THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA

STUDIA
UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI
THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA

CONTENTS

IV. THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

V. VARIA

I. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND POSTMODERNITY: IDENTITY, PLURALISM AND COMMUNION

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ABSTRACT. The article presents the characteristics of postmodernism and its consequences on issues such as identity, pluralism and communion. As an "unstable" philosophical trend, it interacts with the "stability" and authority of the orthodox teachings, thus resulting in an ideological conflict. The article offers some theological answers to the above-mentioned conflict, as well as to some major issues of the contemporary postmodern society.

Keywords: postmodernity, mission, *protean* identity, emerging churches, postmodern communities, ecclesiology

We often hear that there's nothing new under the sun, and the postmodern philosophy or way of thinking, ideologically supporting the contemporary society, is nothing more than a contextual challenge to which Church will offer an answer, the same way it has always done throughout history. This happened before, in the early days, when the orthodox were a small group of people surrounded by Gnostics, legalists and fundamentalists, as shown in the New Testament. It was also true during the Constantinian era when the Orthodox Saints and Church Fathers led an apologetic life, while apostates and heretics led the Christian empire. Such aspects were also present under the ottomans and in the Russian Empire, not to mention Communist times. Likewise, to some extent, it is true even nowadays. So, in this sense, things have never been radically different from what we witness in postmodernity.

However, as father Thomas Hopko notes, today there are radical differences in comparison to all the previous eras. Orthodoxy is not a persecuted

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minority among a multitude of Christian movements and other religious movements in a "heathen" empire with faithful members touched by the fervor generated by Christ's first proclamation in the world. Today, Orthodoxy is no longer the official Church of a Christian empire with persecuted saints in a constant battle with the heretics, the apostates and the sinners, and sometimes even with each other. Orthodoxy is no longer a variety of ethnic communities under Muslim or Marxist domination. Also, one can no longer find in "diaspora" just an orthodox community exiled in heterodox countries, obeying massive secularization, transformations and changes. Although still a minority Church facing inner confusions, fears, expectations and divisions resulted from "an odyssey bearing over 2000 years of history," the Orthodox Church today is, for the first time, part of a "global village," and its diverse people develop in different ways and seem to adopt a way of life that is about to dominate the planet. This is the liberal, democratic, capitalist and postmodern (and post-Christian) pluralism.[1] It is the way of life that dominates the contemporary world and challenges the Church to give an answer to matters such as identity, pluralism, communion and community, established on brand new foundations.

Thus, the present text is an attempt to provide an orthodox answer to the postmodern hermeneutics of identity, pluralism and communion.

1. Postmodernity and postmodernism

Postmodernity is the name given to a historical period, and postmodernism is the theory that developed in order to explain that period, which began during the second half of the 20th century. The opinions regarding the exact moment postmodernity began differ, the dates ranging between 1968-1973. The year 1968 was marked by the student riots, at the end of the Second World War, riots of a generation that began to ignore the cultural conventions it grew up with and asked for change. The riots did not ask for a specific set of political, social and economic changes, but demanded a complete change, as a general rejection of the old. In 1973 international economy changed forever as a result of the oil crisis generated by the new radicalized organization of the oil exporting countries (OPEC). The oil crisis was provoked by the oil-producing countries, the majority of them being part of the Muslim world. It was a way of expressing their anger towards the continuous support the West offered to Israel, support that proved to be decisive in the Iom Kipur

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[1] Thomas Hopko, "Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralist Societies," *The Ecumenical Review* 51, no. 4 (October 1999): 365.

War. It marked a fundamental change for the economic and political power balance and a dramatic priority shift in the global politics and economy. The social changes that occurred in the West on a large scale are to a great extent a product of these evolutions. There are some opinions according to which, postmodernity could be dated back to the year 1973. Although not everybody agrees on that, there is agreement in terms of how the face of the world has changed since then. Thus, the premises that become the basis for the notion of postmodernity is that the world did not go through formal changes, but through a fundamental transformation of the way it operates, a change that became disadvantageous in terms of predictability, order and rationality.[2]

In this context, *postmodernism* becomes a concept widely used to describe the criticism of modernity within a multitude of fields, varying from architecture, philosophy, politics, sociology, religious studies and even theology. Postmodernism is manifested as a trend that criticizes some of the fundamental beliefs of modern philosophers such as I. Kant and R. Descartes (1596-1650), especially their foundationalism. The claim of foundationalism was that scientists – freed from religious and political prejudices – could experience the world as it "truly" was. According to Descartes, for example, properly acquired knowledge is built upon a unique foundation. In the case of Kant and others, this view on knowledge gave birth to the concept of universal, neutral, autonomous reason as a warrant for the universal truth. This description of the objective knowledge is one of the main targets of postmodern criticism (while the critics of postmodernism often state that anti-foundationalism could lead to relativism). According to philosophers like Heidegger (1889-1976), H. G. Gadamer (1900-2002) and J. Derrida (1935-2004), knowledge is already a prejudice, as our perception of the world is conditioned by our "horizons," and these horizons are in relationship with our particular socio-cultural history. So, there is no universal, neutral, "objective" knowledge, but rather an interpretation of the world. M Foucault (1926-1984) continued this criticism, maintaining that knowledge is, in fact, conditioned by power, and that our prejudices are caused by forces of power and domination. J.-F. Lyotard (1924-1988) defined postmodernism as mistrust towards the "grand narratives." For Lyotard, any view of the world – even the scientific one – in the end, calls for a grand "narrative," similar to a religious narrative or with a "myth." Thus, knowledge is strongly related to faith. For him, a "metanarrative" is not just a story, but a view of the world based on a universal, autonomous motif.[3] A metanarrative is the general intellectual framework

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[2] Bill Cooke, "Postmodernism", ed. H. James Birx, *Encyclopedia of Time: Science, Philosophy, Theology, & Culture* (SAGE, 13 January 2009), 1029.

[3] James K. A. Smith, "Postmodernism," ed. Ian A. McFarland et al., in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 399.

through which we see history. For example, the communist metanarrative presented a progressive and inevitable succession from feudalism, to capitalism and socialism and, lastly, to communism. The Christian metanarrative, in exchange, started with the primordial innocence of Eden, followed by the fall, sin and death, for which Jesus Christ paid the ransom, and it would end when Christ was to return, reward the faithful and judge everyone.[4]

Postmodernists, at least the ones from the continental tradition, believe that metanarratives are no longer necessary, and, in this respect, with the end of the metanarratives comes the end of tyranny of history and of the aggressive domination of science.[5] Thus, postmodernism is presented as an escape from rationality, a way of feeling liberated from the limits and norms socially constructed. Postmodernism aims to divide the truth, the standards and the ideals into what has been deconstructed and what intends to be deconstructed, by denying a priori any new doctrine, theory or revelation and claims the right to replace the abandoned rules of the past. G.B. Smith fundamentally identified postmodernism as a sign of disintegration and faith in what he called the Enlightenment project.

In defining postmodernism, we must take into consideration two facts. A more moderate version of postmodernism claims that we know nothing; we can only interpret, and the interpretations can only express partial and narrow perspectives. A more radical version of postmodernism states that we know nothing for sure and that our claims towards universal knowledge are hegemonic, which means that our ability to interpret only from our partial and narrow perspectives is a liberation from this tendency towards hegemony, as it is clearly reflected in science and rationality.

Behind these differences, hides in fact a political ideology for the most part of postmodernism. This is due to the fact that postmodernism is identified with the political left. The reason postmodernism is eager to write the obituary of the metanarratives is that many of its followers, earlier in their lives, supported variations of socialism and communism, components of the grand metanarrative. After the failure of the German nationalist socialism and the failed experiment of communism, postmodernists were faced to admit that the capitalist system and the supporting metanarratives became triumphant or created a critical system which denied the legitimacy of any narrative. This approach was embraced by postmodernism.

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[4] Cooke, "Encyclopedia of Time," 1030.
[5] See Nicolae Turcan, *Postmodernism şi teologie apofatică. O apologie în faţa gândirii slabe* (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2014), 48.

It is important to mention that postmodernism also questions the claim put forth by science, namely that it is founded on the objective truth. The metanarrative of science describes knowledge as being accumulated in time, leading to an ever clearer understanding of the universe. The attitudes towards science reveal the greatest divisions between the continental and the Anglo-American schools of postmodernism. The Anglo-American attitudes are articulated in the work of Richard Rorty (1931-2007), as his criticism was oriented towards fundamentalism and towards practices supporting claims that one's theories are founded on the objective truth. The continental branch of postmodernism, once again, got lost in its attitudes towards science. Indeed, this area received the strongest opposition. Having as a framework a relativist epistemic postmodernism, many continental postmodernists regard science as a metanarrative as any other, without any special authority and they believed it deserved additional criticism, mainly because of the authority claims perceived by scientists.[6]

Postmodernism is, therefore, one of the most controversial notions which seeks to put together in a coherent framework the changes that occur in the western thinking regarding the relationship of the individual with himself, with alterity and with the world he lives in. For this reason, it is difficult to give a characterization, since fluidity and the lack of coherence are some of its features. With this in mind, we can discuss some of the specific features of postmodernism that represent a challenge for the Christian witness: relativism of values, self-reference and autonomization; fluid identity, pluralism, omnipresence of the mediatized communication, creation of reality by means of subjective projections etc.

2. The *protean* identity and the Christian identity

The end of the universal/fundamental metanarratives leads to weak, relative narratives. According to these, we cannot speak of a single truth, in fact, we cannot speak of any truth, because everything is subject to continuous transformation. There are no criteria for absolute judgement – everything is relative. This idea is, of course, the postmodernist answer to modernism, to which postmodernism refers to as post, trans or by denying it. This way, if modernism is crystallized and stable, postmodernism is fluid. If modernism is conservative and rational, postmodernism is liberal and does not believe in rationality. Furthermore, postmodernism is focused more on the self and

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[6] Cooke, "Encyclopedia of Time," 1029-32.

narcissistic in its so-called obsession of identity. This, however, does not mean that postmodern identity is well-defined. As everything becomes more fluid and unstable, postmodern identity defines itself as *protean*, a technical term that comes from the Greek god Proteus, who changes his shape.[7] The *Protean* phenomenon has manifested itself in the 20th and in the 21st century and it encloses simultaneously integration and disintegration, with no limits, theories or authorities. That is to say, we no longer speak of a system, but rather of a multitude of subsystems. The protean self must adapt and change, it must be fluid like the world he belongs to. Furthermore, the contextual circumstances can lead to a dilution of identity, when the self is focused on self-image more than on the self, as an ontological or conceptual self. This way, identity becomes more and more grounded in the social roles played, without a defined, stable core.

Thus, postmodern culture generates the changeable and adaptable protean self, but, on the other hand, it causes a dilution of identity, which leads to self and identity crises, correlated with an obsession for identity affirmation.

In postmodern thinking, the lack of a system and the relativist approach were considered a response to modern conservatism, to the cult of rationality and the totalitarian phenomena that evolved from it. Nationalism – an ideology based on modern values – was a great threat after the Second World War. For this reason, an undefined identity seemed like a good idea in a fight against this threat (as the alternative to the fanatic identity, which, in postmodernism, is often identified with the nationalist identity), and would support the claim that everything is relative and that there is no absolute truth in the name of which one would have the chance to repeat the horror of another global conflict. That is why, postmodern identity is afraid of any firm statements and of borders and boundaries in general and is oriented towards cosmopolitanism. This led to the world we know today – liberal, open, based on international agreements and forms of organization such as the European Union. But it can also lead to opposite values due to the dilution of identity, which generates, surprisingly, lack of tolerance, confusion, a search for stability, which, paradoxically, can even lead to a look back into the past, towards an intolerant nationalism.

In the context of a postmodern world, fanatical identities are not in fact grounded on modern values, such as nationalism. The identity fanaticism is often correlated with the loss or the dilution of identity, or with the lack of a nucleus. Precisely because it is a weak identity, it fears the loss of its autonomy, and that leads to alienation and lack of tolerance.

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[7] Jeremy Bailenson and Nick Yee, "The Proteus Effect: The Effect of Transformed Self-Representation on Behavior," *Human Communication Research*, no. 33 (2007): 271.

The opposite of this weak identity is a strong identity rooted in a strong ego (self-consciousness) as a mediator between the super-ego (the social and cultural world) and the id (the uncoordinated instincts). It presupposes the presence of a nucleus, which allows the individual to play social roles, without losing the integrity of the self. In this case, we have an identity which is not egocentric or ethnocentric, but tolerant towards the others, because it is not afraid to lose its autonomy. Also, the obsession for defining the self disappears, as the feeling of self-integrity is present.

In this case, we must ask ourselves if this kind of identity is still a postmodern identity. On one hand, the protean self can be seen as a strong identity that is capable of adapting itself to changes (in a way, a strong identity should be this way). On the other hand, the postmodern values can generate an identity that is undefined, fluid, relative and without a core. These values are the negation of the modern values, which lead to identity fanaticism. Therefore, a strong identity should rely on other values, not related to modernity. There is a need for a completely different discourse which enables the development of a nucleus and of an ego.[8]

One can note that the problem of identity in general is discussed in terms that couldn't be farther away from the Christian view of identity. Christian identity is based on the scriptural meaning of the self as ontologically given, but also as an ongoing "project."

Thus, from a theological point of view, we can talk about an *identity of the being*: the creation of man in the image of God is a dynamic relation. We are unique creature and our identity is given by the image of God and by the personal effort to be in His image, which presupposes the existence of a relational project. At the same time, we talk about a *fallen identity* about the fragmenting and distorting the initial project, as well as of the restored or *redeemed identity*. The latter is understood as God's healing of the fallen identity, by giving the being a new identity, both *stable*, in the light of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the Embodiment, the Cross, and the Ascension, and also seen as an *ongoing* project, which began on Pentecost, and occurs in the light of entering and living in the Kingdom of God.

There are different understandings of identity from a Christian point of view, but they are all based on the idea that identity is a stable and dynamic ontological given. It is clear that within the realms of these two types of identities, one stable and the other fluid, the premises of conflict are always

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[8] "Who Am I? The Role of Identity in Postmodern Culture," *Antropo Logos* (blog), 16 September 2017, http://antropologos.pl/who-am-i-the-role-of-identity-in-postmodern-culture/, http://antropologos.pl/who-am-i-the-role-of-identity-in-postmodern-culture/.

present. The theoretical idea of a protean identity generates today fluid identities, with effects both at an individual level (gender fluidity) and on a community level (globalism).

3. Postmodern pluralism and confessional pluralism

Pluralism is defined as a doctrine admitting that reality includes several types of existence (principles, essences) or that there are different ways to describe of reality.[9] In the postmodern thinking, pluralism implies that a religious claiming of any ideology is necessarily wrong, respectively incorrect from a political point of view. The only absolute truth is that there is no absolute truth. This philosophy derives from Kant's criticism and its development in mathematics, logic, philosophy, theology and in the hermeneutics of the 19th century. Deconstructivism was generated by the new types of hermeneutics, and these evolutions generated what we know today as postmodernism and multiculturalism.

In modernism it is stated that, in the end, knowledge will revolutionize the world and it will exile God to the periphery of society by constructing a new edifice of absolute knowledge through science. This position was abandoned in postmodernism, and during deconstructivism this modern vision was denounced. According to the pluralist postmodern vision, the objective truth, the goodness, or the beauty of the world that human beings are called to discover do not exist. There is no objective meaning or aim, but rather a construction of a reality or several constructions of a multitude of pseudo-realities, produced by the subjective will of the individuals or by "groups of interest" in a political context. Therefore, the principles of liberal democracy become objects of worship and find their finality within a politicized world and within a world of hedonism. Liberty (in the postmodern sense of the word) becomes a purpose in itself. Differences are deified. Happiness is understood as material and pseudo-spiritual pleasure, becoming the ultimate (and compulsory) objective for everybody.[10]

Pluralism is also encountered in the monotheistic religions, although postmodern pluralism denies its theological foundation. Pluralism and universalism are two types of views that have confronted each other throughout history. In our opinion, pluralism is the result of the failure of universalism to impose itself at a general human level. This can be easily observed in the ecclesial space. The emergence of heresies and their rejection are good examples. The majority of the erroneous teachings, for various theological reasons, perceive themselves as "universal." No Christian community born out of heresy has ever

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[9] Ion Coteanu, ed., *DEX* (București: Univers Enciclopedic, 1996).
[10] Hopko, "Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralist Societies", 366.

perceived itself as a new type of hermeneutics, without contesting the community from which it got separated. For the most part, the new Christian communities were born as a reaction to the old community which, in their view, no longer held the Truth, and the new communities claimed to be the legitimate defenders and inheritors of the Truth. This is how the plurality of the ecclesial communities was born. They claimed to hold the single truth and were in conflict with the original communities and even with the newest communities, which claimed the same thing. From this perspective, pluralism is the result of the "failure" to assume the unique truth homogeneously at the level of the human societies, which would be impossible, in our opinion. "The failure" generated religious conflicts, which in their essence were about a confrontation among powerful and final truths. Thus, there is no surprise that the first time the term "ecumenism" appeared, in a religious sense, was in the correspondence between Bossuet and Leibnitz, for they were against religious wars that stained with blood the European history.[11]

We witness today a "softening" in claiming powerful, ultimate and exclusive truths and the appearance of truths that can be nuanced. Not all truths have an ultimate and absolute character. There are truths and truths and there is the unique Truth and its expression in a hierarchical way. We encounter ultimate, non-debatable, truths, and also truths marked by context, but still expressing the essence in a different way. From this moment on, pluralism becomes legitimate, including in theology. Of course, the way this pluralism is understood and assumed differs from one community to another. For example, in the Roman-Catholic theology we come across a theory of the "hierarchy" of truths[12], or in the orthodox theology, the existence of a theological pluralism which justifies itself in the unity of faith, underlining the fact that, in the true evangelical spirit, one cannot support a theological pluralism as far as substance is concerned, but can accept a formal pluralism.

Therefore, when we talk about pluralism, the orthodox theology acknowledges the existence of diverse means of theological expression, but they are only legitimate for as long as the unicity of the teaching of faith is not altered. In other words, in orthodox theology, there is a balance between what is universal and the plurality of the means of expressing what is universal. Postmodern philosophy, in exchange, seems to regard pluralism as absolute and proposes or imposes it in a radical way.

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[11] Julia H. de Santa Ana, *Oecumenisme-Liberation*, trad. Ana Brun (Paris: CERF, 1993), 10-15.

[12] "Unitatis redintegratio," cap. II. 11,
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

The reaction of orthodoxy to postmodern pluralism

In 1999, father Thomas Hopko warned that there are four attitudes towards postmodern pluralism. The first would be the denial. Some orthodox deny the existence of "postmodern pluralism." To misinterpret what is happening and to underestimate its impact could prove to be fatal for the Orthodox Church. Postmodern pluralism is a reality and without a revolution of great and unimaginable proportions, it will not disappear anytime soon.

Secondly, it would be a fatal mistake for the orthodox Christians to believe that they and their Church are immune to postmodernism and cannot be touched by its influence and power. The orthodox are as affected just as any other people and are as easily manipulated and deceived as the others.

Thirdly, orthodox Christians do not have to react to postmodern pluralism by imagining that they can reject the contemporary world and by finding refuge in their own world. It would be, in fact, what postmodernism invites us to do, and probably, it would protect our right to live in such a world. We cannot create our own realities, we must live the reality as it is and assume responsibility for it in front of God. We must live in a world that was given to us through God's providence.

Fourthly, the orthodox Christians must not be influenced by the idea that a postmodern pluralist vision of the world is a great new opportunity for mankind, in accordance with the orthodox concepts of freedom, personal dignity, cultural diversity, the theology of the embodiment and the mystical apophatic theology, all understood as critical attitudes of "western" rationalism, pietism, legalism and moralism.[13] Although postmodernism is a trend based on the criticism of modernity, it cannot be associated with the orthodox criticism of the western theology. In its structure, postmodernism is a philosophical trend that lacks ontology, and consequently, lacks a "strong" presence of God, Who sustains everything and is the core of the entire human existence.

4. Community and communion in postmodernism

If identities are fluid in postmodernism, when it comes to communities, we see a fragmentation and a hybridization which extended and transformed the meaning of community. According to Erin Sharpe, we can identify the following tendencies in understanding community in postmodernism.

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[13] Hopko, "Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralist Societies," 367.

The community as experience

As more and more social phenomena occur, such as chat rooms on the internet, the conceptualization of the community as associated with a set location extended, in order to include communities that exist in the virtual space. For this reason, the postmodern community is best defined as "an experience, rather than a place."

The communities of interests and emotions

In a traditional way, communities have formed when the individuals were interconnected by instruments and when they depended one upon the other. In the postmodern culture, for a change, people get together when they have common interests and styles. Some theoreticians of the phenomenon call these groups "life style enclaves" or "communities of interests." In a similar way, the idea of "emotional community" appeared and it was described as a group based on feelings, not obligations. Furthermore, their capacity to produce the feeling of community played a central role in assessing the emotional communities. It was characterized by its capacity to make possible the transition from a "contractual community" to a "contact community."

The Christian community in postmodern cultures. The emerging churches

"The enclaves as a life-style" or "the communities of interests" can be found in ecclesiology. If we transfer the idea to the spiritual realm, we observe a postmodern tendency in the ecclesial communities, represented by the so called "emerging churches."[14] The supporters of this movement believe that the emerging churches represent the type of church fitted for today's postmodern society.

The term "emerging" refers to something that is developing, growing and becoming. According to Constantin Ghioanca, the simplest definition of the emerging churches would be "churches in movement." This means that the churches accommodate to culture and develop with it, always open to change for the sake of maintaining their relevance. The change of course occurs both at a formal level and in the doctrine. This phenomenon is visible nowadays in Great Britain, USA and Australia, but the influence can be observed in other places as well.[15] The model of the emerging churches carries the following general features: their cultural context is postmodern and pluralist; the church

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[14] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Baker Academic, 2005).

[15] Costel Ghioanca, "Scurta prezentare a Bisericilor Emergente. Articol in Revista Crestinul Azi," 2010, https://istorieevanghelica.ro/2011/01/26/costel-ghioanca-scurta-prezentare-a-bisericilor-emergente-articol-in-revista-crestinul-azi/.

services combine the classical form with the actual local styles; their missions are "glocal" (global and local).[16] The communion is created in this context and is motivated by emotions. The continuous accommodation to secular culture reduces the evangelic message to a spiritually motivated artistic form. This way, in "the emerging churches," the communion is built around a cultural construct, with an appearance of spiritually.

The Church and the postmodern communities

According to these images the postmodern communities seem to be an accidental and unfinished construct. They seem to be communities that are "done" and "undone" quickly. Fluidity and evanescence, as well as the capacity to reconstruct are some of the characteristics that help these types of communities to remain new in society. Their capacity to reinvent themselves offers them "the chance" to always be in the beginning.

In this context, the Orthodox Church has the mission to offer the perspective of a stable community, in which the eternal new element is Jesus Christ. If the Church Tradition is creatively assumed, the members of the Christian community are, willingly or not, members of postmodern type communities, and can find in the Church renewed experiences and can experience the emotion of meeting the Living God.

Referring to the emerging churches, as a postmodern phenomenon, we must remember that the ecumenical dialogue has as a purpose the recreation of the unity of faith of all Christians based on the biblical and patristic tradition. Within this dialogue, the Orthodox Church meets other Christian communities, with the conscience that it is the One Church of Christ. In postmodern terms, we are talking about a meeting between a "strong" ecclesiology, and a series of "fluid" ecclesiologies (except for the dialogue with the Oriental Churches and with the Roman-Catholic Church), a meeting where Orthodoxy is the living witness of the apostolic tradition. The dialogue of love would have to lead to the redemptive Truth. Of course, one can say that this position is utopian and the attitude fundamentalist, but only by trying to know deeply the various traditions engaged in an ecumenical dialogue, there is a chance to slow down the dissolution of the Christian community.

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[16] Mark Driscoll, "Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church Mark Driscoll," *Criswell Theological Review*, no. 3/2 (2006): 88.

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UNITY IN IDENTITY OR UNITY IN ENTITY?
SHARING OR POSSESSING CHRIST?

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ABSTRACT. Without any question, ecclesiology along Christology remain the crucial issues for theologians in the modern Ecumenical dialogue. And while we take as granted that we, as Christians coming from different Churches, have reached a common place regarding the doctrines of Christology, at the same time we experience and we live within our various confessional bodies a *different Christ*. We are the receivers of the baptismal gift (*unum baptisma*) and of the calling to be workers of unity, but still, we are living in a "*not yet*" unity situation. We all witness the paradoxical phenomenon of accepting that baptism bring us in communion with God, but not with one another, exceptionally not with those who come from different Christian denomination. We are "already" in God's grace, but "not yet" in that same gracious acceptance of one another. We tend to want to correct each other before we encourage one another; to judge before we accept. Statements of faith tend to carry more value than acts of faith. This paper aims to answer the question of the ecclesial unity.

Keywords: unity, identity, entity, Christian Church, ecclesiology, Body of Christ

Introduction

Although it sounds simple that the Christian Churches *confess Lord Jesus as God and Saviour*, it is not; on the contrary it is quite complicated in the view of the living scandal of division among Christians. Jesus asked: "*Who do you say that I am*? *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*," Peter responded.[1] What does such a universal claim about Jesus Christ mean for the Christians and for the members of the other religions? It is a common principle among Christians that Jesus is the life of the world, a blessing to many and an offence to others.[2]

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[1] *Mark* 8:29.

[2] Ion Bria, *Jesus Christ – The Life of the World – An Orthodox Contribution to the Vancouver Theme* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 32-33.

How much the world needs such a blessing today, but how big is the failure of Christians to fulfill Jesus' commandment to be all one, following the prototype of unity of the Holy Trinity.[3] What then are the consequences and the responsibilities concerning the tragedy of Christian disunity and the pain of the contemporary world torn by oppression, starvation, violence, intolerance, hate and killing?

Without any question ecclesiology along Christology remain the crucial issues for theologians in the modern Ecumenical dialogue. And while we take as granted that we, as Christians coming from different Churches, have reached a common place regarding the doctrines of Christology, at the same time we experience and we live within our various confessional bodies a *different Christ*! We are the receivers of the baptismal gift (*unum baptisma*) and of the calling to be workers of unity, but still we are living in a "*not yet*" unity situation. We all witness the paradoxical phenomenon of accepting that baptism bring us in communion with God, but not with one another, exceptionally not with those who come from different Christian denomination.[4] We read in the Faith and Order study document called "The Nature and Purpose of the Church": "*In the One Baptism with water in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit...Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity.*"[5] We are "already" in God's grace, but "not yet" in that same gracious acceptance of one another. We tend to want to correct each other before we encourage one another; to judge before we accept. Statements of faith tend to carry more value than acts of faith.[6]

Thus, what is the importance of the identity in the current situation of unity process? Am I a member of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican etc. Church, or am I primarily a member of the Body of Christ? And even more, can we speak of Churches (in plural) instead of Church? Is our identity a problem to this unity? Do we receive as identical the Body of Christ with our confessional ecclesial body? Who defines the limits of the Church? What sort of diversity can be accepted? Thus, what is it actually ecclesial unity? What does it mean diversity in the ecclesiastical life and how far can we speak

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[3] Georges Florovsky, *La Sainte Église Universelle – Confrontation œcuménique* (Paris : Delachaux, 1948), 17: "*Est le seul modèle de l' unité parfaite, c'est la Trinité Très Sainte, où les Trois Personnes ne font ou plutôt ne sont qu'un seul Être unique. C'est sur cette example suprême que l'unité chrétienne doit être modelée.*"

[4] Vlassios Phidas, "Baptism and Ecclesiology," *The Ecumenical Review* 54, no. 1 (2002): 43-46.

[5] *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 181 (Geneva: WCC, 1998), 36.

[6] Thomas Best, *Faith and Order at the Crossroads Kuala Lumpur – The Plenary Commission Meeting 2004*, Faith and Order Paper No. 196 (Geneva: WCC, 2005): 129.

about legitimate or not legitimate diversity? In other words is diversity against catholicity (*Una Sancta*)? Do we share Christ, or do we possess Christ like being a valuable object kept within our confessional boundaries and with no will to share to each other?

The issue of Unity elaborated within WCC

In 1963 in Montreal during the 4th World Conference of Faith and Order Commission the representatives of the Churches realised their failure to define the ecclesiological nature of the World Council of Churches (WCC). As a consequence of this failure and during the elaboration of Vancouver's general theme "*Jesus Christ – the Life of the World*," a clear and significant shift happened within the agenda and the framework of WCC from *theology* to *anthropology* in the basis of discovering the churchly meaning of unity in the light of God's plan for all creation. [7] For the first time in Vancouver it was mentioned the term "holistic theology" describing the Eucharistic vision along the renewal of the Church and the healing of humanity. We read in particular:

> "Church unity is vital to the health of the Church and to the future of the human family… Christ unites God and world, spiritual and secular… His body and blood given to us in the element of bread and wine, integrate liturgy and diaconate, proclamation and acts of healing… Our Eucharistic vision encompasses the whole reality of Christian worship, life and witness."[8]

In continuation of that plan the Faith and Order Commission proposed three schemes of unity within its members. The first one called "organic unity*,*" which was the outcome of the 3rd General Assembly of WCC in New Delhi (1961) based on the notion of *corporate life*, which describes the link between the mission and diakonia of the whole Church which must go into the world to witness and service. The vision of the one Church and the proclamation of the one Gospel make the visible unity even more vivid. The Unity Statement of New Delhi opened new dimensions of understanding the work of the Holy Spirit within the ecumenical encounter. I quote mot a mot from the Statement:

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[7] John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition – Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 129-135.

[8] *Towards A Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches – A Policy Statement* (Geneva: WCC, 1997), 10.

"We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as *all in each place* who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people."[9]

Seven years later in the 4th General Assembly of WCC in Uppsala (1968) Churches showed that the fellowship (*koinonia*) is at the same time universal and local. The final adopted statement in Uppsala was supplementary to the theological content of New Delhi statement which talked about *all people in each place*. On the other hand, Uppsala talked about *all people in all places* who shape a truly ecumenical conciliar form of common life (*universal fellowship*).[10] According to the Uppsala proposal Churches should work for the moment when a universal council will speak for all Christians and lead the way into the future. By *conciliarity* the Faith and Order Commission describes the process of the Churches coming together in local and in universal level, keeping their different traditions and their own authentic ecclesial identity and providing room for sincere dialogue, common prayer, counsel and decision making and believing that the Holy Spirit once more can lead Christians into a common future.[11] It was understood as a way of "re-reception" of the past councils in the form of a living dialogue. Thus, dialogue must be a process mutual empowerment, and not a negotiation between parties who have conflicting interests and claims. Furthermore, partners in dialogue should join in a common pursuit of justice, peace and constructive action for the good of all people, being able at the same time to hear and listen to the self-understanding of each other's faith.[12] Through that process it is achieved a mutual commitment at all levels.

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[9] https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/1961-new-delhi/new-delhi-statement-on-unity.

[10] Ibid., *Faith and Order Louvain 1971 – Study Report and Documents*, 226: "…*the Uppsala Assembly first calls for eventually actualizing a truly universal ecumenical conciliar form of life and then asks the Churches to work towards the time when a genuinely universal council may once more speak for all Christians and lead the way into the future.*"

[11] Bernard Leeming, *Les Églises á la recherche d'une seule Église* (Paris: Saint Paul, 1964), 188.

[12] *Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of other Religions*, (Geneva: WCC 2003), 9-10.

In the Meeting of Faith and Order Commission in Louvain (1971)[13] and in the Consultation of Faith and Order Commission in Salamanca (1973),[14] in both cases the issue of conciliar unity was stressed one more time under the theme "Concepts of Unity and Models of Union." In Accra's meeting in 1974 the members of Faith and Order pointed out clearly the nine requirements needed in order to be established the vision of the conciliar fellowship as a step towards the visible unity of the Churches. These conditions are the following:

1. Unity in the Gospel's truth.
2. Unity around the table.
3. Unity in each place.
4. Fellowship for the sake of human's life quality.
5. Fellowship in a universal level.
6. Mutual acceptance of members and ministries.
7. Appropriate authority of each level of the Church.
8. Faithful responsiveness to the presence of the Holy Spirit.
9. Co-operation in a faithful mission.[15]

The third model of unity it was presented in Nairobi (1975) during the 5th General Assembly of WCC under the notion of "conciliar fellowship."[16] This delicate issue of unity and diversity describes on the one hand the great difficulties existing towards the Christian unity and on the other hand it reveals the different reception and understanding of the term unity itself. In one sentence *conciliar fellowship* means the unity of the local churches witnessing the same apostolic faith, sharing the fullness of catholicity, recognising mutually the baptism, the Eucharist and the ministry, proclaiming the gospel of Christ in order to service the world.[17] "Each local Church must be the place, where two things are guaranteed: i) the safeguarding of unity and ii) the flourishing of a legitimate diversity." [18] Thus conciliarity describes the form and the structure

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[13] Lukas Vischer, *Faith and Order Louvain 1971 – Study Report and Documents*, Faith and Order No. 59 (Geneva: WCC, 1971), 171-179.

[14] "The Unity of the Church – Next Steps: The Report of the Salamanca Consultation of Faith and Order, September 1973," *The Ecumenical Review* 26, no. 2 (1974): 294-295.

[15] *Commission Report Uniting in Hope: Commission on Faith and Order, Accra 1974, Faith and Order Paper No. 72* (Geneva: WCC, 1975), 110-123.

[16] David Paton, *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975, Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC, Nairobi 1975* (London: SPCK, 1976), 60.

[17] Aram Keshishian, *Conciliar Fellowship – A common goal* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 15.

[18] *The Nature and Mission of the Church – A stage on the way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 198 (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 36.

of Church's unity showing at the same time the way to this goal.[19] The councils have as a primary target to guard the unity, but also to restore any broken fellowship by healing an existing schism.[20]

Apart from these three models of unity a fourth one was proposed by the World Lutheran Federation under the name "*reconciled diversity*," which actually tries to find a way to reconcile the existing differences between the Christian traditions through the establishment of a new general Christian identity. Also, the reconciled diversity leaves room for the element of diversity and does not demand uniformity.[21] Additionally, it was proposed another model of unity called "unity in diversity," which is actually based on the sense and practice of *consensus*. It is a convergence process mainly of critical self-assessment and spiritual renewal and not something new.[22]

It is clear after all that there is an ambiguous relationship between diversity and unity, or between exclusivism and confessionalism. The Unity of the Catholic Church is in peril every time we restrict it in the limits of the confessional identity and denomination; trying to be honest to our confessional bounds, we are not honest to the bounds of the One Church, unless we identify our confessional Church with THE Church. Though Church is inherently One and every division, schism or separation contradicts the Church's witness to the world, but also it is a denial of its very sacramental nature. It is interesting to see how the Orthodox delegations of the 8th General Assembly of WCC in Harare (1998) responded:

> "We recognise that unity does not mean uniformity but at the same time we are concerned about the limits of diversity…In the ecumenical movement we discern a tendency to accept a certain relativity of Christian faith which seems to minimize the concept of heresy."[23]

Therefore, "*the existence of several churches in the same place divided along confessional lines is a denial of the nature and the calling of the local church*";[24] terms such as *Unity* and *Diversity*, *Body of Christ* and *Confessional*

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[19] John Zizioulas, "Conciliarity and the Way to Unity – An Orthodox Point of view," *Churches in Conciliar Fellowship*, 20.

[20] Lukas Visher, "Drawn and Held together by the Reconciling Power of Christ: Reflections on the Unity of the Church – Towards the Fifth Assembly of the WCC," *The Ecumenical Review* 26, no. 2, (1974): 190.

[21] Oscar Culmann, *L'Unité par la diversité* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), 16-17.

[22] Aram Keshishian, *Conciliar Fellowship*, 57.

[23] Thomas FitzGerald and Peter Bouteneff, *Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope. Orthodox Reflections on the Way to Harare* (Geneva: WCC, 1998), 57.

[24] *In Each Place: Towards a Fellowship of Local Churches Truly United* (Geneva: WCC, 1977), 10.

Identity come in confrontation. It is very disturbing when it is realized that we, as Christians, are satisfied remaining in our divisions. It is quite obvious then that the Christian unity is prevented by the confessional plurality and by the confessional identity. According to the Statement of Canberra "*The Unity of the Church: Gift and Calling*" in the 7th General Assembly of the WCC (1991), we read:

> "Diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contexts are integral to the nature of communion; yet there are limits to diversity. Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8)."[25]

Furthermore, we read in the same official text of Canberra the following, regarding the essence of Church:

> "The purpose of God according to Holy Scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Eph. 1). The Church is the foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the one Church to live as sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation. The purpose of the Church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom."[26]

For the Orthodox, the Church is both: catholic and local, invisible and visible, the one and the many; there is no either/or between the one and the many.[27]

    a) The Church of God is always related to a specific local Church. In other terms there is a certain relation between the One Church and the many Churches, without observing a division or separation between the two entities. Such a way of thinking leads us to the thought that Church cannot be received in isolation but always in relation with Jesus Christ and with the local community. In that perspective diversity is legitimate.[28]

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[25]https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-unity-of-the-church-gift-and-calling-the-canberra-statement.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Georges Dragas, "Orthodox Ecclesiology in Outline," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 26-3 (1981).

[28] Ion Bria, *Go Forth in Peace – Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 69.

b) The Universal Church is realized in the local Eucharistic gathering. Through the communion the Church is able to transcend the time liberating itself from formalistic and legalistic types. If it is seen through that theological perspective the apostolic succession would mean communion in time and in space. Such a type of unity based on "ecclesiology of koinonia" would give the appropriate dimension between the universal and the local Church. Also, in that perspective diversity is legitimate.

c) The Church is the very reality of Christ in us and us in Christ, a new mode of God's presence and action in His creation; it is union and unity, communion and transfiguration. It is the continuing presence of Pentecost.[29]

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew during his last visit to the headquarters of WCC in Geneva (17 June 2018), he described probably with the most appropriate words the real essence of doing theological dialogue and the purpose of the Christian unity:

> "...we continue our dialogue in order to surmount these difficulties, overcome our misunderstandings, erase our prejudices, and bear witness more authentically to the Gospel message. Dialogue does not imply a renouncing of one's ecclesial tradition. Instead it signifies a change in our state of mind and attitude, what we call 'repentance' in the language of spirituality, in Greek métanoia, which means 'to see things from a different perspective.' In this sense, dialogue is the beginning of a long process of mutual understanding that requires much patience and openness. We are aware that the movement to restore the unity of Christians is taking new forms in order to respond to new situations and to deal with the current challenges of the world."[30]

The issue of *otherness* in the re-shaping identity process

We live in a time of global crises. Economic, ecological, socio-political and spiritual challenges confront us and Churches are called to solve the riddle of *identity* and of *otherness*. These two notions are the two different sides of the same coin. It is not possible to find our common traces and to set some basic, commonly accepted, principles of life without looking at both sides having an

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[29] Gennadios of Sassima, "Called to be the One Church," in *Plenary Commission on Faith and Order* (6-14 October 2009), FO/2009:08, 3-4.

