted by means of a sophisticated system of many subtle anthropological, psychological, hermeneutic procedures, methods, techniques. Creation and preservation of such organon can only be managed by joint effort of many participants, the effort of a community, which reproduces itself in the chain of human generations, in history. This community, which comprises spiritual practice of a man and makes it possible, is exactly what we call spiritual tradition. By virtue of its connection with spiritual practice, this tradition has a unique distinction among all the rest of traditions (social, cultural, ethnic, etc.), forming up the fabric of life and history of human society: since it serves for the transmission of purely personal experience of spiritual practice and accomplishes this transmission also by means of personal, and not institutionalized mechanisms, it represents a phenomenon of not only social, but also personalistic and anthropological nature.

Eventually, it is this personalistic nature of spiritual tradition that provides the necessary conditions for a certain type of the dialogue of religions, the dialogue, which is not formalized, but personal. First of all, let us note that a religion, or a religious tradition is a much wider and much more heterogeneous entity than spiritual tradition: along with the latter it includes also various institutes, connecting the sphere of religion with that of the society and state. But, being a part of this whole, spiritual tradition plays an outstanding role in it: it is the core of the corresponding religious tradition, the quintessence of its anthropological and spiritual contents and as a rule it keeps strong and lasting (though sometimes latent) influence on all the religious tradition. After a certain period when the influence of spiritual traditions on religious and especially social and cultural life was if only a little noticeable worldwide, today this influence in both Christianity and the religions of the East is increasing again. We can also draw the conclusion that if a dialogue of spiritual traditions is achieved in some way or other, this dialogue will, in its turn, become the core of the dialogue of the respective religions.

⁵ Horuzhiy S.S. K fenomenologii askezy (On Phenomenology of Asceticism). M., 1998.

But how should the dialogue of spiritual traditions be realized? We mentioned above, that this dialogue encounters some troubles; and now when we have defined the notion of spiritual tradition, basing on its connection with spiritual practice, the origin of the difficulties is clear. Each spiritual tradition is a community, the destination of which is the reproduction and transmission of the experience of a definite spiritual practice. Spiritual practice, as we have seen, is a specific anthropological and meta-anthropological strategy, which is characterized by the condition of the rigorous following its organon, or «travel instruction». Any arbitrary variations of or deviations from the organon, lead, as a rule, to some distortion of the strategy, the loss of the correct orientation and also to some phenomena of the false experience. They are the phenomena, which are mistakenly, because of an illusion, taken for the evidence of a real advancement in the way of the practice; in the Orthodox Christianity since long they are called “fascinations” (Russian *prelest*, Greek *plani*). These necessary conditions of the purity of experience, fidelity to its well-defined and rigorously preserved organon, mean that, generally speaking, the experience of a definite spiritual tradition does not allow for its combination, or fusion with the experience of another tradition. *The traditions must not be combined*. That is why the very possibility for different spiritual traditions to have successful contacts with some profound contents might seem doubtful.

If, however, we keep in mind the personalistic nature of spiritual tradition and take into account specific features of personal communication, these doubts can be overcome. We find that there exists an efficient model for the dialogue of spiritual traditions. In contrast to the «model of the communication of protocols» described above, it is based of the paradigm of personal communication.

Our description of this paradigm shows clearly that the presence of some inner obstacles and difficulties is more of a rule than exception in the sphere of personal communication. This kind of communication is a subtle and resisting any formalization process, the success of which can never be guaranteed. There are, however, certain conditions, which can help noticeably to advance to the success. They are discovered and studied by the modern dialogic philosophy⁶. The most important of these conditions is usually defined as an attitude of “participativeness”. In a brief and simplified way, it could be characterized as mutual openness of dialogic partners, their willingness to enter the world of the experience of the Other and share its perspective. “To share” means here to adopt, but only partly, and not completely. Which elements are going to be adopted is impossible to foresee, but taken together, these elements produce a definite effect: they generate the emotion or impression of understanding (rather than the rational understanding itself!) and sympathy. The maximal, absolute form of the participativeness is represented by the Christian attitude of self-sacrificial, kenotic love. In our recent history it was realized, for example, by the Russian monastic elders and brought forth unprecedented influence and nation-wide recognition of their Christian service.

