



FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church

DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Welcome to the “For the Life of the World” Archive, a repository designed to facilitate the exploration, analysis, and engagement with the seminal document issued by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, “For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church” (hereafter *FLOW*). This digital archive serves scholars, theologians, students, and all interested individuals by providing comprehensive resources, including documents, interviews, book reviews, speeches, and encyclicals, which delve into the document’s profound insights and far-reaching implications.

FLOW represents a pivotal theological response to contemporary social issues, articulating a vision for how Orthodox Christianity can engage with the modern world while remaining firmly rooted in Holy Tradition. The document underscores a commitment to economic justice, human rights, environmental stewardship, and peace, all while deeply grounded in Orthodox theology and spirituality. *FLOW*’s aim is to provide a solid footing for engaging with the modern world, ensuring that the Church’s response is not only relevant but also deeply anchored in its rich theological heritage.

The creation of *FLOW* involved a lengthy, conciliar process with contributions from esteemed Orthodox scholars around the world. This process is highlighted in several of the archived resources linked here.

The relevance of *FLOW* extends beyond the Orthodox Church, playing a critical role in ecumenical relations. This is evident in the discussions about the document’s impact in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The document’s call for peace and condemnation of violence resonates strongly in this context, advocating for proactive peacemaking rather than passive peacekeeping. This stance is poignantly reinforced in Patriarch Bartholomew’s Easter

Encyclical, which emphasizes the Church's role as an advocate for peace and its condemnation of war as a sacrificial act to a false idol.

Moreover, *FLOW*'s engagement with ecological issues, as highlighted in the joint statement by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Pope Francis, and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, showcases a commitment to environmental stewardship. This joint statement is part of the broader commitment to engage with global issues reflected in *FLOW*, addressing the dangerous appropriation of ecological themes for prejudicial purposes within certain religious contexts.

A Eucharistic ethos, as articulated by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, provides a profound framework for understanding the social responsibilities of Christians. The Eucharist is portrayed as the nucleus of ecclesial life, embodying gratitude and doxology, and transforming believers into a community that transcends social distinctions. This ethos mandates that Christians live eucharistically, extending their faith into the broader world with a commitment to social responsibility and communal well-being. This transformative vision is further reflected in the Church's stance on scientific advancement and ecological responsibility, as highlighted in the Ecumenical Patriarch's encyclical during the COVID-19 pandemic. *FLOW* supports the Church's commitment to embracing scientific findings and addressing contemporary challenges, reinforcing the interconnectedness of social justice, ecological stewardship, and public health.

FLOW's articulation of the necessity to uphold human rights, particularly its emphasis on recognizing the image of God in all individuals, including migrants, underscores the Orthodox Church's commitment to social justice. This commitment extends to ecumenical and interfaith dialogues, promoting mutual understanding and unity

among different religious traditions. This aspect of *FLOW* is critical in fostering a unified Orthodox witness in the world and encouraging cooperation among Christian denominations on social ethics.

I

The event, co-sponsored by Georgetown University's Office of the President and its Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, along with Fordham University's Orthodox Christian Studies Center, centered around discussions on the impact of a significant social ethos document and its relevance to ecumenical relations, particularly in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The first panel comprised Orthodox scholars who actively contributed to the drafting of the document, including Aristotle Papanikolaou from Fordham University, Rev. Perry Hamalis from North Central College, and a Catholic respondent, Rev. David Hollenbach S.J. from Georgetown University. Panelists elucidated the necessity of such a document and expounded upon the conciliar process involved in its creation. Notable attention was given to the document's emphasis on the common good and the social dimension of personhood. Fr. David Hollenbach underscored the document's Trinitarian language which describes each person as reflecting the image of God through free and conscious communion with both God and neighbor, noting its alignment with Catholic tradition. The panelists also discuss the relationship between the Social Ethos document of 2020 and the 2004 document Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The second panel, moderated by José Casanova from Georgetown University, featured Kristina Stoeckl from the University of Innsbruck, Gayle Woloschak from Northwestern University, and Rev. Nicolas Kazarian from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Fr. Nicolas Kazarian referenced the first joint statement on the environment by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Pope Francis, and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. The

joint statement is the first of its kind and should be seen as part of the very intentional commitment to engaging with the world found in the Social Ethos document. Further discussion touches on the dangerous appropriation of ecological themes and language to support prejudicial attitudes towards science, democracy, and sexuality within the Russian Orthodox Church.

For further reference, the social document of the Russian Orthodox Church can be accessed via the following link: <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>. Additionally, the joint statement on climate change by Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin, is available at: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/joint-statement-climate-change-archbishop-canterbury-pope-francis-and>.