[30] https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2018/homily-of-his-all-holiness-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-on-the-70th-anniversary-of-the-wcc.

opened mind. The so-called *other*, depicted on the persons of refugees and immigrants, who used to be outside of our walls (*extra muros*), now he/she is always present in our daily life everywhere in the public space, living among us, with us.

Because of the globalization, or else because of the McDonaldisation, the *other*, mainly not the European, is considered sometimes as the scapegoat or even worse as the representative of evil's power. Anything and everything which is not similar or even familiar to our civilization easily can be considered as enemy and as a foreigner. Unfortunately, we take part in a history where competition among peoples individually, ethnologically, or nationally, becomes day by day stronger, because of the sovereign neo-liberal economic system implemented in a worldwide level through the means of technology and communication.[31]

Though, according to the Faith and Order statement in Kuala Lumpur (2004),

> "We have to follow the prototype who is Christ, and not our confessional identity, since the source of our identity is Jesus himself. The welcome, or the accepting of one another, is spoken in Romans 15:7 as an imperative, a command. The verb implies an action both of giving and receiving acceptance. Scripture does not make it an optional activity. To 'accept one another, as Christ has accepted us' does not seem to allow room for years of debate and negotiation, but only for an on- going practice of giving and receiving that acceptance."[32]

Accepting the *other* is based on the notion of *koinonia*, a term which is much stronger than communion or fellowship. Koinonia has an internal dynamism, a vivid spirit and it expresses an on-going procedure, meaning that the human being in order to be united with God firstly must be united with his/her neighbor. Thus, koinonia it is valuable for two reasons: i) it deepens the quality of life in togetherness and ii) it helps us to overcome the divisiveness of dichotomies such as worship OR mission, local OR universal; through the notion of koinonia we obtain a holistic perspective of theology and of life.[33]

What is in a need now is an escape from the old way of thinking and of defining the other, by acquiring a new paradigm receiving otherness as a *relational reality*. Through that spectrum otherness and identity are not any

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[31] Augustinos Bairactaris, "The Decalogue of the inter-religious dialogue and the paradigm of the religious pluralism," *Theologia review* 84, no. 4 (2013): 13-32. See here p. 15 (in Greek).

[32] Thomas Best, *Faith and Order at the Crossroads Kuala Lumpur – The Plenary Commission Meeting 2004*, 132.

[33] Michael Kinnamon, "Ecumenical Ecclesiology: One Church of Christ for the sake of the world," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44, no. 3 (2009): 342.

more adversaries but collaborators in offering to society a true meaning of life. This relational reality is against the homogenization of cultures. An attitude of openness of mind and heart would seem to require that we try to have the same mind that was in Christ; Christ who emptied himself (*kenotic theology*), becoming the least, in order to be obedient to God's "yes" (*Phil. 2*).

Probably this attempt can be structured on the theology of *personhood*, where every human being is regarded as God's creation (*imago Dei*). This uniqueness of entity based on God's creative power and it is the fundamental source of diversity and of identity.[34]

Collective identity and religion

The notion of collective identity is also linked with the *mimetic behaviour* of the members of one community (religious, athletic, political group etc.). According to René Girard the *human desire* contributes in this dispute whether religion itself is violent or not, and consequently this human desire has an important significance on the development of human identity. Mimetic or imitative behavior have the members of a community which actually teaches them the social, economic, educational and religious "dos and don'ts" (what they should do, where to go, what to read, what to eat etc.). Thus, the mimetic behavior is something which sometimes is developed gradually since the childhood of a person. This set of rules and of practices actually tries to "produce a proper world inhabited by proper humans."[35] In other terms every member of a community, sharing the same beliefs with the other members, is not independent, in a sense that it carries within himself and within his identity values and desires of the community where he comes from. The community's desire becomes identical with the member's desire.

Additionally, if the community shares some prejudices, ideologies or preferences based on dogmas or on principles against some other communities or against some other ethnical groups, then all these pass very easily and in a passive way to its members. And this mass of behavior could lead to what we call *collective violence* based on the religious argument "we are innocent, they are guilty."[36] The religious dogmatism is caused by a wrong application of religious truth seen in the absolutizing of dogma, which implies at the same time a radical exclusiveness of other beliefs. For the sake of religious truth one

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[34] Yiagazoglou Stauros, "Identity and otherness in a changing world," *Theologia review* 84, no. 4 (2013): 2-5 (in Greek).

[35] Lincoln Bruce, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religions after September 11* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 6.

[36] René Girard, *I see Satan fall like Lightning* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 15.

is able to violate the most basic principles of life adopting a violent behaviour and a violent policy against people of other traditions, political parties, religions or even atheists. Then dogma becomes in the form of dogmatism a clear violent ideology fighting against the so-called *outsiders of truth* and/or *God's enemies*.[37] Researchers have proved that religion correlates with ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, dogmatism and prejudice. (The most easily example to bring forward to our memory is the German society of 40's against the Jewish community, which was received as the scapegoat).

Another key-element of understanding the formulation of the religious identity is the axiom that "the end justifies the means." For instance, some members of religious communities might have the "given role of the protector or defender" of their values. In order to perform that role within the community, and when the circumstances are the appropriate, either they neglect, or maltreat the different one, dehumanizing the human entity. Group identity is built on the difference between the *in-group* and the *out-group* people. Therefore, any religious group increases its own *internal identity* based on the principle of *conformity*, decreasing at the same time the similarity with the outsiders.

Also, another issue is the use by the religious groups of *boundaries* and the practice of *exclusivism*. This form is actually based on violence, because group's members either they have to sacrifice something material or to sacrifice even their intellectual capacity blocking the free development of their own identity. This happens due to the invoking of the divine powers and of God itself. Anyone who resist to that call and to this divine convocation is equal to evil. Thus, that encounter between the religious groups represents a conflict of truth claims and a conflict of Gods so to speak.[38] According to Kimball there is an *authentic religion identity* and a *corrupt religion identity*. The first one works for the peace to be established to the whole oikoumene, while the second one easily comes to include war and violence within its message in order to exercise power and governing.[39]

Time proved that ethics and religion are necessary in the building of the new order of world in order to avoid the consequences of the *fundamentalism* as a form of political religion. Sociology and anthropology have also proved during the last decades that peoples disappointed by the contradictions and the false hope of modernization have tried to find their collective identity through religion and local—cultural beliefs. Consequently, there is intensity between globalization and localization; a dialogue between these two sides is compulsory and not a luxury.

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[37] "Un regard Orthodoxe sur la Paix," *Etudes Theologiques* 7 (Chambesy: Centre Orthodoxe, 1986): 92.

[38] Ruar Ganzevoort, "Violence, Trauma and Religion," presentation in the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, (Leuven, 2006), 11-12.

[39] Charles Kimball, *When Religion becomes evil* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 72.

This is what Jeff Haynes examines in his book *Religion in Global Politics* by pointing out the idea of "de-privatization of religion around the world."[40] Politics and Religions are distinct, but at the same time they are inter-related in the formulation of human's identity. Both exercise power over people and influence the structure of the society being responsible for the social order. Both of them claim for themselves to be the ultimate authority for social order having the right to take decisions for life and death, including the right to kill. Religions and politics must then co-operate translating their values into rules of coexistence.[41]

Is the *Golden Rule* model able to formulate human's identity?

The Golden Rule is a declaration made by the Parliament of the World's Religions where it is presented in four points the basis for the human coexistence.

1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.
2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.
3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.
4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.[42]

It becomes evident that the *Golden Rule* is oriented towards the methodology of how can we overcome the dispute between "we/us" and "they/them"; in other terms we have to stop identifying ourselves always with the "powers of good" fighting the "powers of evil." Otherwise it is formulated a God, who creates an entire world of others, who have to be fought against, since they are different from us and from our culture. That gives birth to *absolutism*, which leaves no free space of existence of the different, is quite dangerous. However, according to Kofi Annan, "people can and should take pride in their particular faith or heritage. But we can cherish what we are, without hating what we are not."[43] We read in the Uppsala's statement: "All peoples have the right to self-determination. This is a basic essential of human dignity…The churches must defend minorities when they are oppressed or threatened."[44] Apart from the threat of absolutism, there is another principle which claims the *equality of all believers*, those who can equally claim that they experience their

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[40] Jeff Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics* (New York: Pearson Education, 1998), 90.

[41] Konrad Raiser, *Religion, Power, Politics* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 11.

[42] Parliament of the World's Religion, "Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations," The International Conference, Vilnius – Lithuania, 2001, 116.

[43] Ibid., 12.

[44] Norman Goodall, *The Uppsala Report 1968* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 64.

own truth; truth has to do with hermeneutics. Where the norm is that all opinions must be given equal tolerance, how is the Church to sustain its claim to be the bearer of a special revelation? Does pluralism in society affect Christian understanding of unity?[45]

Final Thoughts—Conclusions

If total *acceptance* between different religions and cultures is something difficult to be achieved, *tolerance* and *solidarity* must be sine qua non conditions of the new identity. "In Europe today there are between fifteen and twenty million Muslims (before the refugees crisis): in Britain they constitute 2.7% of the population, in Germany is 4.9%, while in France is 8.3%. Surely, we should see this not as a threat but as an opportunity," stated the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartolomew.[46] Religious communities must always attempt the impossible for the sake of peace and justice. Especially we, the Christians coming from different denominations and historical backgrounds, must give together through our own paradigm the meaning of the living sacrifice choosing life instead of death.[47] We read in Faith and Order's Commission Statement in Accra (1974):

> "Christians have a mandate for critical, loyal participation in humanity's strivings for a more adequate human community…The Church is called to be a visible sign of the presence of Christ, who is both hidden and revealed to faith, reconciling and healing human alienation."[48]

Truth is not a subject, but rather it is a process, a long and demanding one. Therefore, we must act as "truth seekers and not as truth holders." During that process of searching and living the truth we realize the complexity of relations, the existing pluralism in life and the subjective conception of world's and human's nature. Living in and with God is making us more opened to other's perspective.[49]

I think the best example of understanding the Christian identity is given in the *Epistle of Disciples to Diognetus*, where we read from mot a mot:

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[45] Thomas Best, *Faith and Renewal – Commission on Faith and Order Stavanger 1985, Faith and Order Paper No. 131* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 218.

[46] "The Role of Religion in a Changing Europe," speech of H.A.H. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartolomew at the London School of Economics, London (3-11-2005), 1.

[47] I *John*, 3:14: "*We know that we have passed from death to life.*"

[48] Thomas Best, *Faith and Order 1985-1989 The Commission Meeting in Budapest 1989, Faith and Order Paper No. 148* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 135.

[49] Augustinos Bairactaris, *Theology and Religious Pluralism in the modern World* (Thessaloniki: Stamoulis, 2014), 118 (in Greek).

"They (Christians) dwell in their countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers… They are in flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives…They are insulted and repay the insult with honour…To sum up all in one word – what the soul is in the body Christians are in the world… The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body. And Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world."[50]

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[50] Henri Irénée Marrou, *A Diognete*, Sources Chrétiennes 33 (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 63-67.

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UNITY AND IDENTITY IN EVANGELICALISM AND PROSPECTS FOR BRIDGE BUILDING WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

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ABSTRACT. This paper reflects on unity and identity within evangelicalism, briefly tracing the development of the movement within Protestantism before sketching its current situation.

From the very beginning of Protestantism, concepts such as authority, scripture, and church, and their relations to individual believers have been complex. Five hundred years after the Reformation, the unity of the movement has come under increasing strain. Evangelicals have been buffeted by the modernist influence of the Fundamentalist-Liberal controversy in the United States, the advent of postmodernity, and a developing sense of unease within, although their numerical strength and global representation have continued to increase. Current issues facing evangelicalism include authority in the church, relations with political causes, and relevance to our pluralistic modern world; responses to such challenges reflect the internal diversity of the movement. Earlier identity markers of adherence to scripture and doctrinally-based exclusivism have begun to fade as evangelicalism has become more fragmented and with the rise of newer, more Spirit-oriented subgroups.

The paper introduces positive trends emerging in some parts of the evangelical movement due to internal angst, secularisation, and the holistic understanding of faith associated with the Lausanne Movement. Evangelicals now show increased openness to social involvement, learning from other Christian traditions, and cooperation in mission endeavours.

The final section explores the potential for bridge building between evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church, framed by ideas from Gerard Hughes and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Although the paper can only credibly examine the evangelical end of the bridge, it is hoped that the general insights may benefit bridge builders at the Orthodox end also.

Keywords: unity, identity, Christian Church, Evangelicalism, Orthodox Church

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Introduction: Protestantism and evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is a subset of Protestantism, arguably the most visible and quickest growing in the world. To frame my discussion of unity and identity within evangelicalism, I employ David Bebbington's quadrilateral[1], whose corners are: emphasis on the Bible, the importance of conversion, activism as an expression of faith, and the centrality of the cross. The term "evangelical" is becoming problematic, as it is getting harder to explain what the word means, and because some people make associations with blanket support for the State of Israel, right-wing causes, or single-issue politics, particularly in America.

I am British and European, and thus my experience of church and perhaps even my very theology are a little different from what is arguably worldwide mainstream evangelicalism. I now consider myself a voice from somewhere near the margins. Because I wish to reflect not only my own British context but also some other parts of the world with which I am familiar, particularly Southeast Asia, I choose not to follow the increasingly dominant American categorisation of mainstream Protestantism *versus* evangelicalism. There are relatively Reformed and charismatic evangelicals within the Church of England, for example, and the situation is similar in Singapore. I place Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement, the Reformed camp, and middle of the road activist evangelicalism all under the same umbrella.

Unity and identity

The American evangelical Peter Leithart is concerned about the direction of Protestantism in his country. The unity speech in John 17 is important for him, and he draws our attention to the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son and the derivative unity of the church.[2] He complains that the church is divided, even spiritually, although some feel claim that there is unity in essential doctrine, ritual, and pastoral roles among the churches.

In the West, the question about church unity has always been whether it is it doctrinal or spiritual.[3] Also, some look for continuity with the past while others emphasise unity of purpose. Leithart believes there is a superficial kind of unity across the church in the West. Protestants and Catholics both talk about

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[1] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989).

[2] Peter Leithart, *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2016).

[3] Ralph Brown, "The evangelical succession? Evangelical history and denominational identity," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 68, no. 1 (1996): 3-13.

justification, without agreeing what the word means. Almost all Protestant churches celebrate both baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, complications arise very quickly. How should we carry out baptism, full immersion or sprinkle? Can children be baptised, and if so what might that mean? Who can take the elements of the Eucharist and who can give them? How is Christ present in the Eucharist, symbolically, pneumatically, physically? Within Protestantism, worship ranges from liturgical to very informal. For some, the whole service leads to and points from the sermon. In others, a short sharing or meditation is preferred. Some parts of the church use a lectionary while others have no clear basis for choosing passages. Even evangelicalism manifests a huge range of approaches to preaching. Apart from differences of practice, there is still theological division within the evangelical movement, such as over God's power and intention to redeem the lost, exemplified by the polarity between Calvinists and Arminians. Indeed, Chirilă mentions "the exegetical diversity in contemporary Western theology."[4] Unity is a curious thing!

Protestantism then and now

Protestantism and its evangelical subset have emerged from certain intellectual trends and views of scripture, tradition, and authority. In addition, developments in theology and practice in the church have never been isolated from broader cultural and intellectual influences in society. The historical circumstances of the genesis of Protestantism mean that it was well documented.

In investigating unity and identity in evangelicalism, and how bridges might be built between this movement and the Orthodox Church, it is important to consider briefly its history and current situation. For reasons of time and space, my thumbnail sketch may appear simplistic and reductionist, for which I apologise.

Historical background

Protestantism was a break with the Roman Catholic Church in the West and thus most scholarship on the Reformation focuses on the differences between the Reformers and Rome. Indeed, an essential characteristic of Protestantism, at the beginning and to some extent even now, is its "otherness" vis-a-vis Rome. Thus, looking at Protestantism involves exploring what it is *not* as much as what it is. I use the word "Protestant" as the official term familiar to most people, but it is used less and less.

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[4] Ioan Chirilă, "Romanian theology: A theology of dialogue," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (2009): 2.

It is appropriate to begin with Martin Luther's dual struggle over the question of justification and the crisis of authority to which it led. Although these issues were located in the church, the broader context includes the rise of the middle class, increases in literacy, the development of printing, and the emerging consciousness of what would later become the Westphalian nation state.

Bainton reminds us that the early reformers were against indulgences, the veneration of relics, and what he calls the "cult of saints,"[5] seeing these as incompatible with the teaching of the scripture and the concept of justification by faith. In seeking to reform doctrine, Luther felt that he was serving his church and had no desire to break away or found something new.

The second phase of the reformation occurred in Zurich, Geneva, and Canterbury, whose movements were "sisters rather than lineal descendants."[6] This is noteworthy; even early Protestantism manifested diversity branching. Protestants were united in not being Catholic or even being anti-Catholic and came together around the authority of scripture and the nature of justification. However, the movement was displaying Wittgensteinian family resemblance, as shared ideals and beliefs began to evolve under the influence of different personalities, local contexts, and theological preferences. Within the space created by the removal of papal and episcopal oversight, or control, depending on your perspective, the reformers began to reshape various aspects of theology, church governance, and public worship. The liturgy inherited from the Roman Catholic Church was amended and in some cases radically reformed; a central place was given to the sermon.[7] Zwingli forbade lent fasting and the veneration of images and saw no reason why clergy should be celibate.[8] During the English reformation, many beautiful murals were obscured as the insides of church buildings were painted white. Bainton talks about the outbreak of "popular iconoclasm."[9]

For the reformers, authority was vested in the scripture rather than the church, its tradition, or the Pope. It was argued that the "Christian man must examine and judge for himself,", rather than relying on the Pope.[10] In rejecting the authority of the Pope and the church as in institution, the later reformers believed they were returning to an earlier, more biblical form of Christianity.

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[5] Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press 1965), 57-58.

[6] *Ibid*, 77.

[7] *Ibid*, 72.

[8] *Ibid*, 83.

[9] *Ibid*, 84.

[10] *Ibid*, 61.

The reformers felt that the medieval Roman Catholic Church "made God small and man big"[11] and argued that salvation lies "not in the church but in Christ."[12]

While Calvin and the Swiss reformers saw the dual sovereignty of God in church and society and sought to change the latter for good, the Anabaptists advocated withdrawal from the state and abstention from public life.[13] In addition, being hated by the world was a sign of theological purity and correctness. Already, there was considerable disunity with regard to how the church saw its relationship with the world. Interestingly enough, Guinness describes similar world-fleeing mentalities among the dispensationalists beginning in the 19th century[14]

An insight into British evangelicalism in the 19th century comes from Brown.[15] While some historians see "dogmatic uniformity and continuity," an evangelical rather than apostolic succession based on faithfulness to its original sources, Brown reveals complex relationships, identities, and doctrinal struggles.[16] Some evangelical Anglicans saw Protestant history through the lens of Britain's Empire, a form of manifest destiny. Something similar has been found in American evangelicalism.[17] There has been and still exists a nationalist element in some parts of the movement,[18] sometimes linked with certain views of the second coming.

Significantly, Brown identifies differences of opinion about "the authority of historical orthodoxy and the freedom allowed to private judgement in matters of scriptural interpretation."[19] Although evangelicals claim that the scripture and its authority lie at the centre of the faith, individual interpreters and the church groupings to which they belong exercise authority over the text. Like nature, the community of faith seems to abhor a vacuum.

In the late 19th century the UK Evangelical Alliance concluded that a simple claim to represent Christian truth was not enough and that a

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[11] *Ibid*, 44.

[12] Graham Duncan, "A Protestant Perspective on Vatican II & 50 years: An Engagement with Dissent," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 9.

[13] Roland Bainton, *The Reformation*, 99.

[14] Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals don't Think and what to do about it* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

[15] Ralph Brown, "The evangelical succession? Evangelical history and denominational identity," *Evangelical Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1996): 3-13.

[16] *Ibid*, 3.

[17] George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 132.

[18] Sam Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[19] Ralph Brown, *The evangelical succession*, 8.

confessional test of its members was needed; belief in and dedication to a set of basic truths was insufficient. Very soon, continental European parts of the Evangelical Alliance formed their own national branches. Protestant and evangelical unity and identity are complex and are affected by the *Zeitgeist* of each generation. Indeed, evangelicalism shows the influence of enlightenment modernism[20] at the same time as it claims to resist to it.

What Brown looks at in 19th century British evangelicalism foreshadows the divisions within the American protestant movement at the turn of the 20th century, when increasingly varied and even contradictory theological ideas within evangelicalism there exploded with considerable force at the Fundamentalist-Liberal divide. At the heart of the problem lay interpretation and authority of scripture, attitudes to science and society, and views on the eschaton. Around a century after the climax of this dispute within the church, American evangelicalism is grappling with many of same issues and has added some more. Into today's cauldron have been poured gender, women ministers, sexuality, climate change and environmentalism, and race.

Another source of division within Protestantism and evangelicalism is denominationalism. Distinct groupings embody different views of church government and approaches to the Christian life. Within these different historical trajectories there are distinctions over what might be called secondary theological matters. Within broad Protestantism there are also loose groupings of churches which do not constitute a denomination and many totally independent churches. Overall, we have a continuum ranging from structured and hierarchical groupings such as the Anglicans or Methodists through various forms of Presbyterians and Baptists and on into fully independent local churches. In addition, since the 1950s there has been a proliferation of para-church organisations focused on particular causes, such as cross-cultural mission, ministry to a particular demographic, creation care, and distribution of the Bible.

Denominationalism is Peter Leithart's *bête noire* and he claims that rather than symbolising unity such groupings affirm and even maintain division.[21] He complains that while the Apostles Creed is acceptable to all Christians, Presbyterians must add the Westminster confession and Lutherans must align themselves with the Formula of Concord. For him, denominationalism is tribalism and we cannot identify ourselves by how we are different from others in God's church.

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[20] Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (London: Random House, 2005).

[21] Peter Leithart, *The end of Protestantism*, 3.

The current situation

After around 500 years of Protestant Christianity, the movement now contains a large number of subgroups, many of which would self-identify as evangelical. These include Reformed/Presbyterian churches, Pentecostals/ charismatics, Lutherans, fundamentalists, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Almost all would hold to some version of justification by faith, believing that we cannot and need not do anything except believe for our salvation. They would embrace the individual right and responsibility of believers to read and understand the scripture. For many evangelicals, belonging to their denomination or group is important and only a few groups explicitly position themselves as not Roman Catholic. Many within evangelicalism do not consider the history and diversity of the church as relevant.

Beyond this exists great divergence in views on church government, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the role of women, the scope of mission (salvation of individual souls or broader communal and societal redemption), attitude to human endeavour and scholarship, wealth and prosperity, healing, consumption of alcohol, and attitudes to other religions. There are also differences over qualifications for ministers and who may preside over the Lord's Supper. There are ongoing disputes about whether the scripture is inerrant or infallible and the importance of weekly sermons. I recently chatted with a Pentecostal brother who told me that his wife struggled when asked to preach from a scriptural text. I genuinely did not understand the issue, because in the tradition I was trained in, the text is the basis of everything! In the realm of politics, while 80% of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump in the recent presidential election,[22] most British evangelicals would be seen as left-wing in America.[23]

Protestant and evangelical unity is facilitated by reference to a small, central core of beliefs. Duncan describes Protestantism as "fluid" and centred on "the doctrine of justification by faith."[24] Beyond the core, Pawley argues, Protestantism "does not represent a homogeneous body of doctrine."[25] Once secondary level theological commitments are discussed, the superficial unity is under pressure. Within and between evangelical subgroupings, infelicitous statements by a preacher or theologian can cause him or her to be labelled and pigeon-holed. I am not denying the existence of tribalism in other parts of the church, but my focus is evangelicalism.

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[22] Sarah Bailey, "White evangelicals voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, exit polls show." *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2016. Accessed October 8, 2018. *https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/*
[23] Andy Walton, *Is there a 'Religious Right' emerging in Britain?* (London: Theos, 2013).
[24] Graham Duncan, *A Protestant Perspective*, 1.
[25] Bernard Pawley, *Looking at the Vatican Council* (London: SCM, 1962).

Today's evangelical church is clearly different from the Protestant church during the reformation and even in the early 20th century. The very foundations of the Protestant movement have allowed and even caused it to morph in response to its leaders, the subgroups inside it, social and cultural trends, and theological innovation. Although such responsiveness has a positive side, we may find ourselves agreeing with Hans Küng about "the mistakes of modern Protestantism— sectarian encapsulation, mutual excommunication and the constant splitting off of churches."[26]

Within evangelicalism there are presbyterian, congregational, and episcopalian approaches to church governance and it is noteworthy that all exhibit various degrees of human authority, despite the initial rejection of such in the early reformation period. Contemporary evangelicalism shows increasing involvement of the laity, according to the protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers and the availability of educated, capable church members. The ongoing debate about the ordination of women and the consecration of female bishops is evidence of a strained unity but also an emerging new identity within evangelicalism which claims that gender equality in Christian service is scriptural.

In the increasingly post-Christian West, hard questions are being asked about the meaning and purpose of the church. Postmodernity emphasises belonging and toleration of other people's points of view, and while some lament a perceived attack on absolute truth, others see a liberation from narrow, modernist approaches to scripture and theology. In some parts of the evangelical movement, there is a move to strip Christianity down to an organic, minimalist core, reflected in how we do theology, conduct worship services, and use the scripture. Positively, previously divisive issues are now put to one side or ignored, but this could also bring loss of theological depth and ideological compromise. Some would see the church's constant internal struggles over the homosexual issue as an example.

Within evangelicalism there has been a reaction to excessively cerebral approaches to worship and preaching. For McGrath the denial of the senses and emotions in worship and relating to God are negative effects of the reformation.[27] The recent rise of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is a reaction to left-brain Christianity and the return of the emotions is accompanied by a new openness to the Spirit. Communal aspects of Christianity are now emphasised as never before in the evangelical world, and there has been a renaissance in scholarship on the kingdom of God and the Trinity. However, this new sense of freedom has brought complications; in some sectors of evangelicalism, doctrine and the scripture have given way to pragmatism and emotionalism.

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[26] Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth: Memoirs II*. London: Continuum, 2008), 320.
[27] Alister McGrath, *The twilight*, 208.

It is ironic perhaps that some of these free and independent evangelical subgroupings have seen the rise of new forms of authority and hierarchy and the return of so-called "apostles." Authority can now be derived from and authenticated by a preacher or pastor being a good communicator, having excellent media skills, dressing well, leading worship well, and causing numerical growth in the church. A small number a hugely influential individual Christian leaders has emerged, whose teachings and publications reach a literally global audience, with little or adaptation to the local context. For some, certainly, pastors who are good communicators of a theologically light gospel represent the identity of evangelicalism.

An authority of neither apostolic succession nor Protestant submission to the scripture can only be described as performative. Although Protestantism and evangelicalism emphasise the right of individual Christians to read and understand the Bible, the spirit of the age (impoverished knowledge of the scripture, lack of familiarity with the church's heritage, a large profit-driven Christian publishing industry, a plethora of evangelical websites, and a pragmatic emphasis on "what works") seems to have produced a neo-papal system in which many simply absorb the views of the new apostles. Within evangelicalism, some mega-churches have almost become denominations, undertaking their own theological training and mission endeavours, often with a huge influence, even beyond their home country. These trends seem to be causing strains within the unity of evangelicalism and a shift in identity towards populism and a lowest common denominator, such that some evangelicals might struggle to recognise each other.

These issues within contemporary evangelicalism are the outcome of earlier trends identified and discussed by Guinness in his short but important work, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds.*[28] Among the forces that have shaped American evangelicalism in particular are polarisation, pietism, primitivism, populism, and pragmatism. Since the book was written, society and the church have changed, but polarisation, populism, and pragmatism remain strong, while private faith has replaced pietism. If Guinness is right then at least part of the evangelical identity is superficiality; flattening the church and removing theological and ecclesial accountability may be a two-edged sword.

Evangelicals have been castigated from without and within for being anti-intellectual and indifferent to history. Looking across the vast swathe of evangelicalism, from strongly modernist Reformed groups to the increasingly dominant Pentecostal churches, one is reminded of Neil Postman's indictment

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[28] Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds.*

of modern American society in his now classic *Amusing ourselves to death*;[29] perhaps Postman is the secular analogue of Guinness. What is of concern is that both books are now out of date and the situation has been made worse by the American culture wars, increasing secularisation in the West, and the abuse of the internet. Within modern evangelicalism there is an unfortunate ignorance of the works of God in the lives of the saints, the church, and in mission in history and in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches; too many evangelicals are floating in time and space. Although Reformed evangelicals are known to be intellectually and historically astute, they generally limit their interest to their own, honouring and quoting from Calvin, Bavinck, and Berkhof.

On a more positive note, there is a growing openness to Ignatian spirituality, *lectio divina*, Taize, and the use of the senses. As evangelicalism expresses discontent with itself, it has begun to draw inspiration from the older, less purely cerebral practices of the church. There is also increased cooperation in the mission endeavour between denominations and mission organisations. The comity agreements of the 19th century have given way to creative cooperation between missionaries who may not agree on every element of doctrine but work together to establish believers and churches as needed. Working together in mission may be the result of maturity in the evangelical movement and the effect of external, societal factors at home and abroad.

In his discussion about unity and cooperation among the Reformed churches of Croatia, Jovanović claims that some of the impetus for this was the war in country and heavy-handed government religious policy in the early post-communist period.[30] We talk about spiritual unity and the church's connection with the living God, but here things improved because of outside forces. In addition, and without belittling the progress made, the issue explored was unity among a group of Reformed churches in a medium sized, predominantly Roman Catholic country. An important point is that joint programmes and endeavours between churches in Croatia have not caused loss of identity; close cooperation actually brings out difference, but loving the other does not mean loving oneself less.[31]

In Western Europe and some parts of North America, we are also seeing increasing unity and cooperation within some parts of the Protestant and evangelical camps. This is partly motivated by a crisis of confidence in the church and its position in an increasingly secular society. Consider for example

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[29] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

[30] Mladen Jovanović, "The Evangelical perspective on unity and the contribution of the Protestant Evangelical Council to Christian fellowship in Croatia." *Evangelical Journal of Theology* 2, no. 1 (2008): 84.

[31] Mladen Jovanović, *The Evangelical perspective*, 80.

the *unChristian*[32] project in the United States; some evangelicals have spent a lot of time and effort to see how they are perceived by the broader society. They are concerned about how outsiders perceive the evangelical identity. Falling church attendance and fears that Christianity is becoming irrelevant are beginning to concentrate the mind. A rather divided community may discover unity and shared identity previously unknown when faced with an indifferent or hostile other outside. As the church finds itself increasingly in a liminal space, we see a healthy sense of communitas emerging. That said, the 9Marks website has published a review of *unChristian* which is clearly at odds with many of the ideas in the book;[33] evangelicals do not have to agree, even when they are under pressure and the identity of 9Marks seems quite different from the *unChristian* people.

An especially influential force within evangelical Protestantism is the Lausanne Movement. Interestingly, the movement's website explicitly claims that it is not an organisation but "an organic movement without formal membership structure."[34] Lausanne exists to facilitate unity and identity among evangelicals, with a particular interest in holistic mission and desire to hear the majority world. The history of the movement reflects largely successful attempts to go beyond earlier divisions over the so-called spiritual gospel and social action, although some of these remain. Some time after evangelicalism began waking up from the nightmare of dispensationalism there are still dark corners in which negativity and a perverse fundamentalist hopelessness remain.

Looking at Lausanne in the second decade of the 21st century enables us to see that its founders forged genuine unity and identity by focusing on what they considered the essential elements of the gospel, theologically and missiologically. Perhaps in acknowledgement of the state of affairs in the church and the wider world, the movement does not claim any authority. Rather, it positions itself as a catalyst for unity and a broader view of mission than was mainstream in the past. Its 15-point covenant[35] provides a basis for association and belonging, and seems to avoid the most contentious theological and pastoral issues. The covenant comes across as a developed, missional derivation of Bebbington's quadrilateral rather than a toothless and reductionist formula designed to be acceptable to all. In addition, Lausanne seems to affirm that unity does not have to mean uniformity.

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[32] David Kinnaman & Gabe Lyons, *unChristian. What a new generation really thinks about Christianity…and why it matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

[33] Owen Strachan, review of *unChristian*, by Dave Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, 9Marks (March 3 2010). https://www.9marks.org/review/unchristian/

[34] "About the movement," Lausanne Movement, accessed October 8, 2018, *https://www.lausanne.org/about-the-movement*

[35] "Lausanne covenant," Lausanne Movement, accessed October 8, 2018, *https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant*

Concerning evangelical statements of faith, the World Evangelical Alliance's[36] is shorter and simpler, and not very different in spirit from that of Lausanne. The US National Association of Evangelicals has something similar,[37] and their presentation of evangelical faith makes reference to Bebbington. The UK Evangelical Alliance basis of faith affirms the same theological tenets but shows greater commitment to a holistic gospel and engagement with society.[38] The American site requires prospective members to affirm the statement of faith while the British one does not.

These umbrella or para-church organisations embrace unity around a fairly basic set of beliefs, tolerating considerable latitude among their members. Authority in a hierarchical sense is not exercised, as individual or organisational members can choose to join them if agree with the statement of faith. Unity and identity are based on a small range of theological commitments. We can see this negatively, as compromise by avoidance of sensitive issues, or positively, if the simple heart of the gospel is recognised and secondary issues discounted. Lausanne is a little different as its statement of faith is actually more detailed than those of the other organisations, but it self-represents as something which people can get involved with rather than join. People can receive the newsletter, join an interest group, work with the leaders, or give financially, of which suggest a more organic affiliation. The identity represented by evangelical organisations and Lausanne seems to be a mixture of adherence to clear but not exhaustive principles and missional activism which aims to benefit the church and broader society.

Bridges to the Orthodox

The history and current status of evangelicalism as described so far are complex and confusing, as much for those within the tradition as for those looking in from outside. We might well wonder how bridges can be built between evangelicalism and the Orthodox tradition. In thinking about building bridges, I concede that I know a lot more about one of the banks than the other, so please forgive me if I misunderstand my brothers and sisters on the other side.

Two things occur to me here. First, bridges are narrow connections between areas of land; we cannot expect agreement on everything or large-

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[36] "Statement of faith," World Evangelical Alliance, accessed October 8, 2018, *http://www.worldea.org/whoweare/statementoffaith*

[37] "Statement of Faith," National Association of Evangelicals, accessed October 8, 2018, *https://www.nae.net/statement-of-faith/*

[38] "Basis of faith," Evangelical Alliance, accessed October 8, 2018, *https://www.eauk.org/about-us/basis-of-faith.*

scale seamless transition from one church tradition to another. In time we may be able to build more bridges and widen some of the existing ones. Second, my reading and discussion with different parts of the Church Universal tell me that people who are older in the faith and better theologically trained generally find it is easier to extend the hand of friendship across boundaries. Maturity and education make us more self-aware and secure in our understanding of our own faith and more willing to engage with people a little different. In addition, if we have spent time with people whose theological positions, church practice, and approach to worship are different from our own, we are usually better able to appreciate the diversity of God's church.

With this in mind I wish to draw on the thought of two Christian thinkers who were neither evangelical nor Orthodox; perhaps building bridges starts from an island in the middle of the river! In his 1806 work *Christmas Eve,*[39] Schleiermacher looks at unity and identity in the Christian community through the analogy of a family gathering. Among those present are different genders, ages, personalities, levels of education, and hobbies; plurality is embodied within the group. As they discuss the incarnation of Christ and the salvation that he brought, there is a variety of approach and content. Some preferred to present their ideas in stories, whereas others wanted reasoned argument. Some placed an emphasis on words while others liked physical movement and music. Their spirituality is a matter of joy and sorrow, happiness and conflict.[40] I am reminded of Lossky's comment that the work of Christ raises the people of God *en masse* while the work of the Spirit celebrates and accentuates our diversity.[41] For Schleiermacher the women represent gradual spiritual growth and maturity, while the male characters portray a sense of crisis and discontinuity. Schleiermacher's portrayals may look rather gendered today, but his point is that no one way to think about God is better than another. All present at the Christmas Eve gathering belonged; they had a right to be there because of their shared family identity and common faith. Hettema and Zorgdrager ask us to consider religious experience as rich and living and believe that we do not have to harmonise and impose uniformity.[42] In Schleiermacher's group, the members are not only accepting but also curious about each other's viewpoints.

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[39] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve. A Dialogue on the Celebration of Christmas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1806).

[40] Theo Hettema & Heleen Zorgdrager, "*Schleiermacher and the Reshaping of Protestantism*" (presentation, 'Reshaping Protestantism', Jubilee Congress of the Theological University Kampen, 1-4 September, 2004): 6.

[41] Vladimir Lossky, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1991).

[42] Theo Hettema & Heleen Zorgdrager, *Schleiermacher and the reshaping*, 7.

If Schleiermacher brings to our attention the value of embodied experience and pluralism within the community of Christian faith synchronically, then Hughes borrows from a framework which is diachronic.[43] Schleiermacher gives us a snapshot of Christian diversity, whereas Hughes summarises a person's journey of faith.

Hughes draws on the work of van Huegel, which draws parallels between the development of human maturity and maturity of faith. His three faith stages of institutional, critical, and mystical are the analogues of infancy, adolescence, and adulthood.[44] Although this model is developmental and the three phases correspond to human growth and experience, Hughes is careful to point out that for rounded and healthy faith all three phases are required together in harmony and at the service of one's spiritual and intellectual life. The institutional or infant phase is the time to inculcate basic knowledge of the faith and moral teaching. There is a need for certitude and belonging, and thus the use of the senses and music is important. However, if a person stays at this stage, then only basic religious needs are met and his or her faith remains passive and seeks security, unable to deal with challenge or innovation. The next stage is adolescence or the critical period, which is marked by the search for meaning, the urge to question, and the desire to systematise one's religious understanding. Hughes is clear that this is a very important element in the development of faith, but comments that too much emphasis on the critical can result in an over-cerebral approach to faith such that a person's emotions are neglected and theology and philosophy of belief can replace faith in God himself.[45] Alongside this can come an insistence that one's own belief and practice are the only valid ones, resulting in the othering of people who do not agree with us. The third phase is adulthood or the mystical stage, when believers can look at their inner selves, accepting and appreciating their own complexity. Hughes cautions that too much introspection can lead to self-absorption, especially if the institutional and critical facets of faith our missing. He believes that some of the excesses of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement are caused by people being in the mystical phase without the balance of the other two. Consistent with the mystical phase, Hughes describes God as "a mystery,"[46] knowable only partially through our experience, which I hope has some resonance for our Eastern Orthodox friends.

