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## **ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT. BACKGROUND, MODELS AND PERSPECTIVES**

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### **Abstract**

Ecumenism can be seen as the natural desire of a spiritual community to unite. The desire for unification in a spiritual community is the power of love - agape, which is impossible without God and which directs those who are captured by it to fulfilment in the Kingdom of God. However, in history, like any other process, ecumenism is a heterogeneous and very ambivalent phenomenon. At present, political possibilities based on the physical unification of churches seem to be practically exhausted. While ecumenism based on interfaith dialogue has prospects for development. Currently, various models of interfaith dialogue have been developed. As a rule, in each case of interfaith dialogue, several models of its conduct are used. However, the religious dialogue of a Christian with members of different faiths should be conducted from a position of humility, goodwill, solving practical problems within the framework of mutual cooperation and faith that God is leading us along the path of fulfilment. And this is the path of love and justice. This path may be different for each person. The purpose of the article was to present the existing forms and models of the ecumenical movement and the prospects for their development.

*Keywords:* unifying ecumenism, interconfessional ecumenism, models of ecumenical dialogue

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### **1. Background of ecumenism: theology and history of the issue**

The foundation of Christianity is the belief that Jesus is the Christ. Confession of this faith makes a person a Christian. Christians form spiritual communities that constitute the essence of the church as the body of Christ. Confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ is unequivocal. And yet its manifestations within historic churches become a religion characterised by the

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ambivalence of the sacred and the secular. Thus, religion can undergo secularisation, degenerate into a moral teaching, become part of culture, and its rituals can lose their former significance as sacred. On the other hand, private manifestations of religious life in human consciousness can become extremely significant, take the place of God and be demonised. Secular tendencies in the church sometimes cannot be overcome and can lead to tragic consequences of schism [1, p.111-117, p.191-196]. At the same time, in a spiritual community, schism awakens craving for unification with the separated one, precisely because the spiritual community is not only a community of faith, but also a community of love. Thus, ecumenism can be seen as the spiritual community's natural desire to unite what has been separated in history. The desire for unification in a spiritual community is the power of love - agape (Αγάπη, Greek), which is impossible without God and which directs those who are captured by it to fulfilment in the Kingdom of God. However, in history, ecumenism, like any other process, is a heterogeneous and very ambivalent phenomenon. Thus, in the first centuries of Christianity the word *oikouμένη* (οἰκουμένη, Greek - inhabited universe) meant the entire church, as opposed to what consists of parts. In modern times, in 1900 at an international missionary conference in New York, the term 'ecumenical' was first used in the new Protestant meaning, as an expression of a spiritual position testifying to the conviction in the unity of all Christian churches and their common task in the world [2]. A modern type of ecumenism's historical background is increase in secularisation in the world, from which the church and Christian culture are being pushed to the periphery of social life. It is also characterised by a rapid growth of Christian denominations and Christian communities/All this is accompanied by the church secularisation. On the other hand, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, individualisation processes intensified, as well as communication possibilities, which led to increasing mixing and mutual penetration of different cultures, called globalisation [3]. Serious challenges to Christian civilisation were the First and then the Second World War, the spread of fascism, communism, the atheistic world view, bloc confrontation and the influx of new religious cults. The challenges have become a trigger for the formation of a Christian response, which in turn depends on another goal - unification of churches [4-6]. Without church unity, consistent Christian action is impossible. At the same time, unification of churches is understood as the restoration of visible unity in faith, sacramental life and evidence of Christianity [7]. The theological basis for this type of ecumenism is the numerous references in the New Testament to the need to maintain the unity of the church. "...There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" [Eph. 4:4-6]. Or "To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours..." [1 Corinthians 1:2]. Thus, God himself leads Christians to unity in faith and love. Granting unity in and through Jesus Christ poses a constant challenge for the entire church [8]. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two forms of ecumenism emerged: unifying, which had fragmentary success, and interfaith, based on dialogue. Due to the fact that in history it is impossible to achieve all

people's physical unification in one church, the concept of interfaith ecumenism, based on dialogue models, currently dominates. Maintaining dialogue within different faiths seems to be an important task. This is due to the fact that the goal of interfaith or interreligious dialogue is for people of different faiths to achieve mutual understanding and respect, allowing them to live and cooperate with each other. It is significant that interreligious dialogue can take place not only between representatives of different Christian denominations, but also between representatives of other religions. In doing so, each party remains true to its beliefs while respecting the other party's right to freely practice their faith. This is even more important in multicultural countries and communities, where mutual understanding at the religious level is required to achieve common goals and reduce the level of social tension [9]. The purpose of the article was to present the ecumenical movement's forms and models as well as prospects for their development.