II

Review of *Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche vor der Herausforderung Moderne (The Russian Orthodox Church Facing the Challenge of Modernity)* by Regina Elsner

Reviewed by Vasilios N. Makrides
International Orthodox Theological Association, October 26,
2021

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<https://iota-web.org/2021/10/25/elsner-die-russische-orthodoxe/>
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The review outlines the differing approaches of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate towards modernity, highlighting their distinct positions and engagements with contemporary issues. The Russian Orthodox Church has traditionally exhibited a cautious and often critical stance towards modernity. This skepticism stems from a broader Orthodox anti-Western sentiment that has been historically ingrained. The Russian Church has shown resistance to modern values like individualism and secularization, preferring to uphold traditionalist views. Historically, this has manifested in various stages, including church reforms under Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Peter I, and responses to the challenges posed by Soviet atheism and the post-communist shift towards liberalism. The Russian Orthodox discourse tends to emphasize unity and traditionalism, viewing modernity's focus on pluralism and diversity as a potential threat to its integrative theological concepts, such as *sobornost'* (the notion of collective unity). In contrast, the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

particularly expressed in *FLOW* has adopted a more open and adaptive approach to modernity. This short article reflects on the broader differences within Orthodox Christianity regarding the balance between maintaining traditional theological principles and engaging with contemporary global issues. The potential for a pan-Orthodox consensus on modernity remains a significant challenge, reflecting the diverse and often conflicting approaches within the Orthodox world.

III

The Pan-Orthodox Council of 2016 – A New Era for the Orthodox Church? Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Vasilios N. Makrides & Sebastian Rimestad (eds)

Peter Lang, 2021, p. 33

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This edited volume brings together twelve articles reflecting on the 2016 Great and Holy Council. Published in 2021 it mentions *FLOW* as a necessary and dynamic development prompted by the Council. The full electronic version of the edition can be accessed here: https://www.uni-erfurt.de/fileadmin/fakultaet/philosophische/Seminar_Religionswissenschaft/Orthodoxes_Christentum/The_Challenge_of_Worldliness_to_Contemporary_Christianity_Projektseite/Publications/The_Pan-Orthodox_Council_of_2016_-_E-Offprint_Introduction_V._N._Makrides_-_S._Rimestad.pdf.

IV

For the Life of the World and Orthodox Political Theology

Fr. Cyril Hovorun

Theology Today, 78(4), October 2021, pp. 347–356

This scholarly article offers a meticulous examination and endorsement of *FLOW*. Through a nuanced analysis, Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, traces the lineage of this document, highlighting its roots in the theological thought of influential figures from the 19th and 20th centuries. Beginning with the pioneering work of Vladimir Solovyov, often regarded as the first modern Orthodox political theologian, Hovorun explores Solovyov's attempts to synthesize traditional Orthodox theology with contemporary liberal political ideas. Solovyov's concept of "free theocracy" and his appreciation for what we now understand as human rights and pluralism laid the groundwork for subsequent theological developments in Orthodox political thought. The article also considers the contributions of other key theologians, such as Fr. Sergey Bulgakov, who advocated for social justice and freedom within an Orthodox framework. Bulgakov's emphasis on the freedom of the Church from state interference and his vision of universal freedom resonate with the themes present in the *FLOW*. Furthermore, Hovorun examines contrasting theological currents within Orthodoxy during the interwar period, notably the divergence between those who embraced liberal democratic values and those who espoused nationalist and anti-Western ideologies. He demonstrates how *FLOW* aligns with the former, rejecting nationalism, anti-Semitism, and totalitarianism in favor of a more inclusive and democratic vision. By meticulously

tracing the intellectual lineage of *FLOW* through these influential theologians, Hovorun provides valuable insights into the theological underpinnings of the Orthodox Church's engagement with contemporary social issues.

V

Patriarchal Encyclical for Holy Pascha 2022

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of
Constantinople

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, April 20, 2022

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<https://ec-patr.org/patriarchal-encyclical-for-holy-pascha-2022/>
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In his Easter Encyclical, His All-Holiness Bartholomew, while lamenting the catastrophic war in Ukraine, underscored the intrinsic role of the Church as an advocate for peace and the defining characteristic of Christians as peacemakers. It is imperative to recognize that peacemaking necessitates proactive involvement, distinguishing it from the often-misconstrued notion of peacekeeping characterized by silence or inactivity and justified as non-provocation, which frequently results in appeasement of the aggressor. The Encyclical poignantly cites the document *FLOW*, asserting that the Church “honors the martyrs for peace as witnesses to the power of love, to the goodness of creation in its first and final forms, and to the ideal of human conduct established by Christ during his earthly ministry” (§ 44). The primordial goodness of all creation and its assured teleological perfection unequivocally invalidate justifications for war, revealing it instead as a sacrificial act to a false idol.

VI

**Η ομιλία του Γέροντος Χαλκηδόνης Εμμανουήλ στο G20
Interfaith Forum 2021 (The Address of Elder Emmanuel
of Chalcedon at the G20 Interfaith Forum 2021)**

His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon
Φως Φαναρίου (Fos Fanariou), September 13, 2021

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<https://fosfanariou.gr/index.php/2021/09/13/his-eminence-metropolitan-emmanuel-elder-of-chalcedon-g20-interfaith-forum-2021/>
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The monotheistic religions, which have historically informed and influenced one another since Late Antiquity within the shared Mediterranean milieu, have extended their confessional geographies beyond this region into the modern era. The onset of mass migration, which has exponentially increased over the past century, continues to alter the religious demographics of countries globally. This re-acquaintance and encounter among diverse religious groups, including the non-Abrahamic religions is an undeniable reality that necessitates meaningful engagement by the Church. In this context, Metropolitan Emmanuel's speech underscores the historical and theological importance of dialogue for the Orthodox Church, emphasizing its role in promoting peace and mutual understanding amidst religious pluralism. The Orthodox Church, particularly the Ecumenical Patriarchate, has a rich yet complex history of coexisting with other religions and Christian denominations, significantly shaped by the rise of nationalism and geopolitical forces over the 19th and 20th centuries. Commending the conference organizers for addressing the