Bringing these two sets of ideas together enables us to encounter and celebrate the pluralism within the Church Universal. Hughes' three phases, all of

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[43] Gerard Hughes, *God of surprises* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).
[44] Gerard Hughes, *God of surprises*, 11.
[45] Gerard Hughes, *God of surprises*, 21.
[46] Gerard Hughes, *God of surprises*, 31.

which he claims are essential to healthy Christian maturity, allow us to embrace the diversity of spiritual encounter and descriptions of Christian experience described by Schleiermacher. The institutional, critical, and mystical facets of faith reflect the need for belonging and engaging the senses, rigorous questioning and use of the mind, and looking and beyond the self. Within this there can be story, propositional logic, analysis, and emotion, yet all of this is of God and focuses on God within the community of faith. Such a view is, after all, inscribed into the Christian faith by the writings of St Paul, particularly as found in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. I believe this is the mindset that we need to build bridges between our different Christian traditions.

Let me end on a personal note. Bridge building involves meeting in the middle, both parties coming out from their own side and seeking to compromise and learn from each other. I sense that my experience is leading me in a certain direction along the bridge. Stamoolis talks about the two distinctive "theological frameworks" of Augustine and Chrysostom. The first is "a theology of grace" while the second is "an approach to the Christian life"; the West has understood justification in legal or forensic terms, while in the East the focus is "union with God."[47] Catholic theologian Eammon Duffy's believes that "tradition is not orders from above, or the *status quo*, a code of law, or a body of dogma. It is a wisdom, embodied in a complex tissue of words, symbols, law, teaching, prayer and action, a way of life which has to be practised before it yields its light."[48] All of this speaks volumes to me.

Conclusion

This brief article has explored the complexity of unity and identity within evangelical Protestantism as a developmental process influenced by intellectual and social factors outside the church. Although there is much which is concerning, recent trends show a more encouraging mutual embrace among many evangelicals. Finally, based on the wisdom of two spiritual giants, neither evangelical nor Orthodox, I have explored an ethos which might help in the building of bridges.

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[47] James Stamoolis, Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 8, no. 2 (1984): 59.

[48] Eammon Duffy, "Tradition and Reaction: Historical Resources For a Contemporary Renewal," in Austen Ivereigh (ed.), *Unfinished journey. The Church 40 years after Vatican II*, Continuum, New York, 2003, pp.49-68.

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UNITY AND IDENTITY IN PERSPECTIVE OF THE FREE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

ANDREAS HEISER[*]

ABSTRACT. Free evangelical Churches emphasize unity amongst God's children. To put it in a nut-shell: The Founder of the first Free evangelical Church in Germany, Hermann Heinrich Grafe (1818–1869), performed an ecclesiological balancing act in order to make the unity of the children of God visible: he has founded a particular Church as an expression of the universal Church. The Free evangelical Churches came to life with a creed that preceded the ecumenical word of John 17:21. Their founders were aware of, that even a Protestant particular Church must continue to pursue the goal of reducing confessional egoism through prayer, personal encounters, common ministry, and serious theological discourses, and to discern the unity already existing in Christ "for the world to believe." This goal remains, even though the numerical growth and confessional fragmentation of the one Church of Jesus Christ over the last two centuries make the visualization of their unity seem impossible. This article shows ecumenical chances and obstacles of the free-evangelical perspective on unity and identity, which are somewhat typical for ecumenical dialogues between free Churches and other Churches.

Keywords: Unity, Identity, Free evangelical Churches, International Federation of Free evangelical Churches.

The Free-evangelical perspective on unity and identity

Free evangelical Churches emphasize unity amongst God's children. To put it in a nutshell: The Founder of the first Free evangelical Church in Germany, Hermann Heinrich Grafe (1818–1869), performed an ecclesiological balancing act in order to make the unity of the children of God visible: he has founded a particular Church[1] as an expression of the universal Church.

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[1] Cf. Kurt Seidel, "Freie evangelische Gemeinde im Spiegel ihrer biblischen Vorbilder," Vortrag vom 3. September 1995 in Haiger, ed. by Hessische Predigerkonferenz, 1996: 20.

Hence, I would like to briefly indicate to you, how the relatively small Free evangelical Churches in Germany[2] have mastered this "balancing act" between unity and identity, or between universal and particulate Church.

The difficulty lies in expressing the unity of the Church as it is given in our Lord Jesus Christ, on the one hand, but also in the face of theological differences and different convictions, on the other hand.

If the Free Churches in Germany[3] are not perceived as some kind of "untimely abortion," or as merely threatening competitors alongside the traditional national Churches, but rather considered to be legitimate forms of being Church, then we have to focus on the reasons for their emergence[4], because

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[2] The Federation of Free evangelical Churches (FeG) is one of the classic free Churches in Germany. At present, there are about 470 communities with about 40,000 members. There are about the same number of family members and friends. In the last decades, FeGs had a growing membership. Overall, the number of members and communities almost doubled in the period from 1960 to 2010. One reason for this is, that the FeG's mission society for Germany has made efforts to plant communities, especially in large cities. Despite this trend in growing, however, the number of members decreased in some regions and some communities had deceased. In the new federal states of Germany, where the FeG are hardly ever present, Church plantings succeed only in a few cases. The Federation of Free evangelical Churches is a member of the International Federation of Free evangelical Churches (IFFEC). In this international federation, national federations are organized from a total of 28 countries (from Europe, Asia, North and South America). IFFEC has around 450,000 members from 30 different countries. For the numbers see Markus Iff, "Die evangelischen Freikirchen," in *Handbuch der Ökumene und Konfessionskunde*, ed. by Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut für Ökumenik, Paderborn, Bd. 1: Konfessionskunde (Leipzig/Paderborn: Bonifatius/Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 325; Andreas Heiser, "Kirchliche Erneuerung am Beispiel der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden," *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (2015): 45 and for the International Confederation of Protestant Protestant Churches: Johannes Demandt, ed., *Freie evangelische Gemeinden*, *Die Kirchen der Gegenwart* 4 = *Bensheimer Hefte* 114 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2012).

[3] For the term and ecclesiastical figure, see Iff, "Freikirchen," 302; There are currently over half a million Christians in free Churches in Romania: Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, evangelical Christians and others. The largest Church is the Romanian Orthodox Church. 86.8% of Christians from Romania (19.8 million people) belong to this Church. The Roman Catholic Church (5%) has 1.16 million members, the Greek Catholics more than 700,000. The Reformed Church counts about 800,000 believers, the Lutheran Church 21,000, the Protestant Church A.B. 17,000. The Unitarian community has about 76,000 members, the Armenian Church 2,000; see World Council of Chruches, "Kirche und Ökumene in Rumänien," *https://www.oikoumene.org/ de/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/xi-week-of-prayer-for-christian- unity/2001/ecumenical-situation-in-romania*. The relationship between the Free Churches and the Romanian Orthodox Church is uneasy in many places. There are allegations of unfair courting of believers. Proselytism is also thought to be intentional, when some Churches use their material strength (which they owe to foreign partners), the support in form of grants or major construction projects as advertising for their own Church.

[4] Cf. Karl Heinz Voigt, "Freikirchen als Vorboten der Ökumene in Deutschland," *ThGspr* 33 (2009): 72.

the formation of Free Churches was initially seen from the perspective of the mother Churches as a serious threat to the unity of the Church[5].

1. The situation of the Protestant Churches in Germany at the time of foundation the first Free evangelical Church

When surveying the situation of the Protestant Churches during the time of the formation of the Free evangelical Churches in the middle of the nineteenth century in Germany, it is clear that they arose within the context of the confessional Churches, which were organized as Churches of specific territories and which were considerably privileged.

1.1 The national Churches as confessional Churches

As denominational Churches that emerged from the Reformation, the creeds and confessions of the national Churches were considered to be of fundamental importance. Their confessions had, in addition to their theological function, also a political task. Since 1555 they formed a basis for the unity of the state. Simultaneously, however, they also establish a clear fence against false doctrine and against Churches that had no legitimate status within this state. And at the same time the expression of the right doctrine of these Confessions led to the feeling of superiority over other denominations and theologies[6].

1.2 The national Churches as territorial Churches

Due to their legal status, the individual national Churches were self-contained. They were territorial Churches and did not see the need to work with believers of other confessions and denominations, neither on a national level, nor on an international level. It follows that the mission to other states was mostly done by emigrants only. Mission was even rejected as interference in the domestic policy of the country. The other way around, the mission within its own borders was considered as an unwanted intrusion that had to be countered[7].

1.3 Privileged Churches

Generally speaking, the regional Churches were privileged entities with monopoly rights. There was no need for them to work together with other, non-

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[5] Cf. Walter Fleischman-Bisten, Ulrich Möller, and Barbara Rudolph, eds., *Heilung der Erinnerungen*: *Freikirchen und Landeskirchen im 19. Jahrhundert. Beiträge aus einem Forschungsprojekt zum Reformationsjubiläum 2017, Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau* 120 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlangsanstalt, 2018).

[6] Cf. Voigt, "Freikirchen," 78.

[7] Cf. Voigt, 78f.

privileged denominations. According to the German Church historian Karl Heinz Voigt, the theological self-understanding, the dependence on the political government and the historically grown structure of the German territorial Church explain the ecumenical restraint that he perceives from the beginning until after 1945.

"In the context of the confessional, territorial and the provincial Church privileging Protestantism, the Free Churches not only sought a place with their other theological approach, but also transported ideas of the Anglo-Saxon covenant-theology to Germany and designed them in various ways. As a result, they are among the pioneers of inner-German ecumenism and its international connections."[8]

2. Steps between unity and identity

Given this context, the founding of a free Church is not at first immanent[9].

2.1 Hermann Heinrich Grafe

The origins of the Free evangelical Churches can be traced back to the life and work of the textile merchant Hermann Heinrich Grafe (1818–1869)[10]. He visited the "Eglise libre evangelique" on a business trip to Lyon in 1841. This Church was planted there in 1832 by the reformed pastor Adolphe Monod

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[8] Voigt, 80.

[9] For the history of their founding under the aspect of Church renewal, see Heiser, "Erneuerung," (see note 2), 43–69.

[10] Biografies: Heinrich Neviandt, "Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des am 25. Dezember 1869 entschlafenen Kaufmannes Hermann Heinrich Grafe," in *Ein Act des Gewissens. Erinnerungen an Hermann Heinrich Grafe*, ed. by Wolfgang Dietrich, with the support of Erich Brenner et al., *Geschichte und Theologie der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden* 1 (Witten: Bundes-Verlag 1988), 99–284; Gustav Ischebeck, "Blätter aus vergangenen Tagen," *Der Gärtner* 27. Jg., no. 37/38 (22.9.1918): 162–28. Jg., no. 51 (21.12.1919): 300; Walther Hermes, *Hermann Heinrich Grafe und seine Zeit. Ein Lebens- und Zeitbild aus den Anfängen der westdeutschen Gemeinschaftsbewegung. Mit einem Anhang der Lieder und Gedichte Grafes* (Witten: Bundes-Verlag 1933); Richard Hoenen, *Die Freien evangelischen Gemeinden in Deutschland. Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1930); Wolfgang E. Heinrichs, *Freikirchen. Eine moderne Kirchenform. Entstehung und Entwicklung von fünf Freikirchen im Wuppertal*, *Monographien und Studienbücher* (Gießen and Wuppertal: Brunnen Verlag and R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1989; Wolfgang E. Heinrichs, "Hermann Heinrich Grafe und seine Zeit," in *Lebenszeichen. Die Tagebücher Hermann Heinrichs Grafes in Auszügen*, eds. Wilfrid Haubeck et al. (Wuppertal and Witten: R. Brockhaus Verlag and Bundes-Verlag, 2004), 13–26; Hartmut Weyel, *Zukunft braucht Herkunft. Lebendige Portraits aus der Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden*, *Geschichte und Theologie der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden* 5.5/1–3 (Witten: Stiftung Christliche Medien Bundes-Verlag, 2009–2011) (it offers biografical portraits to almost all free-evangelical personalities negotiated here); Hartmut Weyel, *Evangelisch und frei. Geschichte des Bundes Freier evangelischer Gemeinden in Deutschland*, *Geschichte und Theologie der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden* 5.6 (Witten: Stiftung Christliche Medien Bundes-Verlag, 2013), 18–37.

(1802–1856). Monod went to Geneva for his theological studies and had contact there with the Scottish Congregationalist Robert Haldane (1746–1842) and his Free evangelical Church of Geneva (Eglise evangelique libre à Geneve).

This Church was founded in 1817 as part of the revivalist movement among theology students ("Reveil") and was strongly related with the theology of John Calvin and the Reformed confessions.

An interesting fact should be noted here: This model of the Church in Lyon, the "Eglise libre evangelique," was clearly characterized by a non-denominational character. Not only have believers from different denominations joined it, but it was also striking for its strong missionary commitment.

This contact had a double influence. On the one hand, Grafe was deeply influenced by this Church in his thoughts on the free grace of God as the center of the Christian message. On the other hand he noticed that the Lord's Supper should be a meal for believers only. The extension of the term "grace," by the attribute "free"-grace, corresponds to the idea of *sola gratia* insofar as it is intended to highlight the unconditionality of salvation *extra nos*, but *pro nobis*[11].

Hermann Heinrich Grafe thus found in Lyon an independent Protestant Church. In this Church one could become a member voluntary, which aligned with Grafe's perception of individualism and his conecpt of free will[12]. Furthermore, the community had a strong missionary impetus and a flat presbyterial hierarchy.

2.2 The Protestant Brotherhood Association

To find a new theological conviction does not automatically mean to plant a new Church. So, we have to look at the political circumstances, which catalyzed the further development to the formation of the Free Churches in Germany.

The political and social innovations took a rapid course around the middle of the nineteenth century. The middle classes expressed their claim to political co-determination. The poorer lower classes articulated the plight of pre-

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[11] Grafe had come in contact with the term "free grace" in Wuppertal with Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher (1796–1868). The theological content was further catalyzed in contact with the Reformed theology in Lyon. Grafe had often visited the services, in which the Reformed pastor and later preacher in Potsdam Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher preached, see Weyel, *Evangelisch und frei*, 19; for Krummacher see Otto von Ranke, "Art. Krummacher, Friedrich Wilhelm," *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliographie* 17 (Leipzig, 1883): 243–246 und Hermann-Peter Eberlein, "Album ministrorum der reformierten Gemeinde Elberfeld. Prediger und Pastoren seit 1552," *Schriftenreihe des Vereins für Rheinische Kirchengeschichte* 163 (Bonn: Verlag Dr. Rudolf Habelt 2003): 106–111.

[12] The voluntaristic aspects in the concept of faith is shown by Andreas Heiser, "*Personale Identität und Bildbarkeit der Person bei Hermann Heinrich Grafe*," in *Person, Identität und theologische Bildung*, eds. Andreas Heiser et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2017), 67–97.

industrial mass poverty, which had arisen from the end of the old social structure, that was based on the manorial and guild system[13]. This situation exploded with the revolution of 1848/1849. Hermann Heinrich Grafe experienced the riots up close, as an uprising broke loose in Elberfeld on May 9, 1849 in the middle of the "Reichsverfassungskampagne" (April to July 1849). Barricades were set up and riots broke loose against the rich citizenship. As in other cities[14], the uprising in Elberfeld was crushed by the Prussian military[15]. For Grafe the armed insurrection was the outcome of a morbid "Zeitgeist" (spirit of the time) and therefore had to be rejected as ungodly and reprehensible. Grafe refused the radical demand for liberal emancipation. "In that movement at that time," he said, as looking back, "I saw only bad things, and saw mostly good things, when I was looking back to the old times."[16]

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[13] Cf. Lothar Gall, "Von der ständischen zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft," in *Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte* 25, 2., aktualisierte Auflage (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), 89–97 and Alexis de Tocqueville, *Das Elend der Armut. Über den Pauperismus*, ed. by Manfred Füllsack and Michael Tillmann (Berlin: Avinus Verlag 2007).

[14] The revolution was defeated militarily in Vienna in October 1848. In Berlin, the counterrevolution intensified, but the meetings had been banned by the Prussian National Assembly on November 9, 1848. The Prussian King Frederick William IV. harshly rejected the imperial crown offered to him by the National Assembly, see Wolfgang E. Heinrichs, *Hermann Heinrich Grafe und seine Zeit*, in *Lebenszeichen*, eds. Haubeck et al., 18f.

[15] Cf. Klaus Goebel and Manfred Wichelhaus, eds., *Aufstand der Bürger. Die Revolution 1849 im westdeutschen Industriezentrum* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1974) and Wolfgang Dietrich, "Barrikaden. Heimatmission und Gemeindediakonie," in Wolfgang Dietrich (ed.), *Ein Act des Gewissens. Dokumente zur Frühgeschichte der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden*, with the support of Erich Brenner et al., *Geschichte und Theologie der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden* 2 (Witten: Bundes-Verlag, 1988), 11–54.

[16] "I saw only bad things in the movement of that time, and in the clinging to the old, mostly only good things." In the aftermath, a change took place in his political conception. He now preferred the democratic form of the monarchy. "And should I choose among the various forms of government, I would not hesitate to declare myself a republic, as best in itself; because it is most conducive to personal development, to the formation of capable characters, in that its use, if it is to be really fruitful for the good of the country, requires already characters which have arisen from the people and formed in it, then also make an impact upon the people in a popular manner and so much to spur it on to its own education." (Entry of 21 June 1852 [Diary 1, pp. 158–161]). – Democracy represents a precondition for the free-Church movement. But even at the end of the 19th century, even in Protestantism, it often served as a placeholder for an anarchy of values. Democracy and cultural degeneration were mentioned in the same breath. The Church historian Kurt Nowak states: "German Protestantism lost its former culture of dissent." He reasons this statement disillusioned: "After the pacification of the religious parties in the Augsburg Religious Peace by 1555 and in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 Protestant knowledge of the necessity of dissent … was lost. The Protestant state was no more tolerant than the Catholic one." [Kurt Nowak, "Der lange Weg des deutschen Protestantismus in die Demokratie," in *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte interdisziplinär. Beiträge 1984–2001*, by Kurt Nowak, *Konfession und Gesellschaft* 25 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 377].

Under the impression of the revolution of 1848/1849, Grafe founded on 19 June 1850 in Wuppertal, in a center of the early industrialization and social upheavals, with like-minded brothers the "Evangelischen Brüderverein." He intended to elevate the self-alienated citizens and in order to achieve this result, there was only one goal for him: To spread the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners. Grafe had previously resigned from his function as a deacon in the reformed Church of Elberfeld. He was annoyed with the lack of discipline and without Church discipline – according to his understanding – no true apostolic-Protestant Church could exist[17].

In addition to the missionary proclamation of the Gospel, the members of the Evangelical Brothers' Association also celebrated the Lord's Supper together, as they did not want to sit "at the Lord's table" with people who were evidently not believers. Within this Protestant Brotherhood conflicts were soon evident[18].

2.3 The Planting of the first Free evangelical Church in Germany

On November 22, 1854, the "Free evangelical Church of Elberfeld and Barmen" was constituted. Grafe had previously drafted a Church constitution. The resignation from the regional Church and the formation of the new community meant for Grafe and the other participants an "act of conscience," as they formulated in their letter to the Church leaders on November 30, 1854. They mentioned the reasons for their action, namely that they question the basis of the Protestant Church, according to which "the unbeliever enjoys the same right on the basis of a mass-Confirmation."[19]

They resisted the assumption that they wanted to create a perfectionist Church. But, despite the imperfection, the body of Christ must be represented in such a way that the local Church should be an image of the universal, invisible Church of Jesus Christ, and only those who have heard the word and answered with faith should belong to it. And the faith should come to expression under the

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[17] Dietrich (ed.), *Act* (see note 10), pp. 191f.; It was already stated in the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563, that those "who turn out in their confession and life to be unbelievers and godless" may not be allowed to partake of the sacrament, because "otherwise the covenant of God will be reviled and their anger will be aroused throughout the Church." (Question 82, in Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche (Deutschland), ed., *Heidelberger Katechismus*, Revidierte Ausgabe (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 54.

[18] Carl Brockhaus (1822–1899) was more committed to the exclusiveist doctrine of Darby, and there were differences regarding the baptismal doctrine between Grafe and the Baptist preacher Julius Köbner (1806–1884). See Erich Geldbach, "Darby/Darbysten," *TRE* 8 (Berlin and New York, 1981), 357–358; Rolf-Edgar Gerlach, *Carl Brockhaus – ein Leben für Gott und die Brüder* (Wuppertal, 1994); Ruth Baresel, *Julius Köbner – Sein Leben* (Kassel, 1930); Wolfgang E. Heinrichs, "Köbner, Julius Johannes Wilhelm," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 4 (Herzberg, 1992), 233–236.

[19] Dietrich, *Act* 2, (see note 15), 215.

action of the Holy Spirit through a believer's lifestyle. In spite of leaving the Reformed Church of Elberfeld, they wanted to prove by action that they intended to maintain unity with all the members of the body of Christ.

The Geneva "Eglise libre evangelique" served as a model of building the new Chruch with name, constitution and creed[20].

The intention was that the newly formed congregation should be "evangelical," thus in accordance with the gospel in terms of the doctrine of justification and in its understanding of Church.

Hence, Grafe founded an independent congregation in opposition and in contrast to the Protestant territorial Church, the Baptist Church and the Darbysmus.

Even before the Church planting, Grafe strived for maintaining unity. So he tried to come to an agreement with the existing Baptist Church in Barmen on the formation of a common Church. But this failed on the baptismal question, since Grafe regarded his infant baptism as a valid baptism. And if one is bound in his conscience to his infant baptism, he should not be compelled to be baptized as an adult. But the Bapitists demanded an adult-baptism in order to become a member of their Church[21].

In contrast to the Darbymus or the "Christian Assembly," Grafe emphasized that in a Church, which is organized according to God's will, a constitution and offices (duties or service) were necessary[22]. He was convinced of the "divine appointment of the elders." In his opinion, this ministry culminated in all the ministries of which the New Testament speaks.

The Constitution of the first Free evangelical Church focused on the local congregation, which had to formulate the doctrine and regulate the conduct of people belonging to the common priesthood of the faithful in the execution of all important decisions.

The Elberfeld-Barmer creed was preceded by John 17 to anchor the unity of Christians in the unity of father and son[23]. The creed did not contain any "special doctrines" and should describe "only the undoubted guideline of the

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[20] Dietrich, *Act* 2 (see note 15), 111–123; Wilfrid Haubeck, "Dokumentation 3: Gemeindegründung: Glaubensbekenntnis und Verfassung," in Dietrich, *Act 2,* 111–123; the reference Grafes to the Geneva-confession as a template for his own confession is based on the lower organizational level of the Bern or Lyon communities.

[21] See Andrea Strübind, "Warum die Wege sich trennten. Der Streit um das Taufverständnis in der Frühzeit des deutschen Baptismus und die Entstehung der Freien evangelischen Gemeinden," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Gemeinde* 12 (2007): 241–271.

[22] Diary entry of 2 April 1858 "Die Dienstverrichtungen in der Gemeinde." For the constitution, see Dietrich, *Act* 1 (see note 10), 209–213.

[23] Haubeck, "Dokumentation 3," in Dietrich, *Act* 2 (see note 15), 123.

healthy biblical faith."[24] It served to legitimate the new Church against other Churches and authorities. It played no role in the further history of the Elberfeld congregation.

Even later congregations of the Federation of Free evangelical Churches acted with written creeds such as Grafe himself has done. Because of his understanding of unity, he demanded the reference to the Scriptures and not to exclusive creeds[25].

3. The Unity of the Body of Christ

Of course, we must ask ourselves, how a new Church planting, which separates itself from an existing Church, can represent the unity of the Church? The "Unity of the Children of God" was nowhere better demonstrated for Grafe than by the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, there were several guests at the Lord's Supper in the community of Elberfeld-Barmen. It was possible for believers who did not belong to the congregation to attend the Lord's Supper without having to formally leave their congregation.

3.1 The Federation of Free evangelical Churches

Since the beginning of the Free evangelical Church, an ecumenical openness for Christians from other Churches was an important factor. Grafe and the community also cultivated intense relationships with Christians from other denominations, which were represented in an Evangelical Alliance (EA), that was founded in London in 1846.

In 1874, 22 congregations merged together and formed the "Federation of the Free evangelical Churches and Lord's Supper Communities," the later "Federation of Free evangelical Churches," as it was called since 1928[26]. The purpose of this "conference" was: "The communion of the Lord's Supper, that is, communion to serve one another with the gifts received, to counsel, and to offer a helpful hands ... ."

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[24] Haubeck, 114.

[25] However, Grafe overlooked the fact that Scripture and confession, even in the Reformed Church of his days, were not separate or even opposite figures, but were related to one another – with the prevalence of Scripture. An examination of the confessional hermeneutics of Grafe, who was able to misinterpret confessional texts as static and opposed them to the dynamics of the mind, is not yet available. Grafe differentiated between useful confessions, which were unifying (*Apostolicum*), and harmful confessions, which had a dividing effect.

[26] *100 Jahre Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden, Gründungsprotokoll*, Faksimile-Druck (no date given, Witten, 1974).

It was not a matter of exercising domination. On the contrary, it was desired, "that the independence of the individual congregation should be preserved as far as it is possible."[27]

The "Guiding Principles" emphasized, on the one hand, that the purpose of the association was "to strengthen one's faith in the Lord Jesus and love all the children of God" and, on the other hand, to present the inner unity of the Spirit "outwardly."

This Federation of the Free evangelical Churches is an example of the integration of different theological positions. In the merging sacrament communities these were especially the question of how to practise baptism. In the covenant they came and stayed together[28].

3.2 Participation in federal initiatives

As the Free evangelical Churches longed for visible unity, they, therefore, were involved in founding confessional confederations. It was not just a matter of collaboration at the organizational level, but also of spiritual communion, prayer meetings, celebrating communal services, and missionary activities.

Thus, the Free evangelical Churches were founding members of the "Christian Singer-Covenant/Christlicher Sängerbund" in 1879, the "Free Church Sunday School-Covenant/Freikirchlicher Sonntagschulbund" in 1891, the "Covenant of Free Church Preachers/Bund freikirchlicher Prediger" in Berlin 1904, the formation of the "Main-Committee of Protestant Free Churches/ Hauptausschuss evangelischer Freikirchen" in 1916.

An important further step towards the practical unity of the Free Churches was the foundation of the "Association of Protestant Free Churches/ Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen" in 1926. It took place as a reaction of the First World Conference of the Movement for Practical Christianity in Stockholm 1925. Today it comprises of twelve member Churches and two guest members[29].

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[27] *100 Jahre Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden, Gründungsprotokoll*, 4.

[28] Voigt, "Freikirchen," (see note 4), 76.

[29] See http://www.vef.de/mitgliedskirchen, last accessed: 30th October 2018. The Union of Protestant Free Churches (Verienigung evangelischer Freikirchen [VEF]) is a union of independent Churches, the oldest interdenominational and ecumenical association in Germany. The theological preamble adopted in 1998 describes a basic consensus, to which all the Churches and parish associations of the VEF agree. Unifying aspects are: the one Lord (Christ confession), the one Word (Bible as teaching authority), the personal faith, the Church of believers, the mission to mission and the hope of the coming Lord. The opening passage of the Preamble strikes out, that the VEF understands itself as a "community of evangelical congregations and Churches," "united by the Lord Jesus Christ." That is why the Free Churches claim: "... with all the Churches of the Reformation, they testify to the salvation of sinners for the sake of Jesus Christ's sake, out of God's free grace solely by faith." (VEF Charter, § 1: Self-conception, www.vef.de/fileadmin/download/VEF_Satzung.pdf); See Iff, "Freikirchen" (see note 3), 298f. and Klaus Peter Voß, "Die Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen

The Free evangelical Churches were also involved as guest members in the formation of the "Working Group of Christian Churches/Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen e.V." in Germany in 1948[30].

4. Perspectives

The Free evangelical Churches understand themselves as part of the worldwide Christ-communion[31] and their unity as founded in Jesus Christ. It is the goal of the Free evangelical Churches to present this unity within and beyond their own borders.

The German theologian Harding Meyer has seen the goal of ecumenical work as "promoting the fellowship of all who believe in Christ, the unity of Christians."[32]

Since even Free evangelical Churches are not content with establishing the unity of Christians in the invisible Church[33], they try to promote the visible community of believers[34]. They regard personal faith in Jesus Christ, obedience

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auf dem Weg zur Kirchengemeinschaft," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 49 (2000), 79–92: Voss sees in the preamble of 1998 an important basis for further clarification-process of the member Churches of the VEF. The fact that they are still a long way from the ecumenical model of "unity in reconciled diversity" is shown in the problems with membership shifts. The preamble also serves as a basis for discussions with other Churches.

[30] Voigt, "Freikirchen," 82–90.

[31] Cf. the preamble to the Constitution of the Federation of Free evangelical Churches, adopted at the Bundestag of the Federation of Free evangelical Churches on September 21th, 2018 in Siegen-Geisweid.

[32] Harding Meyer, "Ökumenische Zielvorstellungen," *Bensheimer Hefte* 78 (Göttingen, 1996): 13.

[33] The distinction between "visible" and "invisible Church" (*ecclesia visiblisia* and *ecclesia invisibilis*) presumably goes back to Zwingli (Zwingli, *Fidei expositio*, 1531 [*Fidei expositio*, ed. by Fritz Büsser and Joachim Staedtke, in Emil Egli et al., eds., *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke*, vol. 6.5, *Corpus Reformatorum* 93,5 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991), 108–111]); see Albrecht Ritschl, *Ueber die Begriffe: sichtbare und unsichtbare Kirche,* in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 32 (Hamburg, 1859), 189–227 and in Albrecht Ritschl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Freiburg im Breisgau and Leipzig: Mohr, 1893, (68–99) 68f.; see Wilfried Härle, "Kirche VII. dogmatisch," *TRE* 18 (Berlin and New York, 1989), 286f. To think about the two Churches fuels the misconception, that the true Church is a community existing as a mere idea. This was already stated by Melanchthon (Hans Engelland, ed., *Melanchthon's Werke* 2/2, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1953), 474f.), that the Church was not a *Platonica civitas* (CA VII, 20 Apology [Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, hg. im Gedenkjahr der Augsburgischen Konfession 1930 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, ⁹1982), 238, 17–22]). Luther himself therefore preferred to speak of the *ecclesia abscondita* (*De servo arbitrio*, 1525 [WA 18, p. 652,23]), bearing in mind that although the Church was invisible as a community of faith, it would certainly be recognizable by outward signs, where the Church was located in the World is to be found.

[34] Cf. Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen, ed., *Freikirchenhandbuch. Informationen-Anschriften-Texte-Berichte*, Ausgabe 2004 (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2004), 32.

to the Word and to God's will, as a precondition for community membership. This self-image is open to ecumenical partnership[35].

Free evangelical Churches see appropriate ways of cooperation, especially in the "Association of Protestant Free Churches (VEF)" and in the "Evangelical Alliance."

Concerning doctrine, they are trying to publicly acknowledge matches in order to signal unity, where it exists.

For example, the Free evangelical Churches have largely agreed on understanding the gospel with the Leuenberg Church-Community = Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in 2009[36].

The relationship to the World Council of Churches is distanced at the level of the "Federation of Free evangelical Churches," which is due to differences in ecclesiology and christology. In addition, Free evangelical Churches miss occasionally in some of the pronouncements of the World Council of Churches a clear orientation towards Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.

However, there are partnerships between individuals of the Ecumenical Council of Churches and Professors of the Ewersbach University of Applied Arts within the framework of research projects on ecumenism and knowledge about denominations.

The Free evangelical Churches have started with a creed into life, a creed that began with the ecumenical word of John 17:21. Its founders were aware, that even a Protestant particular Church must continue to pursue the goal of reducing confessional egoisms through prayer, personal encounters, common ministry, and serious theological discourses, and to make visible the unity already existing in Christ "for the sake of the world." This purpose remains, even though the numerical growth and denominational fragmentation of the one Church of Jesus Christ over the last two centuries make the visible representation of their unity seemingly impossible.

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[35] See preamble to the Constitution of the Federation of Free evangelical Churches (see note 31).

[36] "We reaffirm the testimony of the Gospel in the Concord of Reformation Churches in Europe and agree with the common understanding of the gospel outlined in the Leuenberg Agreement (LK 6–13)." (II. Zum Verständnis des Evangeliums, 1. Grundsätze, 1.1 [Bundesleitung des Bundes Freier evangelischer Gemeinden, *Zum Verständnis des Evangeliums*, *FeG-Text Dezember* 2009 (Witten: Bundesleitung des Bundes Freier evangelischer Gemeinden, 2009), 3]).

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UNITY AND IDENTITY: DECISIVE PRINCIPLES IN THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

ANDRÉS VALENCIA PÉREZ*

ABSTRACT. This article is an analysis of the document "Theology today: perspectives, principles and criteria" published by the International Commission of the Roman Catholic Church. The foundations and principles of Catholic theology as unity and identity, require a permanent turn to the unique message of Christ, a message that we need to announce with courage and conviction. Therefore, it is legitimate to speak about the need for a certain unity of theology. Thus, we must bear in mind that the concept of unity needs to be carefully understood so as not to be confused with uniformity or with an individual style. The unity of theology and the whole Church, as professed in the Creed, must be closely linked to the idea of catholicity, as well as to holiness and apostolicity. Uniqueness and identity come from Christ, Savior of the world. The theology of unity and identity that wants to be "Catholic" must participate in the catholicity and in the unity of the Church, which ultimately is based on the trinitarian unity of God himself. Theology is catholic in the richness of the plurality of its expressions, protagonists, ideas and contexts and, therefore it is born from the attentive listening of the Word of God, it is incardinated in the communion of the Church and it is oriented to the service of the truth.\

Keywords: unity, identity, Catholic theology, holiness, apostolicity, Jesus Christ, Trinity

Unity and Identity

In this sense of Unity and Identity, as Identity and Unity, in 2012 the international theological commission of the Roman Catholic Church published the document: *Theology today: perspectives, principles, and criteria*[1]. I consider its

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[1] International Theological Commission of the Roman Catholic Church. "Theology today: perspectives, principles and criteria,"
www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html.

content of great importance and can I think it enlighten us in the theme of unity and identity of the Church. This document not only relates theology with the *notae ecclesiae*, that is, with the fundamental characteristics of the Church, and in a more specific way with the "catholicity" and the "unity" of the Church. But also from a confessional Catholic theology.

A theology that wants to be "Catholic" must participate in the catholicity and in the unity of the Church, which is ultimately based on the trinitarian unity of God himself.

> "The fact that there is one Saviour shows that there is a necessary bond between catholicity and unity. In the same way it explores the inexhaustible Mystery of God and the countless ways in which God's grace works for salvation in diverse settings, theology rightly and necessarily takes a multitude of forms, and yet as investigations of the unique truth of the triune God and of the one plan of salvation centred on the one Lord Jesus Christ, this plurality must manifest distinctive family traits" (nº2).

Three elements illuminate this identity and source of unity[2]: Firstly, the listening of the word of God; the rich plurality of its expressions, its protagonists, its ideas and its contexts, theologies are catholic and, therefore, fundamentally one when it is born of listening to the word of God. Secondly, the communion of the Church, when it is consciously and faithfully placed within it. And thirdly, when it is oriented to the service of the world, that is the mission also as an identity.

1. Listening to the word of God is the ultimate principle of Catholic theology; it leads to understanding and speech and the formation of the Christian community (nº4).

> "The starting point of all Christian theology is the reception of this divine Revelation: the personal welcome of the Word made flesh, the listening to the Word of God in Sacred Scripture. On this starting point, theology helps the believing intelligence of the faith and its transmission."

Theology is a scientific reflection on the divine revelation which the Church accepts by faith as universal saving truth. The sheer fulness and richness of that revelation are too great to be grasped by anyone theology and gives rise to multiple theologies as it is received in diverse ways by human beings. In its diversity, nevertheless, theology is united in its service of the one truth of God (nº5).

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[2] A. Denaux , "Ese principio decisivo de la teología católica," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20120503_denaux_sp.html.

An authentic Catholic theology must seek the maintenance of the delicate balance between unity and diversity (or plurality) and avoid uniformity and fragmentation. When the theologians – believers, pastors or laity – understand unity as uniformity and plurality as fragmentation, then there is something wrong with their theology.

Thus, listening to the word of God as primacy requires faith in response to this Word, making from it an understanding of faith. Saint Paul writes to the Romans: "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). He makes two important points here. On the one hand, he explains that faith is achieved by listening to the Word of God, always "by the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom 15:19). On the other hand, he clarifies the means by which the Word of God reaches human ears: fundamentally by means of those who have been sent to proclaim the Word and to awaken faith (nº10).

Faith is both: an act of believing or trusting as well as, that, which is believed or confessed, *fides qua* and *fides quae*. Thus faith, at the same time, is a profoundly personal and ecclesial reality. In professing their faith, Christians say both "I believe" and "we believe." Therefore, faith is confessed within the koinonia of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13,13) that unites all believers with God and among themselves (1Jn 1, 1-3) and that acquires its final expression in the Eucharist (1 Cor 10,16s). All Christians are called to give personal testimony of their faith, but the creeds allow the Church as such to profess its faith. This profession corresponds to the teaching of the apostles (no. 13), that is to say, through transmission in tradition.

Thus, we have this first principle of identity that makes us feel in unity based on the Trinity.

2. However, this element is also lived in the communion of the Church as a second aspect of identity and a chapter of this document. The authentic place of theology is within the Church, which has been gathered by the word of God. The ecclesiality of theology is a constitutive aspect of the theological task and, therefore, a fundamental part of identity and unity, because theology is based on faith and, faith is both personal and ecclesial. The study of the Scripture and the fidelity to the apostolic Tradition; namely: the *lex orandi* (the norm of prayer), *lex credendi* (the norm of faith) and *lex vivendi* (the norm of life) are essential aspects of this tradition. Tradition, therefore, is something vital and alive, a continuous process in which the unity of faith finds expression in the variety of languages and the diversity of cultures. It stops being a tradition if it becomes fossilized (nº 25-26).

Thus, the tradition, known and lived by the Fathers, was multifaceted and thriving in life, as can be seen through the plurality of liturgical families and spiritual and exegetical-theological traditions (for example in the schools of Alexandria and Antioquia), a plurality firmly rooted and united in the one faith (nº 27). In this sense, it challenges us, as churches, to walk in this identity by being faithful to our parents.

