

## **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “Religious fundamentalism has nothing to do with the authentic experience of faith”**



“Religious fundamentalism is born of fear, insecurity and the inability to creatively face the challenges of the contemporary era and has no relation to the authentic experience of faith,” emphasised, among other things, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the address he delivered at the opening of the International Conference on the theme: “RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM – Genesis and Evolution of a Phenomenon.”

The two-day International Conference began on Friday, 13 June 2025, at the Spiritual Centre of the Holy Metropolis of Alexandroupolis and was organised by the “International Observatory on Religious Fundamentalism”, which was established in the Holy Metropolis of Alexandroupolis.

At the opening of the Conference, greetings and relevant messages were also delivered by His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece, the

Deputy Minister of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports of Greece, Mr. Nikolaos G. Papaioannou, the Secretary General of Religious Affairs, Mr. Georgios Kalantzis, while the conference participants were welcomed, on behalf of the organisation, by His Eminence Metropolitan Anthimos of Alexandroupolis. In attendance were hierarchs, representatives of religious minorities, political and military authorities and many people.

The full address of the Ecumenical Patriarch follows:

Your Eminence Metropolitan Anthimos of Alexandroupolis, Traianoupolis and Samothrace, primate and exarch of Rhodope, President of the Board of Directors of the “International Observatory of Religious Fundamentalism”, in the Holy Spirit, dear brother and co-celebrant of our Moderation, grace be to your Eminence and peace from God.



With great joy and happiness, we address a Patriarchal greeting to you from the Phanar at the opening session of this first official action of the International Observatory on Religious Fundamentalism, praising the Scientific Committee of your international conference for choosing the important and timely topic “Religious Fundamentalism: Genesis and Evolution of a Phenomenon.” The establishment and operation of this Observatory is a commendable initiative of the Holy Metropolis of Alexandroupolis at a time when the need for an interdisciplinary

approach to complex cultural developments is becoming imperative.

Regarding the presence of religions, our era is characterised by the simultaneous emergence of two trends: the dynamic return of religions to the forefront of history, but also the appearance of distortions of the religious phenomenon, which not only alter the authentic expression of religious faith, but also threaten peace, coexistence and cooperation among peoples. Such a phenomenon is religious fundamentalism, which is born of fear, insecurity, and the inability to creatively confront the challenges of the modern era and has no relation to the authentic experience of faith.

The outbreaks of fundamentalism within religions, as noted in the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church (Crete 2016), “risk leading to the prevalence of the view that fundamentalism belongs to the essence of the religious phenomenon. The truth, however, is that fundamentalism, as “zeal not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2), is an expression of unhealthy religiosity. The true Christian, following the example of the crucified Lord, sacrifices himself and does not sacrifice others, and for this reason he is the strictest judge of fundamentalism from any source. Sincere interreligious dialogue contributes to the development of mutual trust, to the promotion of peace and reconciliation” (§ 17).

In this spirit, we consider interreligious dialogue as an antidote to fundamentalist tendencies, which feed on the closedness of individual religions and the absolutisation of the assumptions of each of them. In no way does sincere dialogue affect the fidelity of religions to their particular tradition. Rather, it enriches religions and highlights their scope and humanistic content.



Of particular importance in confronting fundamentalist tendencies within religions is the encounter with modern civilization. Unfortunately, today there are still widespread rejections on both sides, which perpetuate misunderstandings with deep roots in the initial encounter between the two sides. It is known that modern thought identifies religion with its negative manifestations, while religions had insurmountable difficulties in affirming the humanistic principles of modernity. The dialogue of religions is called to function as a starting point for a new approach to current cultural changes on the part of religions, but also as an opportunity for representatives of contemporary thought to discover the dimension of the depth of religious faith.

It is certain that the International Observatory on Religious Fundamentalism is undertaking an important task at a critical time. Therefore, congratulating you, Your Eminence, dear Brother, and the Honourable Professor Mr. Chrysostomos Stamoulis, Director of the Observatory, as well as your willing collaborators, for the organisation of this international conference, we invoke upon you, upon the chosen speakers and upon the others participating in it, the abundant grace and immeasurable mercy of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is “with us” and “for us.”













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