principles of dialogue, he notes that the Orthodox Church views dialogue not merely as a tool for survival but as a theological space for communion and deification. *FLOW* is highlighted for exploring dialogue as a central component of the Orthodox social ethos. Metropolitan Emmanuel elaborates on the theological dimension of dialogue, grounded in the divine Logos as described in the Gospel of John. He asserts that dialogue, rooted in the life of the Divine Trinity, is a gift from God, who communicates through the prophets, apostles, saints, and nature. This divine dialogue calls for the conversion of hearts, echoing the prophetic messages throughout the Bible. He stresses that dialogue involves risk and personal engagement, transcending mere conversation to include vocations and calls to conversion. Ecumenical and interfaith dialogues are essential for fostering mutual comprehension and peaceful conflict resolution, countering prejudice and fear of the “other.” The speech highlights the transformative power of dialogue, which should be seen as an end in itself, capable of decompartmentalizing and building bridges between diverse religious traditions. Historical examples, such as the meetings between Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, illustrate the potential of dialogue to foster peace and unity. Citing *FLOW* and the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of June 2016, Metropolitan Emmanuel emphasizes that interfaith dialogue is central to the Orthodox Church’s mission of peace. The Church’s longstanding exposure to religious pluralism reinforces its commitment to dialogue, despite challenges from rising fundamentalism and radicalism within religious communities. Finally, he asserts that dialogue is a theological paradigm for reconciliation and salvation, encapsulated in Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s declaration: “Truth does not fear dialogue.”

Link to Encyclical of GAHC:
<https://holycouncil.org/encyclical-holy-council>.

VII

**Address of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch
Bartholomew to the 52nd International Eucharistic
Congress (Budapest, 4–12 September 2021)**

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of
Constantinople

Φως Φαναρίου (Fos Fanariou), September 13, 2021

<https://fosfanariou.gr/index.php/2021/09/13/address-of-his-all-holiness-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-to-the-52nd-international-eucharistic-congress-budapest-4-12-september-2021/>

His All-Holiness' speech underscores the Eucharist as a profound social event in which Christians transcend their earthly social distinctions and embrace their identity as citizens of the eschaton, or more properly, the Kingdom of God. It portrays the Eucharist as the nucleus of ecclesial life, embodying gratitude and doxology for the divine gifts bestowed by the Creator. Through the Eucharist, bread and wine, symbolizing (in the theological sense) the entirety of creation, are transformed by God into a sacrament of communion for the sustenance and renewal of humanity and the world. A eucharistic worldview should inform the quotidian existence of believers, who His All-Holiness urges to live "eucharistically" and to enact the "liturgy after the Liturgy," thereby extending their faith into the broader world with a sacramental outlook and a commitment to social responsibility. This sacramental participation mandates that Christians move beyond the confines of personal salvation and self-sufficiency and to embrace a

communal, open, and hopeful existence. The Eucharistic Liturgy gathers the faithful into one unified body, transcending distinctions of race, gender, age, and social status, thereby embodying the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God and fostering a community of love and interconnectedness. The Eucharistic ethos is presented as a potent transformative force for society. It is in the Eucharist that the Church's worship, spiritual life, pastoral care, and synodal structure are nourished, creating a space where all believers encounter one another and God in a profound communal event. This communal aspect transforms participants from individuals into relational beings, mirroring the ecclesiological vision articulated by Saint John Chrysostom, where the Church does not merely assist the world but becomes a salvific presence through its very being.

VIII

Encyclical of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for the Feast of Indiction and First Day of the Ecclesiastical Year and the Day of Environmental Protection, 2021

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of
Constantinople

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, August 30, 2021

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[https://www.goarch.org/el/-/encyclical-ecumenical-
patriarch-september-2021](https://www.goarch.org/el/-/encyclical-ecumenical-patriarch-september-2021)
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The encyclical, marking the beginning of the ecclesiastical year and published amid the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizes the Church's commitment to social responsibility and scientific advancement. It highlights the environmental impact of the pandemic, noting that reduced pollutants due to restricted activities provide a valuable lesson on ecological impact. The Ecumenical Patriarchate's ecological initiatives align with scientific recommendations, underscoring the necessity of environmental protection and public health. The encyclical urges governments to avoid reverting to pre-pandemic economic practices that exploit natural resources (economism) and stresses the importance of countering misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines and climate change. Indifference to human suffering and environmental degradation is condemned as an offense against God and a violation of His commandments. The Church's role, as reaffirmed by the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016), involves embracing scientific findings to address contemporary challenges. The document *FLOW* supports this view, stating, "The Church

encourages the faithful to be grateful for—and to accept—the findings of the sciences” (§ 71). The encyclical highlights the Church’s pastoral duty to contain the pandemic and support global vaccination efforts, especially in poorer nations, echoing Matthew 25:40: Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. It also calls for love and care for one another, as stated in Ephesians 5:2: As Christ has loved us, urging believers to act as “priests” of creation by safeguarding and cultivating it.