## **2. Unifying ecumenism. Models and Features**

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 is considered to be the ecumenistic movement's symbolic beginning. At this conference the prominent Protestant theologian D. Mott proposed the ecumenism concept as official, having previously published the book 'Evangelisation of the World in This Generation' [10]. The very idea of ecumenism had arisen much earlier, and some historians associate it with the era of the Ecumenical councils' appearance [11]. Swedish Archbishop N. Söderblom, one of the ecumenistic movement's founders gave the word 'ecumenical' a new meaning: an expression of a spiritual position that testified to a conviction in the unity of all Christian churches and their common task in the world. He also came up with the idea of creating the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, which was supposed to be able to speak on behalf of Christianity on religious, moral, and social issues [12, p.239]. In 1948, 147 Protestant churches were included in the WCC. Throughout the entire period of ecumenism as a movement, it gradually included more and more new members belonging to different cultures, political and social groups [From the Ashes of War: The first WCC Assembly in Europe - Amsterdam 1948. World Council of Churches. <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/from-the-ashes-of-war-the-first-wcc-assembly-in-europe-amsterdam-1948>]. Currently, the WCC includes 352 different churches, uniting more than 500 million Christians. The WCC incorporates the overwhelming majority of Orthodox churches, the Anglican, Assyrian, Baptist, Evangelical, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Old Catholic, Pentecostal, Reformed, Quaker and other churches [World Council of Churches. <https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches>]. At present, the ecumenical movement led by the WCC is supported by the feminist movement, women's priesthood and sexual minorities. At the same time, the ecumenical movement itself has become more and more pluralistic, inclusive and secular over time. Particular theologies inclusion in ecumenism (queer, feminist, 'black', liberation ones) is accompanied by fragmentation and undermines the original ecumenism idea of universalism [13]. At present, particular theologies

can pose a serious danger to the universal truth of Revelation due to possible absolutisation of the context in which they arose [14]. A positive achievement of ecumenical cooperation within the WCC was recognition of each other as Christians, rejection of proselytism as a language of 'heresies and schisms' [13].

The unifying type of ecumenism positioned as the ecumenical movement goal at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and based on the principle of churches physical unification, was partially successful. The ecumenical movement put forward various models of such unity. The first model of 'organic unity' was proposed by the Anglicans, whose concept is universal unity, worship and service, and ultimately sincere solidarity of all members in one church. This form of ecumenism was implemented in the United Churches of Canada, China, South India, France, and Protestants in Africa [2, 15; p.124]. The model was described at the WCC assemblies held in New Delhi and Uppsala. At the assembly in Uppsala, the formula of the 'everything in every place' model was changed to the more universal 'unity' of all Christians in all places [15, p.124; 16, p.17]. The second model is of approximate (legal) diversity, in which various Christian denominations can exist in the form of communities of a certain ritual. In this model, Christian communities maintain their independence and interact with each other without uniting, since the idea of central jurisdiction does not exist in the churches' agreements. These are, for example, the Utrecht Union of Old Catholic Churches, the Bonn Agreement of the Anglican Communion, the Leuenberg Agreement signed in 1973 by 65 Reformed, Lutheran and United Churches of Europe. These are also the agreements concluded in 1992 between Lutheran churches of Germany and Anglican churches of England and Ireland (Meissen) as well as between Anglican churches of England and Lutheran churches, signed in 1993 in Porvoo. The legitimate diversity model was refined at the WCC Canberra Assembly. Section III of its decisions is devoted to a possible Diversity that makes up the Body of Christ. It warns against an 'unjustifiable diversity' that makes a common confession of Christ impossible or is detrimental to the cause of salvation [17, p.173].