Another, and not less important feature of the personal dialogic communication (and thus of the dialogue of spiritual traditions as well) concerns the properties of the space of communication. This space should be such that a person, which enters the communication, could be able to “realize itself” in it, to “become its own genuine self”, which means to display and actualize fully its identity. As said above, the identity of the person is constituted by its specific distinctions, its unique personal features. And personal communication is such a special kind of communication, which tends to be the communication and contact between the identities of the partners. Thus it is unique personal features of the Other – the features lying in the depths of communicating personal worlds – that have the maximal chance to arouse interest and the feeling of a real event of encounter. *Eo ipso*, it is these features that are able to become the cause of and provide the ground for mutual understanding and rapprochement. The conclusion is of principal importance: *the space*

⁶ In Russian thought this philosophy is presented by the works of M.M. Bakhtin, especially «Toward a Philosophy of the Act». The basic studies by Western authors are: B.Casper. *Das dialogische Denken*. Freiburg e.a., 1967. M.Theunissen. *Der Andere. Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart*. Berlin, 1965.

of the personal dialogue must be endowed with all the possible width and completeness. It must be built up not by the principle of successive reduction, selecting only the coinciding elements, but by the principle of expansion, tending to include all the unique personal features. In contrast to the model of impersonal formalizable contacts, this space should be not minimal, but maximal one. The contact of impersonal positions or institutions takes place on the surface of banal truths, whereas an encounter of persons is *the encounter in the depths*.

Historical examples can be found, which show that this alternative model of communication has really been implemented not only in individual contacts, but also in contacts between spiritual traditions. The phenomenon of respectful, well-disposed and interested attitude to the Other is undoubtedly present in the sphere of spirituality too. And such attitude emerges exactly in those cases, in which the Other has in some way demonstrated and proved the presence of his own spiritual foundations and firm adherence to them, and shown that he is genuinely zealous in his faith. In such cases, with such Other, *the encounter in spiritual depths* becomes possible. Such examples are not too exceptional, and one of them, which is topical and characteristic enough, will be considered in the next section. However, they are usually little known, since the life of spiritual traditions tends to avoid the outward observation and all the element of publicity. Though these traditions are far from being esoteric communities, and they consider their experience to be of universal value, the secluded way of life is commanded to them by the specific character of their activity, the subtlety of their spiritual and anthropological work.

The distinction between the religious tradition and the spiritual tradition that we draw and stress helps us to clarify the relationship between the two models on practical level. As we have seen, the constitutive principles of the models are directly opposite to each other; but it does not mean that the models are mutually antagonistic. Religious tradition is a very broad and heterogeneous phenomenon, and there are many aspects, many processes, involved in its life, in which the role of its core, the spiritual practice and spiritual tradition, is not so important. Hence there exists a certain class of inter-religious contacts, in which this core is also not very important, so that in contacts, belonging to this class, the “protestant” model of impersonal contacts is valid and can be used efficiently. What is more, the circle of religious phenomena, in which the role of the core is not decisive, includes most of those, which are directly involved in the broad civilization processes on the macro-levels of global reality. Thus the diversity of issues and processes in the contemporary global situation is such that each of the two models, the Protestant model of functional contacts, and the Orthodox model of personalistic dialogue, can find its own sphere of application. They can co-exist, usefully complementing each other in the modern strategies of creation of the new global architecture.

Such coexistence can be seen today in many phenomena of religious and cultural life. We shall not discuss processes in narrow communities that form the core of spiritual traditions; but strong influence of these traditions, due to their high authority, spreads widely in the society by many different and often hidden ways. Rich resources of the model based on personal communication are more and more discovered and exploited in various situations and contexts. Oriented directly to this model is such typical present-day phenomenon as “people’s diplomacy”, informal inter-cultural and inter-religious encounters of unofficial groups, or “simple folk”. Close to this type of the dialogue of religions are many youth movements in religious milieu; regular large meetings in Taizé (France) of Christian youth belonging to all Christian Churches and denominations provide us with the striking example of this kind. On the other side, the “Protestant model” develops clear trends to soften its rigidity and formality, complementing itself, to some extent, with properties of the other, personalistic, model. In the first place, it begins to recognize the necessity to take into account individual features and distinctions of dialogic partners, and not to exclude these features from the sphere of the dialogue. Joseph A. Camilleri quoted above states that “dialogue of civilizations can take very much not only from what is common to all its participants, but also from what makes them different from each other... mutual communication between East

and West will be based on a new synthesis of their distinctions and similarities”⁷. Another expert, George McLean, is even more radical on this subject: “In the existential aspect, we can say that similarity finds its expression not in diminishing our distinctive individualities or cultures, but in their most complete realization”⁸. Rejecting its former disregarding of spiritual and cultural distinctions and adhering to the principles of mutual complementarity and convergence of cultures, the old model improves its prospects today.

3. Applications to the Issues of Islam-Christianity Dialogue

Rich history of contacts and dialogue between Islam and Christianity provides good illustrations of the co-existence of the two models. In my Bulgarian trips I found an unexpected and very interesting example, discussions of which I haven't seen in the literature. Near Varna, an ancient city on the Black Sea coast, in the village of Obrochishche, there is a unique temple, in which both Christian (Orthodox) and Muslim services have been taking place over several centuries. As a Christian church it was dedicated to St. Athanasius, who was traditionally worshipped as the patron saint of shepherds, and as a mosque, it was a place of worship to an Islamic saint who was also the patron of shepherds. The base for the symbiosis was thus a common archaic layer of religiousness: the pagan cattle-breeding cult, preceding historically the both world religions. Clearly, in this case the ground for the “Islam-Christianity dialogue” does not touch upon the core of the religions involved, and the “dialogue” is based on their coinciding elements (namely, giving protection to shepherds), in accordance with the Protestant model (but long before its emergence).