IX

A Catholic Perspective on “For the Life of the World”

Dr. Dietmar Schon

Public Orthodoxy, June 24, 2021

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<https://publicorthodoxy.org/2021/06/24/a-catholic-perspective-on-for-the-life-of-the-world/>
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Dietmar Schon, Director of the Eastern Church Institute of the Diocese of Regensburg and Lecturer at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Regensburg, provides an insightful review of “FLOW” emphasizing its potential to address contemporary challenges. Schon underscores the document’s global orientation, noting its significance in addressing the worldwide spread of Orthodoxy and the experiences of the Orthodox diaspora. He commends its rejection of a narrow, nationalistic approach in favor of a broader, global perspective that reevaluates the Church’s role in society and encourages dialogue with other religions and cultures. The review highlights the document’s theological foundations, particularly its emphasis on “loving communion” and the derivation of social-ethical responsibility from the biblical commandments to love God and neighbor. Schon appreciates the document’s theological coherence and its frequent references to Holy Scriptures, the Church Fathers, and liturgy. Schon sees the potential for the document to provoke fruitful internal Orthodox discussions, hoping it can transcend “autocephalous monologues” and foster a unified Orthodox witness in the world. He believes the document positions the Orthodox Church, and the unique role of the

Ecumenical Patriarchate as a significant player in global social discourse, with the potential to encourage cooperation among Christian denominations on social ethics and foster significant rapprochement.

**Chapter on “For the Life of the World: The Social Ethics of
the Orthodox Church”**

Theodota Nantsou

The text draws from the church tradition and approaches issues crucial for today's societies, such as the organic relationship between ecological destruction and social injustice.

XI

Review of *Pentru viața lumii: Către un etos social al Bisericii Ortodoxe* (For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church)

Irimie Marga

Review of Ecumenical Studies 13(1):97–100 (April 2021)

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<https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/ress-2021-0012>
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Revue by Irimie Marga, Professor at the Andrei Șaguna Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu Romania.

Professor Irimie Marga's review highlights the Orthodox Church's perspectives on poverty, social justice, and ecumenism as articulated in *FLOW*, drawing attention to the extensive use of Patristic sources throughout the document. Marga quotes *FLOW*, noting the Church's assertion that "life in Christ must entail militant hostility to the conditions that create poverty" and necessitates a "heroic commitment to philanthropy and charity" (p. 63). This stance underscores the Orthodox tradition's commitment to combating systemic poverty and championing social justice. Furthermore, the Church's firm rejection of violence, especially its opposition to capital punishment, is emphasized as a testament to its adherence to Gospel teachings and the example set by the Apostolic Church. *FLOW* also delves into ecumenical relations, advocating for dialogue with other Christian denominations to foster mutual understanding and unity. This dialogue extends to Judaism and Islam, reflecting a commitment to interfaith harmony. *FLOW*'s articulation of human rights in chapter seven stresses the importance of

recognizing the image of God in all individuals, including migrants. Professor Marga concludes that *FLOW* represents a significant achievement, offering a comprehensive synthesis of the Orthodox Church's social teachings and serving as a model for the whole Church.

XII

Orthodox Apocalypse: Judgment and Hope for Orthodoxy in the Time of Coronavirus

Dr. Brandon Gallaher & Rev. Dr. Richard René

Public Orthodoxy, June 2, 2020

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[https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/06/02/orthodox-
apocalypse-coronavirus/](https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/06/02/orthodox-apocalypse-coronavirus/)
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This article discusses the coronavirus pandemic as an apocalyptic event, unveiling the fragility of our institutions, presuppositions and sensibilities. Described as a whirlwind, the pandemic exposed hidden weaknesses within societal structures, the article focuses on those within the Orthodox Christian community.

The authors identify two primary revelations from the pandemic. First, it highlights the limitations of a rigid ecclesiology that insists the Eucharist and in-person gatherings are the sole manifestations of the Church, ignoring Christ's promise to be present wherever two or three are gathered. This rigid perspective has imposed undue burdens on the faithful, especially during lockdowns. Second, the rise of Orthodox-led conspiracy theories and a neo-gnostic rejection of the material world reveal a troubling disdain for creation and basic medical understanding, leading to tragic outcomes. Despite these judgments, the pandemic also reveals hope and potential for redemption. Acts of charity and the adaptability of clergy and laity in maintaining spiritual life through online services and domestic "little churches" exemplify a resilient faith. This apocalyptic moment urges Orthodox Christianity to reconsider fundamental questions about the

nature and presence of the Church, prompting a necessary renewal of evangelism, catechesis, and social teaching including *FLOW*.

XIII

Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church

Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis

Faith Matters, May 28, 2020

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<https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/toward-a-social-ethos-of-the-orthodox-church-a-new-document-of-the-ecumenical-patriarchate>
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The article, by Fr. John Chryssavgis, introduces *FLOW* as a guide for navigating contemporary challenges, from racism and poverty to human rights and bioethics, through a pastoral lens. He does not shy away from the historical process of disengagement from societal issues by the Orthodox Church but lays out the process by which it happened. Initially, the early and Byzantine Church had a strong voice on social justice, with figures like Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom emphasizing the social core of the gospel. Over time, however, the Church increasingly focused on monasticism and mysticism, leading to a retreat from worldly concerns. This withdrawal was exacerbated by periods of persecution and oppression, particularly under Ottoman rule and behind the Iron Curtain, fostering a defensive posture and an inward-looking spirituality. This historical disengagement shaped the Eastern Orthodox approach, emphasizing spiritual integrity over social engagement. However, *FLOW* marks a significant shift, urging the Orthodox Church to re-engage with contemporary societal issues and fostering dialogue within the Church and with the broader world. The document reflects contributions from numerous scholars and theologians worldwide,

emphasizing a collaborative approach and underscoring the importance of social justice, care for the poor, and civil equity as essential to the Church's mission.