The third model (the conciliar community) was proposed by the WCC at the Nairobi assembly in 1975 [18, p.60]. Such model's essence is a United Church, represented by local churches' conciliar community, each being a single Church. In such a community each church enjoys fullness of universality in communion with others, testifying to the apostolic faith, and recognises other churches as belonging to the one church of Christ. This model proposes regional representation based on a geographical principle, similar to the system of Autocephalous Churches under one patriarchate's jurisdiction. The WCC uses this system as national churches' representative body. This system's distinctive feature is its social component, for example, assistance to the poor. The WCC believes that such a model can be extended to churches in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, belonging to both the Eastern and Latin rites. The WCC considers the conciliar fellowship model as a preparation for future unity through Christian communities' contacts.

The fourth model (increasing communication - koinonia) falls partially into the rest of the models. This term came into use in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century. It was adopted as the main one following the results of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Conference 'Faith and Order' in Santiago de Compostella in 1993. In the conference documents, the model of increasing communication is enshrined as a 'gracious commonwealth in Christ'. Its distinctive characteristic is ethical background calling for a common growth in holiness, in which everyone shares other people's pain. Ecclesiastical subjects are not considered in depth in this model; churches are primarily based on ethics and morality. It is characterised by significant breadth and is difficult to implement in practice [15, p.124,19]. The fifth model is the Episcopal one, based on unions. It proposes an institutional use of the Roman Catholic Church model, in which unification is possible on the basis of the pope's primacy recognition. At the same time, there are both Catholic and Protestant unions. An example of Catholic unions is the union between the Crusaders and Greeks having common bishops (the Union of Lyons, 1247; the Union of Florence, 1439; the Union of Brest, 1596). And in the modern world such an example is an agreement between the Catholic Church and groups of priests and bishops who came from Anglicanism in protest against women's modern ordination. They are granted the right to practice Anglican rites and customs. There are also non-Catholic unions. For example, the union of Protestant churches in the Netherlands (1892) or in Scotland (1900). Preserving different rituals within one church is a unification disadvantage based on unions. Heterogeneities within one system can also be a predictor of separation. Currently, the union model is considered outdated, which is confirmed by the Balamand Declaration (1993), concluded between the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox churches [Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church: 7<sup>th</sup> plenary session, June 17-24, 1993, Balamand, Lebanon. Vatican City. 24 June 1993]. At present, political possibilities based on churches' physical union seem to be practically exhausted.

### **3. Interconfessional ecumenism. Models and possibilities**

The ecumenical movement abandoned its original goals of uniting churches. And in 1989, the Lutheran theologian Lindbeck D. noted the emergence of interconfessional ecumenism, contrasting it with unification. He also noted that interfaith ecumenism would dominate in the coming years [20]. Thus, the classic version of ecumenism in the form of 'static unity as a connection' was transformed into a dynamic version with the concept of 'unity as communication' - koinonia [21]. There are several reasons for unity in communication or interreligious dialogue [Kuruvachira J. Interreligious dialogue in dialogue and mission. <https://www.euclid.int/papers/JOSE%20KURU%20---%20INTERRELIGIOUS%20DIALOGUE%20IN%20DIALOGUE%20AND%20MISSION.pdf>]. The first reason is social, caused by the basic need of people to communicate with each other. In the age of globalisation, there is mutual penetration of religions and cultures. Therefore, in communicating with each other, representatives of different faiths come to mutual approval, correction of their behaviour and spiritual cleansing of themselves from suspicion and ill will. This can only be