Vatican II distinguished between Tradition and those traditions that belong to specific stages of the history of the Church, or to particular regions or communities, such as religious orders or specific local churches. The distinction between tradition and traditions has been one of the most important tasks of Catholic theology since Vatican II and, in general, theology in recent decades. It is a task, deeply related to the catholicity of the Church, and that has many ecumenical repercussions. Many questions arise, for example: "Is it possible to determine, more precisely, what is the content of the unique Tradition? With what means? Do all the traditions that are Christian say Tradition? How can we distinguish between traditions that incorporate true Tradition and those merely human traditions? Where do we find the true Tradition and where an impoverished or even distorted one?"

On the one hand, theology must show that the apostolic tradition is not something abstract, but that it exists concretely in different traditions that have been formed within the Church. On the other hand, theology has to consider why certain traditions are characteristic not of the Church as a whole, but of religious orders, local churches or specific historical stages. While the use of criticism is not adequate as far as the Apostolic Tradition itself is concerned, traditions must always be open to criticism, so that the "permanent reform" of which the Church has a need may take place, and that the Church can renew itself permanently in its only foundation, which is Jesus Christ. Such criticism tries to verify if a specific tradition expresses, in fact, the faith of the Church in a specific place and time, and also to reinforce it or correct it consequently through contact with the living faith of all times and places (nº31).

3. A final aspect is the requirement of the rationality of theology derived from the very nature of the relationships that faith maintains with reason (nº 61-64). Indeed, at the moment when the Word of God, which is true about God, finds human understanding, it feeds its innate desire to know. This desire is explicitly expressedspecifically in the highly structured form of rational, scientific behavior. The document highlights the value of this rational wisdom, underlining its realistic and objective nature, its ability to "penetrate the true depth of things, beyond appearances, and thereby open up to universal reality," but also insists on the analogical, not univocal, character of rationality and its methods (nº 62).

Another aspect is "The unity of theology in a plurality of methods and disciplines." It confronts the question of the nature and unity of Catholic theology under the pressure of a double problematic, an internal one, "the relationship between theology and theologies" and an external one, "the relationship between theology and the other sciences" (nº 74). The document begins by affirming the ultimate principle of the unity of Catholic theology that is taken from its formal object:

> "Catholic theology… as 'reasoning or discourse about God', is one in its essence and has its own unique characteristics as a science: its proper subject is the one and only God, and it studies its subject in its own proper manner, namely by the use of reason enlightened by revelation" (nº 74).

The awareness of this unity is well established in the history of theology (nº 75), but today it must not "give in" to pluralism but integrate it. The unique theology is incarnated in plural theologies without there being a contradiction between unity and diversity. And therefore, this is positive. However, this pluralism has limits, not only when it crosses the yellow line of heterodoxy, but also "if there is no communication between the different theological disciplines or if there are no agreed criteria by which different forms of theology can be recognized – both by themselves and by others – as Catholic theology" (nº 78). As a science, theology refers to truth, so that "each theology can be evaluated against a universal common truth" (nº 78). The unity of Catholic theology takes concrete forms. It is based on the existence of a common history, of a theological tradition (nº 79); to put it in the words of Benedict XVI: "The theologian never starts from scratch but considers as teachers the Fathers and the theologians of the whole Christian tradition." This unity is also favored by the concrete practice of dialogue and the interdisciplinary collaboration of the theologians (nº 80).

So, in order to conclude and summarize, there are elements that make alive the unity and identity of Catholic theology. The first is the intrinsic ecclesiality of theology; "Remain in the communion of the Church." The second is the high convenience for the theologian to live in a very strong theological and spiritual context if carrying out the correct task is wanted[3]. This was said by Benedict XVI, the spiritual involvement of the theologian is not an option. "The theologian cannot exclude from his own life the effort to understand all reality in reference to God" (nº 93). The theology is quickly exhausted, and it is also perverted without a certain connaturality of the theologian with his Object, that

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[3] S. T. Bonino, "Para leer el documento 'La teología hoy: perspectivas, principios y criterios', http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi-bonino_sp.html.

is, without a personal, existential relationship with the God of Jesus Christ, which only allows the sense of the studied Mystery to be kept alive. In other words, "an intense spiritual life that strives for holiness is a requirement for authentic theology, as the Doctors of the Church, of the East and the West, teach us by their example. True theology presupposes faith and is animated by charity" (nº. 92), the holiness of the theologian is therefore mentioned: "the love of truth, the disposition towards the conversion of heart and mind, the effort for holiness, and the commitment to communion and ecclesial mission" (nº 93), but also: the docility vis-a-vis of the Word of God transmitted in Tradition by the living Magisterium; the "particular bond with the Eucharist" (nº 94); "Humility, respect and charity" (nº 36) regarding the lived faith and the *sensus fidei* of the Christian people; the fraternal communion in charity among the theologians, the life of prayer and contemplation.

These elements illuminate our own Christian identity, by Christological imperative and as a source of unity. Unity and identity based on the Trinitarian communion.

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II. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP:
A CONCEPT FOR UNION AND AN IDENTITY MARKER
FOR MIZO CHRISTIANS

MARINA NGURSANGZELI BEHERA *

ABSTRACT. Paul, as it is well known, was a citizen of the Roman Empire and he wrote these words about citizenship to a young congregation in a Hellenistic city. The Greek word „in Philippians 3:20" he uses here is translated differently as "conservation" (KJV), as "home" and as "citizenship" in the New American Standard (NAS) translation. So, Christian citizenship is in heaven - not on earth. It is from there Christians expect their Lord and savior to come. Yet, while living on earth and waiting until He comes and while being part of the larger human community each and every one is a member of political unit, a nation or a state or a tribe.

The knowledge of the heavenly citizenship gives Christians an indication where to hope for true citizenship and gives at the same time a clear indication to distinguish between "heavenly" affairs and their allegiance to worldly powers on earth.

During the initial period of the history of Christianity in Mizoram in order to differentiate one's new identity was the conviction and the declaration that one is now *Pathian mi* (God's people) and *vanram mi* (heavenly citizen). This significant concept and understanding of what it means for the Mizo to be Christian is reflected prominently in Mizo indigenous hymns and gospel songs as well as in the preaching of the Gospel, where it is declared that one is no longer a citizen of this "earthly world" (*he lei ram mi*), but of the "heavenly world" (*van ram mi*).

This paper attempts to highlight the significance of the concept of heavenly citizenship as an identity marker in the construction of an identity and in fostering a union, sense of being a people—Mizo—a homogenous political unit as a reaction to imposed foreign British rule and the western missionaries in the later part of the 19th century. While the focus of the paper is on the concept of "heavenly citizenship" the Mizo's encounter with the British colonial ruler and Christianity will be highlighted in order to place the development of the concept in its historical contexts for a better understanding.

Keywords: Mizo, Christianity, Union, Identity, British colonialism

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> "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."
> Philippians 3:20

Paul, as is well known, was a citizen of the Roman Empire and he wrote these words about citizenship to a young congregation in a Hellenistic city. The Greek word he uses here is translated differently as "conservation" in the KJV, as "home" and as "citizenship" in the New American Standard (NAS) translation. So, Christian citizenship is in heaven—not on earth. It is from there that Christians expect their Lord and Saviour to come. Yet, while living on earth and waiting until He comes and while being part of the larger human community, each and every one is a member of political unit, a nation or a state or a tribe.

The knowledge of this heavenly citizenship gives Christians an indication where and in which community to hope for true citizenship and gives at the same time a clear indication to distinguish between "heavenly" affairs and the allegiance to worldly powers on earth. During the initial period of the history of Christianity in Mizoram[1] in order to differentiate one's new identity was the conviction and the declaration that one is now *Pathian mi* (God's people) and *vanram mi* (a heavenly citizen). This significant concept and understanding of what it means for the Mizo to be Christian and to which community to belong is reflected prominently in Mizo indigenous hymns and gospel songs as well as in the preaching of the Gospel, where it is declared that one is no longer a citizen of this "earthly world" (*he lei ram mi*), but of the "heavenly world" (*vanram mi*).

This paper attempts to highlight the impact of the theological concept of "heavenly citizenship" in the construction of a faith identity which in turn fostered a sense of being one people—the Mizo. Reformed theology was thus a major factor for the development of a union of the Mizo, both as a Christian community within a majority non-Christian world, and as a separate political body, first in a colonial and nowadays in the national setting of India. Hence, the

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[1] The Church in Mizoram in North East India has roots in both Calvinist theology and the Methodist Revivals of England. The first missionary to visit Mizoram was Rev. William Williams a young Presbyterian missionary who arrived in Aizawl on March 20th 1891and remained there till April 17th. On January 1894 the Baptists J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge came to Aizawl under the Arthington Aborigine Mission and worked there for almost four years. Then on August 30th 1897 Rev. D.E. Jones of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission (then known as The Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission) arrived in Aizawl and in 1898 was joined by Rev. Edwin Rowlands. These two missionaries had the whole of Mizoram as their field of service till the coming of the Baptist Missionary Society which took over the South Mizo Hills and started work in 1903. Within a few years the whole of Mizoram was Christianized and today all but a few who claim to be Jews are Christians.

Mizo case is an example of how Christian faith, reformed theology and politics interacted in a colonial setting resulting not necessarily in unity, but in a union which has been defined both in religious and political terms.

In these unifying processes, Mizo consciousness can be termed as "evolving identities"—a process of re-inventing, re-formulation of identity based on a wide range of markers such as "name change," "places of origin," "common language," "one faith" etc. These "evolving identities" were a way of navigating between the "imposed identities" by the foreign British rule and the offers of the western missionaries in the later part of the 19th century for a "self-construction" or "self-definition," e.g. a reinterpretation of the Christian message within the cultural and political system of the Mizo by themselves. While the focus of the paper is on the concept of "heavenly citizenship" the Mizo's encounter with the British colonial ruler and Christianity will be highlighted in order to place the development of the concept in its historical contexts and for a better understanding of how it led to a union of a people.

Reimagining and reconstruction of Mizo identity under the British colonial rule

The people of Mizoram[2] known as the Mizo are of mongoloid origin. According to ethnographic accounts, the population of Mizoram is made up of succeeding waves of migrants who are thought to have come from China into the Chin-Myanmar region during the middle of the 16th century and then into the area of the present state of Mizoram in the 17th century. All those identifying themselves as Mizo share a belief of a common origin depicted in a folktale in which the ancestors of the Mizo emerged out of a place called *Sinlung* (also referred to as *Chhinlung*.[3] There is a suggestion that *Sinlung/Chhinlung* actually refers to a Chinese city in the Szechwon province of China, though the historicity of this belief cannot be proven.

The first significant contact the British had with the Mizo, were with the Sailo chiefs of the Lusei tribe who by 1810 had gained military power and was ruling over the areas which today falls within Mizoram.[4] This contact came in

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[2] Mizoram has an area of 21, 087 square kilometers, and straddles the Tropic of Cancer. The southern half of the state is wedged between Bangladesh and Myanmar and the northern half is bordered by the other northeast Indian states of Tripura, Manipur and Assam.

[3] F.K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 18; J. Shakespeare, *The Lushai kuki Clans*, reprint 1975 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1912), 2-6.

[4] A.G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (London: Luzac & Co., 1949), 35-37.

the form of a military expedition (1871-2) directed against the Sailo chiefs.[5] From then on the Mizo came to be known as Lushai a derivative of the word Lusei, even though the majority of the Mizo inhabiting the district did not belong to the Lusei tribe.[6] The British divided Mizoram into North and South Lushai Hills and placed them under Assam and Bengal respectively. In1898 with the amalgamation of the two, the territory was organized into the unified Lushai Hills district in 1898 and was brought under the Chief Commissioner of Assam.[7] Colonial administrators had given priority to end the constant village feuds and violence, and to ensure peace and order in the district. In 1927 customary codes and practices of various tribes were also collected and compiled for usage in the whole district.[8] All these administrative measures of the colonial rulers had the effect of engendering greater interaction and commonness among different tribes living in different autonomous villages within the boundaries of the Lushai Hills district.

With the help of Christian missionaries Colonial administrators had contributed towards the popularization of education in the Lushai Hills which was a great success.[9] As soon as they arrived the missionaries immediately set

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[5] Much before the expeditions of 1871-72 the Mizo had several encounters with the British while raiding the bordering territories under the British. After one such raid in 1850 the British for the first time entered Mizoram to subdue the raiding Mizo burning down 800 Mizo villages. After this there was some sort of peace. In 1870 a formal agreement was made between Suakpuiliana, a Sailo chief and the British, in which Suakpuiliana was recognized as having powers and authority over other Mizo chiefs, probably because he was considered to be the most powerful chiefs among the Mizo at that time, and the Mizo were to stop raiding the British territories. When the British started extending their tea garden into the areas considered by the Mizo as their land, they resumed their raids in British territories, which resulted in the expedition of 1871-72 which eventually led to the total subjugation of the Mizo. For more details see C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996), 50-55.

[6] The Mizo had earlier been referred to as "Kuki," a Bengali term for hill dweller. In this paper I will be using the term Lusei to refer to the tribe called by the British as Lushai.

[7] The Lushai Hills were acquired by military conquest and no formal proclamation annexing them to any province of British India was issued till 1895 when the declaration to annex it to Assam was made. Till then it had been considered as "Foreign Territory under British supervision." In 1896 the Lushai Hills officially was annexed to Assam with Major J. Shakespear as the first Superintendent of Lushai Hills. For more details see J. Zorema, *Indirect Rule in Mizoram 1890-1954 (The Bureaucracy and the Chiefs)* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2007), 47 -50.

[8] N. E. Parry, who was the superintendent of the Lushai Hills from 1924 to 1928, collected and compiled the practices and customs practiced by the various Mizo tribes and produced a monogram as N.E. Parry, *Lushai Custom; A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies,* (Shillong: Government Press, 1928). Parry's book later with some modification was developed into a Mizo Customary Law and published in 1957.

[9] Today Mizoram with a population of about 1,091,014 ranks as the second highest in India in literacy rate with 91.58 %.

about standardizing the language by devising a primer and developing its dictionary. They chose the Duhlian dialect which was the dialect of the dominant Lusei tribe. The Bible and hymn books were translated into the Duhlian dialect, popularizing this language all over the region and developed it as the *lingua franca* for all the Mizo.[10]

Education resulted in the emergence of a new class in Mizo society—educated Mizo Christians and opened up opportunities for paid employment. The impact and changes education brought about in terms of social changes was felt the most around the administrative center of Aizawl, inhabited by the Lusei, and also other tribes such as the Hmar, the Ralte and others. The Lusei being the dominant tribe, wishing to cling on to the traditional privileges and authority were initially hostile towards education and other changes that the missionaries introduced. They considered them as threats to their own traditional hold on society, whereas the others, especially the Hmar and the Ralte who were considered as commoners welcomed the opportunities and changes. Thus the Hmar and the Ralte emerged as the new class. Growing in self-awareness they started questioning the traditional powers and authority of the chiefs and strive towards democracy.[11]

In 1946 the leaders of the non-Lusei tribes formed the Mizo Commoner's Union (MCU) the first political party in Mizoram.[12] In 1947 the name was changed to Mizo union (MU) to include the Lusei. For the non-Lusei along with the contest for power against the Lusei chiefs was the hope of the incorporation of bordering areas in Manipur and Tripura inhabited by other non-Lusei sub-tribes into the existing Lushai Hills district. This led to a process of constructing the Mizo identity and a pan-Mizo project, calling for a "Greater Mizoram." Central to public support that such attempts met was the term "Mizo" itself, which was acceptable to all the tribes because of its neutrality having no link to any ethnic elements.

Interestingly in this process "Mizo"—meaning a person of the hills to signify the general population of the Hills—being a neutral category was promoted to an ethnic one because the agents of this move created a Mizo union complete with its own cultural symbols around the myth of common ancestry, including adopting the Duhlian language as the common language. Adopting the Duhlian dialect—a Lusei cultural symbol—already accepted by the different tribes was a significant way of contesting the Lusei power. The Duhlian dialect had

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[10] This was despite the fact that the majorities of the inhabitants of the Hills were not of the Lusei tribe and did not speak the Duhlian language. This is a case where the language and the identity of the few powerful subsumed those of the less powerful majorities.

[11] For more details see A.G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, 203-207.

[12] J. Shakespear, *The Lushai kuki Clans*, xiv.

over time and also under the influence of the missionaries' choice of it as the language of the new union in Christ, connected the different tribes and clans living within the Lushai Hills as well as those outside the official geographical boundary.

The leadership in that evolving identity process used the pre-colonial seeds of Mizo commonness and the integrating thrust of colonial state- making in the Lushai Hills to their political advantage. By the time the British left the district, they had ended the feuds and fights among the hill people. This promoted greater interaction between different tribes inhabiting the district and led to the spread of some sort of corporate feeling. With defined and fixed boundaries, colonial rule also contributed to the process of accommodation and compromise between communities. Colonial rule also facilitated the entry of Christian missionaries, who promoted the spread of Christianity all over the district, further consolidating the benefits of commonness. These developments had the effect of concretizing commonness and a feeling of being in a union. Union is here used to indicate a political and cultural union though this does not exclude internal struggles for influence, power and the claim to define the indicators for the commonness.

Christianity and the Mizo

As has been highlighted one of the important indicators for the described commonness which could lead to a union was taken from the field of Christian faith. With politics being mainly identified with the British rule and in the absence of indigenous political concepts, it was with the growing influence of Christianity and the already quoted concept of "heavenly citizenship" that contributed to an imagined and self-constructed identity of the Mizo in the presented scenario. This concept while being able to address the traditional pre-Christian communal aspirations is also a reaction against the threat perceived to come from outside.

Even though the British followed the policy of maintaining the *status quo* and disturbing the way of life as little as possible, they nevertheless, had a tremendous effect on the entire life of the Mizo. The division of their territory, loss of autonomy, and the disruption of their traditional way of life seriously shook the religious, social and economic foundations of the society, and introduced a totally new value system that affected the world view of the Mizo and introduced them to a new lifestyle. Some of these changes were drastic. They included the disruption of certain cultural values and practices, and the creation of a cultural void.[13]

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[13] F. Hrangkhuma, "The Mizos: A People Transformed by the Gospel," in Rosaimliana Tochhawng, K. Lalrinmawia & L.H. Rawsea, eds., *Ground Works for Tribal Theology in the Mizo Context* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007), 5.

It was precisely at this moment when the imposition of the British administration was turning the traditional world upside down, that the missionaries came with the Gospel, filling in the vacuum and cultural void created by this alien rule.[14] Protestant Christianity itself was gradually modified as a result of its insertion into a Mizo world-view. The form of Christianity, that had resulted in Mizoram with its emphasis on the triumph of Jesus bringing with it spiritual power and liberation to believers, cuts across all denominations.

The efforts of Christian missionaries to develop a *lingua franca* and promote education among the inhabitants contributed to their acquiring support from the populace. They gained converts to the faith and in combination with other factors; Christianity began to spread among the people. Starting with small numbers, churches began to record a phenomenal growth in members. From our point of view, the crucial fact was that Christianity was spreading throughout the region. Though different churches contributed to this spread, and were localized and geographically concentrated, institutional linkages between different church organizations prevented denominational conflicts. On the whole, missionaries contributed to the development of a common language and a state-wide religious faith. These developments have contributed to the integration of the Mizo society.

The Mizo learned from the missionaries a kind of "customized-localized Gospel" which proved to be very successful. Many of the old beliefs were now reinterpreted in the light of the Gospel so that the Mizo could better understand its message. For instance, because Mizo, like many non-western peoples, did not have any equivalent in their indigenous system of the Christian concept of sin, they struggled to understand this message of Jesus Christ as one who atoned for sin. They were instead better able to understand the concept of a Saviour conquering the powers of darkness and death and liberating them of these. Though the Mizo did not have the concept of a chief evil spirit, Satan was translated as *ramhuai lalpa* which literally means "lord or chief of the evil spirits." In this regard the missionaries reported that the Mizo were "fond of hearing that Jesus Christ has conquered the Devil and Death ... And often people come to us to tell them about Jesus."[15]

Not only was Jesus presented as the conqueror and liberator from the devil and the demons but also as the one who guarantees *Pialral* (a future paradisiacal state of ease and abundance that the missionaries treated as the Mizo equivalent of the Christian idea of heaven). The missionaries taught that all those who believed in Jesus Christ were assured of going to *Pialral* after death. The story of the love of God, Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice to

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[14] Ibid., 6.
[15] Ibid., 4.

save and redeem humans, and Jesus' resurrection as a victory over death itself was presented as an answer to the two most significant questions for the Mizos, namely, "How can I be liberated from the power of the evil spirits or forces around me?" and "How can I attain the passage to *Pialral*?"[16]

Pialral—a destination which was elusive for most of the Mizo[17]—was democratized and access to it was opened up for all those who embraced Christianity and had faith in the liberating work of *Pathian* through the sacrificial act on the Cross and in the Resurrection. This resulted in all the different Mizo tribes who had their own separate *sakhua*[18] to accept Christianity as their religion thus creating a union of different tribes under Christian *sakhua* and a shift in their consciousness resulting in collectively assuming a common or shared identity of "heavenly citizens." With that understanding of being united came, however, a system of exclusion and compartmentalization resulting in a pronounced sense of "us" and "them," of the redeemed (heavenly citizens) and the unredeemed (those who are doomed for eternal punishment).

This operated at the beginning within the indigenous communities. Christianity and the new understanding of heavenly citizenship with Christ as the Lord disrupted and questioned the religious and social and political unity of the Mizo tribes. Like the early Christians in Rome, the first new Mizo converts were separated from the traditional social life and its activities. In some villages they were persecuted by the Mizo chiefs.[19] Traditional Mizo society was based

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[16] F. Hrangkhuma, *Christianity in India; Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: CMS/ISPCK, 1998), 286, 287.

[17] The passage to *Pialral* was not obtained by a life of virtue while on earth, but through to the performance of sacrifices and the killing of men and certain prescribed animals. Such acts conferred on a person the respected title of *Thangchhuah.* Thus, *Pialral* was meant for those few who had attained this exceptional status of *Thangchhuah.* The status of *Thangchhuah* could be obtained in two ways. First, one could attain it by giving a series of sacrificial public feasts (*in lama thangchhuah*) with *Khuangchawi* as the final one.[17] The other means was by killing several prescribed wild animals and also men who are considered enemies (*ram lama thangchhuah*). *Mitthi Khua*, on the other hand, was for the souls of ordinary people where they would continue to work and toil forever. The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1901-1902, in *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957*, complied by K. Thanzauva (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Boards, 1997), 15.

[18] The *Sakhua* was the family or clan god. The term "clan" here is used to describe a group of blood-related people speaking the same dialect within a larger tribe. When the sacrifices were made, only the nearest relatives of the clan might share in the feast that followed. It was therefore, a sort of fellowship meal of the clan with their *Sakhua*. For more details on Mizo *sakhua* see Zairema, "The Mizos and their Religions," in *Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective*, edited by K. Thanzauva (Jorhat: Mizoram Theological Conference, 1989).

[19] Young people were beaten by their parents and the Chiefs and the Elders took active part in beating new converts in public. Christian families were driven out of their homes - the favorite time being the new moon when the nights were pitch dark and raining. Some were driven out of the village and their properties confiscated.

on community which was a close-knit society. The missionaries' prohibition of Christians from participating in social activities of the village such as in festivals, drinking any kind of rice-beer, singing the traditional Mizo songs and its tunes, taking part in traditional dances and participating in the sacrifices, disrupted this close-knit communitarian life. So when a Christian abstained from any of the above activities related to the community life, he or she became alienated from the rest of the community.

On the other hand, the role of Christianity is not so clear-cut so as to simply say that the introduction of Christianity brought about conflict and alienation of the Mizo Christians from the rest of the community because within a span of twenty years almost all the Mizo became Christians and Mizoram became a predominantly Christian state. This changed the dynamics of the relationship between the early converts and the rest of the community that was prevalent when Christianity was first introduced into Mizoram.

The two realms—a Reformed interpretation

Christians of all times and in all places have been challenged to clarify further the relation between their heavenly citizenship and their allegiance to the law and the politics of the community they live in which was quoted from Philippians. The Mizo have inherited the distinction of the two realms from the missionaries who were rooted in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition. The basic question which this distinction generates is on the one hand about the relation of the realm of God's grace to the worldly order and on the other hand about the relation of the laws and regulations in church to those of the worldly community.

The Mizo being indigenous peoples agreed from their tradition to a close connection between the order in the church and the order outside of the church. From their earlier tradition it was a small step to accept almost an overlapping of the laws of the faith community and the laws of the community at large. The Mizo had adopted the distinction between the two realms in a colonial setting. Because of the closeness of these two realms among them, the "heavenly citizenship" which had been proclaimed to them mainly by Welsh Presbyterians and British Baptists at the end of the nineteenth century was interpreted as offering freedom and a basis from which they could contest the British claim to be "their" subjects—to a certain degree. Hence, to them the British colonial powers represented the earthly powers and requested the Mizo's political allegiance. The Mizo applied the distinction between the two realms now not so much by drawing a dividing line between church and the Christian community on the one hand and the political arena and decision making among them on the other hand: They used it to distinguish between them as Christians and their "masters."

The way they constructed their identity and the distinction between them as (indigenous) Christians and the British "masters" created for them the chance to interpret the Christian faith from within their tribal identity and structures and– so to say– to "baptize" the indigenous way of living, especially the strong egalitarian and community oriented way of living that blended well with the ideal of forming a Christian community "with one accord" (Acts 1:14). For the Mizo their new identity as "heavenly citizenship" also blended well with their understanding and ideal of a communitarian life as tribal Christians–and became thus a position from which they found themselves in opposition to the earthly colonial powers even though these presented themselves as Christian powers.

In the traditional Mizo culture the chief and his elders functioned as the village court to take decisions that affected the whole community and also decided all kinds of disputes. The functional empowerment of the village council was founded on the principle that the interests of the unified community would supersede those of an individual. The tribal understanding of living has lent itself to understand "heavenly citizenship" in its communitarian dimension, as being part of the decision making processes in opposition to developing an understanding of being a "citizen," e.g. being an individual claiming rights from a government. The well-being of the community superseded an individual's rights and claims. Mizo society had its own "customary laws" concerning social offences, including offences against persons, against animals, against property, against marriage and divorce which were used to administer the community. These customary laws were precedence and convention laid down by their ancestors with the objective of maintaining internal unity and peaceful living. The Chief continued to be the guardian of the customary laws even after the British Government annexed Mizoram and a chief who did not respect the customary laws would soon get disowned by the people.[20]

The "customary laws" were not so rigid as to preclude any freedom. The spirit of *Tlawnngaihna*[21] certainly presupposed the possibility and even

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[20] A. Ray, *Mizoram Dynamics of Change* (Calcutta: Pearl Publishers, 1982), 86. For more details on Mizo Customary laws see N.E. Parry, *Lushai Custom; A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies,* Reprint 1988, (Aizawl: tribal Research Institute, 1928).

[21] *Tlawmngaihna* is the underlying principle of life or philosophy that provides the basis for the communitarian lives of Mizo even today. There is no equivalent word in English to translate the term *tlawmngaihna.* It can be considered as the vital principle that binds Mizo society together as a community. It can be understood as a code of conduct of life and goodness. For the Mizo, every good deed, the virtue of selflessness, kindness and love is based on *tlawmngaihna.* This code of life that is *tlawmngaihna* is not necessarily considered to be, and indeed transcends, religious values. This code lies at the very centre of the Mizos' understanding of their being, as the core essence of their lives and thoughts. To not have this code embedded in one's being or living is considered as alien or un-Mizo-like. *Tlawmngaihna* embraces various types of human qualities and activities and manifests itself in various forms and aspects of community life which can be summed up as "community over self" wherein self-sacrifice for the need of others is the spontaneous outcome.

individual decision making as a contribution to the welfare of the community, as long as individual's decision or rights were exercised on the basis of *Tlawmngaihna*[22] which took into account the well-being of the community and others before oneself it was respected.

India as a cosmos of cultures and communities

Today, the people in North East India (NEI) are not under a foreign colonial rule. After India got its independence from the British in 1947 the Lushai Hills was a district in Assam. On January 1972 it was officially declared a Union territory under the name Mizoram and in 1986 it became the 23rd state of India. So it is a part of India and under its constitution and in theory they enjoy all the rights and freedom of Indian citizenship. It is obvious that most of the peoples of NEI belong to tribal societies, where each tribal community even today has its own customs and traditional laws and peculiar ways of decision making. In states like Mizoram tribal identity and culture has over the last two centuries been reformulated in the Christian faith.

So how did the sense of union founded on the identity marker of a heavenly citizenship work in the larger Indian Union founded on a secular understanding of citizenship? According to the Indian Constitution citizenship is a legal status of an individual, independent of ethnicity, descent or religion. It is conceived as a legal and political status defined by a collection of privileges and rights and responsibilities of an individual. It is important to remember that this understanding of citizenship in the Indian constitution has a link in part to its colonial past and in a complex way to western democratic traditions. In the West, citizenship is the result of a historical development in which Christianity has played a decisive role. It has inherited concepts of citizenship from the Greek and especially from the Roman world to which Paul gives evidence in the quoted verse from Philippians. In turn Western concepts of personhood and individual subjects are deeply influenced by such Christian concepts and have over the centuries spread to other regions of the globe.

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[22] An example of *Tlamwngaihna* where individuals or group of individuals forfeit their rights for the well-being of who they consider to be weaker and less powerful for them can be highlighted in the customs that was followed when Mizo children went to pick wild fruits or catch crabs or fish in the streams. Each boy would have his own bag or container to carry the fruit or crabs or fish he caught; but when it was time to go home, they would put all they caught in one big pile and divide it equally, after which they would ask the youngest among them to choose his share first while the eldest took the last remaining portion. Sometimes, when the foraging was not successful and the amount they procured was too little to be divided, they would give all they procured to the youngest. On their way home the eldest would bring up the rear and they would walk home slowly according to the pace of the youngest and weakest who was in the lead. B. Lalthangliana, *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* (New Delhi: Director, Publications Divisions, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Goverment of India, 2005), 128-129.

These concepts have found their way and helped to form the political conceptions of government and institutions in India independently of its ultimately Christian origins. They thus have inculturated into democratic procedures which should secure rights and the dignity of everyone in a nation in which the absolute majority were and are non-Christians. "India," on the other hand, is a cosmos of cultures, languages, peoples and ethnic groups and of religious communities, including Christians. At several point there is a close link between religiously and culturally defined communities and rights or laws (e.g. family and inheritance laws). The constitution itself names communities such as the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes, and other backward classes, who have historically been discriminated and are in a disadvantaged and marginalized position. The constitution provides provisions for them to secure their rights as equal members and citizens of India.

Despite such provisions in the constitution, these communities are today still discriminated and marginalized in several instances. If in many cases individuals are denied the constitutional rights by larger sections of the Indian society on the basis of their being born into these marginalized communities, it is understandable that these seem to react in relation to their communal identity and not so much as individuals. They try to fight for their constitutional rights but primarily starting from a communal basis because these rights are denied to them because they are a part of such communities.

As the case of the Mizo, they seem to tend, in that situation, to develop a concept of "citizenship" which is much more pronounced in its communal dimension and by highlighting the shared cultural and religious identity because that is the basis of the discrimination they experience.

This situation brings the Christian Mizo into a strange and complex situation within the Indian society. They are citizens of India and thus enjoy in principle all rights as well as share the responsibilities of members of the Indian nation. These political concepts, communicated through and influenced by a complicated history from Western Christianity are now claimed independently from that history as political rights in a predominantly non-Christian society.

The Mizo on the other hand have accepted Christianity from within their indigenous culture and are deeply influenced by the Christian faith including the concept of a heavenly citizenship which in turn has contributed to developing in the New Testament a notion of being a Christian and a member of a political unity. Yet, as this paper argues, their Christian background has led them to develop an understanding of citizenship on earth which differs from the one of the Indian constitution. Through their own history they have not developed a concept of a political citizenship of individuals but of a culturally informed community membership, the sense of being in union against the rest.

Conclusion

In the specific context of the Mizo identity, "difference" is seen as both being imposed and produced historically as well as discursively.[23] Difference can be utilized as an expression of agency in the creation of identity. The differentiating practices created by "other" have been politicized and used by the Mizo themselves in ascribing an identity to themselves based on differences.

It is important to note that it was not only the introduction of Christianity by the missionaries that brought about a shift in the Mizo's understanding of their identity, life and world views. The primary factor for change was the British administration. Both had played an important role in effecting changes in the Mizo's life and world views and in the consciousness and construction of their identities.

In the wake of the rereading of the process which led to the evolving identities on the basis of identity markers, this paper has highlighted the intricate relations of two concepts of Christian faith and the understanding of politics and law leading to different understanding of union. Western Christianity came with Mission and Colonialism and did influence eventually the concept of citizenship in India (its constitution). The Mizo's understanding of the Christian faith was a result of the encounter with Western missionaries but the Mizo accepted the Christian faith from within their culture and tribal identities. That has in turn influenced their understanding of politics, laws and ways of communal decision-making.

The "heavenly" citizenship of Christians comes in the Protestant tradition with the belief in justification by faith. That means that the heavenly citizenship and the ensuing unity is a gift from God and not something to be earned or achieved. It should be explored as the basis for a life in union, in dignity and solidarity and service. The motivation for striving for earthly and political citizenship should not be the wish for one's own rights alone. It should be the expression of a solidarity Christians express because they experienced God's solidarity with them in the first place. That should lead them to serving others and offering them solidarity which could lead to a this-worldly union. Through justification by faith, Christians become new creatures, free from the captivity of evil and are thus able to serve, amidst sin and evil, e.g. injustice and the refusal to acknowledge the dignity of others.

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[23] Joy L. Pachuau has dealt extensively with this understanding in her book *Being Mizo: Identity and Belongings in Northeast India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

For people with an uncertain past a Biblical theology of human origins and redemption provides for the possibility for a new beginning—one world, one race, one Gospel—, for an egalitarian understanding of all humanity created in the image of God, a body of people redeemed by Christ through faith now in the process of re-creation as the People of God for worship of God and service of humankind. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." The new identity appropriated a world-view providing answers to pressing questions while maintaining continuity with the past. The move to seek Christian instruction and affiliation was taken by the people themselves.

Cultural affirmation, union and recovery of dignity, is only one side of the coin. As Lamin Sanneh notes, "Christianity triumphs by the relinquishing of Jerusalem or any fixed universal centre, be it geographical, linguistic or cultural, with the result that we have a proliferation of centres, languages and cultures within the Church. Christian ecumenism is a pluralism of the periphery with only God at the centre."[24]

On the downside of such a union with God in the centre as identity marker is in the Mizo case the dominance of the Church the worldly realm, not as the body of Christ but as a social organization. Religion saturates today all imaginable space and every aspects of life. On Sunday there are three services with other fellowship and prayer meetings in between. There is no time for anything else on Sundays and every evening of the week, except on Thursday and Friday, there is a church service. Almost every conversation is infused with the words "prayer," "sin" and "God." Crusades and revivals are common phenomena in Mizoram with charismatic preachers springing up in every locality. There is no dearth of such preachers. Any function official, or informal gatherings or activities are incomplete without a prayer. Mizoram resembles Calvin's vision of an ideal Geneva: the state obedient to the church, an unchallenged moral code universally applied.

What can be learned from the case of the Mizo? We can learn how Christian faith, reformed theology and politics interacted in a colonial setting resulting not necessarily in unity, but in a union which has been defined both in religious and political terms.

In that process we can identify a double ambivalence of the contribution of Christian faith to a union which forms a concrete body in this world. One is

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[24] From an unpublished paper, "Mission and the Modern Imperative: Retrospect and Prospect, Charting a Course," Yale University (undated), cited by Robert Frykenberg, "Christianity in South India Since 1500: Historical Studies of Transcultural Interaction within Hindu-Muslim Environments." Dharma Deepika, December 1997, 3.

the differing impact the Christian religion had on the identity construction of the Mizo as a union in faith over and against the indirect influence of the secularized split off of Christian religion on the formation of India as a secular state. The second is on the ambivalence of the positive influence on the identity and life practices in a region like Mizoram and the concomitant system of exclusion and compartmentalization; it naturally induces a pronounced sense of the redeemed and the unredeemed and of "us" and "them" in the world. The Mizo are a minority group of barely one million redeemed—heavenly citizens. Their union set in multicultural, all assimilating, Hindu-dominated India, this equation of religion with culture on both sides becomes a way of defining and magnifying their difference from a vast and imagined "other." At the end of a long process the evolving identities of heavenly citizenship and the concomitant union of a people turns -within the context of politics in a larger context- into a separate identity which may become exclusive.

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III. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

IDENTITY AND DIALOGUE.
A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON MISSIONS AND
PARISHES IN THE DIASPORA

ASTRID KAPTIJN[*]

ABSTRACT. When focusing on the Catholic view regarding mission and parishes in the diaspora, the author of this paper emphasizes some aspects of the historical development concerning this vision. The paper starts with a short overview of some historical tendencies and highlights the latest events and document of the Catholic Church regarding this issue. A first characteristic of the Catholic view on migration concerns the terminology. When speaking about missions and parishes, the author uses these notions in the sense of Church structures. The Catholic Church designates the local structures that are not yet parishes with the word 'missions.' In the Catholic view, it has a specific significance, but the author underlines that the missionary perspective is not entirely absent from this Catholic point of view.

Keywords: migration, parish, identity, unity, Catholic Church, missiology, diaspora

The topic of our symposium focuses especially on unity and identity, situating Romanian Orthodoxy in a geographical perspective between east and west. The question of identity and dialogue with the western world made me think especially of the situation of faithful living in diaspora. I think that in this sense, the Orthodox and the Catholic Church are both confronted with similar problems and challenges. Since I have been focusing my research on the situation of Catholics from the Eastern Catholic churches living in diaspora, the so-called Uniates, even if this notion seems no longer appropriate since the Declaration of Balamand in 1993[1], I could not ignore the phenomenon of migration.

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[1] Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion," Balamand, June 23rd, 1993.

In what follows, I want to present the view of the Catholic Church on migrants in general before focusing more precisely on Church structures; then, as a canon lawyer, the institutional aspects are of particular interest for me. The characteristics of the Catholic view are, at least for some of them, the result of theological foundations. However, we will present them only briefly, not entering into details, since the limits imposed on this paper do not allow it. When we speak of missions and parishes, we use these notions in the sense of church structures. The Catholic Church designates the local structures that are not yet parishes with the word 'missions.' So, it differs from the sense that Orthodoxy often attributes to this word.[2] In the Catholic view, it has a specific significance, but we also will see that a missionary perspective is not completely absent from this Catholic view.