XIV

The Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church

Aristotle Papanikolaou

The Hellenic American Leadership Council, May 27, 2020

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLqPPOwXYfQ>
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=80632535656342>

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This interview highlights the unique nature of *FLOW* within the Orthodox Church. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which has a well-established tradition of social teachings, the Orthodox Church has rarely produced such comprehensive reflections on social issues. This document, while not an official patriarchal encyclical, represents a significant step in Orthodox engagement with modern ethical and social challenges. Dr. Papanikolaou identifies “theosis” or deification as a guiding principle of *FLOW*. Theosis, central to Orthodox theology, involves becoming more like God through love and ethical living. This concept extends beyond individual spirituality to inform the document’s approach to social issues like politics, economy, and human rights. Theosis encourages believers to embody divine love in the world, offering a transformative vision for how Orthodox Christians can engage with societal concerns.

XV

'Orthodox Social Ethos' aims to put Eastern Church spin on social issues, Interview with Aristotle Papanikolaou

Charles C. Camosy

Crux, May 16, 2020

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<https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2020/05/orthodox-social-ethos-aims-to-put-eastern-church-spin-on-social-issues/>
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In the interview, Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou emphasizes the unique role and place of the Ecumenical Patriarch within global Orthodoxy, free from the introspective ties and focuses of the national churches. This allows *FLOW* to be received as a comprehensive statement representing Eastern Orthodoxy as a whole. Nationalism has deeply entrenched itself within autocephalous churches, limiting their ability to convey a unified Orthodox stance. By contrast, the Ecumenical Patriarch's leadership as the "Green Patriarch" and his international engagements, such as meeting with the Pope, demonstrate his broader representation of Orthodoxy beyond geographical confines. This global representation is crucial because it allows *FLOW* to be widely discussed and serve as a key reference point for understanding Orthodox teaching on social issues. Papanikolaou underscores that *FLOW* carries forward the tradition of the fathers and mothers of the Church who spoke against social injustice. This tradition was revived in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Russia but has been somewhat muted within the contemporary Orthodox Church.

XVI

Join Metropolitan Nathanael and the Rev. Dr. Perry Hamalis for a discussion violence and war

His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago & Rev.

Dr. Perry Hamalis

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, May 14, 2020

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<https://www.facebook.com/MetropolisofChicago/videos/847748282380333/?v=847748282380333>
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This conversation between Fr. Perry Hamalis and Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago, held in May 2020, introduces *FLOW* and primarily centers on the ethics of war. Fr. Perry, who contributed significantly to Chapter 5: War, Peace, and Violence, emphasizes that the ethical categories of Just War, Pacifism, and Holy War are not inherent to the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Chapter 5 serves as a response and engagement to those categories in order to disambiguate the historical-theological position of the Church on warfare and violence.

XVII

**Это – оскорбление Святого Духа:
Константинопольский патриархат о политике Трампа
(Insult to the Holy Spirit: Constantinople Patriarchate on
Trump's Politics)**

Evgeny Olegovich Ivanov

Русская народная линия, April 17, 2020

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https://ruskline.ru/opp/2020/04/17/eto__oskorblenie_svyatogo_duha_konstantinopolskii_patriarhat_o_politike_trampa
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This extremely brief and alarmingly crude review of *FLOW* characterizes the document as an attack on Donald Trump as an opponent of globalization. It uses the word содомократ to describe Pres. Joe Biden.

XVIII

Patriarcato ecumenico: un documento sulla dottrina sociale della Chiesa per la prima volta nella storia ortodossa

M. Chiara Biagioni

AgensIR, April 16, 2020

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<https://www.agensir.it/mondo/2020/04/16/patriarcato-ecumenico-un-documento-sulla-dottrina-sociale-della-chiesa-per-la-prima-volta-nella-storia-ortodossa/>

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XIX

Новый Документ Фанара: Социалистический, Гиперэкуменический, и Либеральный (The New Document of Phanar: Socialistic, Hyperecumenical, and Liberal)

Sergey Khudiev

Православная Жизнь, April 13, 2020

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<https://pravlife.org/ru/content/novy-dokument-fanara-socialisticheskij-giperekumenicheskij-i-liberalnyy>
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This review characterizes *FLOW* as an attempt to integrate left wing, liberal politics into Orthodox Theology. It is hysterical in tone and gives most of its energy to an imaginary adoption of a wholesale endorsement of radical a pro-LGBTQ+ “ideology”. This disingenuous characterization is based solely on *FLOW*’s insistence that discrimination on the basis of sexual identity is unacceptable ‘All Christians are called always to seek the image and likeness of God in each other, and to resist all forms of discrimination against their neighbors, regardless of sexual orientation. Christians are called to lives of sexual continence, both in-side and outside of marriage, precisely on account of the sanctity of sexual life in the created order. But Christians are never called to hatred or disdain for anyone’ (p. 25). Further and perhaps sadly *FLOW* doesn’t address LGBTQ identities, it merely sets out a baseline of Orthodox Christian sexual morality “The Church and the community of the faithful must offer young adults a vision of sexual relations as life-giving and transfiguring: an intimate union of body, mind, and spirit, sanctified by holy matrimony. The body is a temple of the

Holy Spirit with-in you, and even in its sexual nature is called to exhibit the sanctity of God's dwelling place (p. 25). If the review can teach the reader anything it may well be the hysterical fear among conservative Christians that any approach to engaging non—heteronormative persons will inevitably lead to apostasy.