achieved through interpersonal communication, a friendly exchange of opinions, knowledge and support. The second reason is the need to bring the Word of God to various people and nations, a principle that is laid down in the Bible itself. "Go therefore and teach all nations..." [Matthew 28:19]. Christ is present in a person even when he does not know it. His saving power extends to everyone. Therefore, in various religious traditions, there are many values that upgrade mankind and prepare it to accept the Word of God. Therefore, they deserve Christians' attention and respect. When describing ecumenism in communication, we mean different models of dialogue [22]. Being the largest church associations, the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, led by the Pope, have proposed several models of ecumenical dialogue. The WCC has developed models of systemic, communitarian and relational dialogue. The Vatican has formulated a four-part interaction model based on dialogue, expressed in the formula - life, action, experience and discourse [23, 24]. Systemic dialogue is a dialogue between experts. It therefore implies a discursive interaction between belief systems, mediated through a meeting of minds. This model is a research and discussion arena in which specially appointed experts participate. It is a classic understanding of what dialogue is: an intellectual exercise and search. The systemic dialogue model was one of the first to be proposed, but at present the WCC has practically abandoned its use in favour of communitarian and relational one. This is due to the fact that currently the WCC believes that dialogue is primarily interpersonal interaction, which should be aimed at solving specific social problems. At the same time, the model of systemic dialogue was rejected as an abstract and fruitless exercise in favour of dialogue as an experience of interpersonal communication between people of different faiths during various public events [23, 25]. The model of communitarian dialogue is considered as a form of building a spiritual community based on interpersonal interaction aimed at improving people's lives: search for peace, harmony, social justice and solving social problems. This model has become the predominant model of interfaith initiatives related to the WCC activities. This model of dialogue has been successful for a long time because it was attractive due to its pragmatic orientation, allowing for relatively clearly defined and measurable results. Its disadvantage was the fact that this type of dialogue did not pay due attention to issues of systematic theology and doctrinal truths that should underlie social interaction. Over time, it became clear that theological issues within the framework of communitarian dialogue cannot be completely ignored. This circumstance became the basis for a relational model of dialogue, which can be defined as an expanded communitarian model. It promotes the ideas of mutual knowledge enrichment, deeper understanding of pressing problems, the need to combat ignorance and prejudice, and the necessity of building interpersonal relationships of good will among religious and public leaders. This model's benefit is an opportunity to learn more about religiosity and different faiths' theological issues, identify common ideas, problems and ways to their solution. With all its advantages this dialogue model has a number of limitations, since Christians do not often know how to love their neighbour and even do not always want to get to know him better and share his views [25]. On the other hand, such dialogue can be very effective, since interreligious interaction

is based on accepting members of another faith. This is possible only on the basis of mutual understanding [23]. This is all the more important because studies conducted have proven that goodwill is positively correlated with three subscales of religiosity: 'religious beliefs' ( $r = 0.29, p < 0.05$ ), 'prayer' ( $r = 0.22, p < 0.05$ ) and 'participation in religious services' ( $r = 0.26; p < 0.05$ ) [26]. Previously, the WCC dialogue's structure emphasised interpersonal, socially oriented dialogue aimed at solving specific social problems. However, at present, this model of dialogue has merged with the communitarian model [22, 25].

The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, now renamed the Decastery for Interreligious Dialogue, proposed 4 interreligious dialogue models: the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of religious experience. Most theologians believe that this dialogue classification is optimal and that these models' use will contribute to the best knowledge of the truth, including scientific achievements, life wisdom, the study of various religious traditions in interaction with love [24]. The dialogue of life is the first model to begin communication with. This model implies care, respect and hospitality towards the other. The model leaves room for a different personality, its values and means of expression. Every follower of Christ, by virtue of his human and Christian vocation, is called to a live dialogue in his daily life, regardless of whether he is part of a majority or a minority. Man must bring the Gospel spirit into every environment in which he lives and works: be it family, social, educational, artistic, economic or political one. Thus, this type of ecumenical dialogue is reflected in the spirit of the Church living dynamism [25]. The dialogue of life is a Christian testimony to mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. It is aimed at friendly coexistence with people of other religions, enrichment of partners, and brings to life the human and spiritual values of various religions [21, 26]. The second model is an action dialogue (practical dialogue). This type of dialogue ensures cooperation with other faiths representatives for the sake of humanitarian, social, economic or political goals aimed at achieving freedoms and improving a person's level of existence. Within this dialogue framework, struggle for social justice, moral values, peace and human freedoms is carried out. Action dialogues are going on between international organisations, where Christians and other religions followers work together to solve existing problems [Kuruvachira J. Interreligious dialogue in dialogue and mission. <https://www.euclid.int/papers/JOSE%20KURU%20---%20INTERRELIGIOUS%20DIALOGUE%20IN%20DIALOGUE%20AND%20MISSION.pdf>]. This form of dialogue opens up a vast field of activity for people of various professions for mutual assistance. This model is of value for man's comprehensive development and liberation from social injustice and poverty. Following this model, a Christian can be confident that he is participating in the construction of the Kingdom of God on Earth [27, p.75]. At the same time, the laity involved in the dialogue of action can be sure that they are instruments of God's love, helping to fulfil the prayer of Jesus: 'Thy kingdom come' [27, p.78]. Creative work, justice, and preservation of peace are the church mission's integral part. It is argued that the dialogue of action basis is compassion, which turns a person into one who sympathises with others. And it is compassion that leads to action called