I. Principles and characteristics of the Catholic view on migration

When focusing on the Catholic view, we should also keep in mind certain elements of the historical development concerning this vision. We would like to start with a short overview of some historical tendencies and highlight the latest events and documents of the Catholic Church.

Migration is, of course, a phenomenon that has been known through the ages. People have always been on the move – we only need to the pilgrims in former centuries. The ecumenical councils and different synods treated the phenomenon from the perspective of the hosting of pilgrims and of their pastoral care, which raised the question of the transfer of a cleric from one local church to another. During this period of church history, the migration phenomenon benefited only in a marginal way from the attention of the church.

In the following periods of church history, after the loss of communion between Rome and Constantinople, some attention was paid by the church in the west to the migration phenomenon especially through dispositions concerning pastoral care at the local level. Only since the 19th century has the Catholic Church used the terms "migrants" and "migration". We should also keep in mind that it was only in 1912 that an institution was created in the Roman Curia for the pastoral care of migrants;[3] however, this was not in an exclusive way. This situation lasted till 1952, when Pope Pius XII issued an Apostolic Constitution with the title "Exsul Familia". He established a centralised system of pastoral care for migrants, gathering all the different competencies into one institution.[4] This changed in the 1960s after the Second Vatican Council.

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[2] See for instance Cristian Sonea, "Missio Dei – the contemporary missionary paradigm and its reception in the Eastern Orthodox missionary theology," *RES* 9, no. 1 (2017), 70-91.

[3] EMCC, n. 31.

[4] The Consistorial Congregation.

The Council strengthened the position of the individual bishops and promoted the creation of bishops' conferences. This necessarily also had an influence on the organisation of pastoral care for migrants. In 1969 an instruction entitled "Nemo est" issued dispositions in this sense, relying more on the individual bishops and the conferences of bishops. In 1970 a new commission for migration questions and tourism was set up. However, it was not an autonomous institution at the time, being subordinate to the Congregation for Bishops. Only in 1988 did it acquire its independence, when a Pontifical Council for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people was created. This Pontifical Council produced an important document in 2004, entitled "Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi" (EMCC). It has the form of an Instruction, which means that it is a document issuing guidelines for the application of laws, addressing itself to those who have to implement the laws. We will refer to it in detail in what follows. In 2016, the Pontifical Council became part of a large dicastery for the promotion of integral human development, so the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people started to be considered in the perspective of human development.

A first characteristic of the Catholic view on migration concerns the terminology. If we limit ourselves to the most important documents of the Catholic Church since 1952, we can observe the following.

Because of the fact that migration is a very complex phenomenon, one that has to do with different motives, concerns different geographical movements and does not cover the same duration in time, the Catholic Church on the one hand started to consider it in a very broad sense, speaking about human mobility. One sign of this broader perspective is the tendency to include different categories of people (such as pilgrims, seafarers on ships and in port, those working in airplanes and on airports, and even nomads, tourists and circus people) under the heading of migrants.[5] The only thing they have in common is the fact of being on the move.

On the other hand, the migration phenomenon also came to be considered in a narrower sense, as concerning all those foreigners who for a certain time and for any motive, even for studies, stay in a foreign territory. Also to be seen as migrants, in the Catholic opinion of that time, were descendants of the second generation, even when they had acquired the nationality of their new home country.[6] We can conclude from this description that there is a territorial criterion according to which people move from one territory to another, the latter being a foreign territory. Territory means the sovereign territory, migration within one country being excluded. A second criterion is the ethnic one: in the eyes of the Catholic Church, migration is not just moving from one country to

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[5] See for instance John Paul II, Ap. Constitution "Pastor bonus", 1988, nos. 149-151, defining the competences of the Pontifical Council for pastoral care of migrants and people on the move.

[6] See Pope Pius XII, Ap. Const. "Exsul Familia", 1952, n. 40.

another; it means moving from the home country to a strange, unknown and unfamiliar place. The place where one feels protected, at home, has to be abandoned to move into a place where everything is new, different and unfamiliar. Then thirdly, there is the criterion of duration of the stay abroad. The pontifical document of 1952 apparently considers that the integration process finishes with the second generation, after which the descendants are no longer referred to as migrants. At the same time, this shows that the accent is more on the ethnic criterion than on the territorial one. According to the latter, children of migrants who are born abroad and have even obtained the nationality of that country would no longer be classed as migrants. In 1952, however, the pontifical document considered them as such. And finally, since the motive for migration does not play a role, any person (whether moving freely or under coercion, be it for political, religious, economic or cultural reasons) falls in the category of migrants.

The Instruction "Nemo est", issued some years after the Second Vatican Council, gives a new definition. What strikes us is the change from the term "emigrants", used in 1952, to "migrants". This includes not only emigrants and refugees, but also for instance students, technical experts and persons working in human development, entrepreneurs and industrial workers. Secondly, the Instruction does not consider migrants from the perspective of the host country they enter, thus putting the accent on the fact that they are different, but considers them from the perspective of their home country, which means stressing in a positive way that they have something of their own. Their own identity receives more attention than the fact that they are different in their new country. Thirdly, the instruction underlines the necessity of a special kind of pastoral care because of their situation of being on the move. The Second Vatican Council precisely mentions this aspect, stating that diocesan bishops should extend special pastoral care to those persons who, because of their life conditions, cannot benefit from general ordinary pastoral care.[7] This implies that foreigners have the same rights to pastoral care as native inhabitants. The element of duration also disappears: special pastoral care should be provided as long as it is necessary. It is no longer limited to the second generation.

This perspective of an unlimited duration is also a characteristic of the current doctrine of the Catholic Church. The most recent important document on migration, the instruction "Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi" (2004), mentions very early on that migration is becoming more and more a permanent structural phenomenon.[8] The definition of who is a migrant is a wide one: including both

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[7] See the Decree "Christus Dominus", n. 18.

[8] Pontifical Council for Pastoral care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction "Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi", May 3, 2004, n.1, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html#The challenge of human mobility, accessed on October 20, 2018.

those who move voluntarily, for reasons that may be economic, cultural, technical or scientific, and also refugees who move because of civil, political, ethnic or religious conflict in their home country. Thus migration is an international phenomenon, but domestic migrations are also taken into account. The document is not only aimed at Catholics: it clearly adopts an ecumenical and interreligious perspective. This corresponds to the vision of the second Vatican Council concerning the ministry of the diocesan bishop.[9]

The approach is a very broad one, not least in view of the fact that the document establishes a connection between the migration phenomenon and the ethical question of the need for a new international economic order for a more equitable distribution of the goods of the earth. According to this view, educational and pastoral systems should educate people in a new vision of the world community, considered as a family of peoples in a global dimension characterised by the universal common good.[10] Thus the migration issue also becomes the occasion for an appeal to Christians and non-Christians to elaborate such a new international order.

From a theological point of view, the document underlines that: "The passage from monocultural to multicultural societies can be a sign of the living presence of God in history and in the community of mankind, for it offers a providential opportunity for the fulfilment of God's plan for a universal communion."[11] It is the purpose of the document to respond to the new spiritual and pastoral needs of migrants and to make migration more and more an instrument of dialogue and proclamation of the Christian message.[12] Pastoral care should be open to developments in pastoral structures, and at the same time guarantee the communion between pastoral workers in this specific field and the local hierarchy.[13] Here we can already see an element that will be stressed even more in the rest of the document: the aspects of dialogue and integration.

The mention of pastoral workers also deserves attention. For centuries, the Catholic Church mainly focused on the clergy who accompanied the migrants to provide them with spiritual assistance. Now the perspective changes from priests as missionaries to that of pastoral workers, a notion that also can include lay people.

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[9] See the decree on the pastoral office of bishops in the church "Christus Dominus" 16: "They should deal lovingly with the separated brethren, urging the faithful also to conduct themselves with great kindness and charity in their regard and fostering ecumenism as it is understood by the Church. They should also have a place in their hearts for the non-baptized so that upon them too there may shine the charity of Christ Jesus, to whom the bishops are witnesses before all men."

[10] EMCC, n. 8.

[11] EMCC, n. 9.

[12] EMCC, n. 3.

[13] Ibid.

The nature of their activities has also changed: for a long time, one of the preoccupations of the Catholic Church was that the migrants should be able to confess in their own native language. The priests needed for this task could also celebrate the Eucharist in the same language. As we know, pastoral care nowadays largely goes beyond the necessities of the celebration of the sacraments: catechesis, spiritual guidance and diaconal tasks, for instance, as well as collaboration and coordination inside and outside communities, are equally important.

Another aspect in line with this new vision is the fact that the migrants themselves are addressed as actors with an active role. This corresponds to a more general change of perspective in the Catholic Church: the ecclesiology of the People of God, having in mind all the faithful before underlining the specific role of the hierarchy (which is one of service to the community), resulted in a view where the faithful are no longer merely the objects of the pastoral care of the ministers of the church; they now have an active and responsible role in the church and also in society. According to the document, the missionary-dialogical task associated with the phenomenon of migration pertains to all members of the mystical Body of Christ. Migrants themselves are responsible for this task, in the threefold function of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. Thus it becomes necessary to build up the church and make it grow *in* and *with* migrant communities.[14]

II. Theological foundations

The document tries to establish a connection between migrations and biblical events. Reference is made to the patriarchs of the Old Testament, especially to Abraham and Jacob, and to the Hebrews who crossed the Red Sea in the Exodus to form the People of the Covenant. This leads to the conclusion that: "The hard test of migration and deportation is therefore fundamental to the story of the Chosen People in view of the salvation of all peoples."[15] the New Testament, Christ himself (who was born in a manger and fled into Egypt, where he was a foreigner) repeated in His own life the basic experience of His people (cf. Mt 2:13 ff). "Born away from home and coming from another land (cf. Lk 2:4-7), 'he came to dwell among us' (cf. Jn 1:11,14) and spent His public life on the move, going through towns and villages (cf. Lk 13:22; Mt 9:35). After His resurrection, still a foreigner and unknown, He appeared on the way to Emmaus to two of His disciples (…)." The document concludes from this: "So Christians are followers of a man on the move 'who has nowhere to lay his head' (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58).[16]

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[14] EMCC, n. 38,6. Italics from the original.
[15] EMCC, n. 14.
[16] EMCC, n. 15.

Christ's mother Mary is called a living icon of the migrant woman, because she gave birth to her Son away from home (cf. *Lk* 2:1-7) and was compelled to flee to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-14). Popular devotion is right to consider Mary as the Madonna of the Way.[17] And of course the birth of the church at Pentecost symbolises the meeting of peoples.[18]

Because of all these events, the Christian should consider himself as a *pároikos*, a temporary resident, a guest wherever he may happen to be.[19] This means, on the one hand, that their geographical location in this world is not very important to Christians, and on the other, that the sense of hospitality comes naturally to them.[20]

As a consequence, foreigners are a visible sign and an effective reminder of the universality that is constitutive for the Catholic Church.[21] At the same time, the journey of migrants can become a stimulus to the hope which points to a future beyond this present world, inspiring the transformation of the world in love and eschatological victory. As such, it announces the paschal mystery.[22] In a way, the "foreigner" is God's messenger[23].

Based on the event of Pentecost, Pope John Paul II stressed that ethnic and cultural pluralism is not just something that should be tolerated because it is transitory; on the contrary, it is a structural dimension of the Church. This brings him to the conclusion that: "Migrations offer individual local churches the opportunity to verify their catholicity, which consists not only in welcoming different ethnic groups, but above all in creating communion with them and among them."[24]

The notion of "communion" is a central one for the Catholic view of migration. Even if we speak of foreigners and natives, or of host churches and home churches, we are not speaking in terms of opposition. Migrations are clearly considered as an opportunity for the church, because they not only express its universality, but also promotes communion within the church.[25] Migrants, their pastors and other faithful are called "builders of communion": they should lay the foundations for the acceptance of legitimate diversity.[26] We should go beyond a pastoral care that is generally mono-ethnic and adopt a pastoral approach based on dialogue and on constant mutual collaboration.[27]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] EMCC, n. 16.

[19] Elsewhere in the same document, it is mentioned that "we are all pilgrims on our way to our true homeland". See EMCC, n. 101.

[20] Ibid.

[21] EMCC, n. 17.

[22] EMCC, n. 18.

[23] EMCC, n. 101.

[24] John Paul II, message on the occasion of the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, 1987, 3c.

[25] EMCC, n. 97.

[26] EMCC, n. 99.

[27] EMCC, n. 90.

From a theological point of view, unity and diversity are always linked. They refer to the Holy Trinity, which demonstrates precisely that unity is not uniformity, but represents a harmony in which every legitimate diversity plays its part in the common and unifying effort.[28] This unity in diversity that transpires from the trinitarian vision refers the communion of all to the fullness of personal life of each individual.[29] It seems to imply that there will be a real communion only when each person lives in fullness his/her personal life. Applied to the living together of migrants and natives, this can be understood in the sense of living fully one's own identity, but without prejudice to unity. It follows that for the sake of unity it could be necessary at times not to insist on aspects that are important for one's own identity.

However, the diversity of cultural identities is very important, especially in the proclamation of the word of God,[30] so we can say that it has a missionary significance. If the document mentions missionary perspectives in relation to migration, it is not just in the sense of looking outward to those who are not yet Christians, passing on its own treasures to others and being enriched with new gifts and values. The missionary quality is also at work inside each particular church because mission is, in the first place, radiating the glory of God, and the church needs "to hear the proclamation of the 'mighty works of God' ... to be called together afresh by Him and reunited."[31]

"Openness to different cultural identities does not, however, mean accepting them all indiscriminately, but rather respecting them – because they are inherent in people – and, if possible, appreciating them in their diversity."[32] It follows that "culture" is relative, as the Second Vatican Council emphasised. If the church has used the discoveries of different cultures to spread and explain the gospel, it "is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life or any customary way of life recent or ancient."[33]

Inculturation is necessary for evangelisation: one cannot promulgate the Word of God without entering into a profound dialogue with different cultures. Thus "inculturation" begins with listening, which means getting to know those to whom we proclaim the gospel. Listening and knowing lead to a more adequate discernment of the values and "countervalues" of their cultures in the light of the

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[28] EMCC, n. 89.

[29] EMCC, n. 34.

[30] EMCC, n. 30.

[31] EMCC, n. 37.

[32] EMCC, n. 30.

[33] See the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, "Gaudium et Spes", 58, 5 and 6. It also stresses the fact that a culture might be linked to a social class (GS 56,5 : "the human culture of those who are more competent"), and points to the development of a more universal civilisation, what we nowadays call globalisation. See GS 54 -56.

Paschal Mystery of death and life.[34] In spite of such critical discernment in relation to other cultures and lifestyles on the one hand, tolerance does not suffice; sympathy also, a certain feeling for the other, is needed, together with respect, as far as possible, for the cultural identity of one's dialogue partners. "To recognise and appreciate their positive aspects, which prepare them to accept the gospel, is a necessary prelude to its successful proclamation. This is the only way to create dialogue, understanding and trust. Keeping our eyes on the gospel thus means attention to people too, to their dignity and freedom."[35] Dialogue, even if it is imperfect and in permanent development, already constitutes a step towards that final unity to which humanity aspires and is called.[36]

In this sense, there can be an ecclesial integration of migrants. It does not mean that they should be assimilated to the other faithful, the natives, so that that their foreign origin will no longer be recognisable. They should also maintain their own identity, not only for their own personal good, but also for the good of the church.

Migrations offer an occasion for the faithful to discover the "semina Verbi" (the seeds of the Word of God) that are present in different cultures and religions[37] and allow them to put into practice these aspects of listening, dialogue and discernment in connection with the proclamation of the gospel.

We have seen that the document not only links migration with biblical events, but also points to a theological foundation in the Holy Trinity itself. Its unity and diversity inspire and present a model of living together in spite of existing differences, highlighting the specific role and contribution of each person.

III. Consequences for church structures

Let us start with the living together of migrants and natives at local level. As we have seen already, the Catholic Church wants to take into account the fact that migrants need a special form of pastoral care, because of their life conditions and especially their diversity in language and in culture. Because of that, special structures have been created for them, parallel to the territorial parishes. These structures are called "missions", sometimes also chaplaincies;[38] in general they represent a preliminary stage to the setting up of a personal parish. In the latter

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[34] EMCC n. 36.

[35] Ibid.

[36] EMCC n. 30.

[37] EMCC n. 96.

[38] The Code of Canon Law does not contain anything about missions. The only relevant canons are cc. 564-572 on chaplains. This means that the topic is treated from the point of view of the responsible priest. Besides that, different types of chaplains exist. C. 568 speaks explicitly about chaplains who should be appointed for the pastoral care of migrants and people on the move.

case, the parish and its field of action are determined not by a territory, but by a personal criterion such as language, nationality or rite. Thus we may find, especially in large cities, an Italian mission, an English mission, a Spanish or Portuguese mission, a Croatian or Polish mission etc., according to the number of faithful of these groups present in the territory of a diocese.

Apart from the personal criterion determining the field of action of each mission, a delimitation of territory is also involved, very often coinciding with the territory of the diocese. Since one and the same person might belong to a territorial parish based on his domicile, and at the same time be part of a mission in virtue of his language or nationality, the jurisdiction exercised in relation to this person is a cumulative one. We mean by this that the parish priest and the priest of the mission both exercise powers in regard to this person. From the perspective of the faithful, it implies that they can normally choose to which of these priests they will address themselves. The celebration of certain sacraments, for instance, necessitates the intervention of the parish priest, either because their celebration cannot be repeated or because their reception has/entails consequences for the juridical status of the person. Therefore, it is important to restrict their celebration to the parish priest, because he will take care to register the celebration in the parish books. This is very clear when it comes to the celebration of baptism, confirmation, the sacrament of holy orders, and also in the case of marriages. The migrant who can also benefit from the pastoral care of a mission priest might choose between the two: a sacrament may be celebrated in the parish, by the parish priest for instance, or by the priest in the mission.

Most of currently existing missions are known as "missions with cura animarum", which means that they are allowed to provide a type of pastoral care similar to that given in a parish. However, the missions generally depend on a local territorial parish, which for instance implies that they do not have their own registers. If the priest in the mission celebrates a baptism, he has to notify the local parish priest who will record it in the parish book of baptisms.

You are probably wondering why the Catholic Church does not simply set up parishes everywhere. This has to do with several factors, I think. One of them is the fact that a parish is presumed to last for an undetermined period; in virtue of its constitution it obtains juridical personality, allowing it to acquire, to administer and to sell ecclesiastical goods and to function as a legal entity, for instance. Since mission structures are still considered, in a certain sense, as temporary, owing to the uncertainty about the third and fourth generations and their need of special pastoral care, they lack the stability that is necessary for the constitution of a parish.

The document describes the ethnic-linguistic personal parish or the one based on a particular rite as a parish "for places where there is an immigrant

community that will continually have newcomers even in the future, and where that community is numerically strong. It maintains the typical characteristic service of a parish (proclamation of the Word, catechesis, liturgy, *diakonia*) and will be concerned above all with recent immigrants, seasonal workers or those coming by turns, and with others who for various reasons have difficulty in finding their place in the existent territorial structures."[39] This description almost seems to suggest that the migrants who initially benefited from this parish have left it, to be progressively absorbed by the territorial parishes of the same location.

Another likely factor that inhibits the setting up of personal parishes rather than missions is that the Catholic Church is reluctant to use structures based on personal criteria, even if it sees the necessity of them in order to provide for the special need of pastoral care of these groups of persons. It remains the rule in the Catholic Church that the structures are determined first and foremost by the criterion of territory.

If we take for granted this coexistence of linguistic or national (in the sense of nationality) missions and territorial parishes, we should be able to see how this coexistence could and should be shaped with a view to implementing the principles and theological foundations presented above.

Various forms of structures for collaboration come into question. A local parish could have an ethnic-linguistic or ritual mission. The priest of the mission will be integrated in the team of the parish. If there are several groups of faithful, one or more pastoral agents can be in charge of their pastoral care.[40]

Another model would be the setting up of an intercultural and inter-ethnic or inter-ritual parish. It would be responsible for the pastoral care of natives as well as of foreigners/migrants living on the same territory. Each group should maintain a certain autonomy, but this model allows for intercultural experiences among the faithful.

An alternative to this could be a local territorial parish that offers services to one or more groups of migrants or to faithful belonging to one or more Eastern Catholic churches. The local parish is composed of natives, but its church might become a centre for meetings and community life for one or several groups of foreigners.[41]

Similar structures of collaboration can be envisaged at supra-local level, for instance in the shape of an *ethnic-linguistic pastoral service on a zonal level,* understood as pastoral care for immigrants who are relatively well integrated in the local society. In this case certain elements of pastoral care based on language

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[39] EMCC n. 91.
[40] EMCC n. 91.
[41] EMCC n. 93.

or linked to nationality or a particular rite have to be preserved, especially with respect to essential services, including those related to a particular type of culture and piety. At the same time, openness and interaction among the territorial community and the various ethnic groups have to be promoted.[42] There could also be more specialised centres on this level, focusing on pastoral action in relation to youth work and vocations, on the training of laity and pastoral workers or on study and pastoral reflection.[43]

At national level, the communion aspect can be put into practice through a national coordinator who is responsible for coordination but does not exercise any jurisdiction, among missionaries of a determined language or nationality or belonging to one of the Eastern Catholic churches. Likewise, the episcopal conference should delegate one of the bishops or a priest to guarantee coordination between diocesan delegates and the episcopal conference on the one hand, and between the episcopal conference of the host church and that of the home church on the other.

Conclusion

The document, with the church structures it envisages, clearly shows an awareness on the part of the Catholic Church that migration is not a temporary phenomenon. It also aims to take into account the different pastoral needs of migrants, depending on the length of their stay in the host country and their degree of integration in society, culture and church. In short, we can say that the vision of the Catholic Church on migration nowadays is a differentiated one.

Many aspects remain to be studied with a view to practical implementation. Especially the models of parishes and centres that we presented in the last part of our talk call for reflection and further study.

If we compare the Catholic with the Orthodox Church, it seems to me that certain challenges are the same: when large numbers of faithful of a church leave their home country for a permanent stay in another country, the church as well as each individual migrant will be confronted with the question of how to preserve one's own identity (social, cultural and religious), while at the same time aiming for integration with a different society. Both our churches take these challenges seriously and try to help migrants with this process.

A difference is to be found in the solutions adopted by the two churches. Based on my impression as an outsider, the Orthodox Church is very ready to export its church structures by the constitution of hierarchies in the host

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[42] EMCC n. 91.
[43] EMCC n. 94.

countries. These hierarchies might govern the territory of one or of several countries, but in any case are attached to one of the autocephalous or autonomous churches. This explains the multiplication of Orthodox bishops in several western countries.

The Catholic Church seems more hesitant about the constitution of new hierarchies. Faithful belonging to the Latin rite church will be integrated in a Latin rite diocese; no specific hierarchy of their own nationality or language will be constituted for them, since these criteria are not ones that call for the constitution of a hierarchy. Eastern Catholic faithful, however, could benefit from the constitution of a hierarchy of their own church and rite. Here we can see that the criterion of rite and its preservation is highly important. This need can best be met by hierarchs of the same Eastern Catholic church to which the faithful belong. If these faithful are entrusted to a Latin bishop, this will normally be temporary. When they become numerous enough, a proper hierarchy may be erected.

I think exchanges between our churches concerning this topic make us more aware of similarities and differences between us. It may contribute to a deeper consciousness of our respective church cultures, and facilitate collaboration in future.

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A CANONICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RECONSIDERATION OF THE DOCUMENT "THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING AND ITS OBSERVANCE TODAY" OF THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF CRETE

RĂZVAN PERŞA[*]

ABSTRACT. In this paper I tried to examine the first four paragraphs of the document "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today" of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016) from canonical and theological point of view by taking into consideration its development, the pre-conciliar debates, and its final form. Having in mind this vast period of time needed for the final form of the text of the Holy and Great Council, we can assert the total victory of the theologians and circles with conservative theological visions, because the idea of changing and adapting fasting periods to current social circumstances was totally removed from the inter-Orthodox debate. The official document of the Holy and Great Council is an attempt of theological argumentation of the practice of fasting, highlighting, with several biblical and patristic quotations, the general importance of the institution of fasting, but without any practical clarification. The text contains more than 26 biblical, patristic and liturgical quotations. Almost 40% of the text of the document is represented by quotes and different references, showing a lack of originality and actuality. Despite that, the documents emphasizes that fasting in the Orthodox Church has many dimensions: *historical-theological* (fasting as divine commandment given in Paradise); *ascetic-spiritual* (fasting as great spiritual endeavor and the foremost expression of the Orthodox ascetic ideal); *canonical* (the foundation of fasting are the apostolic precepts, the synodal canons, and the patristic tradition as a whole); *soteriological* (the great significance of fasting for our spiritual life and salvation); and *liturgical* (fasting is according to the liturgical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, culminating with the Holy Eucharist).

Keywords*: Holy and Great Council, Fasting, Canon Law, canons, Tradition, postmodern society

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The importance of fasting for the Orthodox Church. From the pre-conciliar draft Documents to the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016)

The theological importance of fasting was debated for the first time in a pre-conciliar inter-Orthodox or pan-Orthodox meeting at the so-called Pan-Orthodox Congress[1], that met in Constantinople[2] from May 10th to June 8th, 1923, under the chairmanship of the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) IV (1921-1923) [3], a very controversial person.

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[1] On February 3rd, 1923, The Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis sent an invitation letter to the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Serbia, Cyprus, Greece, and Romania in order to convene the Pan-Orthodox Congress at Constantinople in the same year. For this letter, see Anastasios Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil: ein Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch zur orthodoxen Ekklesiologie*, (Münster: Theophano-Verlag, 2013), 101-102. The participants in this Congress were, *from the Ecumenical Patriarchate*: Meletios IV, Ecumenical Patriarch, Basil of Cyzec, Basil Antoniadis (Professor of Theology), archimandrite Germanos (Congress Secretary); *from the Russian Orthodox Church*: Anastasius of Kishinev and Chotin, Alexander of North America; *from the Church of Serbia*: Metropolitan Gavrilo of Montenegro and Parathalassia, Milutin Milanković (Professor of Mathematics and Mechanics at the University of Belgrade); *from the Church of Cyprus*, Bishop Basil of Nicaea; *from the Greek Orthodox Church*: Bishop Jacob of Dyrrachion*; from the Romanian Orthodox Church*, archimandrite Iuliu Scriban and Senator Petre Drăghici. A. Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 102-103.

[2] The acts and decisions of the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress were published during the same year in *Πρακτικά καὶ Ἀποφάσεις τοῦ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Πανορθοδόξου Συνεδρίου (10 Μαΐου - 8 Ἰουνίου 1923)*, (Ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει: ἐκ τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Τυπογραφείου, 1923). This Congress did not enjoy a vast reception, and its decisions were contested in the Orthodox Church, especially by those who opposed the reformation of the Orthodox calendar. The English translation was published just in 2006 by Patrick Viscuso, *A Quest For Reform of the Orthodox Church: The 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress, An Analysis and Translation of Its Acts and Decisions*, (Berkeley, Calif: InterOrthodox Press, 2006). For a review of this book, see John A Jillions, "Review essay: A quest for reform in the Orthodox Church; the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress," *Studia Canonica* 41, no. 2 (2007): 507-514.

[3] For a very critical overview of the context and debates of the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress of Constantinople and its subsequent reception, see Photii Bishop of Triaditza, "The 70th Anniversary of the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople: A Major Step on the Path Towards Apostasy," *Orthodox Life* 44, no. 2 (March 1994): 36-48. The author considers this Congress to be responsible for all the failures of the Orthodox Church in the 20th century, including the "heresy of ecumenism," the reform of the calendar, and the apostasy of the Church. For a more balanced introduction, see Demetrios Constantelos, "Preface," in P. Viscuso, *A Quest For Reform of the Orthodox Church*, IX-XII; Anne Jensen, *Die Zukunft der Orthodoxie: Konzilspläne und Kirchenstrukturen* (Zürich: Benziger, 1986), 25-26.

In the final decision of the Congress issued on June 5th, 1923, signed by the members of the delegations of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches[4], in Chapter V.8 was stated:

> "Regarding the question of fasting, each Church authority is able to be guided by the sixty-ninth Apostolic Canon which prescribes, 'If any bishop of presbyter or deacon or subdeacon or reader or chanter does not fast during Forty Days of Pascha, or Wednesday or Friday, let him be defrocked except if he were prevented on account of bodily illness, but if a layman let him be excommunicated.' On account of individual needs for occasional economy let Balsamon's commentary on the same canon be used as a guide, which states: 'Note from the present canon that there is primarily one fast, the forty days, that of Pascha. For if there were others, the canon would have also made mention of them. Except during other Lents, i.e., of the Holy Apostles, Theotokos, and Birth of Christ, when fasting we are not ashamed.'"[5]

As it can be seen from Balsamon's commentary on this canon[6], the Byzantine canonist is very strict regarding the application of Church economy and the length of the fasting periods. But the strict application of the letter of the 69th Apostolic Canon in the current pastoral context would lead to the defrocking and excommunication of many members of the Orthodox Churches, clergy and laymen as well.

Regarding fasting, the decision of the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress highlights two important aspects: the regulation of fasting periods and the practice of fasting are established by the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and the principles of *oikonomia* and *akribeia* must be used for the practice of fasting in each local Church, so that, by using *oikonomia,* fasting will not be legally and ritually imposed on the faithful, and by using *akribeia*, the practice of fasting will not be disregarded and abolished in the Orthodox Church. As we will see further, these two ideas will also be found in the final document of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016).

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[4] The document was signed by: The Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis, Bishop Kalinic of Kyzic, Archbishop Alexander Nemolovskii of North America, Metropolitan Gavrilo of Montenegro and Parathalassia, Bishop Basil of Nicaea, Bishop Jacob of Dyrrachion, archimandrite Iuliu Scriban, B. Antoniadis, M. Milanković, archimandrite Gherman. P. Viscuso, *A Quest For Reform of the Orthodox Church*, 193.

[5] P. Viscuso, *A Quest For Reform of the Orthodox Church*, 193; Viorel Ioniţă, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009: spre Sfântul şi Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe*, (Bucureşti: Basilica, 2013), 143; A. Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 109-110.

[6] Georgios A. Rhalles, Michael Potles (eds.), *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, volume 2, (Atena, 1852), 88-89.

On July 8th, 1926, the Romanian Orthodox Church sent to the Ecumenical Patriarchate a list of nine themes that could represent the main subjects on the agenda of a future Pan-Orthodox Council. The fifth theme in this list was: "A re-evaluation of fasting according to the climate, hygiene of the human organism and their moral influence on the soul."[7] At the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission gathered in 1930 at the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, under the presidency of the Ecumenical Patriarch Photius II and with the participation of all Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, except Russia, Bulgaria and Albania, the latter not being invited at all, the theme of fasting was proposed for further debate by the delegations of the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Jerusalem[8].

At the First Congress of Orthodox Theology in Athens, that met from November 29th to December 6th, 1936, the theme of fasting was debated only partially, being mentioned and discussed in some papers[9].

The theme of fasting was retaken into consideration only at the first Pan-Orthodox Conference[10], that met in Rhodes, from September 24th to October 1st, 1961, where a long list of topics, classified according to eight categories was adopted[11]. In the third group, called "Administration and Church Order," the fifth subject was entitled: "The adaptation of the rules of fasting to contemporary conditions."[12]

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[7] Fr. Gheorghe Soare, "De la Vatopedi la Rhodos (From Vatopedi to Rhodos)," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LXXIX, no. 9-10 (1961): 844.

[8] A. Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 127-128.

[9] Hamilkar Alivisatos, "Wie verständigen sich die verschiedenen orthodoxen Kirchen über allgemeine und eilige fragen (Kalenderreform, Ehe der Geistlichen, fasten etc.) im Falle eines Aufschubs des ökumenischen Konzils?," in *Procès-verbaux du Premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe: à Athènes; 29 Novembre – 6 Décembre 1936*, ed. Hamilkar Alivisatos (Athènes: Pyrsos, 1939), 297-298. For further discussion, see Veniamin Goreanu, "The Settlement of Canonic Tradition in the Document "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa*, 62, no. 1 (27 june 2017): 89-91.

[10] A. Jensen, *Die Zukunft der Orthodoxie*, 28-31; Fr. Liviu Stan, "Soborul panortodox de la Rhodos," *Mitropolia Olteniei*, no. 10-12 (1961): 732-733; Gr. Marcu, "Expunerea Prea Sfințitului Episcop Dr. Nicolae Corneanu al Aradului despre Conferința de la Rhodos," *Mitropolia Ardealului*, no. 11-12 (1961): 841; Nicolae Chițescu, "Note și impresii de la Conferința Panortodoxă de la Rhodos," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9-10 (1961): 887.

[11] The eight categories of theological topics were: 1) Faith and dogma; 2) Divine Worship; 3) Administration and Church order; 4) Relations between the Orthodox Churches; 5) Relations of the Orthodox Churches with the rest of the Christian world; 6) Orthodoxy and the World; 7) theological topics (including the question of the *economy* and *akribeia*, the relationship of the Orthodox Church with other religions, euthanasia, and cremation); 8) Social issues (such as the family, youth, discrimination).

[12] V. Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009*, 164; A. Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 257.

At the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Conference (Chambésy, June 8-16, 1968) the issue of fasting was assigned for further research to the Serbian Orthodox Church[13].

At the first Preparatory Inter-Orthodox Commission, that met in Chambésy, on July 28th, 1971, a text regarding the adaptation of the rules of fasting based on the detailed research and theological contributions of the Serbian Orthodox Church was proposed in order to be discussed by the future pre-conciliar Conferences[14]. The draft document began with the cultural and religious perspectives on fasting in different religions of the world, focusing on the practice of fasting in the Old and the New Testament[15]. The text of the Preparatory Inter-Orthodox Commission emphasized the historical development of the practice of fasting in Patristic Theology. What is very important, the text highlights the strong influence that Orthodox monasticism had on the practice of fasting in history. If the Nativity Fast and the Fast of the Holy Apostles were obligatory just for monastics, they were later imposed upon laity as well[16]. The commission also acknowledged that "the majority of faithful today do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting, whether due to faint-heartedness or their living conditions, whatever these may be."[17] This phrase can be found even in the final document of the Holy and Great Council of Crete, without considering the reasons why the majority of faithful do not fast anymore. Therefore, the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission proposed an adaptation of the rules of fasting by shortening its periods, saying that this is not in contradiction with the principle of fasting. It was decided that the future Pan-Orthodox Council has the authority of shortening the periods of fasting. The document of the Inter-Orthodox Commission ended with ten important conclusions that proposed serious reforms of the Orthodox practice of fasting[18].

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[13] Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009*, 77.

[14] Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 378-383.

[15] This text represents the draft form of the document subjected to debate at the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (1986), from which a lot of biblical and patristic arguments were taken, as we will see, even in the final document of the Council of Crete, such as those from: *Didache 8, 1*, St. Irenaeus of Lyons cited in the *Church History 5.24* by Eusebius, Dionysius of Alexandria, or the quotes from St. Basil the Great.

[16] Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 381.

[17] Kallis, 382.

[18] "All the ordinances on fasting in force today shall be observed fully by monastics and by as many of the clergy and devout laity who wish and can do so. For other Christians, who have difficulty in observing the strict ordinances on fasting in force today, because of special circumstances applying to each of them, whether these are because of climate, way of life, difficulties of diet or in finding suitable food for the fast and so on, and, moreover, so that the holy institution of fasting should not be abandoned by the people of God, we propose the following: The Orthodox Church may allow a partial dispensation for cooked food to facilitate Christians, and this dispensation should be understood as a gradual easing, depending on the circumstances, as tolerance or a

As it can be seen from these conclusions, the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission proposed a massive reduction of the periods of fasting for those lay people who, under certain conditions, could not observe the rules of fasting. The text did not represent a relativization and a possible abolishment of the practice of fasting, but the application of Church *economy* in time and space, the text stressing as well the importance of fasting and its observance. At the first Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held at Chambésy from 21st to 28th November, 1976, this theme, entitled "Re-adapting the Church provisions regarding fasting"[19], was on the final list of ten subjects of the future Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. The theme was subjected to debate at the second Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, that met from 3rd to 12th September, 1982, at Chambésy[20].

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milder form of fasting. It is proposed that Wednesday and Friday fasts be observed throughout the year, but with a dispensation for oil and fish, except during times of fasting. This ordinance regarding Wednesday and Friday does not apply if the Elevation of the Precious Cross or the Beheading of the Forerunner falls on these days; likewise, the eve of Epiphany, and Wednesdays and Fridays in Great Lent. The ordinances concerning the dispensation from fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays remain in force, as regards the weeks when there is no fasting at all. There is thus no fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays in the period from Thomas Sunday until the Ascension. The length of the Fast of Great Lent should remain as it is, according to the ordinances of the Paschalio and the Typiko. The existing ordinances regarding quantity and kind of nourishment shall be retained in the first week and in Passion Week. On the other days, from the 2nd week of the Fast up to and including Palm Sunday, there should be a dispensation for oil and fish, except on Wednesdays and Fridays (see 4).Regarding the Christmas Fast, the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission has two proposals to make: a) either it should be shortened by half (three weeks) and begin the day after the feast of Saint Barbara, with fish and oil being allowed except for the last five days or b) it should remain as 40 days, with oil and wine permitted on all days, except the first three and the last three, when a strict fast should be observed. The Apostle's Fast should be restricted to 8 days before the feast if there are more than that number of days between the Sunday of All Saints and the Feast of the Apostles. During this fast, fish and oil are to be allowed. The fast of 15 August shall be retained, as regards the length, but there shall be a dispensation for oil and fish on all days, except Wednesdays and Fridays. Should the feasts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and the Dormition of the Mother of God fall on a Wednesday or Friday, there is a dispensation from fasting since there has been a period of fasting leading up to the feast. If the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission accepts these proposals, the people shall be informed accordingly regarding the alterations." *Πρός τήν Μεγάλην Σύνοδον, Εἰσηγήσεις τῆς Διορθοδόξου Προπαρασκευαστικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς ἐπί τῶν ἔξ θεμάτων τοῦ πρώτου σταδίου* (Chambésy-Genève: Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1971), 41-42; Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 382-383.

[19] Viorel Ioniţă, "On the Way to the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church," in *Orthodoxie im Dialog: Historische und aktuelle Perspektiven*, eds. Reinhard Flogaus, Jennifer Wasmuth, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 425.