An Orthodox Ethos of Solidarity Against COVID-19

Very Rev. Dr. Nicolas Kazarian

Public Orthodoxy, March 28, 2020

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<https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/03/28/an-orthodox-ethos-of-solidarity-against-covid-19/>
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In this article, Fr. Nicholas Kazarian reflects on the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on its impact on the Orthodox Church and its faithful. The crisis has brought about significant changes in daily life, raising questions about the future of personal, social, and spiritual dynamics. The pandemic, he notes, serves as a critical moment of judgment, urging a reassessment of priorities in light of the Gospel's radical message. Fr. Nicholas highlights the polarization within the Orthodox Church over critical issues, such as the nature of the Eucharist and the potential risk of disease transmission through Holy Communion. He warns that these debates may distract from the core mission of the Church: to be apostolic and to prioritize the salvation of individuals rather than merely preserving religious traditions. Echoing Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, he asserts that the focus should be on the well-being of the faithful rather than theological arguments about faith itself. *FLOW* is central to Fr. Nicholas' reflections, providing a framework for understanding and responding to the social and spiritual challenges of the pandemic. It emphasizes that actions should stem from a love for God and a union with Christ, manifested through love for one's neighbor. This ethos is rooted in the great commandment

to love God fully and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22:37–39). It calls for a transformative approach, akin to the disciples' experience at Pentecost, urging the faithful to transfigure the world.

XXI

Orthodoxe Sozialerklärung zu drängenden Zeitfragen (Orthodox Social Statement on Pressing Contemporary Issues)

Heinz Gstrein

DOMRADIO.DE, March 31, 2020

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<https://www.domradio.de/themen/soziales/2020-03-31/aemter-fuer-frauen-und-verhuetung-ja-abtreibung-nein-orthodoxe-sozialerklaerung-zu-draengenden>
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This short, comparative article written from a Catholic perspective examines the Orthodox positions affirmed in *FLOW*. It is particularly interested in the document's contents on reproductive rights, sexual abuse and the role of women in the church, all pressing concerns of the Roman Catholic Church in our modern era.

**Orthodoxe Kirche unterstreicht Frauenrechte (Orthodox
Church Emphasizes Women's Rights)**

Vatican News, April 1, 2020

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<https://www.vaticannews.va/de/welt/news/2020-04/orthodox-kirche-soziallehre-konstantinopel-gender-frauen-rechte.html>

—

Like the previous short article this review on a German Catholic website notes the social issues of most pressing concern to the Roman Catholic Church and remark on the points of divergence covered in *FLOW*. Non-abortive contraception, the mandatory reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement rather than only to bishops, divorce and the revival of the female diaconate are points of focus.

XXIII

«Pour la vie du monde – vers un ethos social de l'Église orthodoxe» Publication d'un texte de référence du Patriarcat oecuménique ("For the Life of the World – Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church" Publication of a reference text by the Ecumenical Patriarchate)

Yannick Provost

Orthodoxie.com, April 3, 2020

—

<https://orthodoxie.com/pour-la-vie-du-monde-vers-un-ethos-social-de-leglise-orthodoxe-publication-dun-texte-de-reference-du-patriarcat-oecumenique/>

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Available only with subscription.

XXIV

Neue Impulse für eine orthodoxe Sozialethik (New Impulses for an Orthodox Social Ethic)

Dr. Regina Elsner

Nachrichtendienst Östliche Kirchen, April 16, 2020

—
<https://noek.info/hintergrund/1502-neue-impulse-fuer-eine-orthodoxe-sozialethik>
—

Dr. Elsner provides a brief overview of the drafting, aims and contents of *FLOW* then conceptualizes it by bringing in the 2001 document of the ROC. She asserts *FLOW* and the Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, cover similar topics, aiming to address a broad range of subjects within their respective fields. The differences between the documents can largely be attributed to the social and ecclesiastical developments of the past 20 years, as well as the distinct contexts of the Western Diaspora and the Russian Orthodox Church. Importantly she remarks on the clear contradictions, particularly on the issue of human rights. The Russian document's assertion that "collective values can stand above human rights" (§ 63) directly opposes the principle that no laws or institutions should override the absolute moral demand of human dignity (*FLOW*, ch. VII). She suggests that *FLOW* may have been created to deliberately counter the Russian stance. This perception is taken perhaps, because of the ongoing conflict between the Moscow and Ecumenical Patriarchates.