cooperation. This action is carried out in the form of people`s unified cooperation, regardless of religious affiliation. This leads to a better understanding of each other [28 p.141-143]. Dialogue of experts (theological dialogue) is a way of communication between specialists of different religions [27]. A Christian recognises the cultural value of existing religious traditions and engages in theological discussion and sharing experiences. Experts study other religions` ideological foundations to understand their view of certain existence problems. Spiritual dialogue involves a deep study of other religions and their comparison with one`s own beliefs. Such dialogue is aimed at mutual enrichment, which enables the parties to solve problems of interreligious interaction, exchange opinions, defend the truth, and find touch points with opponents to solve existing social problems. Such dialogues can involve representatives of different religions with their own beliefs and include a different number of participants. At the same time, the issues under consideration may cover various topics (ethical, social, theological, cultural). The ways of organising such meetings may vary. They can be of significant benefit, allowing a Christian to give living testimony of his faith and show that the Church is, first of all, not an organisation, but a spiritual community based on the faith that Jesus is the Christ [27, p.32-33]. Moreover, it is advisable to conduct this type of dialogue frequently enough to maintain mutual understanding and cooperation. However, dialogue between experts requires experience and responsibility in order to avoid turning a dispute into a polemic. It should remain a dispute over complex issues to find an optimal solution [27, p.32-33]. Through the expert dialogue, it is possible to achieve greater effectiveness in the dialogues of life and action. The dialogue of religious experience is an intimate form of dialogue where people following deep-rooted religious traditions can share the spiritual richness of prayer experience, contemplation, faith and service. In the course of dialogue, it is essential for believers to demonstrate their unique spiritual experience, which led them to recognition of God or the absolute. This type of dialogue can become a mutually enriching and fruitful collaboration to promote and preserve the highest values and spiritual ideals. Even significant differences between religions should not interfere with this form of dialogue, in which religious experience gives the Christian an opportunity to show the Other an existential comprehension of the Gospel truth [29]. Spiritual background exchange can be carried out formally or spontaneously in private conversation. This could be studying religious texts together, joint prayer, or simply attending each other's worship services. However, such interaction requires great responsibility in order to prevent syncretism, along with maintaining a sense of deep respect for other religions as a condition for achieving cooperation [30]. On the other hand, the dialogue of religious experience can have a broad base, involving lay people interested in spiritual matters, participating in prayers, retreats and rooted in the Christian faith. Sometimes simple words, personal experience and philanthropy of a person who does not belong to the church hierarchy can help others find the path to Christ. Each type of interreligious dialogue takes place at a different level of existence. Therefore, there are 3 types of interreligious interaction: dialogues of the 'head', 'hands' and 'heart' [30]. The dialogue of the 'head' implies a desire to study the meaning of life ideology in

various religions. The second one involves uniting with representatives of other religions to create a better world. The third one requires immersion in the spiritual world of the Other in order to understand his aesthetics [27, p.76-77].

Tasks to develop interreligious dialogue for the Roman Catholic Church are mandatory. They are supported by the Vatican and are implemented primarily by its Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, which is entrusted with the apostolic mission of promoting dialogue with followers of other religions [31, p.17]. The Vatican asserts that where there is dialogue, there is also a salutary proclamation, within whose framework dialogue must take place. Pratt D. proposes distinguishing three different and mutually complementary models of interreligious dialogue within the framework of the Roman Catholic Church interaction with other spiritual associations: ambassadorial, propaedeutic and humanitarian ones [23]. The ambassadorial dialogue is fundamental for the Vatican, since it is a sovereign state with all the diplomatic responsibilities and relations that apply to it. Currently, many countries have ambassadors accredited to the Holy See. The Vatican, in turn, has ambassadorial missions and relationships throughout the world. In many situations, state and religious relations coincide. This is because Vatican envoys present themselves not only as representatives of the Vatican government, but also as those of the Pope, the Catholic Church leader. Accordingly, they do not limit their activities only to communication with political members. A distinctive feature of ambassadorial dialogue is the steps taken to maintain long-term relationships. Thus, currently, at least 62 states have ambassadors to the Vatican and 107 Vatican ambassadors are heads of diplomatic missions. The Vatican maintains diplomatic relations with 165 countries. At the same time, Pope Paul VI, in a letter of recommendation dating from in 1969, wrote that the ambassador's important task is to further strengthen unity between the Holy See and local authorities [32]. At the same time, specific dialogue events themselves may be episodic and quite rare. Nevertheless, relations between the parties to the dialogue can develop. An example is the annual goodwill message to Muslims around the world to mark the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of mutual greetings 'and expressions of gratitude' as a response [31, p.29]. Since 1995, similar annual messages have been sent by the Pope to Hindus on Diwali and to Buddhists on Vesak. The ambassadorial dialogue model involves a meeting on equal terms, whose condition is establishment and maintenance of friendly and functional working relationships, which is a prerequisite for any other dialogue. In this context, it is important to accept each other in order to gain true knowledge and respect. The ambassadorial model of dialogue is believed to be of use not only in the Vatican work, but also in all churches [23]. Model of propaedeutic dialogue. The second model relates to interreligious interaction, which involves explaining oneself carefully to another on the basis of apologetics in preparation for further development and deepening of the relationship. Within this ecumenical interaction model, mutual hospitality is observed in the host-guest paradigm. In such a way every effort is made to affirm and explain the essence of truth, what it means to be a Christian and a Catholic. The propaedeutic dialogue purpose is not only to establish interaction