[20] The Delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church was represented by: Metropolitan Teoctist of Moldova (the future Patirarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church), Metropolitan Nicolae of Banat, Bishop Vasile Târgovişteanul, Prof. Ion Bria and Dr. Daniel Ciobotea (the future Patriarch

On the second day of this Conference, the ten conclusions of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission were debated in the plenary session[21]. The discussion started with the remark of Metropolitan George Khodr of Mount Lebanon, that the text of the Inter-Orthodox Commission did not sufficiently emphasize the spiritual value of fasting. Metropolitan Calinic of Vatsa, a member of the delegation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, stated that the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Church submitted the text of the Commission for further debate in 1974 and 1982, concluding that the text expresses the basic principles regarding fasting and that the Church of Bulgaria fully agreed with the following conclusions: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10, but some amendments or improvements to conclusions 2, 6, 7 and 9 were considered as needed and further aspects must be discussed and analysed by the Committee of the Conference[22].

However, Metropolitan Juvenal of Kroutitsky and Kolomna, a delegate of the Russian Orthodox Church, expressed his concerns regarding the third conclusion and regarding the fact that the final phrases of the text are called "conclusions"[23]. In response to the remarks of other bishops, Bishop Vasile of Târgoviște[24] affirmed the official position of the Romanian Orthodox Church, stating that:

> "la délégation de l'Eglise de Roumanie a étudié tous les documents des Eglises sur ce thème qu'elle a reçus et a abouti à la conclusion que le jeûne a une grande importance pour la vie des fidèles. Il s'agit d'un moyen spirituel d'atteindre à la sanctification; c'est pourquoi nous considérons que les jeûne fixés par l'Eglise doivent rester immuables tant pour la durée que pour la sévérité. D'ailleurs les canons s'y rapportant se montrent très larges envers ceux qui pour diverses raisons ne peuvent pas observer de jeûne sévère. En supprimant certains jeûnes, je crains que nous ne privions l'Eglise d'un moyen de vie spirituelle en Christ. Je

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of the Romanian Orthodox Church), see: Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 1994), 8. For more details about the official Romanian delegation, see Dan-Ilie Ciobotea, "Spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Ortodoxiei," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 11-12 (1982): 942-945.

[21] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIᵉ Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 96-98.

[22] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 99.

[23] To these two remarks, Metropolitan Chrisostomos of Myra, the chairman of the Preparatory Inter-Orthodox Commission responsible for the elaboration of the text, responded in detail, indicating the procedure for reaching these formulations.

[24] For a general perspective of the importance of fasting in that period in the Romanian Orthodox Church see: Constantin Pavel, "Posturile rânduite de Biserica Ortodoxă în condițiile de viață actuale ale credincioșilor," *Studii Teologice*, no. 5-8 (1977): 421-435; Nicolae Necula, "Învățătura despre post în Biserica Ortodoxă," *Studii Teologice*, no. 7-8 (1984): 514-520.

crois que la question du jeûne peut être résolue localement par chaque Eglise orthodoxe dans la mesure où on lui donne plus de liberté pour cela."[25]

Following the declaration of the Romanian bishop, Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev[26] has drawn attention to the inappropriate title and message of the text that was referring to the "adaptation" of fasting to the conditions of a "secular society," and proposed a change of the title, "not to distract and shock the faithful people of God." After these discussions, the text was sent to further elaboration, completion, and improvement to the working Commission, with representatives from each delegation, under the coordination of Metropolitan John of Helsinki, a member of the delegation of the Church of Finland, having Metropolitan Melitios of Nicopolis and Preveza as secretary of the Commission. On behalf of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bishop Vasile Târgovişteanul and Dr. Dan-Ilie Ciobotea were members of this Commission. On September 10th, 1982, the Committee finalized the report on the topic of fasting and submitted it to the plenary session for debate[27]. The main ideas of this report were the following: fasting is referring simultaneously to body and soul, implying all their forces; fasting is not a hygienic, social or religious invention, but a divine commandment[28] that would have led man to deification from the beginning; the practice of fasting is found in the Old Testament, in the books of Moses, in the books and lives of the prophets, in the New Testament (where fasting is seen as a means of abstinence, spiritual improvement, and penance), and in the post-apostolic writings[29]; no other Church rule offers as much freedom as fasting, because it is a free act of sacrifice for the spiritual life; the non-Orthodox world disregarded fasting, creating serious problems of ecclesial consciousness; fasting is related to Eucharist; Christians do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting, so these cases must be treated with pastoral care. The report read in the plenary of the Conference concluded:

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[25] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 101.

[26] For a broader analysis of Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev on the topic of fasting in accordance with Pan-Orthodox decisions until the second Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, see Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 458-461.

[27] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 152-156.

[28] Here appears, for the first time, this idea according to which fasting was imposed in Heaven by the command of God (Genesis 2: 16-17). The argument is taken from the homily of St. Basil the Great *On fasting* 1.3.

[29] The majority of quotes found in the text of the 1971 Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission are taken in this document. They will be used as arguments for the practice of fasting in the post-apostolic period even in the final document of the Council of Crete.

"a) de conserver telles quelles sans altération, les prescriptions de l'Eglise sur le jeûne actuellement en vigueur; b) de n'introduire aucune modification dans le sens, le caractère et l'application du jeûne; c) que le saint et grand Concile pour ce qui est des chrétiens éprouvant des difficultés à respecter les prescriptions actuelles sur le jeûne — soit pour cause de maladie, soit à cause de certaines conditions particulières d'ordre climatique, soit en raison d'une impossibilité de se procurer des aliments convenant au jeûne, soit à cause du contexte social — et pourvu que soit respecté tout ce qui a été dit plus haut dans ce texte et afin de ne pas affaiblir l'institution du jeûne, laisse au discernement spirituel des Eglises orthodoxes locales le soin de définir conformément aux dispositions existantes, la mesure de l'économie avec laquelle les hiérarques responsables et les pères spirituels mandates par eux feront face aux situations particulières (d'ordre général ou individuel), rendant ainsi plus douce l'âcreté des saints jeûnes."[30]

Therefore, the Committee's report drops out all the adaptations of the Church rules regarding fasting, keeping in the text of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission from 1971 only the biblical and patristic quotations and the spiritual role of fasting, that was further developed by the Conference[31]. In other words, the report asserts that fasting is a divine commandment, this is the reason why it cannot be changed, adapted or reconsidered in the contemporary world, but the so-called "secular society" has to re-adapt to this divine institution of fasting. Despite this beautiful sermon for the importance of fasting which emphasized its spiritual role, the text of the commission, as bishop Gregory of Kerynia, a member of the delegation of the Church of Cyprus, said does not answer a fundamental question: "why Christians in contemporary society no longer observe the rules of fasting?." The text of the Commission received many criticisms from the Orthodox bishops. Metropolitan Partenios of Carthage considered this text as unsatisfactory, and Metropolitan Chrysostom of Myra emphasized that the text does not address some fundamental questions, such as the possibility or the impossibility of any evolution of fasting and does not take into consideration special cases where fasting can be suppressed. Furthermore, the provision that the local Autocephalous Churches should regulate the practice of fasting was considered as a possible context for creating a large number of particular practices of fasting, which could have a devastating effect on the Orthodox diaspora. The idea of Metropolitan Chrysostom is also supported by Professor Vlassios Phidas, who stated that the canonical Tradition of the Church

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[30] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 156.

[31] Μαρίνα Κολοβοπούλου, "«Ἡ σπουδαιότης τῆς νηστείας καὶ ἡ τήρησις αὐτῆς σήμερον.» Δρώμενα ἀπὸ τὴν πορεία πρὸς τὴν Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλη Σύνοδο τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας," *Θεολογία* 87, no. 1 (2016): 198-200.

regulated just the Wednesday and Friday fast and the Great Lent. The other practices of fasting were imposed on laity after the 12th century under the influence of monasticism, but they were not regulated by the canonical Tradition of the Church[32]. Metropolitan Nicolae of Banat emphasized the fact that the text of the Commission can be improved, especially regarding its refractory attitude towards contemporary "secular" society (Article 7), underlining that the text should also highlight the medical and therapeutic aspects of fasting, as well as the social understanding of fasting (Article 8). Some of the delegations of the Orthodox Churches were supporting the unchangeability of fasting and its practice, others were still talking about the re-adaptation of the rules of fasting to the contemporary society, despite the fact that the draft text rejected this idea. The lack of consensus on this theme led to its postponement for a future Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference. In the final decision of the Second Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1982 it was stated:

> "Concerning the topic: *Re-adjusting the Church regulations concerning fasting according to the contemporary requirements*- While debating on this topic with all attention and concern: Considering however as insufficient the preparation made until now and not allowing Orthodoxy to express itself unanimously on this point; In order to avoid a hasty decision and to offer the local Orthodox Churches the opportunity to prepare faithfully to carry on the tradition of the people of God, the Second Pan-Orthodox Conference: 1. invites the local Orthodox Churches to send to the Secretariat for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod their observations on this subject on the basis of the file already constituted. 2. postpones the problem under scrutiny for the next Pro-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference after a preliminary examination by the Preparatory Inter-Orthodox Commission; 3. declares that the traditional practice should remain in force until the Holy and Great Synod will examine the problem on the basis of the proposals by a Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference appointed to study it."[33]

As a result, although the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission from 1971 demanded some adaptation of the rules of fasting to the contemporary realities of the Church, they were largely rejected by the second Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference from 1982. This Conference did not issue a new text

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[32] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 158-159.

[33] Viorel Ioniţă (ed.), *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009*, (Freiburg, Base: Reinhardt, Friedrich, 2014), 155; Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (3-12 septembre 1982)*, vol. VIII, 182; V. Ioniţă, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009: spre Sfântul şi Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe*, 199-200.

regarding fasting. The draft text of the Second Conference was taken into consideration at the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference[34] (Chambésy, October 28th – November 6th, 1986), but without any possibility of re-writing the text or proposing a new one[35]. The text of the third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference is an attempt of theological argumentation of the practice of fasting, highlighting, with several biblical and patristic quotations[36], the general importance of the institution of fasting, but without any practical clarification[37]. At the beginning of the same year 1986 at the Preparatory Inter-Orthodox Conference at Chambésy, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, the President of the Secretariat for the Preparation of the Holy and Great Council, presented the theme of fasting and the "new results" of the second Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference, as well as the suggestions received from the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, especially from the Greek Orthodox Church, which stated that the theme of fasting was subjected to debate at an inopportune period of time and could lead to division among Greek Orthodox believers, and the Greek Church disagrees with any amendments of the canonical provisions regarding fasting, while Local Churches can apply ecclesial *economy* if necessary[38]. The

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[34] The Secretariat for the Preparation of the Holy and Great Council decided that, for the further debate, Orthodox studies and papers must be submitted to the Secretariat, and canonists, bishops and theologians from the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches should research and study this issue. This task was entrusted to Metropolitan Pantelimon of Corinth, Professor Atanasije Jevtic, from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade, Professor Konstantinos Mouratidis from the Faculty of Theology in Athens, and Professor Vlasios Phidas from the same Faculty.

[35] For the French translation see *Episkepsis*, no. 369 (1986): 2-28; for the German translation see: "3. Vorkonziliare Panorthodox Konferenz," *Una Sancta* 42 (1987): 14-28 and Anastasios Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 501-553.

[36] The text contains more than 26 biblical, patristic and liturgical quotations. Almost 40% of the text of the document is represented by quotations and different references, showing a lack of originality and actuality. The quotes often represent arguments of authority taken from different Patristic works.

[37] These concerns were expressed by the participants in the Conference: "Finalement, une remarque pratique. On nous promet de parler des prescriptions ecclésiastiques concernant le jeûne, mais on ne fait que parler des différents jeûnes de l'année. Aucune prescription. On ne dit pas de quoi on s'abstient, ce qu'on mange et ce qu'on ne mange pas. Dans les pays méditerranéens, nous mangeons les fruits de mer: quand cela est-il entré dans la pratique? Les Russes mangent du poisson : cela est-il conforme aux règles de l'abstinence? Un autre problème est celui du mariage. Il est un temps où il est interdit de célébrer des mariages. Nous connaissons les fondements anciens de cela, l'abstinence étant complète pendant la quarantaine du Carême. Qu'est-ce que nous gardons de cela? Est-ce que nous sommes très stricts là dessus? Si nous parlons de «prescriptions ecclésiastiques concernant le jeûne», parlons de tout cela en détail, ne disons pas seulement les principes." Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, *Synodika* X, (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2014), 79.

[38] Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 474.

Greek Orthodox Church tried to ensure its position for the third Pan-Orthodox Conference and to ensure the monastic circles that no adaptation of the rules of fasting will be made. This opposition of some local Churches, shaped under the pressure of some conservative monastic circles and presented as an opposition of the Orthodox laity and as a possible revolt of the believers in case of shortening the periods of fasting, although the inobservance of all canonical provisions regarding fasting is expressed by the official texts of the Conference—as well by the Council of Crete, led to a very cautious and conservative formulation of the text. This general fear of a possible rebellion of the Orthodox laity led to the excessive delimitation of the principle of ecclesial economy applied to the practice of fasting. In the same presentation of Metropolitan Damaskinos, the following limits were imposed on the application of economy by the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches:

> "1. Beim Fasten der Großen Woche hat keine Änderung der bestehenden Ordnung *kat'Oikonomian* Platz. 2. Beim Fasten der Quadragesima kann *kat'Oikonomian* keine Verkürzung der zeitlichen Dauer eingeführt werden, während aus Menschenliebe während der Nichtfastentage das Essen von Fisch eingeführt werden kann. 3. Bei dem von den Aposteln Überlieferten Fasten am Mittwoch und Freitag kann keine Änderung der bestehenden Ordnung zugelassen werden. 4. Bei den Fasten vor Weihnachten (Kleine Quadragesima), der heiligen Apostel und der Entschlafung der Gottesmutter kann aus Menschenliebe von der kirchlichen Oikonomia sowohl in der zeitlichen Dauer wie auch in der Zusammensetzung der Fastenspeisen Gebrauch gemacht werden, wobei aber auf jeden Fall das Fasten der letzten Woche vor dem Fest streng einzuhalten ist.5. Bei den festgesetzten Fastenterminen der Kreuzeserhöhung, des Vorabends der Theophanie und der Enthauptung Johannes des Vorläufers ist keine Oikonomia erlaubt."[39]

In other words, the excessive limitation of the principle of economy transforms it into the principle of exactness (*akribeia*). If all the cases and the entire context of the application of Church economy is specified then economy loses any canonical value, being entirely circumscribed by Church law[40]. At the

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[39] Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 476-477.

[40] For the principle of economy in the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, see J. Erickson, "Oikonomia in Byzantine Canon Law," in *Law, Church, and Society. Essays in Honor of Stephan Kuttner,* eds. Kenneth Pennington, Robert Somerville (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 225-236; Hans Thurn, *Oikonomia von der frühbyzantinischen Zeit bis zum Bilderstreit: Semasiologische Untersuchung einer Wortfamilie*, (München, 1961); Gerhard Richter, *Oikonomia. Der Gebrauch des Wortes Oikonomia im Neuen Testament, bei den Kirchenvätern und in der theologischen Literatur bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); Florian Schuppe,

end of this Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission, a text was proposed which, as we shall see, is not much different from the final document of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016).

At the end of that year, 1986, at the third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, the President of the Commission, presented a comprehensive report on the topic of fasting[41]. The main points highlighted by him were: 1) the inadequacy of the title with the text of the Commission, given the fact that any adaptation of the practice of fasting was rejected, and the proposal of a new title: "The importance of fasting and its observance today"; 2) the institution of fasting, and not its practice, is unchangeable (ἀμετάβλητος); 3) as an ascetic ideal, fasting refers not only to abstinence, but it is a spiritual and moral edification towards perfection and a way of penance, an idea elaborated by the delegates of the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Romania; 4) fasting is a spiritual struggle; 5) fasting has to be understood from the Christocentric point of view as obedience to Christ; 6) the sixth article of the proposed text enumerates all the fasting periods in the Church without any difference, deciding to keep them all by taking into account the spiritual nature of the institution of fasting and the possible "rebellion" of believers against any reduction of the periods of fasting; 7) the possibility of applying the principle of economy in special circumstances; 8) the importance of socio-cultural and geographical conditions regarding fasting, supported by the delegates of the Russian Orthodox Church; 9) fasting is closely linked to the Holy Sacraments, especially to the Eucharist.

After this extensive report of Metropolitan Damaskinos, the draft text of the Commission was debated by the delegates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches. At the proposal of Metropolitan Antonie of Transylvania[42], the delegates debated the possibility of changing the title of the document on the grounds that the term "re-adaptation" may scandalize the Orthodox communities and the previous title is no longer in accordance with the actual content of the text. After this ample debate on the title, a first concrete proposal was made for: "The importance of the institution of fasting and its observance today (or in the present world)"[43]. Some of the members of the official delegations were arguing that the

Die pastorale Herausforderung – orthodoxes Leben zwischen Akribeia und Oikonomia: theologische Grundlagen, Praxis und ökumenische Perspektiven (Würyburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 2006).

[41] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 56-63; Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 519-523.

[42] Antonie Plămădeală, "A treia Conferinţă Panortodoxă Preconciliară," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9-10 (1986): 40.

[43] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 77.

text highlights the spiritual value of fasting, but others considered that fasting does not refer only to a spiritual reality, and the text needs a broader perspective, by taking into consideration the entire existence of the human person. This second idea of the incompleteness of the text regarding the importance of fasting in the Orthodox Church was shared by several bishops by raising arguments against the drafted text[44]. Despite these arguments, the conclusion of the plenary session before sending the text for further debate to the Commission was that the text is a balanced one from the theological point of view, but it could be improved. What were the changes operated by the Commission[45] of the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference to the proposed text? If we compare carefully the text of the Commission with the previous text we can observe the following: the title of the document was changed to: "The importance of fasting and its observance today"; the word "immutable (ἀμετάβλητος) " was taken out from the first article of the text and instead of this it was stated that fasting is "a divine commandment"; several quotations from the Old and New Testaments were added to the second and third article; no reference was made to monastics in the fifth article, although this matter was discussed in the plenary session of the Conference; the content of the sixth article was abbreviated; little changes have been made to articles 8 and 9. The rest of the text remained unchanged, being the same with the text of the Inter-Orthodox Conference from the beginning of 1986[46].

After several comments and insignificant amendments to the text of the Commission, the third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference from 1986 voted the final text.

The debate on this text was resumed only 30 years later at the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference (Chambésy, October 10-17, 2015). This Conference focused in particular on Article 9 of the text and the relationship between the Eucharist and fasting, at the proposal of Prof. Theodoros Giangou[47]. After some amendments and reformulations, the text was sent for approval at the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church from January 2016[48] and sent, as a final draft text, to the Holy and Great Council.

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[44] See the remarks of Metropolitan George Khodr, Metropolitan Chysostom of Pafos or Jeremiah of Wroclaw in Secrétariat pour la préparation (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire,* 84-86.

[45] The delegates of the Romanian Orthodox Church that were part of the Commission were the patriarchal bishop Nifon Ploieşteanu and the Fr. Prof. Dumitru Popescu, as counsellor.

[46] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 198-201.

[47] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *Ε' Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Ὀκτωβρίου 2015*, coll. *Synodika* XIII, (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2016), 274.

[48] After the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, the text received several positive remarks from the Local Churches. The text was debated by the Russian Orthodox

In his report read before the Bishops' Council, on February 2nd-3rd, 2016, Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church asserted that: "One of the draft documents is entitled *The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today*. It was agreed upon by the participants in the Synaxis of Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches in Chambésy in January 2016, except for representatives of the Churches of Antioch and Georgia"[49].

At the Holy and Great Council, on the afternoon of June 22nd, 2016, the theme "The importance of fasting and its observance today" was introduced for discussion in the plenary session of the Council. As stated in the official press release:

> "During the afternoon session of the same day, the text on 'The importance of fasting and its observance today' was introduced for discussion. The text was considered in general as a complete and comprehensive expression of both letter and spirit of the entire age-long ecclesiastical tradition, and hence it has received only a minimum of modification in the period following its unanimous acceptance by the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (Chambésy, 1986). During the discussions on the matter, their Beatitudes, the Primates, expressed their full satisfaction, both in regard to the completeness of the text and also in regard to the breadth of its perspectives concerning the pastoral distinction between canonical rigor and ecclesiastical economy in the application of these positions by the various Local Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. Consequently, it was decided that the theological observations articulated did not touch on the substance of the matter, and so the text was unanimously accepted as it stands."[50]

Church at the Bishops' Council, the supreme body of the Russian Orthodox Church in matters of doctrinal, canonical, liturgical, pastoral, and in maintaining fraternal relations with other Orthodox Churches, summoned on February 2-3, 2016, where 354 bishops were invited from 293 dioceses from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Tajikistan. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Estonia, and "also from far abroad, countries with the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church." In his report read before the Bishops' Council, Patriarch Kirill highlighted the fact that "the document gives a detailed description of the Church's generally known and accepted teaching on fasting, reveals its spiritual importance and speaks about its observance today. 'Dispelling the rumours of the forthcoming annulment of fasts or their reduction at the Council, this draft document clearly prescribes to observe all fasts established by the Church, without any exceptions,' the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said. Moreover, His Holiness noted, the document affirms for the first time on the pan-Orthodox scale the obligatory character of the Nativity, the Apostles' and the Dormition fasts which were not mentioned, unlike Lent, in ancient sacred canons." "A draft document of Pan-Orthodox Council affirms for the first time on pan-Orthodox scale the obligatory character of Nativity, Apostles' and Dormition fasts." For the involvement in the preparation of the Holy and Great Council see Nicolas Kazarian, "Всеправославный собор: формирование новой православной геополитики [The Pan-Orthodox Council: Shaping New Orthodox Geopolitics], *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом*, 1 (2016): 102–26; Andrei Desnitsky, "Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche vor dem Panorthodoxen Konzil," *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West* 2 (2016): 7–8.

[49] https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127681/.

[50] https://www.holycouncil.org/-/news-bulletin-number-3.

In other words, the text regarding the importance of fasting in the Orthodox Church was discussed at the Holy and Great Council just a couple of hours on the afternoon of June 22nd, the final text being almost entire the same, with some small and interesting changes, with the text of the third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference. Taking into consideration this vast period of time needed for the final form of the text of the Holy and Great Council, we can assert the total victory of the theologians and circles with conservative theological visions, the idea of changing and adapting fasting periods being removed from the inter-Orthodox debate. Moreover, as we shall see, fasting is considered a divine institution, and therefore any argument for any possible shortening of it is suppressed from the beginning. The remark of Bishop Jeremiah of Wroclaw, the representative of the Polish Orthodox Church at the third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference, is still valid for the final text of the Holy and Great Council: "dans ce texte tout est correct mais qu'il y manque quelque chose (in this text everything is correct but something is missing)"[51]. We will try to see what is missing from the final text regarding the importance of fasting.

The Document "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today" of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016). A canonical and theological analysis of the first four paragraphs

In this part of the paper, I will try to analyze the first four paragraphs of the final form of the document of the Holy and Great Council of Crete, showing both the positive parts and those that could be improved in a future Holy and Great Council. I will take into consideration the four official translations of the text[52] and I will emphasize some differences of meaning by comparing the four

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[51] "dans ce texte tout est correct mais qu'il y manque quelque chose." Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 84.

[52] Unfortunately, the final decisions of the Council of Crete are not yet published as official texts and translations of the Local Orthodox Churches, despite the fact that they can be found on the official website of the Holy and Great Council and the websites of some Autocephalous Churches, being translated into several languages. At least we can find some translations and studies, but they are just a few exceptions to this rule. French translation "Textes Officiels Adoptés Par Le Concile," *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016), 255–322; English Translation: Alberto Melloni, ed., *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches. Crete 2016*, Corpus Christianorum Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta 4.3, (Brespol, 2017). Ukrainian Translation: *Документи Святого і Великого Собору Православної Церкви. Крит, 2016*, trans. Юрій Вестель, Дмитро Каратєєв, Відкритий Православний Університет Святої Софії Премудрості, ДУХ І ЛІТЕРА, 2016, 112 pages. Parts of the documents were published in different Journals: "Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church," *The Canadian Journal of Orthodox Christianity* 11, no. 3 (September 2016): 57–70; "Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church: Crete

versions of the official document. The document regarding the importance of fasting was analyzed by different Orthodox scholars, but often their paper represents just a description of the document[53].

   Paragraph 1: Fasting as a divine commandment. By reading the four official translations or versions of the text, we can see a couple of differences regarding the first part of the text. For example, in the English[54] and Russian translations, the passage from St. Basil the Great "On Fasting 1, 3. PG 31, 168A" does not appear as a quotation, as we can find in the Greek and French versions:

2016," *The Ecumenical Review* 68, no. 2–3 (December 2016): 291–304; "Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church," *The Canadian Journal of Orthodox Christianity* 11, no. 3 (September 2016): 71–94; "Autonomy and the Means by Which It Is Proclaimed," *The Canadian Journal of Orthodox Christianity* 11, no. 3 (September 2016), 95–105. For the four official translations, we will use the text found on the official webpage of the Holy and Great Council: https://www.holycouncil.org/.

[53] Rastko Jovic, "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance for Tomorrow," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa*, 62, no. 1 (28 iunie 2017): 103-114; Athanasios N Papathanasiou, "Christian fasting in postmodern society: considering the criteria," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 249-268; Constantine Cavarnos, *Fasting and Science: A Study of the Scientific Support and Patristic Foundation for Fasting in the Orthodox Church*, 2 edition, (Calif: Center for Traditionalist, Etna, 1998); Anne Marie Reijnen, "Fasting-some Protestant remarks: «not by bread alone»: an argument for the contemporary value of Christian fasting," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 269-278; Issa J Khalil, "The Orthodox Fast and the Philosophy of Vegetarianism," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 35, no. 3 (1990): 237-259; Stelyios S Muksuris et alii, "Reflection on the Pre-conciliar Document: *The Importance of Fasting and its observance today*," in: *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Theological Reflections*, Nathanael Symeonides (ed.), (Department of Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 2016): 57-61; Μ. Κολοβοπούλου, "«Ἡ σπουδαιότης τῆς νηστείας καὶ ἡ τήρησις αὐτῆς σήμερον»," in *Δρώμενα ἀπὸ τὴν πορεία πρὸς τὴν Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλη Σύνοδο τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας*, 195-206; Παναγιώτης Σκαλτσῆς, "Ἡ νηστεία κατὰ τίς Προσυνοδικές Συζητήσεις," *Θεολογία*, 86, 4 (2015): 213-220; Ἀντωνίου Παπαδοπούλου, "Ἡ προετοιμαζομένη Ἁγία καί Μεγάλη Σύνοδος τῆς κατ' Ἀνατολάς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας ἔναντι τῶν περί νηστείας Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Διατάξεων," in *Νηστεία καί πνευματική ζωή (Χρονικόν, εἰσηγήσεις, πορίσματα Ἱερατικοῦ Συνεδρίου τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Δράμας, ἔτους 1989)*, (Δράμα, 1989), 68.

[54] "Article 1. Fasting is a divine commandment (Gen 2:16-17). According to Basil the Great, fasting is as old as humanity itself; it was prescribed in paradise (On Fasting, 1, 3. PG 31, 168A). It is a great spiritual endeavor and the foremost expression of the Orthodox ascetic ideal. The Orthodox Church, in strict conformity with the apostolic precepts, the synodal canons, and the patristic tradition as a whole, has always proclaimed the great significance of fasting for our spiritual life and salvation. The annual liturgical cycle reflects the entire patristic teaching on fasting, the teaching on constant and unceasing watchfulness of the human person, and our participation in spiritual struggles. Accordingly, the Triodion praises fasting as grace that is full of light, as an invincible weapon, the beginning of spiritual struggles, the perfect path of virtues, the nourishment for the soul, the source of all wisdom, life imperishable, an imitation of the angelic life, the mother of all good things and virtues."

«*συνηλικιῶτίς ἐστι τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος· νηστεία γάρ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ ἐνομοθετήθη*» (*Περί νηστείας,* 1, 3. PG 31, 168A), «*a le même âge que l'humanité ; car il a été instauré dans le paradis*» (*De jejunio,* 1, 3. PG 31, 168A). The passage: "The Orthodox Church ... has always proclaimed the great significance of fasting for our spiritual life and salvation" contains a simpler and more direct phrase in English "for our spiritual life and salvation" than the Greek or the French translation, where we have: "διά τόν πνευματικόν βίον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καί τήν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ" and "pour la vie spirituelle de l'homme et son salut." However, the differences are quite important. If we consider the addressing of the Greek and French translations, then the text shows the importance of fasting for the human being in general and its salvation. On the other hand, the English text, by using the first person "our spiritual life and salvation," is probably referring exclusively to Orthodox Christians. Another difference in translation can be seen between the English and the French version of the phrase: "the annual liturgical cycle," "tout au long de l'année liturgique," and the Greek translation "τόν κύκλον τῆς λατρείας τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου"[55]. Likewise the Greek, French and Russian translations of the text contain the phrase "πατερική παράδοσις καί διδασκαλία," "la tradition et enseignement patristique" "святоотеческое предание о посте и учение" but in the English version the "tradition" (παράδοσις/la tradition/предание) is missing, and we have just: "the entire patristic teaching on fasting." We can find as well other small differences in the official translations of the first article[56]. Sometimes the French translation of the text is adding words that can not be found in the other official translations[57]. Despite these inconsistencies, let us analyze the text from the theological point of view.

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[55] The syntactic structure of this phrase differs in the official translations. If the English text states: "the annual liturgical cycle reflects," the subject of the sentence being the "liturgical cycle" that reflects the Patristic tradition, in the Greek text the verb is used in the passive form: "προβάλλεται" (is shown, is reflected), i.e. "the teaching is reflected," and in the French translation, "elle exalte la traditie," the Orthodox Church "l'Église orthodoxe" is promoting the tradition. Also in the Greek and French texts, we have the wording "tradition and teaching," "tradition and enseignement patristique," while in the English translation there is only "teaching" without the "patristic tradition."

[56] The English version has "human person" for "l'homme" and "τοῦ ἀνθρώπου" in the phrase: "the teaching on constant and unceasing watchfulness of the human person"; The French version does not contain an equivalent for the English and Greek word: "Accordingly/ Διό" as we can see in the phrase: "Accordingly, the Triodion praises fasting as grace that is full of light"; even the syntactic structure of this sentence is different. In the English text "the Triodion praises fasting," the text is using the active voice, but in the Greek and French versions is used the passive voice: "Le jeûne est exalté dans le Triodion," "ὑμνεῖται εἰς τό Τριῴδιον," the subject of the sentence being the word "fasting."

[57] The English and the Greek versions of the text contain "as grace that is full of light" and "ὡς χάρις πολύφωτος," but the French version is using a more complex phrase: "don divin, grâce pleine de lumière." The English and the Greek versions have: "the nourishment for the soul" and

This first paragraph of the document, that has not been changed at all since 1986, states that fasting is a divine commandment in accordance with the biblical quote from Genesis 2: 16-17[58]. When we read this Old Testament passage, we see that it represents the commandment of abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not the divine institution of fasting or a divine commandment for fasting. This interpretation of the text from *Genesis* belongs to St. Basil the Great (*On Fasting*, 1, 3. PG 31, 168A) and is used by him in his Homily as an argument for the fact that fasting is as old as humanity because it was prescribed in Paradise. In the homily of St. Basil the Great, this argument appears as an interpretation of the passage of Genesis 2, 16-17, whereby the prohibition to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is regarded as the first commandment for fasting[59]. This quote is nothing else than a reception of the interpretation of Saint Basil the Great by a Holy and Great Council of the Church, and not an invention of the Council of Crete, as some stated[60], despite the fact that we can find different interpretations of this passage in the homilies and commentaries of the Holy Father of the Church.

However, despite the fact that fasting is a divine commandment and it was prescribed in Paradise, *the second paragraph* of the document claims, that fasting

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"ὡς τροφή ψυχῆς," but the French translation is adding to this "aide accordée par Dieu," that can not be found in the other translations. The phrase "life imperishable, an imitation of the angelic life" is different in all four official translations. The French version contains: "imitation d'une vie impérissable et semblable à celle des anges," and the Greek one "ἀφθάρτου διαγωγῆς καί ἰσαγγέλου πολιτείας τό μίμημα."

[58] *Genesis* 2: 16-17: "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'"

[59] "Do you think that I am resting the origin of fasting on the Law? Why fasting is even older than the Law. If you wait a little, you will discover the truth of what I have said. Do not suppose that fasting originated with the Day of Atonement, appointed for Israel on the tenth day of the seventh month. No, go back through history and inquire into the ancient origins of fasting. It is not a recent invention; it is an heirloom handed down by our fathers. Everything distinguished by antiquity is venerable. Have respect for the antiquity of fasting. It is as old as humanity itself; it was prescribed in Paradise. It was the first commandment that Adam received: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ye shall not eat." Through the words "ye shall not eat" the law of fasting and abstinence is laid down. If Eve had fasted from the tree, we would not now be in need of this fast. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." We have been wounded through sin; we are healed through repentance, but repentance without fasting is fruitless." For the English translation see Susan Holman, Mark Delcogliano, *On Fasting and Feasts: Saint Basil the Great*, (Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013). For the Romanian translation see Sf. Vasile cel Mare, *Scrieri, partea I, Omilii la Hexaemeron, Omilii la Psalmi, Omilii şi cuvântări*, coll. *Părinţi şi scriitori bisericeşti* 17, trans., by Pr. Dumitru Fecioru, (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1986), 348.

[60] Rastko Jovic, "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance for Tomorrow," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa*, 62, no. 1 (28 iunie 2017): 103-114.

is "an ancient institution, fasting was mentioned already in the Old Testament" and the quote from the book of *Deuteronomy* 9:18 is given as an argument[61]. If we believe that fasting is a divine commandment than the beginning of the second article or paragraph of the document: "an ancient institution, fasting was mentioned already in the Old Testament" is redundant. The text already said that it was mentioned in Genesis. Let us analyse this possible contradiction. In the discussion of the changeability or unchangeability of fasting (ἀμετάβλητος), it was decided, as we have seen, at the third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference that the institution of fasting is "unchangeable (ἀμετάβλητος)" because it is a divine commandment, according to Saint Basil[62]. In the Commission of the Conference, it was decided that the text can not use the word "unchangeable" (ἀμετάβλητος), but this idea can be expressed by the phrase "fasting is a divine commandment." Therefore, from the beginning of the text, it is stated that fasting belongs to *ius divinum*[63], which means that it can not be altered, changed or abrogated[64]. Relying directly on the divine commandment, the institution of fasting remains unchanged even though the word "unchangeable" (ἀμετάβλητος) is not used in the final text.

On the other hand, the second paragraph identifies the first elements of this institution by historical and religious references after the divine commandment. The question of Rastko Jovic is legitimate, if fasting had been a divine commandment from the beginning, it would not have been normal to find it in the religious practice of humanity from the beginning and especially in the Jewish liturgical and personal life?[65] The two phrases from the two paragraphs are incongruous. If fasting is a divine commandment given by God to men in Paradise, then it originates in the words of God and not in the episode of receiving the Tables of Commandments by Moses, as we can see from the quote from Deuteronomy, given as a biblical argument in the second paragraph of the text. The same mismatch had been reported by Professor Theodoros Zisis at the third

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[61] "Then once again I fell prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the Lord's sight and so arousing his anger."

[62] *Episkepsis*, no. 368 (1986): 10-11.

[63] For the doctrine of *ius divinum* see Peter Kistner, *Das göttliche Recht und die Kirchenverfassung*, Band 1 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 36; Karl Rahner, "Über den Begriff des Ius Divinum" im katholischen Verständnis," in *Existenz und Ordnung. Festschrift für Erik Wolf zum 60. Geburtstag,* eds*.* Thomas Würtenberger, Werner Maihofer, Alexander Hollerbach, (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1962), 62-86; Alexander Hollerbach, "Göttliches und Menschliches in der Ordnung der Kirche," in Alexander Hollerbach (Hrsg.), *Mensch und Recht: Festschrift für Erik Wolf zum 70. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1972), 212-235.

[64] Avery Dulles, "Jus divinum as an Ecumenical Problem," *Theological Studies* 38 (1977): 681-708; Nicolas Afanasiev, "The Canons of the Church: Changeable or Unchangeable," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 11(1967): 54-68.

[65] Jovic, "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance for Tomorrow," 105.

Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference[66]. Indeed, the first phrase would have been more compatible with the second article of the text, where we can find a biblical and patristic foundation of the institution of fasting according to the Orthodox Church. The passage from *Genesis* 2, 16-17 and the interpretation that St. Basil the Great offers to this paragraph the value expressed by those apostolic judgments, synodal canons, and patristic tradition, or metaphors found in liturgical hymns, but without being mentioned. This paragraph can represent, at first reading, a heterogeneous amalgam of arguments for fasting. The first article is based on the apostolic precepts, the synodal canons, and the patristic tradition as a whole and the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Tradition. Although in perfect agreement with the Patristic tradition, the last part of the first paragraph contains probably too many metaphorical expressions, which lead to an abstraction of the institution of fasting rather than to its explanation, or definition which would have been very useful especially for the beginning of a text that wants to explain the importance of fasting. Therefore, at first reading of this first paragraph of the document, it can be seen that it is very heterogeneous, comprising arguments from different registers and theological visions.

However, if we read this first article of the text more carefully, we can see that it is an attempt to define not the practice of fasting or the Orthodox fasting itself, in the same manner as the definitions found in some Orthodox handbooks or catechisms, but it tries to define the complex character of fasting. From this perspective, this first paragraph of the text represents the hermeneutical key for understanding the entire document. It is not the text itself, with its consistencies and inconsistencies, that is extremely important for this perspective, but the theological reconsideration of fasting that it emphasizes. Thus, according to the first paragraph of the document, fasting in the Orthodox Church has more dimensions: *historical-theological* (fasting as divine commandment given in Paradise); *ascetic-spiritual* (fasting as great spiritual endeavour and the foremost expression of the Orthodox ascetic ideal); *canonical* (the foundation of fasting are the apostolic precepts, the synodal canons, and the patristic tradition as a whole); *soteriological* (the great significance of fasting for our spiritual life and salvation); and *liturgical* (fasting according to the liturgical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, culminating with the Holy Eucharist). The other paragraphs of this document represent developments of these perspectives found in the first article of the text. Analyzed in this unity, the first paragraph is no longer heterogeneous, but attempts to unite, under the same definition, the holistic meaning of fasting

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[66] "Émin. Président, au § 1 figure une référence à la Genèse. Dans la mesure où ce renvoi ne cadre pas entièrement avec le contexte, je propose de le déplacer au § 2, avant la référence au Deutéronome." Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 202.

in the life of the Orthodox Church. However, what we can see in the whole document is the total subordination of the bodily importance of fasting to the spiritual one. The first paragraph of the document is nothing else than a framing under the same definition of the many meanings and understandings of fasting. The document refers to fasting as an Orthodox ascetic ideal. This does not mean that fasting is a purpose for the Christian life, but a means to spiritual uplifting[67].