**Pastoral Guidance for Civic Engagement: Moving
Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church**

Rev. Dr. Nektarios Morrow

Public Orthodoxy, August 27, 2020

—
<https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/08/27/pastoral-guidance-civic-engagement/>
—

This article discusses the need for Orthodox Christian pastoral guidance amidst contemporary challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, social issues, and political polarization. It highlights *FLOW*'s role in addressing social justice, supporting democratic values, and promoting human dignity. The article also links to broader educational efforts, referencing the American Democracy Project's focus on civic learning and democratic participation. It argues that pastoral guidance should integrate Orthodox teachings with contemporary issues, helping Christians navigate complex political landscapes with principles rooted in their faith. The goal is to guide Orthodox Christians in applying their faith to foster a just and thriving society, bridging the gap between religious values and practical civic engagement.

XXVI

Islam from an Orthodox Perspective: A Review of Paragraph 56 of the Social Ethos Document

Dr. Phil Dorroll

Public Orthodoxy, July 3, 2020

—
<https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/07/03/islam-from-an-orthodox-perspective/>
—

In this article Dr. Phillip Dorroll highlights the significant strides made in Muslim-Orthodox relations by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, particularly in *FLOW*. He directly references paragraph 56 “Though the Orthodox Church seeks deeper bonds of amity with all faiths, it recognizes her unique responsibility with regard to the other two “peoples of the book,” the Abrahamic traditions of Islam and Judaism, with which it has longstanding dialogues and alongside which it has lived for millennia. Therefore, the Church can and does engage the beauty and spiritual truths of Islam in all its multiple traditions, acknowledging points of contact with it especially in its affirmation of the Virgin Birth (Quran 3:47, 19:16-21, 21:91) and its recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, Messenger, Word, and Spirit of God (4:171). Although Orthodoxy cannot agree with Islam in its rejection of the Incarnation and of God as Trinity, it is nevertheless able to pursue meaningful dialogue with all parts of the Islamic Ummah regarding the proper understanding of these central Christian teachings. It believes that the common roots of Christianity and Islam in the Middle East, the common affirmation of the message of the unity of God, as well as the common recognition of the holiness and truth of

God's Word and his Prophets, the importance of prayer and asceticism, as well as the struggle to discern the will of God in all things, invite Islam and Orthodoxy to enter into an intimate conversation for the advancement of peace and understanding among all peoples.' This paragraph is praised for its nuanced and respectful depiction of Islam, marking a notable advancement in Orthodox-Christian dialogue.

The document effectively communicates key aspects of Islam, such as the central doctrine of tawhid, or the oneness of God, which is foundational to the Muslim faith. It accurately reflects Muslim self-understanding by acknowledging the importance of daily prayer and the fundamental unity of God while also recognizing the diversity within Islamic social doctrines and practices. This diversity stems from the distinction between immutable beliefs and interpretable social practices in Islam. By acknowledging the complexities and nuances in Islam, the document fosters a more authentic and respectful dialogue between Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

XXVII

Happenings & Resources

National Center for the Laity
Initiatives 252:6 (Summer 2020)

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<https://catholiclabor.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Summer-2020-1.pdf>
—

This short review notes *FLOW* is a deliberate break away from the ambiguous social vision of Eastern Orthodoxy in order to “champion a devout care of the earth in all its dimension.”

XXVIII

**Το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο για την ορθόδοξη διδασκαλία
στη σύγχρονη κοινωνία (The Ecumenical Patriarchate on
Orthodox teaching in modern society)**

Π. Ηρακλής Φίλιος (Fr. Heracles Philius)

Kalamata Times, June 26, 2020

—

<https://www.kalamatatimes.gr/to-oikoumeniko-patriarcheio-gia-tin-orthodoxi-didaskalia-sti-sygchroni-koinonia/>

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This short article presents *FLOW* as a necessary first initiative to ensure the church is neither a museum nor a passive spectator of society.

XXIX

**Διαδικτυακή Ημερίδα της ΟΑΚ για την Αγία και Μεγάλη
Σύνοδο στην Κρήτη (Online Conference of the OAC on the
Holy and Great Council in Crete)**

Romfea.gr, June 11, 2020

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[https://www.romfea.gr/oikoumeniko-patriarxeio-
ts/arxiepiskopi-kritis/37559-diadiktuaki-imerida-tis-oak-
gia-tin-agia-kai-megali-sunodo-stin-kriti](https://www.romfea.gr/oikoumeniko-patriarxeio-ts/arxiepiskopi-kritis/37559-diadiktuaki-imerida-tis-oak-gia-tin-agia-kai-megali-sunodo-stin-kriti)
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This article documents the conveyance of a conference titled “Studying the texts of the Holy and Great Council: Problems about the social crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic,” by the Orthodox Academy of Crete. The conference brought to light the difficulties presented by the coronavirus pandemic by a Church that is largely ignorant of its own historical social teaching. The address of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the participants can be accessed in full here: Μήνυμα του Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου κ.κ. Βαρθολομαίου Α' για τη Διαδικτυακή Ημερίδα (Webinar) της Ορθοδόξου Ακαδημίας Κρήτης με θέμα: «Μελετώντας τα κείμενα της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Συνόδου: Προβληματισμοί για την κοινωνική κρίση και την πανδημία του COVID-19», η οποία πραγματοποιήθηκε την Τετάρτη 10 Ιουνίου 2020 (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=265579794875297>).