with representatives of other faiths representatives, but also to clear the way for a proper evangelical ‘invitation and witness’ in the spirit of Catholicism. Propaedeutic dialogue aims at ‘conversion’. After all, God can speak to us through our meetings with other believers. And through these meetings we can show fidelity to our faith [33]. Taking into account that religion should be offered and not imposed, the propaedeutic dialogue model is an effective form of interreligious interaction based on both respect for the person of the Other and verification of one's statements truth [34]. The humanitarian dialogue model sets the task of unification based on a common goal and joint actions to solve social problems and improve the quality of life. Such dialogue is most suitable for the local or regional church activities. The humanitarian dialogue model is close in content to the WCC communitarian model. For example, a number of humanitarian dialogues are sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and are aimed at solving socio-political and humanitarian problems, including issues of justice, human rights and freedom [35; 36, p. 32-53]. Often the humanitarian dialogue model is carried out together with the propaedeutic and ambassadorial models.

#### **4. Conditions for conducting ecumenical dialogue**

Conducting ecumenical dialogue with representatives of different religions can sometimes be a difficult task, requiring compliance with a number of conditions. Otherwise, ecumenical dialogue can hardly be effective [37]. The first condition for interreligious dialogue is epistemological humility as recognition of the change possible within one’s own religious tradition. This involves a humble recognition of limited options in which the highest truth is understood and expressed within a religious tradition. Such humility can be applied to doctrines, rituals, and/or ethical systems. It is not common for all religious systems to recognise the possibility of change within a religious tradition to the same extent. However, the mystical aspect of religious experience, essential to any religion, reveals the transcendence of ultimate reality and the impossibility of fully expressing that reality in finite human terms. It is mystical experience that provides the basis for recognising the difference between ultimate reality, the categories in which it is expressed, on the one hand, and the absolute, which transcends all final conditions, on the other hand. Recognising this fact allows one to create conditions for intellectual humility and open up space both for growth within one's own religious tradition and for interaction with other faiths. The second opportunity for epistemological humility formation and acceptance of the doctrine of the change and growth possibility can be formed under the influence of scientific research showing the features of the historical and cultural-linguistic formation of certain religious doctrines and practices. It should be noted that recognition of the finitude and relativity of existing linguistic constructions in expressing religious truth does not and should not lead to a refusal to profess the kerygma. And religious beliefs should not exclude intellectual humility. In this case, we must be guided by N. Kuzansky’s concept of scientific ignorance, in which he explains that perfect truth is indivisible by nature, and man is finite and