Paragraph 2: Biblical and patristic foundation of fasting. If we compare the four official versions of the document, we can see that there are some differences of translation in the second paragraph[68] of the document as well. For example, the French, Greek and Russian translations are using the superlative adjective for the institution of fasting: "très ancienne," "ἀρχαιότατος," "древнейшее," but the English version considers fasting just an ancient one, not "the most ancient." The Greek phrase: "ὡς μέσον ἐγκρατείας, μετανοίας καί πνευματικῆς ἀνατάσεως" is best translated: "as a means of self-restraint, repentance, and spiritual uplifting"[69]. According to the English and the Greek versions the Church has proclaimed "the profound importance," "τήν ὑψίστην σημασίαν" of fasting, but in the French translation the adjective is

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[67] Alexander Schmemann, *The Great Lent. Journey to the Pascha*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 14; Stelyios S Muksuris et alii, "Reflection on the Pre-conciliar Document: "The Importance of Fasting and its observance today," in *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Theological Reflections*, Nathanael Symeonides (ed.), Department of Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 2016, 60.

[68] "As an ancient institution, fasting was mentioned already in the Old Testament (Deut 9:18; Is 58:4-10; Joel 2:15; Jonah 3:5-7) and affirmed in the New Testament. The Lord Himself fasted for forty days before commencing His public ministry (Lk 4:1-2) and provided instructions on how to practice fasting (Mt 6:16-18). Fasting is generally prescribed in the New Testament as a means of abstinence, repentance, and spiritual edification (Mk 1:6; Acts 13:2; 14:23; Rom 14:21). Since the apostolic times, the Church has proclaimed the profound importance of fasting and established Wednesday and Friday as days of fasting (Didache 8, 1), as well as the fast before Pascha (Irenaeus of Lyons, as cited in Eusebius, Church History 5, 24. PG 20 497B-508AB). In ecclesiastical practice that has existed for centuries, there has always been diversity with regard not only to the length of the fast before Easter (Dionysius of Alexandria, Letter to Basilides, PG 10, 1277), but also the number and content of other periods of fasting which became customary under the influence of various factors, primarily, of the liturgical and monastic traditions, with a view to proper preparation for the great feasts. Thus, the indissoluble link between fasting and worship indicates the extent and purpose of fasting and reveals its spiritual nature. For this reason, all the faithful are invited to respond accordingly, each to the best of his or her strength and ability, while not allowing such liberty to diminish this holy institution: 'See that no one make thee to err from this path of doctrine… If thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou wilt be perfect; but if thou art not able, what thou art able, that do. But concerning meat, bear that which thou art able to do' (Didache 6, 1-3)."

[69] Stelyios S Muksuris et al., "Reflection on the Pre-conciliar Document: 'The Importance of Fasting and its observance today,'" 60.

missing: "l'Église a proclamé l'importance du jeûne." Very often, the French version of the text contains small differences than the others[70].

Despite these, the second passage of the document of the Holy and Great Council, which has not been changed since the third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference, offers historical and theological references regarding the practice of fasting in the Old and New Testaments and the post-apostolic period. If in the first paragraph the quote from *Genesis 2, 16-17* was used according to the interpretation of St. Basil the Great, in this paragraph the quotes are used without a precise patristic or Orthodox interpretation. The Old Testament quotations represent various testimonies about the Jewish practice of fasting. The New Testament quotations from this document are not the common quotations found in Orthodox texts about fasting. Some of them give minimal support to the importance and practice of fasting in the Orthodox Church. For example, the quote from the *Gospel of Mark* 1: 6: "John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts, and wild honey" is not an argument for fasting as "a means of abstinence, repentance, and spiritual edification." It is necessary to interpret the passage so that the reader realizes that the biblical quotation refers to fasting. The same thing can be said about the two quotations from the *Acts of the Apostles*, the word "fasting" being just mentioned in them[71]. As for the quotation of *Romans* 14, 21: "it is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall" is taken out of the context and is not referring to the practice of Orthodox fasting. Also, the work "Letter to Basilides, PG 10, 1277" of St. Dionysius of Alexandria, which represents his first canon, received in the canonical collection of the Orthodox Church, refers to the days before the Passover, not to the Great Lent of forty days, and the phrase "ἄσιτοι διατελοῦντες" [72] from this canon refers to the complete abstinence from food for several days before the Resurrection,

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[70] For example: for the English phrase "with a view to proper preparation for the great feasts," the French translation is: "et destinés, entre autres, à la préparation adéquate des fidèles avant les grandes fêtes," the word: "des fidèles" is addend just in the French translation; the French translation for the English version: "Thus, the indissoluble link between fasting and worship indicates the extent and purpose of fasting" is "Ainsi, le jeûne est indissociable du culte. Ce lien intime démontre la mesure et le but du jeûne."

[71] Acts 13: 2: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Acts 14: 23 "Paul and Barnabas ordained elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

[72] "Ἀλλ᾽ οἱ μὲν καὶ πάσας ὑπερτιθέασιν, ἄσιτοι διατελοῦντες, οἱ δὲ δύο, οἱ δὲ τρεῖς, οἱ δὲ τέσσαρας, οἱ δὲ οὐδεμίαν. Καὶ τοῖς μὲν πάνυ διαπονηθεῖσιν ἐν ταῖς ὑπερθέσεσιν, εἶτα ἀποκαμοῦσι καὶ μόνον οὐκ ἐκλείπουσι, συγγνώμη τῆς ταχυτέρας γεύσεως."

and not to the practice of usual fasting for forty days. Indeed, the document recognizes the diversity with regard to the length, number, and content of the fasting periods in the history of Christianity and the influence that the liturgical and monastic tradition had on the settlement of this tradition even for the laity. The text refers to fasting periods practiced in monasteries, which, after the 12th century, were imposed as obligatory for laymen as well. What is very important to note is the reserved attitude of the document towards the obligation of fasting as a penitentiary discipline. Without diminishing or abolishing the practice of fasting, the document takes into consideration the strength and ability of everyone and invites everyone to discover the practice of fasting especially for worshiping God. By this, the document shows the indissoluble link between fasting and worship and the liturgical character of fasting. Therefore, the second passage of the document brings biblical and patristic arguments for the importance of fasting in the history and Tradition of the Church, but without a precise historical development of the practice of fasting, as can be seen in the document of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission of 1971.

Paragraph 3. The spiritual value of fasting. As in the previous paragraphs, the third paragraph[73] of the document contains some differences in translation[74]. Despite these, the beginning of the third paragraph with "the true

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[73] "As a spiritual endeavor, the true fast is inseparable from unceasing prayer and genuine repentance. Repentance without fasting is fruitless (Basil the Great, *On Fasting* 1, 3. PG 31, 168A), as fasting without merciful deeds is dead, especially nowadays when the unequal and unjust distribution of goods deprives entire nations of their daily bread. "While fasting physically, brethren, let us also fast spiritually. Let us loose every knot of iniquity; let us tear up every unrighteous bond; let us distribute bread to the hungry, and welcome into our homes those who have no roof over their heads…" (Sticheron at Vespers on Wednesday of the First Week of Lent; cf. Is 58:6-7). Fasting cannot be reduced to simple and formal abstinence from certain foods. "So let us not be selfish as we begin the abstinence from foods that is the noble fast. Let us fast in an acceptable manner, one that is pleasing to God. A true fast is one that is set against evil, it is self-control of the tongue. It is the checking of anger, separation from things like lusts, evil-speaking, lies, and false oaths. Self-denial from these things is a true fast, so fasting from these negative things is good" (Basil the Great, *On Fasting*, 2, 7. PG 31, 196D). Abstinence from certain foods during the fast and temperance, not only with regard to what to eat but also how much to eat, constitutes a visible aspect of this spiritual endeavor. "In the literal sense, fasting is abstinence from food, but food makes us neither more nor less righteous. However, in the spiritual sense, it is clear that, as life comes from food for each of us and the lack of food is a symbol of death, so it is necessary that we fast from worldly things, in order that we might die to the world and after this, having partaken of the divine nourishment, live in God" (Clement of Alexandria, *From the Prophetic Eclogae*. PG 9, 704D-705A). Therefore, the true fast affects the entire life in Christ of the faithful and is crowned by their participation in divine worship, particularly in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist."

[74] The only significant difference that I had noticed in this paragraph is the translation of the phrase: "genuine repentance" with "repentir sincère," and "τήν εἰλικρινῆ μετάνοιαν." The

fast," "le véritable jeune," "ἀληθής νηστεία" would imply the existence of another type of fasting, "the untrue fast." This parallelism is excluded in Patristic theology by the existence of a single type of fasting. This is the reason why the word "true" added in the official document can be considered redundant. More than that, as we will see, if the "true fast" is referring only to the spiritual one than we could have a distorted opinion regarding fasting. This paragraph of the document emphasizes the spiritual character of fasting, trying to outline some fundamental elements for the explanation of this "true fast." The three elements for the correct understanding of the Orthodox fasting are *unceasing prayer, genuine repentance, and good deeds.* What is very important in this paragraph, but insufficiently treated, is the link between fasting and social involvement of Christians through charity works. The importance of fasting in the first centuries of Christianity was given exactly by this type of social involvement through fasting, rather than their isolation in the space of private asceticism, totally separated from the needs of their fellowmen. Fasting is the direct expression of the commandment "Love your neighbour as yourself" (*Mark* 12:31). The quote from the Sticheron at Vespers on Wednesday of the First Week of Lent, is emphasizing this: "let us distribute bread to the hungry, and welcome into our homes those who have no roof over their head." Fasting represents, from this perspective, a social attitude towards the one in need. Metropolitan George Khodr of Mount Lebanon proposed at the third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference that the text should emphasize not only the spiritual value of fasting, especially in accordance with the vision of St. Basil the Great but also its social involvement, a perspective found in Christian apologetics and the works of the Fathers. Through this vision of giving and sharing, fasting does not represent a personal ascetic egocentric ideal, but it takes care of the poor or the one in need[75]. Although it includes the social involvement of Christians as a fundamental element of fasting, the document does not explore this idea, but merely contends with its incipient assertion and with a liturgical quotation.

The following arguments try to emphasize the link between bodily fasting and spiritual fasting. In this sense, bodily fasting (or the abstinence from certain foods) is totally subordinated to spiritual fasting. Despite the fact that the document is speaking about abstinence from food (bodily fasting) and spiritual fasting, the connection between them is not developed and the interdependence between them is overlooked. Although correct in its meaning, the statement: "Fasting cannot be reduced to simple and formal abstinence from certain foods" can lead to the disregard of the practice of fasting which begins with this

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phrase "τοῦ ἐπιουσίου ἄρτου" found in the prayer is translated by "daily bread." The word "ἐπιουσίου" does not mean just "daily," see Eugen Munteanu, *Lexicologie biblică românească* (București: Humanitas, 2008), 407-448.

[75] Secrétariat pour la préparation (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire,* 84-86.

abstinence from certain foods, not because they are pure or impure, but because "fasting seeks to assist us in reprioritizing our allegiances from an addictive dependence upon worldly goods to an intimate relationship with God and neighbour"[76]. In a world in which food represents much more than in the ancient, pre-modern or modern societies, implying, due to economic and cultural development, a true "religion of thinness" [77], having vegan, raw-vegan trends and countless diets and food plans, that are present daily in the lives of people, the assertion that the bodily understanding of fasting is not so important, and the relation between abstinence from food and abstinence from sins is not emphasized leads to the impoverishment of the full meaning of fasting in the Orthodox Church. If the spiritual value of fasting is the only one that matters, then we have a *docetist* vision on fasting. Focusing only on the spiritual value of fasting is nothing else than a spiritual elitism that does not take into account the first steps of fasting, namely the abstinence from certain foods, especially in a society of consumption, that tempts the simple believers with smells, sensations, and irresistible culinary offers. Without reducing fasting to diet or food plan, and without idealizing or misinterpreting the importance of fasting, the document should have highlighted the psychological and physical importance of fasting and the indissoluble link with spiritual fasting. How can a believer be compelled to consume only vegan products more than 150 days a year without explaining him the reasons? Despite the fact that the document affirms that many faithful today do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting, or do not fast at all, the text shades the importance of food fasting and its social involvement. In a world marked by consumerism, land exploitation, resource depletion, global warming, social inequality, diseases caused by deviations of nutritional behaviors, abstinence from food can be a solution for all of these problems. The problem of the document is that the idea of true fasting is focused just on spiritual fasting: "A true fast is one that is set against evil, it is self-control of the tongue. It is the checking of anger, separation from things like lusts, evil-speaking, lies, and false oaths. Self-denial from these things is a true fast, so fasting from these negative things is good." The documents need to emphasize fasting from the Chalcedon definition of faith, where human and divine coexist "unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably," as we can see in the interpretation of Fr. Alexander Schmemann[78].

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[76] S.S. Muksuris et al., "Reflection on the Pre-conciliar Document: "The Importance of Fasting and its observance today," 57.

[77] Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, "Christian fasting in postmodern society: considering the criteria," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 249-256.

[78] "In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh—the animal, the

On the other part, the abstinence from food without abstinence from sin can led us to a "chemical theology," as Athanasios N Papathanasiou called it, which devotionally and passionately observes just the components of foods [79]. In this sense, fasting should have biological, psychological, social and spiritual value. The physical or bodily importance of fasting is underlined by several Church Fathers. In accordance with them, modern medicine can provide evidence that underlines the benefits and medical importance of Orthodox Christian fasting for the health of the body[80]. As a psychological practice, current medicine and nutrition refer to the concept of "compulsive overeating," a deviation of nutritional behavior based on a psychological disorder, being an addiction to food. Fasting can be a solution to this problem[81]. As a social practice, as we have seen, fasting can have countless implications. Metropolitan George Khodr emphasized as well at the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference the fact that fasting can restore the theological vision of Adam's existence in Heaven, who, through fasting was taking care of nature and animals. This vision would contribute to the understanding of fasting as a non-violence practice towards nature and animals, which can be found in many ecological debates today. The document of the Council states, indeed, the necessity of fasting from food, in which "temperance, not only with regard to what to eat but also how much to eat" is very important, but all this bodily value of fasting is immediately circumscribed by a quote from the third century: "food makes us neither more nor less righteous." The question is, can I behave according to the Gospel, even without abstinence from food?

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irrational, the lust in us—over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious; the body is holy, so holy that God Himself "became flesh." Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of the spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man—soul and body—repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the 'psycho-somatic' sign of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the lenten rite *par excellence*." Alexander Schmemann, *The Great Lent. Journey to the Pascha*, 37-38.

[79] Papathanasiou, "Christian fasting in postmodern society," 259.

[80] Katerina O. Sarri, et al. "Effects of Greek Orthodox Christian Church fasting on serum lipids and obesity," *BMC Public Health* 3, (January 2003): 16-8; A. Papadaki et al*, "*Differences in nutrient intake during a Greek Orthodox Christian fasting and non-fasting week, as assessed by a food composition database and chemical analyses of 7-day weighed food samples," *Journal Of Food Composition & Analysis* 24, no. 1 (February 2011): 22-28; A. Papadaki et al. "Calcium, nutrient and food intake of Greek Orthodox Christian monks during a fasting and non-fasting week," *Public Health Nutrition* 11, no. 10 (October 2008): 1022-1029; Constantine Cavarnos, *Fasting and Science: A Study of the Scientific Support and Patristic Foundation for Fasting in the Orthodox Church*, 2 edition, (Etna, Calif: Center for Traditionalist, 1998).

[81] For an Orthodox perspective on this topic see: Rita Madden, *Food, Faith, and Fasting: A Sacred Journey to Better Health* (Ancient Faith Publishing, 2015).

Paragraph 4. *Christocentric understanding of fasting.* If we compare the four official versions of the text of this fourth paragraph[82], we can observe the following differences. The English version contains the phrase: "exemplifies fasting," but in the French and Greek versions we find: "est devenu l'exemple," "κατέστη ὑπόδειγμα." The French translation of the word: "for the faithful" "τῶν πιστῶν" is "de celui que doivent pratiquer les fidèles." The French text is different than the English and Greek translations by saying that: "Il rend active leur participation à l'obéissance du Seigneur, afin que, *par le jeûne*." The word *"par le jeûne*" can be found just in the French translation, the English and the Greek ones are referring to "the obedience in the Lord" ("that through it," "ἵνα δι' αὐτῆς"), and not to fasting.

This paragraph, without being modified in any way since the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference in 1986, emphasizes the Christological character of fasting, given that Christ Himself fasted. In this sense, the Christian fasting is an imitation of Christ and obedience to his salvific activity. At the third Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference, Metropolitan Christodoulos of Dimitrias considered the use of the passage from the work of St. Gregory Palamas as inappropriate because it requires that fasting is an absolutely necessary condition for salvation, being, by this argument, more important than baptism[83]. However, the quote is referring to fasting as a practice of self-sacrifice in relation to the sacrifice of Christ and cannot be considered as a necessary condition for salvation.

Conclusions

The first four paragraphs of the text represent an attempt of defining not the practice of fasting or the Orthodox fasting itself, in the same manner as the definitions found in some Orthodox handbooks or catechisms, but the complex

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[82] "The forty-day fast of the Lord exemplifies fasting for the faithful, initiating their participation in the obedience in the Lord, that through it 'we might recover by its observance that which we have lost by not observing it' (Gregory the Theologian, Homily 45, On Holy Pascha, 28. PG 36, 661C). The Christocentric understanding of the spiritual dimension of fasting—in particular the fast of Great Lent—is a general rule in the entire patristic tradition and is characteristically epitomized by St Gregory Palamas: 'When you fast like this you not only suffer with Christ and are dead with Him, but you are also risen with Him and reign with Him forever and ever. If through such a fast you have been planted together in the likeness of His death, you shall also share in His resurrection and inherit life in Him' (Homily 13, On the Fifth Sunday of Lent, PG 151, 161AB)."

[83] Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 78. Secrétariat pour la préparation (ed.), *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire*, 81-82.

character of fasting. Thus, the first paragraph represents the hermeneutical key for understanding the entire document. It is not the text itself, with its consistencies and inconsistencies, that is extremely important for this perspective, but the theological reconsideration of fasting that it emphasizes.

Without diminishing or abolishing the practice of fasting, the document takes into consideration the strength and ability of everyone and invites everyone to discover the practice of fasting especially for worshiping God. By this, the document shows the indissoluble link between fasting and worship and the liturgical character of fasting. Therefore, the second passage of the document brings biblical and patristic arguments for the importance of fasting in the history and Tradition of the Church, but without a precise historical development of the practice of fasting.

Taking into consideration this vast period of time needed for the final form of the text of the Holy and Great Council, we can assert the total victory of the theologians and circles with conservative theological visions, the idea of changing and adapting fasting periods being removed from the inter-Orthodox debate. More, as we shall see, fasting is considered a divine institution, and therefore any argument for any possible shortening of is suppressed from the beginning.

Fasting should have biological, psychological, social and spiritual value. The physical or bodily importance of fasting is underlined by several Church Fathers. In accordance with them, as we saw, modern medicine can provide evidence that underlines the benefits and medical importance of Orthodox Christian fasting for the health of the body. As a psychological practice, fasting can be a solution to different addictions to food. As a social practice, fasting can have countless implications. This vision would contribute to the understanding of fasting as a non-violence practice towards nature and animals, which can be found in many ecological debates today.

Also, in a world where the exploitation of animals in miserable conditions, the use of countless hormones, chemicals, additives, preservatives, and other toxic materials for the human body, the millions of tons of discarded food are present daily in our post-modern society, the practice of fasting would come precisely as a message against the exploitation of God's creation for economic profit or for the satisfaction of our culinary desires and appetites, and focusing on the one in need.

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IV. THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

HOW DOES THE TRUTH APPEAR?
FROM PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION TO THEOLOGICAL COUNTER-REDUCTION

NICOLAE TURCAN*

ABSTRACT. Starting with Husserl's phenomenology and advancing to Jean-Luc Marion's and Jean-Yves Lacoste's phenomenology and to the revealed theology, this paper aims to answer the question: "How does the Truth appear?" Husserl's phenomenological reduction made the appearance of God, who remained in an absolute transcendence, impossible; but John's Gospel states that Christ is the Truth. We accept both of these opinions and offer the following answers: the religious phenomena, which have to do with a religious life and knowledge, could appear after one ignores or weakens the Husserlian epoché; God could appear if the phenomenological reduction became a reduction to givenness; the religious phenomena could appear after a theological counter-reduction, which separated itself from phenomenological rigor and belonged to theology.

Keywords: Christ, Truth, transcendental reduction, phenomenological reduction, eidetic reduction, reduction to givenness, theological counter-reduction, faith, grace, God, transcendence, Edmund Husserl, Jean-Luc Marion

The question about the appearance of the Truth points simultaneously towards two disciplines which broaden its horizon: phenomenology and theology. As a science of phenomena, the former teaches us that the discourse about appearance is included in its very concept, given that the phenomenon (phainomenon) is what appears, what manifests itself, what shows itself.[1] The latter, theology, simply affirms the identity between God-man and the truth in the unequivocal statement from John's Gospel: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"

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[1] Martin Heidegger, *Ființă și timp* [Being and Time], trans. Gabriel Liiceanu, and Cătălin Cioabă (București: Humanitas, 2002), § 7.

(John 14: 6). This statement resembles a phenomenological one because, in phenomenology, "truth is what appears."[2] This is why, in this article, the question about the possibility of appearance of the truth will become a question about the possibility of appearance of God.

The answer—an easy one from within theology—is a statement of faith over which philosophy has no real domination: Truth appears as a revelation and as man's answer to the call of God throughout the history of salvation. Then again, how legitimate is the encounter between theology and phenomenological philosophy if the topic of appearance belongs to both of them? Can the religious truth appear while the phenomenological reductions are active? What relationships are possible between the two disciplines in this case?

The following pages examine the legitimacy of a conversation about Christ the Truth within Husserl's tradition of thought. If, as we will prove later on, Husserl's phenomenological reduction eliminates God, who thus remains in an absolute transcendence, how reasonable is the "theological turn in French phenomenology," which practices a discourse based on the Revelation (therefore, a theological one in its intention), but which claims to remain phenomenological in its method and rigor? The thesis that we will support is that the encounter between phenomenology and theology would not have been possible without weakening or rethinking that Husserlian reduction, to make way for new reductions that have to do with religious life and knowledge.

The Phenomenological Reduction and the Rejection of Transcendence

Phenomenology is a philosophical method and line of thought that aims to delineate the phenomena existing in our mind at the level of the intentional consciousness. Trying to avoid any theoretical and metaphysical presuppositions to go "Back to the things themselves!"—according to one of Husserl's principles—phenomenology aspires to be "a science of sciences" and "a theory of theories."[3] It attempts to substantiate the other sciences transcendentally and to grant them a philosophical unity, without claiming to replace them. The transcendental sphere of phenomena appears after the phenomenological reduction, which involves bracketing the existence of the world, which continues to exist for me as part of my intentional consciousness.[4] Husserl takes the concept of intentionality from Franz Brentano and observes that all the acts of our consciousness are intentional, pointing towards contents of consciousness. This idea opens up the

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[2] Michel Henry, *Eu sunt Adevărul. Pentru o filozofie a creștinismului* [I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity], trans. Ioan I. Ică jr, (Sibiu: Deisis, 2000), 50.

[3] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, vol. 1, *Prolegomena to pure logic* (București: Humanitas, 2007), 152, § 66.

[4] Edmund Husserl, *Meditații carteziene* [Cartesian Meditations], trans. Aurelian Crăiuțu, (București: Humanitas, 1994), 50–51, § 8.

meditation towards two directions: on the one hand, towards contents of consciousness—intuitions, noemata or cogitata, the noematic direction; on the other hand, towards the descriptions of the acts themselves—such as perception, memory, retention, i.e. towards intentions and the cogito itself. The phenomena are constituted in the consciousness and the constitution of the transcendental world is an infinite guiding idea.[5]

For Husserl, phenomenology is an eidetic science that studies ideas, essences, principles, the a priori universal.[6] Therefore, Husserl talks not only about a transcendental reduction, but also about a categorial reduction to the essence of phenomena, and both of them define the proper meaning of a transcendental phenomenology.[7] Knowledge is a constitution in the transcendental consciousness of the phenomena obtained after making those reductions; it is a unity of fulfillment by gradual confirmations and refusals, and the truth belongs to the apodictic evidence.

Under these circumstances, the phenomenological reduction is the most radical obstacle to the possibility of appearance of a religious transcendence. Husserl defined reduction as follows:

"Formulated explicitly, the philosophical ἐποχή that we are undertaking shall consist of our completely abstaining from any judgment regarding the doctrinal content of any previous philosophy and effecting all of our demonstrations within the limits set by this abstention."[8]

The reduction can be split into a negative movement, which eliminates the theories and prejudices that block the way to the phenomenon—affecting theology as a corpus of teachings prior to the reduction—and a positive one, that returns to the pure phenomena in the way they give themselves.[9] Phenomenology sheds light on the transcendental realm of phenomena, surpassing naïve objectivism and granting access to those phenomena through intentionality. The movement of abstention (epoché) is essential for the refusal of religion, which enters alongside other doctrines in the realm of the suspension that addresses any philosophical and scientific hypotheses. Bracketing the existence of the world to

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[5] See the "Second Meditation" in Husserl, 58–87.

[6] Husserl, 104.

[7] Husserl, 105.

[8] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy.* First Book: *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology,* trans. F. Kersten, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1983), 33–34 [33], § 18.

[9] Jacques Taminiaux, *The Metamorphoses of Phenomenological Reduction* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004), 9.

reveal the transcendental realm does not lead to a fantasy, because, as Husserl said, fantasy cannot be excluded, cannot be put out of action.[10] The criterion for the difference between illusion and reality is bracketing itself. Applied to theology, we can observe that, from Husserl's perspective, there is nothing to bracket; maybe just the text of the Scripture, which we read because it shows itself to us and reveals meanings, but it could be considered a fantasy, which does not ensure the evidence of the theological meanings it contains, only the existence of the Scripture as a book that is within my intuitive horizon. Given these circumstances, the theology of that book does not resist the phenomenological reduction. However, does the theology of liturgical experience resist? No, because it can fall under the same hits, as a theatrical play reflecting a fantasy. The reduction purifies and does not annihilate, its main goal being to discuss the phenomena that remain within the field of consciousness after bracketing. Those phenomena belong to the field of knowledge but "with a change of sign," namely outside the natural attitude and according to a transcendental attitude.[11] We must emphasize that this reduction is plural, because Husserl talks about "phenomenological reductions."[12] We can interpret this plurality in two ways: on the one hand, as applying the reduction to the different fields of factual and eidetic sciences—the reduction of physics, psychology, logic, and others; on the other hand, as a gradual, never-ending reduction. Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and even Husserl affirm the gradual nature of the phenomenological reduction. Marion also implies it in his principle "So much reduction, so much givenness."[13] The most important aspect of this discussion is the fact that reduction does not bracket only the existence of the world, but all our theories and prejudices as well, which is very difficult to do completely.

Though comparable to a religious conversion, the reduction remains problematic for religion itself and for the absolute transcendence of God due to its passing from the natural attitude to the transcendental one.[14] In fact, three transcendences remain after the reduction: the transcendence of the world, which is different from noemata, the transcendence of the pure ego, which is different from noesis, and the transcendence of God.[15]

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[10] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 59 [54–55], § 31.

[11] Husserl, 322 [278–279], § 135.

[12] Husserl, 66 [59–60], § 33.

[13] Jean-Luc Marion, *În plus. Studii asupra fenomenelor saturate* [In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena], trans. Ionuț Biliuță, (Sibiu: Deisis, 2003), 26.

[14] See R. A. Mall, "The God of phenomenology in comparative contrast to that of philosophy and theology," *Husserl Studies* 8, no. 1 (1991), 1.

[15] Angela Ales Bello, *The divine in Husserl and other explorations* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands; London: Springer, 2009), 25.

Firstly, the transcendence of the world distinguishes between the content of the consciousness after the phenomenological reduction—those noemata—and the objects that constitute their references. Noesis–noemata are immanent to the consciousness, but the noematic objects remain transcendent, according to Husserl. In metaphysical terms, this is a relationship between the images and the objects of the intuition; noema is the image immanent to consciousness, whereas the object remains transcendent. This is an admitted limit of Husserl's phenomenology, characterized by the limit established by the reduction: even though it questions the transcendent reality of our consciousness, Husserlian phenomenology does not intend to offer a science of its own or to answer the question of whether this is possible, but focuses on the immanent and on the phenomenological stream of the intentional consciousness:[16]

> "That acts of thought at times refer to transcendent, even to non-existent and impossible objects, is not to the case. For such direction to objects, such presentation and meaning of what is not really (reel) part of the phenomenological make-up of our experiences, is a descriptive feature of the experiences in question, whose sense it should be possible to fix and clarify by considering the experiences themselves. In no other way would it be possible."[17]

Another limit is given by the very importance of objects in Husserl's phenomenology. If the principle "back to the things themselves" targets the objectivity of the phenomena appearing after the reduction, then it ignores, for the most part, non-objective phenomena. Husserl even claims in Ideas I that a transcendency that lacks the present perception and the phenomenological constitution would be nonsensical.[18]

Secondly, there is also a transcendency of the pure ego, inasmuch as it joins the acts and the noetic–noematic contents while eluding the field that appears after the phenomenological reduction. Being imperative to every cogitatio and remaining identical to itself despite its changing acts, "it cannot in any sense be a really inherent part or moment of the mental processes themselves."[19] The pure ego remains irreducible[20], indescribable and pure

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[16] Husserl, *Logical Investigations* 1: 179, § 7.

[17] Husserl, 177, § 7.

[18] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 100 [85], § 46.

[19] Husserl, 132 [109], § 57 (emphasis in original).

[20] Jean-Yves Lacoste claims that God also is irreducible. See Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Fenomenalitatea lui Dumnezeu* [Phenomenality of God], trans. Maria-Cornelia Ică jr (Sibiu: Deisis, 2011), 88–89.

emptiness, has "no explicatable content,"[21] which is why it has a paradoxical "transcendency within immanency":

> "If we retain a pure Ego as a residuum after our phenomenological exclusion of the world and of the empirical subjectivity included in it (and an essentially different pure Ego for each stream of mental processes), then there is presented in the case of that Ego a transcendency of a peculiar kind—one which is not constituted—a transcendency within immanency."[22]

Both transcendencies—of the world and of the pure ego—extend to all situations where the intention points to the phenomena of the others (the problem of intersubjectivity) or to the stream of mental processes of other egos.[23]

Thirdly, due to its problem with intersubjectivity, the phenomenological reduction becomes even more problematic with regard the divine alterity, which is considered radically transcendent. Husserl's phenomenology cannot make way for God in its analytical field, because of its phenomenological reduction, which eliminates all presuppositions and is descriptive and essentialist. The transcendental subjectivity which exercises a phenomenological reduction can accept only an immanent God, constituted phenomenologically, but this is absurd because God has no place in noetic–noematic correlations.[24] In paragraph 58 from Ideas I, Husserl claims that the phenomenological reduction excludes God. Although Husserl accepts a teleological argument implicitly and speaks of God as a "base" and not as a "physical causal reason," he considers God's transcendence to be a radical one, different from both the transcendence of the world towards consciousness and the transcendence of the pure ego. The absolute of God is different from the absolute of pure consciousness.[25] Here, we may notice the "methodological atheism" of phenomenology, which is specific to Husserl's and Heidegger's thought.

To sum up, the phenomenological reduction excludes the possibility of God's appearance, which cannot be analyzed within phenomenology. However, some solutions were found to overcome this interdiction: (1) weakening or ignoring the reduction—a kind of reduction of the reduction— and using a non-Husserlian and non-rigorous discourse (this is the solution of Husserl himself,

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[21] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 191 [160], § 80.

[22] Husserl, 133 [109–110], § 57 (emphasis in original).

[23] Husserl, 79 [68], § 38.

[24] Mall, "The God of phenomenology in comparative contrast to that of philosophy and theology," 4–5.

[25] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 133–134 [110–111], § 58.

Levinas, Michel Henry, and Jean-Yves Lacoste); (2) re-thinking the reduction to allow God's appearance (as in the case of Jean-Luc Marion's reduction to givenness); and (3) allowing the theological reductions present for phenomena of faith and admitting the possibility of a noetic–noematic analysis that accepts the irreducibility of God (Jean-Yves Lacoste's solution).

The Reduction of the Reduction

In a "Note" from Ideas I, Husserl talks about a cosmological and teleological argument of the world, starting from the idea of the order of the universe and of the visible telos. He observes that one can rationally presuppose a theological principle of absolute transcendence, but this principle cannot be analyzed phenomenologically: "The ordering principle of the absolute must be found in the absolute itself, considered purely as absolute."[26] This idea opens the field towards the possibility of discourses other than the phenomenological one, discourses that can legitimately refer to God:

> "In other words, since a worldly God is evidently impossible and since, on the other hand, the imanence of God in absolute consciousness cannot be taken as immanence in the sense of being as a mental process (which would be no less counter-sensical), ther must be, therefore, within the absolute stream of consciousness and its infinities, modes in which transcendencies are made known other than the constituting of physical realities as unities of harmonious appearances; and ultimately there would also have to be intuitional manifestations to which a theoretical thinking might conform, so that, by following them rationally, it might make intelligible the unitary rule of the supposed theological principle. It is likewise evident, then, that this rule must not be taken to be 'causal' in the sense determined by the concept of causality as obtaining in Nature, a concept attuned to realities and the functional interdependencies proper to their particular essence."[27]

Firstly, this paragraph distinguishes between the worldly transcendence and the absolute transcendence—adequate to God; the latter reappears at the end in the form of the rejection that God could be a worldly cause. As a foundation of the world, God cannot be a "cause" in any ordinary meaning, for there is no relationship between cause and effect, as in physical causality; instead, He is a

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[26] Husserl, 116 [96], § 51.
[27] Husserl, 116–117 [96–97], § 51 (emphasis added).

foundation visible only through faith. The causality of the world is a horizontal one and does not need to be founded by divine transcendence. Here, Husserl seems to think that God's transcendence is transcendent to the transcendence of the world, namely a superior transcendence. The difference between the mundane sphere and divine one can also be observed from the fact that the phenomenological constitutions are not adequate to God.

Another important idea is that Husserl accepts the legitimacy of other, no less rational ways of thinking than the phenomenological one, but which do not exercise the phenomenological reduction, nor do they use intuitions that could be accepted by theological thinking.

Finally, the "supposed" theological principle of Husserl's text leads to the possibility of a counter-reduction: what if what we see in the religious phenomena belongs to our sphere, our faith, and our Christian teachings?

Through this note, Husserl opens a field for religious analysis, a less rigorous discourse than the phenomenological one, with no phenomenological reduction. Husserl himself talks about God in his manuscripts, ignoring reduction, exercising a phenomenology without epoché. No matter where we situate Husserl's ideas about religion and God, they are essential for the legitimacy of such discourses. Thus, Husserl—who converted from Judaism to Protestant Christianism—writes about the superiority and the universality of monotheism, defending the Judeo-Christian Revelation, about the importance of the teleology for understanding God, who is not a totality of monads, but an entelechy. He also defines God as infinite life, love, will, and happiness; he speaks about the "ethical love" of Christ and the ethical way of man.[28]

Theological Counter-Reduction

How does the truth appear? Jean-Luc Marion gives another answer, trying

"to broaden the meanings of phenomenology and to propose a phenomenology of givenness which overcomes the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger. His reduction to givenness is radical and goes beyond the reduction to objectness (Husserl) and the reduction to beingness (Heidegger). Its role is that of freeing the phenomena from anything a priori, which favors the act of discussing the phenomena

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[28] I developed all these ideas in Nicolae Turcan, "Fenomenologia fără *epoché*: Problema religiei la Husserl" [Phenomenology without *epoché*: The Problem of Religion in Husserl], in *Simetriile înțelepciunii. Studii de filosofie şi teologie* [Symmetries of Wisdom: Studies of Philosophy and Theology], ed. Alin Tat, and Nicolae Turcan (Bucureşti: Eikon, 2017).

related to religious experience and Christian Revelation. These phenomena overwhelm human understanding; in Marion's terms, this means that they are given in excess, saturating our concepts with intuition; hence, the name of saturated phenomena."[29]

However, is that reduction to givenness free from a theological counter-reduction? Doesn't the same Husserlian "supposed" theological principle appear here? The remaining pages will try to analyze such a theological counter-reduction, because it is another answer to our question.

A religious phenomenon is an "appearance" of transcendence within the field of intentional consciousness. A good example is an epiphany, the manifestation of the divine through daily phenomena. Even the Christian feast of the Epiphany is the revelation of God incarnate as the Son, revealed by the Father and the Holy Spirit. The history and the philosophy of religions show us other religious revelations: ontophanies—revelations of the true reality or Being—and cratophanies—revelations of the power of the sacred. The phenomenology of religions speaks about privileged objects through which the sacred manifests itself, as well as about sacred spaces, e.g., temples, and sacred times, e.g., feast days. Homo religiosus, who is present in all societies and cultures of the world, understands well such phenomena.

What is more difficult, however, is to define the religious phenomenon starting from an atheist perspective. A phenomenological reduction excludes the sacred, as well as the religious phenomena. There are religious people who transform, by an act of transfiguration, the normal phenomena, giving them exterior meanings. What happens in the intentional conscientiousness in such cases when a religious meaning is granted to a phenomenon that, for non-believers, shows no transcendence? For a non-religious consciousness, intuition and concept can arrive at a certain adequacy and can offer the phenomenon in itself, but without any religious connotation. In the same way, if the phenomenon is an event, surprising and saturating the concept, the religious content is not a necessity. The art lover who admires an Orthodox icon might see a saturated phenomenon without any religious saturation, only with an artistic one. The difference between the non-religious consciousness and the religious one is given by the absence or the presence of faith. At first sight, such a distinction annihilates the specificity of the religious phenomenon, because a faithful consciousness only adds a "supposed" theological principle that is not present in the phenomenon.

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[29] Nicolae Turcan, *Apologia după sfârșitul metafizicii. Teologie și fenomenologie la Jean-Luc Marion* [Apology after the End of Metaphysics: Theology and Phenomenology in Jean-Luc Marion] (București: Eikon, 2016), 368–69.

Such an act could be the creation of a counter-reduction. Even Kierkegaard admitted, in his Philosophical fragments, that man assigns divine ideality to the empirical world.[30]

Holiness—as a manifestation of God's power and love—is not limited by the existence of faith; it can arise even for the non-believer, causing his conversion. However, this is the exception, because the rule is that a miracle is conditioned. Christ asked: "Do you believe I can do that?" Thus, faith appears as an unnecessary and insufficient condition and, from a phenomenological point of view, comparing to the Husserlian reduction as a counter-reduction.