XXX

**For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the
Orthodox Church**

Carrie Frederick Frost & Nadieszda Kizenko

Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies 5(1):119–139 (2022)

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<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/875108>
—

This article is a collection of reflections solicited by Dr. Carrie Frederick Frost who served on the theological commission of *FLOW*. The contributors are Nadieszda Kizenko, Radu Bordeianu, Will Cohen, Regina Elsner, Tamara Grdzeldze, Lidiya Lozova, Evgeny Pilipenko, and Rowan Williams. The reflections provide a nuanced critique of *FLOW*'s methodological and theological innovations. Evgeny Pilipenko considers that the document marks a departure from traditional Orthodox norms through its incorporation of modern influences such as “theo-aesthetics”, “historicism”, and “ecumenism”. He expresses concern that the document's emphasis on beauty and goodness in creation risks over-idealizing the world and blurring sacramental boundaries. Additionally, the document's flexible approach to Orthodox teachings, which aligns with modern historical and scientific perspectives, might be seen as inconsistent with established traditions. Pilipenko also critiques its ecumenical stance, which incorporates elements from he considers outside of Orthodox tradition, namely, liberation theology among other Christian perspectives, noting a lack of clear justification within Orthodox theology and potential conflicts with traditional views.

Rowan Williams on the other hand, focuses on the ethical and ecclesiological dimensions of *FLOW*. He praises the document for grounding ethical discussions within the church's theological framework, emphasizing the role of communion and the church as the context for moral reflection. Williams appreciates the document's nuanced approach to justice and human rights but suggests it could benefit from more engagement with critiques of liberal democracy and traditionalism. He also notes that while the document's ecclesiocentric perspective is a significant contribution to ecumenical dialogue, its authoritative tone might inadvertently echo Western institutional approaches, potentially straying from Orthodox communal sensibilities. Both reflections highlight the document's innovative contributions to Orthodox theology and social ethics while pointing out areas where further clarification and alignment with traditional Orthodox views might be necessary.

**For the Life of the World? And of the Church too! Quality
of Ethics as a Diagnostic Key for the Orthodox Church**

Vasileios Thermos

Studies in Christian Ethics 35 (2):235–252 (2022)

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<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/09539468211058008>
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In this scholarly article, Fr. Vasileios Thermos a theologian and psychologist highlights a perceived discrepancy between *FLOW*'s theological and psychological interpretations of "identity." The document asserts that identity is primarily theological, grounded in the ontological reality of humanity being made in God's image, rather than in personal attributes such as sexuality. Thermos argues that this theological view conflicts with the psychological perspective, which includes sexuality as a core part of personal identity. Thermos emphasizes that while the Church's theological identity underscores divine creation, it fails to adequately address contemporary psychological understandings of identity. This oversight creates confusion and makes the Church's message less relevant in modern discourse. He also points out the inconsistency in addressing sexuality as both a psychological and theological aspect, suggesting that Orthodox theology has not fully engaged with modern anthropological concerns.

XXXII

**Μήνυμα του Οικουμενικού Πατριάρχου για την
«Παγκόσμια Ημέρα ενημερώσεως και ευαισθητοποίησης
δια τον αυτισμό» (Message of the Ecumenical Patriarch
for the “World Day of Awareness and Sensitization for
Autism”)**

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of
Constantinople

Φως Φαναρίου (*Fos Fanariou*), April 2, 2022

—
<https://fosfanariou.gr/index.php/2022/04/02/minima-ecum-patr-gia-hmera-autismou/>
—

This address by the Ecumenical Patriarch on World Autism Awareness Day stresses the value of every human person. His All-Holiness quotes St. John Chrysostom and *FLOW*, specifically 33, “The pursuit of social justice and civil equity—provision for the poor and shelter for the homeless, protection for the weak, welcome for the displaced, and assistance for the disabled—is not merely an ethos the Church recommends for the sake of a comfortable conscience, but is a necessary means of salvation, the indispensable path to union with God in Christ.”

XXXIII

Thronal Feast of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of
Constantinople

*Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, November 20,
2020*

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<https://www.ecupatria.org/2020/11/30/thronal-feast-of-the-ecumenical-patriarchate-3/#more-1497>
—

In his speech on the Thronal Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew expressed solidarity with Pope Francis on addressing contemporary global issues. He emphasized common concerns, sensitivities, and perspectives regarding peace, reconciliation, and social justice. Advocating for initiatives that promote fraternity, solidarity, human rights, and respond to the plight of refugees and migrants. The Patriarch also noted their mutual distress over violence committed in the name of religion and highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue in overcoming mistrust and fostering cooperation among religions. Patriarch Bartholomew commended Pope Francis's Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* for its profound engagement with social challenges. He parallels this with the efforts of Orthodox theologians to address many of the same challenges in *FLOW*.



Istanbul, Turkey. 06th Jan, 2024. Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople conducts the Epiphany mass during the Epiphany day celebrations at the Church of Fener Orthodox Patriarchate. Hundreds of believers celebrate the epiphany and baptism of Jesus. Credit: SOPA Images Limited/Alamy Live News



Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople conducts the Epiphany mass as part of Epiphany day celebrations at the Church.



St Katherine Monastery on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt



A mosaic design depicting a throne above the transept in Monreale Cathedral



God is resting after creation. Бог отдыхает после труда сотворения. Byzantine mosaic in Monreale . 12th century.
Unknown 422 Monreale god resting after creation.