An example of a different kind is provided by the relations of Hesychasm and Sufism, respectively, the Eastern-Orthodox and Muslim spiritual practices and traditions. Between these two practices there exist multiple correspondences and similarities, among which there are even some elements from the key parts of both practices: they include the breath techniques, some details of the prayer discipline, the elaboration of a generalized pneumo-somatic concept of heart. All the experts are unanimously of the opinion that this many-sided similarity is not a result of a mere coincidence, but rather the fruit of contacts, in which the exchange of experience between the spiritual traditions was taking place. Indeed, for several centuries the traditions in question were developing side by side, in a close vicinity, in the area of active ethno-cultural contacts between the Byzantine and Islam civilizations. However, it is extremely hard to uncover the real mechanisms and course of events of this fruitful process of exchanging such a specific experience. It is often difficult to determine even the direction of the translation: from which tradition to which were the details of the spiritual practice translated? On such questions the experts, even the most competent ones, have divergent opinions. It looks as if a kind of law was in power here, and this law could be expressed by the formula: *the more important, the more concealed*. And it is obvious that these processes correspond exactly to the model of personal communication, with its motto “the encounter in the depths”.

This example is also valuable in one more respect: it demonstrates vividly the difference between the phenomena of spiritual tradition and religious tradition (historical religion). For the medieval civilization the relations of the religions were inseparable from the state, political and military relations. And so, in the same time, when “in the depths” the encounter of the Christian and Muslim spiritual traditions was taking place, at the historical proscenium there were bloody Christian-Muslim wars. The example shows convincingly that spiritual traditions can play a positive role in inter-religious dialogue. Thus in the contemporary strategies of contacts and dialogue between Christianity and Islam these traditions obtain serious attention. As Ignatius IV,

⁷ J.A.Camilleri. Loc. cit. Pp. 44, 49.

⁸ G.McLean. Globalizatsiya i sotrudnichestvo religiy. Vyzovy i perspektivy (G.McLean. Globalization and collaboration of religions. Challenges and perspectives) // Vestnik Mirovogo Obshchestvennogo Forumu “Dialog Tsivilizatsiy”. 2006, N 1. P.69.

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, said in one of his interviews, today there takes place “the continuing search for meeting-points between Islam and Christianity at the level of faith, experience, spirituality, and moral responsibility... There was a striving to deepen the awareness among Muslims and Eastern Christians of cultural partnership and variety”⁹. These words find the full confirmation in the fact that in the recent years active dialogue between Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy is developing within the general framework of the Islam-Christian dialogue. Regular connection and contacts have been established between the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy and the Parliamentary Union of the Organization Islamic Conference. In March 2005 in Amman (Jordan) the conference “Perspectives of the Orthodox-Islamic dialogue in the light of problems of the modern world” took place. The tasks, which are formulated in these contacts, take fully into account spiritual and existential dimensions of both religions. This is what writes an active participant of this dialogue, Professor of philosophy of civilizations of the University of Lebanon Suheil Farah: “Our hope is that Orthodox Christian forms such image of Islam, on which a Moslem could see his genuine picture. And that, in his turn, a Moslem presents such portrait of Orthodox Christian, in which the latter could believe”¹⁰.

The Patriarch Ignatius IV sums up the centuries-old contacts of Islam and the Eastern Christianity. Let us make this summary the conclusion of our short review: “The Eastern Christians transmitted to Islam the scientific and technical dimensions of the Greek philosophical heritage. Cooperation was never cut off, and its importance increases today whenever believers work towards putting knowledge and power at the service of man, the vice-regent (*khalifah*) of God or his image. On the spiritual level, there is a striking resemblance between Christian Hesychasm and Islamic *dhikr*... There is also a resemblance between “foolishness in Christ” and “foolishness in God”. Christians and Muslims interacted at all levels, there was a mutual influence in ways of life and rituals, and they experienced an almost common awareness of God the Most High. They shared alike the same humility, self-submission to God, and trust in His Providence”¹¹.

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⁹ Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. *Orthodoxy and Issues of Our Time*. University of Balamand, 2006. P.99.

¹⁰ Souheil Farah. *K razumnomu dialogu mezhdou pravoslavnyim i islamskim mirami* (Souheil Farah. To the sensible dialogue between Eastern-Orthodox and Islamic worlds) // *Vestnik Mirovogo Obshchestvennogo Foruma* “Dialog Tsivilizatsiy”. 2006, N 1. P.224.

¹¹ Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. *Loc. cit.* P.235.