is part of the whole [38, p.9-10]. The critical thinking concept remains of lasting value in our time, being a necessity for a scientist. At the same time, intellectual humility, autonomy, honesty, courage, persistence, confidence in reason, empathy and an intellectual sense of justice are integral components of critical thinking, without which the process of creativity and development is impossible [39]. The religious education process in the family, school and university through teaching the fundamentals of religious culture and interreligious dialogue seems important. It seems significant that the educational process concerning teaching issues of religious culture and its diversity goes beyond the school boundaries. This process should include social workers, teachers, politicians and public organisations. Thus, numerous studies have shown that religious tolerance is associated with multidimensional personal education, including knowledge of religion [40]. The second condition for interreligious dialogue is commitment to one's religious tradition. It is this commitment that distinguishes dialogue between religions from a purely personal exploration of various religious or philosophical teachings for the purpose of spiritual enrichment. This is due to the fact that commitment to one's religious tradition is associated with responsibility to it, subordination of one's judgments and religious experience to the theological circle or kerygma [41, p.16-19]. In dialogue, a Christian confesses his faith, which is of utmost interest to himself and to the religious community that he represents. In a religious dialogue, a Christian does not simply express his opinion, but represents the centuries-old tradition of communication with God and the work of theologians generations on religious issues. On the other hand, one of the main church functions is to educate new generations of followers, which is important for church existence. At the same time, believers themselves, regardless of their status, can use the interreligious dialogue fruits, expanding their circle of contacts and gaining new knowledge both about their own religious tradition and about the religion of Others. Responsibility to one's tradition may require serious diplomatic work, which is associated with a fine line between interreligious dialogue and the mission of converting the interlocutor to one's faith, which can lead to mistrust among partners and deprive the dialogue of honesty and openness. Since interreligious dialogue's ultimate goal is truth advancement, dialogue can be seen as a form of mutual witnessing which is most appropriate for their own religious tradition members. It can also be used in communication with Christians of different denominations, since in dialogue with each other they can testify to the final truth of Revelation, whose conductor and bearer was Jesus. In the process of interreligious dialogue with representatives of non-Christian religions, a Christian must believe that the God knowledge experience is most fully expressed in the final Revelation - in Jesus Christ as the New Being bearer. At the same time, non-Christian religions also have some universal revelation experience, devoid of finality, but potentially ready to accept it [41, p.166-174]. The third condition for interreligious interaction is adherence to the principle of connection. According to it there is something in common between religions, all religions are called to resolve certain existential and religious questions that involve a process of self-transcendence. The answer about a certain religions communion is very important because if there is no communion between religions, there is no practical meaning

in interreligious dialogue. Religions give different answers to the same fundamental questions and have different attitudes towards existential crisis. And yet, different religious traditions must unite to solve existing social or political challenges: poverty, natural disasters, social injustice, consequences of war. These problems require a collective response and allow religions to practically interact with each other and come together to address basic human needs. Such collaboration may, in some cases, lead to further dialogue about the reasons for engaging in social action, concepts of an ideal society, the need for social change, or any other topic of interest to both parties. Cooperation for common goals helps to establish the level of trust and friendship necessary for further fruitful and constructive exchanges. However, such a practical or humanitarian dialogue is unlikely to be fully successful, since its level cannot go beyond practical issues, and its conduct will always depend on external challenges or crises. Thus, sustainable dialogue between religions requires a sense of connection common to them all. The interaction difficulties based on connection are due to the fact that the ethical aspects of religion are secondary to religious experience, which is very different in Christian and non-Christian religions. At the same time, there is heterogeneity of religious experience in Eastern and Western Christian churches. It cannot be the foundation of a union and harmonious interaction between representatives of different religious traditions. Therefore, the relationship between them must be based on the beliefs developed by a particular religion. And this is not faith in a common religious experience, but the Christian's conviction that every person is created in the image of Christ and that God leads him along the path of salvation. And the Buddhist is convinced that all living beings have the nature of Buddha. For Muslims, this is Allah's covenant: "O people! Indeed, we created you from a (couple) of a man and a woman and made you nations and tribes so that you would recognise each other (but not despise each other). The most honoured among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most God-fearing. Verily, Allah is the Knowledgeable, the Knowing of (everything)" [Koran, 49:13]. Thus, the possibility of constructive interreligious dialogue requires each religious tradition to develop a religious self-understanding in which (at least in some) other religions' teachings are somehow related to or relevant to its own religion. So, Mufti Ravil Gainutdin writes: "... Let Christians, different but equally worthy, know a lot about Islam, the origin of the Koran, the Prophet Muhammad, ... helping the poor, jihad in its true sense - as a war waged by the faithful in his own soul against his own vices and temptations of the shaitan. And we will study with interest Christian theologies, Christian ethics with its calls to faith, hope and love, close to the heart of a Muslim. Only knowledge gives understanding and takes away any falsehood, eliminates lies and slander" [42]. But these words are also relevant for representatives of other religions, including Christianity. Empathy. Dialogue between religions also requires the ability to understand each other based on empathy, which is a component of critical thinking [40]. The term 'empathy' usually refers to the acquisition of 'another mind's experience', including reproducing others' emotional experience. It is argued that religious doctrines or practices that leave a person indifferent or cause a negative reaction are likely to generate little interest, creativity, or initiative, except perhaps