Faithful consciousness transfigures the appeared phenomenon through its faith: for example, when seeing a human being who deserves blame, it tries to love him on account of the commandment of loving one's neighbor, so it adds a certain quality to the other, which is inadequate from a phenomenological point of view. The other does not necessarily have such a quality, but faithful consciousness takes it from its faith. Transfiguring the phenomenological reality, the religious man does not impoverish it; on the contrary, he enriches it, giving it spiritual determinations that the reality itself seems, at first sight, not to have. Through this work of faith, all the phenomena can become religious, because God can work through everyone. This mental activity is not a falsification of the phenomena, because it neither contradicts, nor cancels them; instead, it is a spiritual enrichment, probably even the revelation of the spiritual meaning that those phenomena already have, but keep them opaque.

This idea—that God can work through every phenomenon transfigured by faith—gives us the second meaning of religious phenomenon: it is the revelation of God's power and love. Faith alone is not able to make miracles; it makes only transfigurations of the phenomena, building a world within one can imagine a happy life. When the power of God appears alongside this transfiguration as an answer to man's faith, then there is a second-grade religious phenomenon. In this case, there is something more powerful, more revelated, more surprisingly, which is not only our religious opinion, but also a real revelation. God's revelation overwhelms theological counter-reduction.

We should make a distinction between two kinds of acts of the religious consciousness: on the one hand, the acts that faithful consciousness adds from within itself and, on the other hand, the acts of revelation, based on faith—which is, let us not forget, a gift and a work of God's grace. A redoubtable objection arises here: our acts, do they not obstruct the possibility of God appearing from himself? Do our transcendental conditions create a God reducible to them and, in the end,

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[30] See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fărâme filozofice* [Philosophical Fragments]*,* trans. Adrian Arsinevici (Timişoara: Amarcord, 1999), 64.

do we fail, as Feuerbach asserts, in front of a God created after our image? The answer to that objection could be: even though we bring our faith from ourselves, such an act of the consciousness is not sufficient for the non-intuitive appearance of God. God could not appear, and we remain only some kind of rationalist believers. The teachings of faith, which are received by way of revelation (The Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition), are inefficient for an authentic mystical experience. Therefore, even though we bring our faith, askesis, and prayer, as "theological reduction,"[31] "liturgical reduction,"[32] and "eschatological reduction,"[33] this is not an actual a priori, because the authentic a priori is the work and the grace of the Holy Spirit. When Christ the Truth comes to us and we receive Him, such an experience overwhelms any previous concept, human effort or intellectual faith.

It is obvious that those appearances belong to the mystical theology rather than to Husserlian phenomenology. They advance into the field of theology and belong to philosophy only by language. However, if the analyzed phenomena are the texts of the Bible or the liturgical experience, the phenomenological method could be appropriate and could show the faith manifested from themselves. There is no faith of the phenomenologist, but, for example, the faith proclaimed by the biblical texts becomes phenomena in order to be analyzed. As a result, faith appears even for phenomenological thought while it describes phenomena of the Christian revelation. When the phenomenologist is also a believer, he understands better what he describes in the field of theology, but he keeps the distinction between the two domains. Working behind its reductions, phenomenology cannot "validate" the teachings of the faith but can only describe them. The frontier between theology and phenomenology passes through that possibility of "validation," so the difference between a phenomenologist and a theologian is not in the manner in which they describe the phenomena—both of them should describe them similarly but in the fact that the theologian believes they are true and tries to live according to them.

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[31] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică* [Time: A Theological Phenomenology], trans. Maria Cornelia Ică jr, (Sibiu: Deisis, 2005), 142.

[32] See Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experienţă şi Absolut. Pentru o fenomenologie liturgică a umanităţii omului* [Experience and the Absolute. Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man], trans. Maria Cornelia Ică jr (Sibiu: Deisis, 2001), 220–22, § 65.

[33] Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică* [Time: A Theological Phenomenology], 239.

Conclusions

The answers to the question about the appearance of Christ the Truth involves overcoming the Husserlian epoché. Firstly, through some absolute and non-phenomenological discourses and by ignoring phenomenological reduction. Secondly, by broadening the meaning of the reduction in such a way that the impossibility of God's appearance becomes a possibility; not due to our a priori categories, but to the appearance of the Truth himself, as a revelation, coming from himself—Jean-Luc Marion's answer. Thirdly, the Truth can show himself after a theological counter-reduction visible in the phenomena of faith; in this case, the eidetic reduction could remain active, but the transcendental reduction—the Husserlian epoché—could not. It is in the realm of theology where the conditions of possibility are doubled by the divine grace, in order to receive Christ the Truth in amazement. Such a gifted "transcendental," an a posteriori one, is the grace of God, through which man can participate in the mystery of Trinitarian love.

As Christ the Truth is not an epistemological notion, He appears in the communion in which the believer comes not only by his faith—a gift from God too—but also with what he does not have, by God's grace. By grace, he receives the spiritual gaze and can see and understand, as far as he can, the unseen and the unknowing of God. An objection might reply that, at that level, there is only spirituality and not phenomenology, that the believer posits faith and the phenomenological reduction is annihilated. However, the phenomenon of faith points beyond itself, towards the God who has always gifted it and has manifested Himself through the work of the Holy Spirit. If this last way leads to the overcoming of phenomenology, then it is time for one last rhetorical question: when we are talking about God, isn't it legitimate for theology to be the fulfillment of our pursuits and to let God to appear under His conditions, not ours?

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V. VARIA

THE GATHERING OF MANY TEACHINGS. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN ROMANIA (16TH–18TH CENTURIES)

MAGDA-ELENA SAMOILĂ[*]

ABSTRACT. Although the history of the 16th-18th centuries fails to offer comprehensive information about the contemporary interest in adult education, there is evidence of initiatives to provide adult instruction, undifferentiated, yet concurrent with the education provided to children and young people. This paper gives insight into the old Romanian literature on the territory of Moldavia and Wallachia, in order to identify and analyze ideas, reflections and pedagogical solutions relevant for the continuing and adult education. While the religious educational aims and contents prevailed during the 16th century, being in close connection with the cultural activity of the time, mainly carried out within the churches and monastic schools, and intended to educate the upper class, the period between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century showed the tendency to diversify the content, for reasons related to the need of population, regardless their social class, to access the scientific and practical knowledge of that time. The historical research will consider both texts that capture the general movement of ideas of the time, and the criticism accumulated in the Romanian cultural space, structured in a distinct direction of historical research on education, the history of education. We will resort to historical arguments in order to establish the main directions relevant to the specificity of continuing and adult education that stand out within this period: a. elements of religious education for adults in the Slavonic literature (16th-17th centuries) ; b. diversifying the ideas of adult education in the content of religious texts in order to disseminate moral and social cohabitation norms with educational value, through multiplication of translations into Romanian of biblical writings (end of 17th century—first half of the 18th century); c. the appearance of the first instructional and practical textbooks for adults (second half of the 18th century).

Keywords: religious education for adults, moral education for adults, practical textbooks.

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1. Historical context

The Christian education of adults in the monasteries is part of the first educational manifestations of humanity whose stated purpose is to prepare the individuals for life. The first monastic schools were founded in the 4th century, at the initiative of Saint Basil the Great, the main beneficiaries of the instruction being the monastic staff who had responsibilities in copying books with religious content. The new institutions start to develop in all regions where Christianity was spreading, thus occupying a distinct place in the development of Middle Ages education. The monastic school of Fulda, Germany, or that in the Eastern Europe, set up on Mount Athos, became landmarks in the medieval Christian education. Later, the first elements of a secular culture appeared during the 16th–17th centuries, and circulated concurrently with the spread of heresies. The new realities lead to the emergence of the cultural movement called *scholasticism*, based on the principle according to which Christian dogmas must be rationally grounded. Gradually, the spirit of scholasticism contributes to the emergence of an education system centered on both theological and abstract, empirical contents derived from the experiences of the contemporaries.

In Romania, the monastic schools from Moldavia and Wallachia remained in the historiography as the first institutions that materialized the forms of Slavonic education, strongly influenced by the evolution of the church[1]. In the national tradition, the founding of Wallachia and Moldavia is called "descălecare" (*dismounting*), a term that denotes *colonization, settlement, foundation*, and which shows that the establishment of the two principalities was achieved due to people coming from afar, riding on their horses[2]. As for Transylvania, the fate of the Romanians was under the domination of the Hungarian kings, and it would fundamentally change in 1699, when Hungary would pass under the authority of Austria. In the 18th century, the influence of the Lutheran and Calvinist church will be replaced with the Catholic one[3]. As a matter of fact, Transylvania, Banat, the Hungarian areas had only occasional contact with the political organization of the free Romanians, and their political and religious life was found in a different context with different influences, stated the historian Nicolae Iorga[4].

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[1] Ş. Bârsănescu, *Istoria pedagogiei româneşti* (Bucureşti: Societatea Română de Filozofie, 1941), 23.

[2] A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană. Ediţia a III-a. Primii domni şi vechile aşezăminte (1290-1457)* (Bucureşti: Editura Cartea Românească, 1925), III: 12.

[3] I. Găvănescul, *Istoria pedagogiei*, Ediţia a II-a (Bucureşti: Editura Librăriei & Tipografiei H. Steinberg, 1922), 241.

[4] N. Iorga, *Istoria bisericii româneşti şi a vieţii religioase a românilor* (Vălenii de Munte: Editura Neamul Românesc, 1908), I: 19.

The political process of founding and strengthening the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia was naturally followed by the development and strengthening of the church, which was mainly due to the recognition of the two Metropolitan Churches, between 1352-1364, by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople[5], the highest church authority in the Eastern Orthodox Church. These political and cultural realities explain the predominance of the Slavic language in the two Romanian territories, as it was the official language of both the church and the state, similar to the Latin used for sermons in Transylvania and the West[6]. The social and educational impact of the new political and cultural realities will be strongly felt, especially by the inhabitants, the "lower" social classes, separated from the administrative leadership of the state. A.D. Xenopol characterizes the linguistic and social cleavage of the two categories, the leading class, Slavic speakers, and the rest of the people, speaking Daco-Romanian, maintained until the 19th century, as follows:

> "The Slavonic language was too little spoken by this people who expressed their needs and thoughts in their ancestral language. Thus, related to culture, this dualism has always accompanied us during all periods of our history: the upper class, usually estranged from the thinking of the people, breaking its moral unity: during the Slavonic period, with the Slavonic language; during the Greek period, with Greek, in recent times, with the French, always receiving and feeding another foreigner with its powerful body. This is, in brief, the main feature of the whole cultural development of the Romanian people."[7]

The Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga marks the first stage of the founding of monastic life in Moldavia and Wallachia in the "Slavonic Stage" (14th-16th centuries). This is followed by the "Slavic-Romanian Stage," associated with the multiplication and diversification of religious prints translated into Romanian (16th–17th centuries), and the "Romanian Stage," by the end of the 18th century and the early 19th century[8]. We will preserve these delimitations, stating that our research will mainly capture and analyze the contributions of the texts that have benefited from Romanian translations, for reasons related to the increased influence they had on the majority population of the two Romanian territories. We will further analyze the ideas, reflections and pedagogical solutions relevant to the adult and continuing education, written on the territories of Moldavia and Wallachia in the centuries that followed the founding the two principalities.

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[5] M. Păcurariu, *Istoria bisericii ortodoxe române* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al B.O.R., 2006).

[6] N. Djuvara, *A brief illustrated history of Romanians* (București: Humanitas, 2014), 34.

[7] Xenopol, *Istoria românilor*, 205.

[8] Iorga, *Istoria bisericii*, 39.

2. Methodology

The paper is based on a qualitative historical research that enables us to explore and explain the meanings, stages and characteristics of the processes of adult education and learning in Romania, between 16th and 18th century. The evolution of concepts and practices regarding the field of adult education is divided into periods, in relation to the historical stages of the Romanian state evolution and the socio-cultural dominants. The historical research will analyze both the texts that capture the general movement of ideas of the period, as well as the criticism in the Romanian cultural space, structured in a distinct research direction of the educational historiographical field: the history of education. Regarding primary sources, it is necessary to clarify the following: for reasons related to the lack of access to the texts printed in the analyzed period (because many of them were lost, damaged or destroyed, without being re-published), we consulted the translation of their copies included by Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoş in *Bibliografie românească veche [Early Romanian Bibliography]* (BRV), Volume I (published in 1903), and Volume II (published in 1910). Romanian exegesis and historiography consent that the authors of these primary sources of historical information were prominent figures of the communities they represented or originated from: rulers of the pre-modern Romanian states, or of the relevant communities. In addition, the corpus analized includes secondary sources: monographs, lexicographic, historiographic and history works of Romanian pedagogy.

3. Adult education in the first religious texts. The Slavonic Stage (16th–17th centuries)

Throughout most of its history, Romania has a state of Orthodox and Catholic denomination, in which the Church has enjoyed important privileges in education matters. The clearest example for the Church's influence can be found in the permanent presence of the Christian doctrine and the Biblical history in the texts published in this period. We may state this is a reference period for understanding the historical and cultural determinants of adult education, both in terms of the specifics of the prints and the activities of the institutions that support and generalize the ideas. The old Romanian translations of Biblical and patristic texts represent, at least in the 16th and 17th centuries, the result of initially occasional activities, too little included, later on, in the framework of a unitary activity. The translators, trained within the church, often act under the impetus of concrete and relatively stringent needs, as well as cultural-religious

initiatives[9]. With reference to the written text, elements of continuing and adult education can be identified since the 16th century, in the first prints containing religious norms and teachings, intended for all, both children and adults. Monk Macarie printed the first texts in Slavonic, which provide moral and religious advice to guide an undifferentiated education for all stages of life, like the *Liturghierul din* 1508 *(Liturgy of 1508),* the first paper printed in Wallachia, the Octoich of 1510, the *Evangheliarul (Gospel)* of 1512, used in both the chancelleries and the religious services[10]. Such a message appears in the *Evangheliarul slavonesc* (*Slavonic Gospel*), printed by Deacon Coresi, in 1562: "I pray the youth and the elderly, and the young and the old, that thou shalt come around!"[11]. *Coming around* send to the stages of an extended lifelong education, gained exclusively through the knowledge and observance of religious parables.

The *Învăţăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie* (*Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Teodosie*), a text allegedly written by Neagoe Basarab, the ruler of Wallachia between 1518-1521, provide an overview of the cultural and religious ambiance of that age. Although, in modern times, Neagoe Basarab's teachings have gained the fame of being one of the greatest European books of the 16th century, their value was only recognized in the last decades of the last century, due to the theory of the text's inaccuracy, and use of the Slavonic language, as the main limits that contributed to the difficult interpretation and generalization. Ştefan Bârsănescu states that the *Teachings* is "the first Romanian pedagogical writing"[12], and Nicolae Cartojan considers it "the most important masterpiece of Romanian thinking and feeling in the Slavic language"[13], while for the influential contemporary thinker, Adrian Neculau the *Teachings* predict many of the themes of modern psycho-sociology, such as leadership relationships with close collaborators, psychological elements of negotiation, social merit evaluation, advice on ways to gain social and moral accomplishment etc. [14]. Structured in eleven parts, the text proposes and develops sets of religious and political teachings in the scholastic culture, which in fact represented a "true treatise of guiding the *people* towards the Christian life[15]." According to Neagoe

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[9] A. Gafton, „Relaţia dintre sursele traducerilor biblice şi concepţia de la baza acestora", in *Text şi discurs religios* (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iaşi, 2009), 125-134.

[10] I. Bianu and N. Hodoş, *Bibliografie românească veche 1508-1830*, Tom I, 1508-1716 (Bucureşti: Ediţia Academiei Române, Atelierele Socec, 1903), 47.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Bârsănescu, *Istoria pedagogiei,* 23.

[13] N. Cartojan, *Istoria literaturii române vechi*, Vol. I, *Dela origini până la epoca lui Matei Basarab şi Vasile Lupu,* (Bucureşti: Fundaţia pentru Literatura şi Artă „Regele Carol II", 1940), 42.

[14] A. Neculau, "Începuturile unei viziuni psihosociale asupra manifestărilor umane la cărturarii români", in *Psihologie socială în România*, red. Ana Tucicov Bogdan (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1984).

[15] Bârsănescu, *Istoria pedagogiei*, 16.

Basarab, the education made in the spirit of continuing the royal traditions, and observing, throughout the life, the forefathers' parables and practices, is the guarantee of a valuable continuing education.

Continuing education ideas also appear in *Evanghelia învăţătoare* (*The Gospel of the Teacher*), printed at Govora, in 1642. The text records the exclusive interest in learning and understanding the religious content by all *those* in the "darkness of misunderstanding," young or old, scholars or illiterates:

> "I pray you to read this book for your soul because it is full of meaning, and reveals the mysteries of God. The light and glow of the Holy Spirit illuminates all who are in the darkness of misunderstanding, makes the young wiser, and strengthens the elderly."[16]

We find the similar ideas in another writing printed in the same year, 1642, in Wallachia, also. *Învăţătura pentru toate zilele (Everyday Teachings)*, a work printed by Melchisedec, the abbot of Câmpulung-Muscel Monastery, is intended for all "little and grown up" readers. The preface justifies the purpose of its translation and printing: "to be handy and useful because the Greek language cannot be understood by all the people of our country, that is why I brought them out to light, to help the little and the grownups understand them"[17].

> "For we see in the teachings how to achieve good things earlier, and how people have established their homes. I have had to bring these teachings into Romanian, to make them handy and useful not only to those who know, but to those who do not know the Greek language."[18]

The text has two educational objectives: learning the Romanian language, necessary to the people for accessing new information in a formal context (e.g. schools, monasteries), and learning the practical advice, useful in the daily life of the contemporary adults.

A particular interest of the feudal society seems to have been the instruction of the girls. The *Îndreptarea legii* (*Rectifying the Law*), a text published at Târgovişte, in 1652, includes the punishments for the person (the "teaching woman") who did not provide religious education, generally suitable for the female learners, and brief references to the nature of the studied contents, and some elements supporting the existence of an educational system paid by parents:

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[16] Bianu and Hodoş, BRV, I: 123.

[17] M. Gaster, *Chrestomaţie română. Texte tipărite şi manuscrise, Secolele XVI-XIX,* Vol. I (Bucureşti: Socec, 1891).

[18] Bianu and Hodoş, BRV, I: 123.

> "The one who will give his daughter to be instructed by a teaching woman, or to learn another craft, will also have to pay for the studies and food, and if she, through teaching, misdirects her without the knowledge of the parents, the judge will punish her."[19]

The text also records the first teachings for parents derived from the need to provide children with moral education in accordance with the community values. The concerns related to cultivating the virtues of sons and daughters, their duty to respect and help their family, some provisions related to the methods of discipline, as well as how to make children accountable for their actions, are some of the pedagogical ideas emerging from the text that mainly envisage the noble families who ignore the education of the children, relying on "the good ancestral heritage."

> "Those who believe that goodness comes from their ancestors are completely mistaken. Similarly, the evil and bad life habits are not passed on by great men, but each, according to his actions, either feels ashamed of or glorifies them. A man, regardless of his famous and good parents or relatives, should be punished and despised if his deeds are evil and unnecessary. Moreover, if an offspring of good people is being raised alike, and makes wonderful things and improvements, with great effort and carefulness, then he deserves to be illuminated and praised."[20]

By the end of the 17th century, many translations into Romanian of the collections of religious texts that had the stated purpose of explaining, for everyone's sake, the passages of the Holy Scriptures, mainly through the ecclesiastical services, appeared on the territory of Moldavia and Wallachia. The priests or clergy of inferior rank, especially from the rural area, were almost always recruited from the peasantry, and the religious culture of church servants was often poor due to the lacking knowledge of the Slavic language[21].

4. Diversifying religious contents. The Slavonic-Romanian Stage (17th- 18th centuries)

Therefore, the religious literature has been gradually diversified and made accessible through a large number of translated *Psalteries and Homilies*, used both for disseminating the Christian morality, and the social cohabitation

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[19] Colectivul de Drept Vechi condus de Andrei Rădulescu, *Îndreptarea legii*. 1652 (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei R. P. R., 1962)

[20] Ibid.

[21] Djuvara, *A brief Illustrated History*, 65.

rules. To the believers, these sermon collections represented a real moral and spiritual support in the struggle with the increasing heresies. As for the cultural activity of that time, some of the great monasteries in Wallachia and Moldavia focused on it by copying and decorating manuscripts, by translating the Holy Scriptures and other religious books into Romanian and participating in the activities carried out by religious and royal embroidery workshops and mural painting schools[22]. According to Nicolae Iorga, the activity conducted by the Church in this period was remarkable, and the heritage left by it is responsible for the existence of some peculiarities that will feed the struggle for strengthening the national identity[23].

The Metropolitan Varlaam of Moldavia is the one who, in the spirit of Deacon Coresi, draws up the first series of the most widely spread sermons of the old Romanian literature. The value of the *Cărţii româneşti de învăţătură (Romanian Teaching Book)* or Cazania (*Homily*) (1643) made the text enjoy a great appreciation in the year of its appearance and long after, the work being a reference to the preaching activity for about three hundred years, with a determining contribution to the Romanians' awareness of their spiritual identity[24]. Moreover, the historians consider Varlaam's *Homily* to be the book that successfully fulfilled the mission of defending the Orthodoxy from the attacks by the Protestants who had begun to exert influence even on the representatives of the church. Given that the sermons had been exclusively held in the Slavonic language until the 17th century, Varlaam's preaches from the pulpit, followed by the priests' reading of the preaches in the *Cartea românească de învăţătură (The Romanian Teaching Book)* had an important role in the consolidation of the Romanians' the idea of spiritual unity. It seems that the dialogue encouraged by Varlaam in *Cazania* (*Homily*), made the audience share the biblical events presented, thus making it more receptive after each sermon. Due to its purely Orthodox content understandable by everyone, *Cazania* (*Homily*) taught Christians the norms of the Orthodox faith by insisting on the evil done by heretics and offering teachings that urged them to a moral life consistent with the social norms ("pravilele") of the time[25].

At the beginning of the 18th century, Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul from Wallachia enjoyed the same success in making accessible and disseminating religious teachings, as Metropolitan Varlaam, in Moldavia. *Didahiile (Didaches)* are the reference writings to reflect on the realities of the time, being drafted in

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[22] Xenopol, *Istoria românilor*, 241.

[23] Iorga, *Istoria bisericii*, 17.

[24] Djuvara, *A brief Illustrated History.*

[25] C. Giurescu (ed.), *Istoria învăţământului din România* (Bucureşti: Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1971), 58.

the most updated Romanian by that time[26]. Written between 1709 and 1716, *Didahiile* (*Didaches*) encompass ecclesiastical writings, materialized in discourses of educational value, delivered during sermons held in Bucharest and Târgovişte. Nicolae Iorga argue that the sermons in *Didaches* provided both a genuine collection of moral and pedagogical lectures, as well as moral lessons. While the printed books addressed the young and old readers, either the clergy or the laic people, the *Didaches* of Antim Ivireanul mainly addressed the ignorant social classes, to educate them, beyond the religious purposes, and against social inequalities and injustices[27]:

> "If you did not know until now and there was no one to teach you, now you know that I address all the people from Wallachia, young and old, except for the pagans and those who do not share our Law with us and are oppressive."[28]

The Biblical text also appears as the only means and purpose for instruction in the *Evanghelia învăţătoare (Teaching Gospel),* printed at Dealu Monastery in 1644. Having the "scripture craft," "light in hands," led to "changing the mind and loving the doctrine," as the ultimate goal of religious education being the knowledge of biblical passages. In fact, the first religious books translated into Romanian had exclusively educational purpose[29]. The Gospel text captures different levels of knowledge of the text:

> "Some do not have the craft of the Scriptures at all, and they are like a ship without a helm in the midst of the sea, so that it may sink; others have the craft, but they do not do what the Scripture says and so they sink, having the light in their hand; others read the Scripture but do not understand, as the ones who keep the light on, but has no eyes to see, and this is how most of our people is now."[30]

In a *Cazanie (Homily)*, which appeared in Râmnic, in 1748, religious messages appear supplemented by advises that support the need for lifelong learning. The skills acquired throughout the life provide the measure of knowledge and wisdom at the old age, and the gatherings of youth determine the evolution to maturity:

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[26] N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII-lea (1688-1821)*, Vol. 1, *Epoca lui Dimitrie Cantemir* (Bucureşti: Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1964), 331.

[27] Ibid., 332.

[28] A. Ivireanul, *Din Didahiile ţinute în Mitropolia din Bucureşti.* Notiţe biografice de Dr. I. Cernoi (Bucureşti: Editura Librăriei Socec, 1895), 29.

[29] Giurescu, *Istoria învăţământului*, 44.

[30] Bianu and Hodoş, BRV, I: 105.

> "We can know that the skills a man learns when he is young rest with him until he is old and not only valid for the human nature, as also the trees, whatever fruits they make when they are young, they will be the same up to the end."[31]

In *Adunare de multe învăţături (The Gathering of Many Teachings)*, a collection of religious texts, which was published in Iaşi, under the direction of Moldavian Metropolitan Iacov, in 1757, the book became a "hermitage," and the knowledge of the forefathers' experiences would "bring them to light at all times of life"[32]. This text appears at a time when, in Moldavia, the Moldavian historians Grigore Ureche, Ion Neculce and Miron Costin printed the *Letopiseţe,* as an early stage of the Romanian historiography.

Some adult education ideas also appear in *Ducere de mână către cinste (Guidance to Honor)*, a text published in 1777, in Romanian and German, in Vienna, that was widely spread dissemination in the two Romanian provinces. The work structures in chapters several sets of moral and religious teachings offered to the future families:

> "For good habits or for justice or for a man's honour, regarding his thoughts and deeds/For whoever marries and how man should look to all who are honoured and praised/For keeping the house and for what to do and what to know for being a good host."[33]

Divanul sau Gâlceava înţeleptului cu lumea sau giudeţul sufletului cu trupul (The Salvation of the Wise Man and the Ruin of the Sinful World), by Dimitrie Cantemir, the prince of Moldavia, was published in 1698, in Romanian and Greek. In *Divanul* we can identify the first reflections that support the need to establish a differentiated education, by age, as Cantemir introduced in the Romanian educational literature elements of differentiating education according to the age criterion, and established, in an empirical manner, the steps in the individual evolution.

To Cantemir, the human life is the expression of a succession of stages[34]: *the infancy*, the first age, corresponds to the first seven years of life, called "the flower of life, the example for other ages, as it has no evil"; the next is the *childhood*, followed by the *catarigia (puberty)*. Cantemir considers that childhood

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 97.

[33] Ibid., 222.

[34] D. Cantemir, *Divanul sau gâlceava înţeleptului cu lumea sau giudeţul sufletului cu trupul*, Established textbook, translation of the Greek version and glossary by Virgil Cândea (Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1990), 22-33.

and puberty are "stages that determine the moral constitution of man through the good habits acquired"; *voinicia (early adulthood)* is the forth age, corresponding to youth, coming with "high desires, energy and mobility"; *manhood* is the fifth age, described as the "maturing of the human life"; *cărunţenia (young seniority)* or "the beginning of the man's life decay"; *bătrâneţea (old age)* is the last and seventh age. The comparison of man's evolution with that of the tree is frequently used in both scholastic and humanistic education approaches, as highlighted by Jan Amos Comenius, in *Pampaedia*, a reference text for that time. In Cantemir's view, the purpose of education is to form the spirit, the individual who possesses the "supreme gift of wisdom, a superior state of the soul," built by a set of characteristics: the disposition to premeditate the action, "for doing all the work in good faith," the disposition to respect the rules of life "set by laws, a strong will, the ability to comprehend, and humanity."[35]

Gradually, real cultural centers are formed near the great monasteries, supported by the throne. It is the case of Three Hierarchs Monastery, organised by the Moldavian Ruler Vasile Lupu in 1640, and Horezu Monastery (Hurezi), founded by Constantin Brâncoveanu in Wallachia, in 1690, that were both hosting schools, workshops, printing houses, laboratories where the culture and "the language of the Romanian people" were being "processed," to spread the Orthodox faith[36]. Towards the end of the 17th century, these schools sheltered true centres that included calligraphy schools that taught manuscript copying and copywriting, which contributed to the development and organisation of education. In fact, the 17th century is known as the one in which the first schools that "are required by the specific needs of the time" appeared[37]. Based on the stated purpose of supporting Orthodoxy, the schools of those years are among the first educational institutions similar to the Western schools according to their content and purpose.

5. The first instructional and practical texts for adults (18th century)

The 18th century brings important structural changes. From a political point of view, Moldova, in 1711 and Wallachia, in 1715, came under the domination of the Phanariotes families, and Transylvania under the Hapsburg Empire. The clerical schools that functioned within monasteries, bishops or churches continue to work with similar objectives to the previous stage:

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[35] Ibid., 28.

[36] V. Citirigă, "Cina Domnului după Calvin, privită din punct de vedere ortodox," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai-Theologia Orthodoxa* 51, no. 2 (2006): 45-59.

[37] Gh. Părnuţă, *Istoria învăţământului şi gândirea pedagogică din Ţara Românească* (sec. XVII-XIX) (Bucureşti: Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1971).

attracting as many believers as possible and preparing priestly staff[38]. A characteristic of this period is the fact that, beyond the wide use of Greek education, associated with the new state governments, the focus of the scholars on establishing an education system in Romanian is amplified. If, over a century ago, the privilege of education, religious in general, belonged exclusively to the clergy and to those trained in the monastic schools, since the 18th century there is a tendency to generalize education among the people, the education in Romanian being, gradually, the main means of creation and materialization of knowledge. Ştefan Bârsănescu (1941) shows the importance of this period for "the history of the Romanian teaching books" and marks the 18th century in the "stage of early manuals"[39], The literature and educational institutions of this stage reflect the change of paradigm.

Ceasornicul domnilor (The Compass of Princes), text translated by Nicolae Costin between 1710 and 1712, records the first Romanian contents with explicitly expressed aims in the direction of adult instruction, and mainly materialized in counselling for parents. The main educational ideas identified in the text refer to differentiated approaches to education, based on gender characteristics, parents' responsibilities in children's education. For Nicolae Iorga, the examples in *The Compass of Princes* were "full of teachings and contemptuously read by contemporaries"[40]. The criticism on social stratification and the excessive care for children of the parents belonging to the ruling classes become milestones in the analysis of the educational literature of the 18th century. The text also shows the idea of family empowerment in the teacher selection phase, but also a first description of its qualities:

> "A mature man, between forty and sixty years old, pure, loving truth, gentle, temperamental, moderate, steadfast, righteous, known for understanding the books he read, both the holy and the profane ones.
> The parents are to be blamed for the teachers' defects, as they are the ones who choose them badly, for I have chosen unknowing tailors, it is my my fault that they to ruined the coat!"[41]

This is when the earliest didactic texts and rural economy books were published, in order to popularise science and help the people to overcome their limits.

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[38] Giurescu, *Istoria*, 65.
[39] Bârsănescu, *Istoria,* 38.
[40] Iorga, *Istoria bisericii,* 44.
[41] Ibid*.*

In 1785, in Vienna, there was published *Carte trebuincioasă pentru dascăli (A Useful Book for Teachers)*, in Romanian and in German, as the first pedagogy paper written in Romanian[42].

Aimed at developing the concept of teacher education, proposed by Iosif Moesiodax several decades ago, *A Useful Book for Teachers* is one of the first textbooks for teacher training, as a "teaching guide for teachers for educating the young people," so that "this dignity should not fall into the hands of undignified people without the needed knowledge"[43]. The paper is structured on two sections and a conclusion, called "addition." The first part outlines the profile of the teacher, his "spiritual assets," the second describes the contents of the education, and the postface ("addition") mentions aspects related to the organization of the educational institutions "in order to keep the school order in good condition"[44].

> "This book should train qualified, useful people and true teachers for schools. All these books were written to help teachers educate as soon as they can wise and courageous Christians, good citizens, workers, married, honest, honest, obedient, faithful servants, in a word, the perfect men—as much as possible."[45]

The teaching books series is completed by the teacher's manual, *Lecţione*, of Toader Şcoleru, published in Iaşi in 1789, aiming at teaching the "Moldovan" and Russian languages, and *Desvoltatele şi tâlcuitele Evanghelii (Gospel Developed and Explained),* published in 1790 in Sibiu. The latter paper develops the teaching methods used in delivering religious contents, with emphasis on the valences of reading and catechetical conversation:

> "Together they should rarely read, but when the disciples do not have books, then the teacher or a skilful disciple must read the Gospel rarely and clearly, to be remembered."[46]

Economia stupilor (The Economics of Beehives) is a rural economy manual drafted by the Transylvanian doctor Ioan Piuariu Molnar in Vienna, in 1785, in both Romanian and German, and it was widely spread in Moldova and Wallachia. Considered to be the first Transylvanian economic publication written by a Romanian, *The Economics of Beehives* remains in the Romanian historiography as

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[42] Părnuţă, *Istoria,* 245.
[43] Bianu and Hodoş, BRV, II: 360.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 335.

the text that not only transmits the necessary information to improve farming methods, but also makes significant contributions to the development of the Romanian language (see the studies signed by Stela Petcu, 1965, R. Tudoran, 1960, Ovidiu Densuşianu, 1915). The adult education has two relevant aspects: first of all, it has to answer to concrete teaching needs, because "only through the science and application of verified agricultural methods, the contemporaries will succeed in leaving the state of ignorance and poverty." Therefore, the text contributes to the enrichment and diversification of the contents with teaching values of those times. Second, the author's focus on making the new information widely accessible is obvious, fact that leads his efforts to "adapt the literary language to the unique language of the people"[47], through the use of popular language, the frequent use of regionalisms, as well as some agricultural notions borrowed from the old Slavic language, known by the most of the inhabitants. Below are the author arguments for writing this text:

> "Dear reader! Whoever you are, a priest or other worker, home-keeping, bee-lover, seeing myself and knowing how the bee-keepers pass over the goodness of this economy with cunning eyes, and how they take the bees under guard, until they fill their baskets with good things, and then they punish them with death, I felt the duty to show, besides other teachings, what the bee keepers should know."[48]

> *Oarecare secreturi ale lucrării pământului (Some secrets of the work of the earth)* is another manual in Romanian, published in 1796, in Bucharest, having the role of educating peasants in the field of plowing and sowing, in order to increase the agricultural production":

> "Our plumbers do not have the science of their craft, but they only follow what they have learned in their villages, from the locals, and this is the reason they cannot multiply their sown and fruit. This is the reason for which we have gathered these secrets, and we have put them in our people's language, because the craft is an endless treasure. Many times, people who used their craft have worked wonders.
> If anyone could see how a skilful plowman makes hundreds kilograms of wheat, by preparing his field beforehand with wisdom, and sowing it in proper weather, it would consider it a great wonder."[49]

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[47] S. Petcu, "Limba lui I. Molnar-Piuariu în *Economia stupilor,*" *Extras din Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Series Philologia, Fasc. I.* (Cluj, 1965): 107.

[48] Bianu and Hodoş, BRV, II: 309.

[49] Ibid., 389.

Simultaneously with the influence of the humanist texts in establishing the foundations of an indigenous culture, the Romanian educational literature continues to have two tendencies, until the end of the eighteenth century: a modern one, that replaces the Slavic language with Romanian, both in church and religious documents and in schools, and a traditionalist one, which maintains the Slavonic culture, especially in the clergy schools, where the study of religious texts prevails[50].

6. Discussion and Conclusion

An incursion into the history and historiography of the 16th and 18th centuries seems important to establish the roots of a differentiated education, religiously driven, in its first stages, carried out on the territories of Moldavia and Wallachia in the period that followed their constitution. In order to identify the main stages of the evolution of the domain, two criteria of analysis were taken into consideration: the content characteristics of the educational literature and the specificity of the historical and cultural context of the Romanian society, reflected in the explored texts. At the level of exegesis and historiography there is a consensus that the signatories of these texts have benefited from influence and authority in the communities they have represented, but for certain periods in Romania's history they remain the only written sources that provide information on social life and educational practices relevant to the education of the adults.

The investigated documentary materials demonstrate that, without existing a systematic pedagogical literature devoted explicitly to adult learners, the ideas, reflections of contemporaries, and the educational solutions relevant to the field can be identified, starting with the first religious texts printed in the Slavonic language, and in their translations into Romanian and in the first teaching books that appeared at the end of the 18th century. Even though adult education is predominantly secular in the contemporary world, historical research reveals important connections between the early stages of adult education and the first printed texts, with a predominantly religious nature, but also the activity of the first organizations responsible for education during the medieval ages, i.e. the religious institutions. The original purposes of adult education are religious, as only the copywriters and book writers in the monasteries were literate and able to copy religious texts. Towards the end of the 17th century, the texts with

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[50] M. Momanu and M.E. Samoilă, "Elements of Continuous and Adult Education in the Romanian Literature and Institutions of the 15th-17th Centuries," *Scientific Annals of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Educational Sciences Series* XV (Iași, 2011): 5-16.

educational purpose gain an eclectic character, and the Christian teachings are being gradually supplemented, then replaced, with philosophical, moral and applicative sentences. The diversification and multiplication of secular cultural elements and the orientation of the educational literature towards more practical disciplines become the main constants of the 18th century.

Even though the idea of a systematized education adapted to the characteristics of each age materializes a few centuries later, the content of the old religious texts confirms that the beginning of adult education in the Romanian cultural space is deeply rooted in the historiographical tradition, while the predominantly religious pedagogical reflections and educational approaches will be maintained until the end of the 18th century, when they become the source for the actions associated with a new stage, the "Romanian stage."

Knowledge in the field of adult education is not a static corpus, but an open structure, conditioned by developments that send to the accumulation of facts, ideas and reflections, from the widest, general to the most specialized and applied, derived from experiences concrete, and often difficult to generalize to the new theoretical perspectives, being enrolled in a continuous reconfiguration process. The discourse on adult education addresses both the conceptual, theoretical and the axiological sphere, with prescriptive function, and last but not least approaches the empirical educational levels that determine interrogations and invites to search for solutions articulated to concrete situations and social actors.

Historic research validates the existence of an interest in adult education, registering the activities of Romanian scholars starting with the 16th and 17th centuries. Works of Romanian pedagogical historiography mentions the formalized actions of adult education and learning, more or less institutionalized or systematized. Nowadays, talking about the field of adult education in Romania represents a necessary yet laborious undertaking, and the assertion becomes certainty as the studies in the field are advancing. We believe the ideas, theories and practices that we identified in the Romanian educational literature, starting with the 16th century contribute to the establishment of the field's identity and favor the contextualized significance of contemporary approaches.

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