to demonstrate the superior value and power of one's own teachings [43]. The importance of empathy may seem self-evident. Thus, if a person is conceptually and empirically restricted by his own religion, dialogue can never provide any new ideas or experience of his religious concept. On the other hand, if a person does not have his own religion, dialogue will also not be able to lead to any new knowledge or religious experience. The process of empathy not only provides a deeper understanding of particular teachings and practices` meaning, but also provides a measure of what can ultimately become the constructive dialogue object. At the same time, empathy should be based on the principle that every individual is a person, and people have a certain spiritual, psychological and physiological commonality [44]. Therefore, although religious tradition plays the most significant role in interreligious empathy, the possibility of empathic understanding of another is not necessarily limited to religious experiences and culture that has been shaped by religion. Thus, for example, a representative of any religious tradition is able to perceive Jesus' mental suffering in Gethsemane, regardless of historical, racial or human limitations. At the same time, for every sensitive person, acquaintance with Jesus can become a link through which the Revelation about God will be perceived. Empathy does not provide full access to the religious experience of the Other, since it is formed by the object of faith. Despite this, it allows one to expand the knowledge and experience that, under certain conditions, can help in constructive interreligious dialogue [37].

Hospitality. Implies recognition of at least partial truth in another religion, which is a sufficient basis for dialogue. Hospitality presupposes a certain humility towards a sense of the unconditional truth of one's tradition, the admission of some of its aspects to change in the future, a sense of interconnection between religions and the desire to understand each other. Of course, in the process of discerning truth, each religious tradition will be judged by the Christian in terms of the Final Revelation`s truth. Accordingly, this aspect determines the nature of the truth found in other religions. It does not pose a threat because the element of truth in another tradition does not challenge or question the claim to have the fullness of truth. As part of the hospitality principle, Christian theologians proposed a common Eucharist for Christian believers of various denominations. This practice is called intercommunion and is practiced by some churches. And yet, the Eucharist itself does not guarantee the achievement of unity due to the lack of understanding its ancient principle by modern Christians. It can strengthen unity when it is already the result of being in the same church and, accordingly, church unity. At the same time, gathering representatives of churches, who belong to different confessions for a common Eucharist in one church, does not indicate their spiritual unity and may serve as a predictor of schisms in the future. In our time, to achieve the unity of churches, greater importance belongs not to the Eucharist, which is perceived by many Christians only as a rite, but to the spiritual unity of believers in Jesus as Christ, in which the law of faith and the law of life coincide [45].

## 8. Conclusion

Interreligious dialogue today has important social significance. Changes in recent decades have made interreligious dialogue an easier task. This was facilitated by advances in the study of history. Thus, starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious statements began to be perceived in historical events` context. Later, with the development of phenomenology, it became clear that truth has a component of intentionality, interest, meaning for us and, therefore, includes a component of subjectivity and, accordingly, relativity. In addition, hermeneutics` achievements have shown language limitations in describing reality, which is always presented one-sidedly in linguistic construction. Language has limits in describing the infinite and is able to testify to it only symbolically and, therefore, linguistic expressions cannot claim absoluteness. Further research into hermeneutics showed that any text is perceived by different people in different ways, and is interpreted differently. For example, knowing Jesus as the Christ and the text of the Bible are not identical. Truth is learned through dialogue. Questions that a person asks and answers that he receives will always be in his language, whose structure is determined by cultural tradition, which also reveals relativity of our knowledge [46, p.1-20]. Despite the need for interreligious dialogue, awareness of our knowledge relativity and intellect humility before the process of knowledge inexhaustibility, the creation of global ethics in reality seems impossible, since ethics and morality are secondary to the human spirit`s spheres [47]. A Christian`s religious dialogue with members of different faiths should be conducted from a position of humility, goodwill, solving practical problems within the framework of mutual cooperation and faith that God is leading us along the path of fulfilment. And this is the path of love and justice. This path may be different for each person. Yet in his realised kingdom God is all to all [41, p.177].

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